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*Inspiring
excellence,
transforming
lives through
quality,
impact, and
care.*



**THE PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE ON TEACHERS'
WORK PERFORMANCE**

by

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1998630014

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF**

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in

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SUPERVISOR: Dr CC OKEKE

FEBRUARY 2025

DECLARATION

I, Moneilweng Patience Khantsi, hereby declare that the dissertation titled: “*The psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers’ work performance*” is my own work and that all sources that have been used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as in-text citations and in references.



Signature

February 2025

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to *my late* uncle Mojalefa Albert Khantsi. Thank you for raising me up and seeing gold in me when everyone else saw nothing but rust. *Robala ke kgotso malome waka.*

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance. The study's main aim was to investigate the psychosocial implications that teachers encounter due to school violence, how these implications affect their work performance, as well as strategies that could be applied to deal with school violence towards teachers. A qualitative approach was adopted, utilizing interpretivism paradigm. Purposive sampling was used to collect data from twelve teachers in four schools in the Motheo District using face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The study adopted phenomenology to explore the essence of the school violence and its implications for teachers' work performance. The generated data was transcribed from the audio-recorded interviews and analysed thematically. Themes and sub-themes emerged from the coded data and the findings revealed that teachers were struggling with psychosocial implications of school violence. These challenges included, among others, social isolation, alcohol abuse, avoidance behaviour, humiliation, absenteeism, frustration, as well as demotivation. The study's results indicated that teachers need psychosocial support from the Department of Basic Education (DBE), workshops, as well as training on how to deal with violent learners, to mitigate violence against them. Also, the findings revealed that there is lack of parental involvement in schools and that learners behave violently because of the challenges they face in their homes. Furthermore, findings revealed that schools need to create safer environments for teachers and apply tighter security measures to protect teachers in their workplace. Lastly, the findings suggested that the DBE need to hire school social workers and ensure that every school in Motheo District has a social worker that is providing social services to learners with underlying issues.

Keywords:

Psychosocial implications, school violence, teachers, work performance

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

DBE	Department of Basic Education
HDE	Higher Diploma in Education
HOD	Head of Department
NSSF	National School Safety Framework
PGCE	Post-Graduate Certificate in Education
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RIMS	Research Information Management Systems
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SAPS	South Africa Police Services
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organisation

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

School violence against teachers continues to be a steadily unsettling trend which is understudied, while having implications on South African societies, as well as globally (Reddy, Espelage, Anderman, Kanrich & McMahon, 2018; Khumalo, 2019:1). Newspaper and broadcast reports highlight the increase in school violence (Meyer & Chetty, 2017:121), which includes learners kicking and stabbing other learners and teachers (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). Violence refers to the threat or use of physical force to hurt oneself, another individual, a group, or a community with the goal of physically harming, damaging, or intimidating someone else (Uyane, 2021; De wet, 2016:1; Girmen, Kaya & Kilic, 2018:703). Also, violence has been defined by Lokmic, Opic and Bilic (2013) as any act of physically and/or emotionally abusing someone, and treating people unfairly, that could cause genuine or possible harm to their well-being and safety.

Furthermore, in describing school violence, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2017:8), supported by Meyer and Chetty (2017:121), holds the view that “school violence encompasses physical violence, psychological violence, including verbal abuse; sexual violence, rape, harassment and bullying, including cyberbullying”. Increasingly, learners possess sharp objects, knives, guns, and other harmful weapons at school. This is fuelled due to the degree of criminal activity which those learners encounter in their neighbourhoods (Hendricks, 2018:76; Sitoyi, 2020:5). The South African Council for Educators (SACE) (2011:19) claimed that teachers run the possibility of experiencing violence against them. This emanates from the belief that teachers are perceived as the violent ones and thus, making them even more vulnerable (Mkandla, 2019). Furthermore, the likelihood of violence against teachers is relatively high (Mdhluli, 2018:12), and this makes the learning environment suffer, as teachers feel powerless and demotivated to address issues of violence against them (Zuze, Reddy, Juan, Hannan, Visser & Winnar, 2016:2).

Emotional, psychological, and social well-being are integral to this multidimensional paradigm and can be rooted in satisfying interactions at work (Berlanda, Cordova, Pedrazza & Fraizzoli, 2019). Hence several studies suggested that aggressive behaviour has the potential to reduce teachers' instructional delivery (Okeke, Akobi & Botha, 2023) and occupational well-being in terms of increased emotional exhaustion (Grobler, 2018), de-personalisation (Williams & Dikes, 2015) and diminished motivation for work (Aldrup, Klusmann, Ludtke, Gollner & Trautwein, 2018) as well as making it more challenging to establish constructive classroom interactions. According to the Shields, Nadasen, and Hanneke (2015) paper, a lot of teachers experience social isolation because of school violence, which negatively affects their connections with coworkers and family. The study further reported that the severe social and psychological stress teachers suffer includes anger, helplessness, humiliation, guilt, a lack of assertiveness, feeling judged by others, and social disengagement.

Moreover, there are some reported cases of teachers' aggression and classical symptoms of "burnout" towards learners' victimization (Venketsamy, Baxen & Hu. 2023; Shields et al., 2015). Similarly, studies by Espelage, Anderman, Brown, Jones, Lane, McMahon, Reddy & Raynold, 2013; Terzoudi, 2020:5) asserted that teachers who have been victimized may exhibit signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), avoidance behaviours toward certain learners and teaching and learning environments, and anxiety and worry about their safety. Other psychological and social consequences teachers face are anxiety, depression, empathy, fear, hopelessness, internal problems, loneliness, irritability, worry, nervousness, low interpersonal support, poor job performance, and low life satisfaction and/or quality, among other things (Turanovic & Siennick, 2022:22). Ultimately, this is because teaching is a relationship-building profession, and disagreements with the parents of learners can lead to excessive stress for teachers (Farmer, 2020:41) which negatively impacts their overall job performance.

Violence in schools and other safety-related challenges on teachers and learners of high schools are challenges that affect all countries globally. In South Africa, these issues are viewed as community issues because schools are a part of the community, according to Mncabe and Madikizela-Madiya (2014). Furthermore, according to reports by Skaland (2016:3) and Van Droogenbroeck, Spruyt and Vanroelen

(2014:106), teaching is one of the most mentally demanding professions and includes the requirement to forge strong bonds or relationships with learners and their parents and families; relationships that are crucial to teachers' well-being. Also, Berlanda et al. (2019) attested that the degree of well-being experienced by teachers is significantly influenced by the learner-teacher connection. Studies that have revealed detrimental impacts on well-being, increased discomfort, anxiety, depression, and somatic and traumatised symptoms help to indicate the psychological harm that is brought on teachers by school violence (Sigad, 2022). Teachers who have experienced or witnessed learner-induced violence are more likely to suffer adverse impacts, and they also tend to be less satisfied with their overall lives (McMahon, Martinez, Reddy, Espelage & Anderman, 2017). Studies (Arvidsson, Leo, Larsson, Håkansson, Persson & Björk, 2019; Chen, Wang, Zhang & Oudekerk, 2020:66) have shown that teachers devote time to lesson planning, lesson, exam grading, administrative tasks, attending numerous meetings and extra-mural activities, among others; however, they still need to deal with learners' violent behaviour in the classrooms. Thus, teaching learners who lack motivation and discipline in the classroom becomes a challenging experience (Alhija, 2015). It may be argued that when teachers experience school violence and have no support from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) (Grobler, 2018) and school management teams, they end up reaching the stage of teaching fatigue due to of school violence (Berlanda et al., 2019; Farmer, 2020).

A study conducted by McMahon et al. (2017) revealed that approximately 80% of teachers in the United States had encountered some form of violence, including verbal, physical, and property-related incidents, within a single year. Furthermore, Mhlongo (2017), supported by Grobler (2018), indicated that the prevalence of school violence in South Africa exceeds that of the United States. Mosito and Sitoyi (2024:133) warned that toxic workplaces, marked by various types of aggression and an overall atmosphere that disregards employees' well-being, have been identified as contributing to job dissatisfaction and considerations of leaving the profession or a particular institution. With this being said, teachers have the right to work in secure atmospheres; thus, employers are obliged to ensure that their staff members are secure in their working environment (Sambo and Govender (2023:24). Nonetheless, due to a lack of assistance from the DBE and schools (Grobler, 2018), many teachers continue to work under hazardous conditions. Thus, it is of utmost importance that the

psychosocial support given to teachers who have been exposed to school violence, whether as victims or as witnesses, because this has a negative effect on their well-being and job performance, ultimately affecting the quality of teaching and learning in our schools. Thus, this study explored the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

An increasing body of research from both developed and developing nations reveals that school violence is linked to increased teacher turnover, disengagement, and other detrimental effects that hinder job satisfaction (Yang, Qin, and Ning, 2021b). Sigad (2022) maintained that the detrimental impact on teachers' well-being increases discomfort, anxiety, and depression (Baxen, 2021:1), and those who experience violence at work develop exhaustion, work absenteeism and teachers might no longer go an extra mile in their work. Additionally, as teaching is a relationship-building profession, teachers may experience excessive stress because of bad relationships with students and their parents (Farmer, 2020:41). However, Sithole (2017:10) alluded that learners perform better in an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning; therefore, good learner-teacher relationships should be maintained. Even in suburban schools, teachers are likely to be victimised and fear learners or their parents (Lokmic et al. 2013; Terzoudi, 2020:4). Bell and Adams (2016) noted that school violence defeats the intentions of socially-just-education because it thrives on violent, unjust, unfair and uncivil practices.

Studies have revealed that more than half of teachers have been victims of learner-perpetrated violence, and violent victimisation happens in schools (Chouhy, Madero-Hernandez & Turanovic, 2017; Longobadri, Bedenes-Ribera, Fabris, Martinez & McMahon, 2019). In summary, even though the issue is widely reported, violence against teachers has received far less attention than violence against learners. As a result, little is known about the consequences that those who are or were victims face (McMahon et al. 2017; Terzoudi, 2020:5). It is reasonable to infer that any form of violence—whether direct, indirect, verbal, emotional, or physical—has a long-lasting effect on the teacher's self-esteem and confidence. As a result, it is likely to hinder their work, negatively impact their job satisfaction and performance, make it challenging to foster a positive learning environment in the classroom, and will have

an overall negative and harmful effect (Fakude, 2022:5) on the occupational growth, improvement, and success of their learners.

1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

School violence is a common phenomenon and a growing concern worldwide (Tiang & Zhang, 2023; Taole, 2016). Learners are said to be the primary perpetrators of violence against teachers (Gerberich, Nachreiner, Ryan, Church, McGovern, Geisser, Mongin, Watt, Feda, Sage, and Pinder, 2014), while other perpetrators can be their parents, as well as other teachers, and these incidences are becoming popular. A study conducted by Mosito and Sitoyi (2024:141) revealed that violence in schools undermines the relationship between teachers and their learners, eroding the legal obligation for teachers to act in a nurturing and protective manner toward all learners.

With this being said, a year ago, I witnessed a male colleague being violently attacked by a Grade 10 learner within the school premises and the teacher's smartphone was damaged in the process. In another incident, I read and followed a story of a teacher in one of the public schools in Botshabelo, who was attacked by a learner and the learner's parents within the school premises, right in front of other learners and colleagues. The incident was on the news and newspaper (News24, 2022). The said learner and the parents were arrested, however; the psychosocial implications of that violence on the poor teacher's work performance, and the humiliation that comes with it, can only be imagined.

Furthermore, another female colleague was recently slapped on her face by a boy in Grade 9, right in front of a class full of learners. However, when she reported the matter to the School Management Team (SMT), nothing was done to punish the boy; instead, the boy was allowed back into class as if nothing happened. Another incident was that of a female teacher from Botshabelo who was working in Soutpan and got stabbed and killed by a Grade 12 learner. This was also on the news, on television, on radio and newspaper (News24, 2022). In that same incident, a female teacher lost her life at the hands of a learner whom she taught and nurtured. Thus, there are many other cases whereby teachers have been brutally attacked by learners, and Mncube (2014) attested that these are cases that the media broadcast almost every day. It is evident that teachers, irrespective of whether they are victims or witnesses of these violent acts, are battling with the psychosocial implications of school violence, which can

possibly lead to several negative consequences for their well-being and work performance if nothing is done by all relevant stakeholders.

For the prevention and intervention strategies to be developed to reduce school violence directed towards teachers in public schools, I was motivated to conduct this research to examine the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance. The issue is urgent because violence against teachers in the classroom has a big impact on the teaching and learning process. Terzoudi (2020:6) asserted that school violence against teachers can have negative effects on the victim's health, as well as the culture of the school.

To act preventatively, it is crucial to raise awareness about violence as teachers experience it. Also, there is currently little research on teacher victimization and its effects that go beyond the phenomenon's prevalence estimates or provide a more thorough understanding of teachers' unique experiences with violence (Fakude, 2022:18). Current research has not explored how teachers manage the aftermath of violence, including the sources of social support they seek and the effectiveness of such support in their coping process (Bounds & Jenkins, 2016). Insufficient support for employees who have been victims of violence can deter them from reporting such incidents. Lack of support may also contribute to unnecessarily extended psychological distress, affecting not only the victims but also their colleagues and witnesses (Skaland, 2016). Consequently, the objective of the proposed study was to address this research gap by gathering comprehensive qualitative data on the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance.

1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aim of this intended study is to investigate the psychosocial implications of school violence on teacher' work performance.

1.4.1 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- Determine how teachers perceive school violence.
- Understand the psychosocial problems teachers encounter at school.
- Establish how school violence impacts teachers' work performance.
- Establish strategies that can be adopted to deal with school violence.

1.5 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

This proposed study is informed by the main research question: What are the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance?

1.5.1 Sub-research Questions

To answer the main question, the following sub-questions are addressed:

- How do teachers perceive school violence?
- What are the psychosocial problems teachers encounter at school?
- How does school violence impact teachers' work performance?
- What strategies can be adopted to deal with school violence?

1.6 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study focused on the psychosocial implications of school violence on high school teachers. Only twelve high school teachers were selected to participate in this study. These participants were selected based on whether they directly or indirectly experienced school violence, either as victims or witnesses. These participants consisted of three teachers each from four public schools in the Motheo District of the Free State province, South Africa.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will promote and foster better relationships within the school communities. It will influence the process in which a person develops within the framework of a system of relationships. It will further postulate how an individual's development takes place inside an interactive system of nested influences between themselves and their environment (Gouws, 2015:79). Practically, the study will mitigate school violence against teachers by establishing intervention strategies against the perpetrators of school violence, investigating measures of psychosocial support that victimized teachers need, as well as those who have been witnesses to school violence. Therefore, the beneficiaries of this study will be the teachers, learners and their parents, the school management teams, as well as the Department of Basic Education.

The benefit that teachers will get from this study will be enhanced safety within the school environment, minimized acts of school violence against them, provision of necessary support to victims and witnesses of school violence, as well as to enable them to deal with long-term and short-term effects of violence on their psychosocial

well-being. Also, learners and their parents can benefit from workshops and anti-bullying campaigns, which teach tolerance, understanding and respect. This study has established possible measures of dealing with school violence against teachers such that cordial and respectful relationships are promoted between teachers and their learners, to enhance conducive teaching-learning environments, to elevate teacher's work performance and learners' academic achievements.

1.8 DEFINITION OF KEYWORDS

Psychosocial implications

The term psychosocial implications refer to the psychological and social impacts that result from interactions with the surroundings. It explains how one's internal environment and the larger social environment interact, and how social influences might affect one's thoughts and actions (Dhiman, 2023). All social and psychological factors that contribute to a person's socialisation and self-concept as a person and as a member of a social group are considered psychosocial implications or determinants (Skosana, 2021:3). Additionally, the impact that biological and/or environmental elements have on a person's social and/or psychological features is known as the psychosocial impact (de Oliveira, Buchain, Vizzotto, Elkis, Cordeiro, 2013).

School violence

School violence is a complex concept that includes both criminal activities and aggressive behaviour that disrupts academic growth and learning as well as impacting the school environment (Grobler, 2018). According to Ncontsa and Shumba (2013:2) "school violence is defined as any deliberate physical or non-physical (verbal) condition or act that causes physical or non-physical pain to the recipient of that act while the recipient is under the school's supervision."

Teachers

A teacher is an individual designated to carry out extracurricular responsibilities, engage in teaching, instruct, or train others, and offer professional educational services, which may include therapeutic and educational psychological services within a school setting (SACE, 2020). The term 'teacher' refers to someone who implements an educational curriculum, evaluates student involvement in such a curriculum, and/or

exercises consistent and significant leadership in an educational programme (Islamia, 2016:9).

Work performance

According to Wu (2011), work performance refers to the outcomes that an employee achieves by completing the work assigned to her/him within a predetermined time frame. Another definition of work performance includes all the steps individuals have taken to carry out their responsibilities and the extent to which these activities help them, or their companies, reach their objectives (Avunduk, 2021:103).

1.9 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

1.9.1 Introduction

School violence in South African townships schools have been escalating from bad to worse. Thus, incidences of violence against teachers by learners and learners' parents exhibit this phenomenon. This section will review the relevant literature on the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers in the Motheo district township schools. The section will begin with the theoretical framework that informs this study and will review related literature on school violence, teachers' views on school violence, the implications of school violence on teachers' well-being, the implications of school violence on teachers' work performance and ways in which school violence can be managed.

1.9.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was informed by the frustration-aggression theory proposed by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears (1939), which posits that frustration is both a necessary and sufficient cause of aggression. This theory, also known as the frustration-aggression hypothesis, suggests that any form of frustration will inevitably result in aggression, and conversely, any act of aggression is a response to frustration (Dollard et al., 1939). According to this perspective, violent behaviour is a manifestation of frustration, which can sometimes escalate into various forms of aggression (Breuer & Elson, 2017:1). Frustration is defined as any obstacle that hinders the achievement of a particular goal (Kruglanski et al., 2023:446), while aggression encompasses a range of actions from milder forms, such as name-calling and pushing, to more severe acts like hitting or punching, and can potentially lead to

more extreme behaviours like stabbing, shooting, or killing (Allen & Anderson, 2017). Similarly, Baron and Richardson (1994) defined aggression as behaviour aimed at harming another individual who does not consent to such harm.

The frustration-aggression hypothesis implies that if we experience frustration from being prevented from achieving a certain goal, this will lead to aggression. In essence, individuals who experience frustration or whose goals are being stifled, are more likely to demonstrate aggressive behaviour (Breuer & Elson, 2017:1). Furthermore, because this theory is also referred to as the frustration-aggression-displacement theory, it suggests that aggression is displaced by targeting an innocent victim when the source of frustration is not managed expeditiously or is misunderstood. For example, a teacher who is humiliated by learners at work will yell at his family because she/he cannot respond to the source of the frustration because of the fear of being dismissed. In this case, a learner(s) who abuses a teacher cannot be reprimanded due to red-tape, school policy, and embarrassment—so it is directed towards an innocent target like the teacher's children.

Furthermore, the notion that frustration might trigger aggression if perceived as being disrespectful is supported by early studies of aggression in social psychology (DeBono & Muraven, 2014). Also, Kruglanski, Ellenberg, Szumowska and Molinario (2023:450) observed that “attack” is more intense than “frustration”, and that an insulting attack is an effort by perpetrators to exert control and show that they have the power to alter the teacher's position by exposing the teacher's frailty and vulnerability. This theory was relevant to this study because it exposed how learner-on-teacher violence has the potential to frustrate teachers to such a point that they conceal their emotions, sometimes retaliate, or even resign in the worst-case scenario. Therefore, learners' violent behaviour in the classroom has resulted in teachers battling with psychosocial problems such as stress, anger, isolation, anxiety, and frustration. In some cases, retaliatory aggression by the teacher is an attempt to gain release by harming the aggressor in the hope of learners changing their perception of teachers' vulnerability.

1.9.3 Review of Related Literature

1.9.3.1 Concept of school violence

Violence committed against teachers at schools is a scourge that continues to be worrying, especially in education circles. The percentage of teachers who report victimization to school authorities is significantly high; however, it seems teachers feel that the action taken by the school to intervene after being violated is ineffective and insufficient (Moon, Saw and McCluskey, 2020:2). Furthermore, Moreroa (2022:17) pointed out that school violence is a very broad concept which encompasses many forms of harm, such as physical harm, threats, different forms of harassment, damage to property, weapon-carrying and violent behaviour, among others; and that the mass media regularly reports on the rise of school violence even on an international level. Alarmingly, learners carry knives, guns, and other weapons to school which emanates from the level of crime they are exposed to in their communities (Sitoyi, 2020:5).

There are different types of school violence, namely: physical violence, verbal violence, relational or social violence and sexual violence. Thus, Mncube and Netshitangani (2014), supported by Ngidi and Kaye (2022), attested that the more prevalent forms of school violence are fighting, stabbing, bullying, rape, (Dogutas, 2013; Sibisi, 2021:33) stealing, extorting possessions or money, verbal abuse and intimidation, as well as murder, in extreme scenarios. Other acts of violence are the recent high-profile shootings in schools, which not only harm victims but harm more than one person at a time. That pain can extend to the victims' colleagues, relatives, friends, families and even their community at large (Henry, 2000; Lokmic et al. 2013).

According to Moon et al (2020:2) teachers' victimization by learners is a serious topic that receives scant attention but has the tendency to make the learning environment unsafe and not conducive for teaching and learning. Thus, teachers feel powerless and demotivated to address issues of violence against them, especially since corporal punishment has been outlawed. Furthermore, the dedication of teachers to the school and their jobs, their contentment with their work, their ability to handle stress and burnout, the solid relationships they forge with their learners, parents and colleagues, can all be regarded as the most crucial elements of a school's success (Erturk, 2022:192). However, Yang et al. (2021b) contended that a lack of safety can hamper

teachers' ability to "deal completely with the demands of the job". According to Ghadban, Berkowitz and Enosh (2023:179), the literature has identified factors that contribute to teacher victimisation as exacerbated by lack of support among school staff members, school management teams and other relevant stakeholders.

Teachers who have experienced or witnessed learner-induced violence are more likely to be traumatised physically and/or psychologically, which tends to decrease their morale to teach effectively and efficiently (McMahon, Martinez, Reddy, Espelage & Anderman, 2020). In addition, Terzoudi (2020:5) claimed that teachers who are victims of learner abuse may experience post-traumatic stress disorder, display avoidance behaviours towards teaching-learning situations and specific learners, as well as express fear and stress regarding their safety. Thus, this study intended to establish measures of minimising school violence against teachers such that cordial and respectful relationships are promoted between teachers and their learners to enhance safe and conducive teaching-learning environments to elevate teachers' work performance and learners' academic achievement.

1.9.3.2 Teachers' views on school violence

Teachers' safety in schools is a complex issue that is acknowledged on different levels internationally, and depends on a range of individual, societal, and interconnected factors that vary from one society to the next (Sibisi, 2021). Teachers have emphasized the importance of the role that communities play in the upbringing and behaviour of children. According to Sotoyi (2020:4), children are exposed to aggressive behaviour, which eventually leads to them emulating and exhibiting this behaviour at school. Thus, these violent incidents result in teachers' humiliation, which leads to frustration and escalates to aggression towards learners. This aggression can be manifested either verbally or even physically.

Additionally, a recent study on violence in South African schools by Grobler (2018) revealed that many teachers have encountered violence at school in various forms. Similarly, an earlier study by Sibisi (2016:48) on the impacts of school violence found that incidents such as threats, physical harm, sexual assault, and robbery were on the rise nationally. However, according to Mahaye and Ajani (2023), education is viewed as a vital pillar of a nation's economy because it is so important in promoting economic development. A broken educational system can be linked to the existence of socio-

economic problems, including violence, drug abuse, child labour, and unemployment in a country. Nhambura (2020) posited that our country struggles with a lack of qualified teachers, particularly in high-need areas where violence is more ubiquitous and common. Therefore, Singh and Steyn (2014:81) confirmed that the recurring aggressive and violent behaviour exhibited by students in schools has had a detrimental impact on the school system and has become a significant concern for stakeholders within the South African school system.

1.9.3.3 Causes of school violence

In places where there is ongoing violence, learners are more likely to engage in violent behaviour such as fighting, bullying, and carrying weapons (Sekgobela & Malesa, 2024). This suggested that learners are capable of being in possession of hazardous weapons within the school premises. Harber and Muthukrishna (2000:424) (as cited in Grobler, 2018) believed that schools in urban areas, particularly townships, are regularly subjected to gangsterism.

Furthermore, factors such as poverty, unemployment, rural-urban migration, availability of weapons such as guns and knives, and violent family and societal background all contribute to an environment where school violence breeds and teachers are attacked at their workplaces (Benevene, Ittan & Cortini, 2018). Nzama and Ajani (2021) also added that the learners' easy access to substances such as alcohol and narcotics is another contributing factor that increases the frequency of school violence incidences within the school settings, as learners have been found or seen using drugs on multiple occasions.

UNESCO (2017) identified broader structural and contextual factors such as income inequality, deprivation, marginalisation, and conflict, along with gender and social norms, as being the primary drivers of school violence. The influence of peer groups, the permanent exclusion of students for misbehaviour, the inability of schools to enforce policies addressing discipline and violence, high crime rates in students' communities, and the failure to prioritise safety as a fundamental right of teachers are all potential contributors to school violence (Netshitangani, 2014; Bhana, 2015; Mubita, 2021).

Ultimately, instead of being pillars of education and character development, dysfunctional schools deteriorate into hostile settings marked by frequent violent

crimes and the increase of other societal problems that have the ability to compromise academic goals. Thus, Mahaye and Ajani (2023) reiterated that the process of teaching and learning gets impacted by a number of factors which can use instability within educational settings. Alarming, learners carry knives, guns, and other weapons to school, which emanates from the level of crime they are exposed to in their communities (Sitoyi, 2020:5). Sadly, this situation is exacerbated by the lack of support from the DBE and school communities (Grobler, 2018:1), thus forcing many teachers to continue working under hazardous conditions.

1.9.3.4 Impact of school violence on teachers' work performance

Research on teacher well-being has been extensively conducted, with different studies focusing on relational, environmental and personal aspects (Zuze et al., 2016). De Cordova, Berlanda, Pedrazza & Fraizzoli (2019:2) defined teachers' well-being as "a positive emotional state, which is the result of harmony between the sum of specific environmental factors on the one hand, and the personal needs and expectations of teachers on the other". Furthermore, numerous studies (De Wet, 2010; Taole & Ramorola, 2014; Shields et al., 2015, Davids & Waghid, 2020) have shown that school violence may have an adverse impact on South African teachers on both a professional and emotional level. According to Dzuka and Dalbert (2007, cited in Grobler, 2018), school violence has a negative impact on teachers' well-being and lowers their level of personal life satisfaction. Generally, burnout and professional disengagement are major concerns for teachers.

Many teachers may suffer from common symptoms of trauma and/or psychological distress when they are exposed to stressors such as shooting or stabbing incidents, attacks by students, or witnessing the traumatic experiences of colleagues and students (Lizana & Lera, 2022). Research has indicated that teachers who have observed school violence may experience traumatic stress, manifesting as increased anxiety and headaches, depression, low self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, frustration, shame, and guilt (Lizana & Lera, 2022; Taole & Ramorola, 2014; Shields et al., 2015). Additionally, teachers exposed to school violence may feel exhausted and disillusioned (Davids & Waghid, 2020).

The repercussions of violence can modify teachers' views about teaching and learning, as well as their behaviour towards learners, in addition to symptoms that

have an impact on their personal lives. According to Zuze et al. (2016), school violence appears to have a negative impact on teachers' morale and may worsen the learning environment when combined with the helplessness that many teachers are very often experiencing.

School violence is significantly affecting not only teachers, but it impacts the education system and the quality and consistency of learners' education. Teachers often spend a significant amount of their time addressing issues related to school violence, which detracts from their ability to focus on effective teaching and learning (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). Furthermore, when students are unruly, unmanageable, and poorly disciplined in the classroom, it becomes challenging for teachers to facilitate effective teaching and learning (Sibisi, 2016:31). The teacher finds it difficult to complete the curriculum on time because of absenteeism from the learners and the teachers themselves because time is wasted on dealing with issues that arise from school violence. Thus, this affects the overall performance of the teachers, and the school in general. This is in line with the frustration–aggression theory which suggests that a teacher who experiences or is exposed to school violence may struggle to maintain good relationships with learners and eventually struggle with their professional identity and purpose.

Benevene et al. (2018) confirmed that violence has a detrimental effect on the well-being of affected teachers, as well as on the quality of their teaching. Therefore, the way in which teachers perform in their profession and workplace, their level of absenteeism and how they interact with their learners, demonstrates the kind of attitude they have regarding the teaching profession (De Cordova et al., 2019). According to Zuze et al. (2016), school violence appears to have a negative impact on teachers' morale and may exacerbate the learning environment when combined with the helplessness that many teachers are experiencing. Thus, frustration–aggression theory suggests that school violence has the potential to frustrate teachers to such a point that they conceal their emotions, retaliate, or resign.

1.9.3.5 The psychosocial implications of school violence

School violence has a negative effect on the well-being of teachers, with a lowered personal life satisfaction (Grobler, 2018). Many teachers may have trauma symptoms or psychological discomfort when they encountered some of these stressors, such as

shooting or stabbing occurrences, learner attacks, or witnessing horrific experiences of colleague being attacked. Teachers generally experienced burnout and professional disengagement. This is evident in the studies conducted by Taole and Ramorola (2014), Shields et al. (2015), Davids and Waghid (2020) have shown that school violence can have a negative impact on South African teachers, affecting them emotionally, personally, and professionally.

According to research conducted by Davids and Waghid (2020), teachers exposed to school violence may suffer from traumatic stress, evidenced by increased anxiety and headaches, depression, low self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, frustration, shame, guilt, exhaustion, and disillusionment. Thus, teachers eventually consider using violent responses, aggressive behaviour, and even corporal punishment (Shields et al., 2015) in response to these intense sentiments of frustration and rage. Victims, as well as witnesses, may suffer psychological harm because of intimidation, bullying and other forms of violence (Benevene et al., 2018). Thus, these incidences result in teachers experiencing feelings of helplessness and inadequacy, which the frustration–aggression theory suggests is linked with the teacher failing to find his or her purpose in life and experiencing feelings of frustration, withdrawal and isolation which, in worst case scenarios, may develop into aggressive behaviour manifestations.

Violence against teachers is common and has the potential to negatively impact teachers' well-being, effectiveness and longevity in the teaching field (Anderman, Eseplage, Reddy, McMahon, Martinez, Lane, Reynolds & Paul, 2018). Violent incidences are more likely to occur in a school that is in a neighbourhood with high crime, violence, and drug addiction rates (Van Zyl, 2022). In addition, Mncube (2014) concurred, saying the level of violence in schools by learners display that which exists within the society. This suggested that factors driving violence among learners are closely linked to their exposure to violence and their societal economic statuses. These elements highlighted the depth of violence and criminality that we encounter in our neighbourhoods, and our social settings (Sibisi, 2016:5).

Nonetheless, schools play a very important role in society by helping learners learn how to peacefully co-exist with others and particularly, their teachers. Also, Berlanda, Pedrazza, Trifiletti, and Fraizzoli (2017) suggested that positive relationships with

learners, their parents, colleagues and school management appeared to foster a positive attitude toward the profession. However, if learners and their parents attack teachers at their workplace, teachers will be humiliated, experience frustrations, especially when they are unable to address their grievances, and they may be more likely to act aggressively. Nowadays teachers must deal with learners who come to class intoxicated, aggressive and high on drugs, who belong to gangs, and who have illegal weapons on the school grounds (De Cordova et al., 2019). Therefore, teachers end up becoming frustrated and eventually become aggressive to retaliate from the humiliation to which the learners are subjecting them.

1.9.3.6 Strategies to deal with school violence

According to Khumalo (2019), one of the most significant work-related stress factors in the teaching profession is learner aggressive behaviour and hostility. It has the potential to significantly lower teachers' occupational well-being and prevent them from forming supportive relationships with learners. According to teachers, school staff and administrators, school violence poses a serious threat to school safety and can deprive learners and teachers of a secure and effective learning environment (Van Zyl, 2022).

The solution is to change the atmosphere so that decent citizens are produced. Parents and other stakeholders must be involved in managing learner violence. Schools should implement a psychological support system for their teachers in order to foster an environment that is conducive to learning (Sibisi, 2016:5). Together, schools, parents, and communities can act as a stronghold against, and stop school violence.

Research by Sibisi (2016:49) and Van Zyl (2022) indicated that parental involvement in school activities, community support, and participation in school-wide violence prevention initiatives help schools and teachers promote and sustain appropriate behaviours. Active parental involvement and strong community support are essential and beneficial mediating factors (Gage, Prykanowski & Larson, 2014). Engaging parents and community members in meaningful ways enables schools to uphold appropriate behaviours (Gage et al. 2014).

1.9.4 Summary of Preliminary Literature Review

This section evaluated and reviewed literature that discussed school violence and how the phenomenon is problematic, not only in South Africa, but worldwide. School violence has a negative impact on the well-being of teachers, both physically, psychologically, and socially, as well as professionally. It is evident that teachers are having difficulties when dealing with violent learners in their classrooms. This results in teachers doubting their classroom management abilities as well as their self-efficacy as professionals. The evidence that arose from the literature demonstrates how learners, together with their parents on certain occasions, attack teachers within their place of work. This then results in teachers experiencing feelings of disengagement in their jobs, constant absenteeism, poor job performance, withdrawal symptoms, stress and burnout, among others.

The frustration–aggression theory has been explained to exhibit the link between being frustrated because of the attacks at the workplace, and being aggressive, not only towards learners, but also towards one’s children. Thus, these incidences result in victims getting frustrated and acting out aggressively in an attempt to retaliate from the devastation, directing their frustrations and anger to innocent people, especially in cases where the perpetrator is unchallengeable.

1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.10.1 Introduction

Research methodology refers to the systematic approach a researcher employs to obtain accurate and reliable results that align with the research paradigm's goals and objectives. This involves the research approach, research design, and specific methodologies for data collection and analysis regarding teachers' experiences with school violence. This section will detail the data gathering process, the sampling method, the techniques for data collection and analysis, and the ethical procedures followed before commencing data collection. Each of these aspects is covered in more detail below under the relevant sub-headings.

1.10.2 Research Paradigm

This study was guided by an interpretive research paradigm. Kruger (2019:32) has suggested that interpretivism centres on the individual, aiding the researcher in

understanding the subjective experiences of participants. This paradigm enabled a deep understanding of teachers' perspectives and experiences with school violence, particularly in their interactions with students within the school setting. It also incorporated the researcher's own viewpoint on the topic being studied. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020:42) have argued that the interpretivist paradigm, which posits that reality is subjective and varies among individuals, may limit the generalisability of the data collected and analysed, as the data are heavily context-dependent and influenced by specific viewpoints and values.

Finally, by accessing the meanings that participants attach to their social environments, Perumal (2021) believed that interpretivist researchers would attempt to incisively comprehend individuals' experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon under investigation. This means that by applying an interpretivism paradigm, I as the researcher, was empowered to better comprehend the lived experiences of the participants by making sense of their sociocultural backgrounds. It was therefore important that the researcher probe for a better understanding of the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance.

1.10.3 Research Approach

This proposed study adopted the qualitative research approach which is meaning-based rather than statistical in terms of types of data analysis, and its reliance on linguistics skills rather than numerical data (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019:259). Creswell (2014:3) defined a research approach as the plans and procedures that encompass the steps from broad assumptions to specific data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Qualitative research, as pointed out by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) and Nieuwenhuis (2019), involves the interpretation of meaning from data that is connected to the purpose of a study; this means that the social meanings that people attribute to their experiences and circumstances are embedded in the collected data. Hammersley (2013:12) explained that qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that typically employs a flexible and data-driven research design. It utilises relatively unstructured data, highlights the crucial role of subjectivity in the research process, examines a number of naturally occurring cases in detail, and relies on verbal rather than statistical methods.

Thus, meaning making from participants' raw collected data, through recorded semi-structured interviews, in their natural setting, was the researcher's duty and responsibility. Also, the description in qualitative descriptive study entails the presentation of the facts; the selection of a research approach is based on the nature of the research problem, researchers' experiences and the audience of the study (Kim, Sefcik & Bradway, 2017:24). For the purpose of this study, qualitative research was convenient because it helped me understand perceptions, views, and experiences of participants according to their interpretations. Also, a descriptive qualitative approach was useful in describing participants' views on the problem of school violence and the effects it has on participants' psychosocial well-being. Thus, this approach was appropriate in establishing how school violence affected teachers' psychological and social well-being in terms of their work performance.

1.10.4 Research Design

This study pursued a phenomenological research design which is an approach to research that seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019:90). Qutoshi (2018:215) explained that phenomenology is an approach to educate our vision, define our position, broaden how we see the world around us, and study the lived experiences of others at a deeper level. To explain social reality, phenomenologists are "interested in human consciousness, particularly how one 'thinks' about experience; in other words, how consciousness is experienced" (Leavy, 2017:129).

Further, phenomenology as a philosophy provides a theoretical guideline to researchers to "understand phenomena at the level of subjective reality" (Qutoshi, 2018:215). It is a methodical approach of studying how people find themselves and the world, how they define themselves, and how they experience the world phenomena (Vagle, 2014:20). As defined by Thwala, Ugwuanyi, Okeke and Gama (2020:36), phenomenology is particularly effective when the objective of the study is to explore a phenomenon with complex social and cultural implications, particularly when the phenomenon is difficult to quantify and when new and innovative viewpoints are required. Thus, this design was essential in exploring and establishing the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance.

1.10.5 Research Participants and Site

The study targeted four high schools in the Motheo District of the Free State Province, South Africa. According to Leavy (2017:148), participants are identified and recruited according to the research purpose, objectives, and research questions. Teachers who regularly experience violence in schools and were willing to provide relevant information on this issue were chosen for the study. In other words, teachers in high schools who had been victims and witnesses of school violence were identified and approached to participate in this study.

1.10.6 Sampling and sample size

Sample size refers to the number of individuals included in a research study to represent a population. It indicates the total number of respondents in the study, which is often divided into sub-groups based on demographics such as age, gender, and location, to ensure that the sample accurately represents the entire population (Kibuacha, 2021). This study employed the purposive sampling technique in selecting the high schools (research sites) and the teachers to participate in this research. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling where the researcher consciously decides on what relevant and rich information the sample can provide; and so, participants are chosen accordingly (Vehovar, Toepoel & Steinmetz, 2016:328). Lee and Landers (2022) stated that this sampling method selects criteria that possible participants can meet based on the goals established by the researcher. This method was useful in this study because it enabled the researcher to develop a better comprehension of participants' personal experiences.

The research participants were evaluated for suitability according to the study's purpose such that the sample size was kept limited and manageable according to typical qualitative studies (Skosana, 2021:79). Twelve teachers from four high schools were selected for this study: six teachers were selected from two urban schools, and the other six teachers from two semi-urban schools. The purpose of selecting teachers from different high schools was to collect rich and varied data that were to be obtained from diverse groups of participants.

1.10.7 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Since this study followed a phenomenological perspective, semi-structured interviews were conducted to glean data from participants. According to Barret and Twycross (2018:63), it is necessary that the researcher design a well-planned interview schedule to guide the research process to cover important areas of interest relevant to the study. People experience events in their daily lives that can be best understood when the researcher creates opportunities for participants to describe their personal experiences themselves (Cropley, 2022:45). Thus, conducting semi-structured interviews by utilising closed- and open-ended questions allowed participants the freedom to spontaneously articulate their opinions and experiences guided by the study's specific objectives.

To prevent researcher and participant tiredness, it is recommended that semi-structured interviews not last longer than one hour (Adams, 2015:494). Therefore, the researcher created an interview guide which guided and ensured that each participant was asked the same open-ended questions. All interviews were audio-recorded to ensure authenticity, verification, and accurate verbatim transcriptions for precise data analysis. The semi-structured interviews were also followed-up by probing questions related to the why and how questions for elaboration, clarity, and to deeply understand the intricacies of school violence. Therefore, the conducting of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to garner important information from participants to execute accurate analysis and truthful reporting.

1.10.8 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis entails reading numerous transcripts repeatedly via comparing and contrasting processes, detecting discrepancies, identifying themes, and creating categories—all of which are steps in qualitative data analysis (Dube & Shawe, 2022:152). According to Ngulube (2015), describing and summarising data, figuring out how variables relate to (or differ from) one another, comparing and contrasting variables, and eliciting credible results are all part of data analysis. Thus, the thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2021) was applied in this study.

For the purpose of this study, I used thematic data analysis. According to Dube and Shawe (2022:153), the thematic analysis approach entails analysing qualitative data

where a set of data is read multiple times to facilitate the discovery of themes by distinguishing patterns while applying meaning-making to the data. Data were organised and prepared for analysis via a six-stage approach: collection of data, familiarisation and management of data, coding, categorising themes, contextualising, and interpreting the results (Peel, 2020:3). This method of analysis ensured the effective interpretation of the scourge of school violence on teachers' work performance in a way that participants experienced it.

1.10.9 Data Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in research seeks to confirm whether the research findings can be regarded as reliable (Leavy, 2017). "Research instruments need to be assessed for validity and reliability in order to be deemed trustworthy" (De Klerk & Van Wyk, 2022:134). In ensuring trustworthiness, the following principles should be considered in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Laumann, 2020). Credibility is measuring the reliability of the data collection and data analysis techniques. In other words, the researcher's ability to demonstrate the "correctness and dependability of the findings" determined credibility (Stahl & King, 2020:27). The ability of qualitative research findings to be generalised or applied in different situations is referred to as transferability; it is defined by Korstjens and Moser (2018:121) as "the degree to which results of qualitative research can be utilised in other contexts or settings with additional participants".

Sample size is a term used in research to describe the number of individuals included in a study to represent a larger population. It refers to the total number of respondents participating in the research, and this number is frequently divided into sub-groups based on demographics such as age, gender, and location. This division ensured that the sample accurately reflects the characteristics of the entire population (Kibuacha, 2021).

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics is described by Okeke, Omodan and Dube (2022:170) as the standards and guidelines that guide the researcher to decide on what is acceptable and unacceptable when conducting a study. Therefore, I adopted acceptable, correct, and appropriate research ethics while conducting this research. Firstly, permission was obtained from

the University of the Free State and the Department of Basic Education to commence this study. Also, permission was requested from the principals for teacher participation, and for their schools to be used as research sites. In addition, teachers who were expected to participate in the study provided informed consent voluntarily. This is in line with Flemming (2018:210) who maintains that participants (after noting and agreeing to all the finer details of the research) must provide signed consent for participation in a study.

1.12 ORGANISATION OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Introduction

The first chapter has offered an introduction and background to the study. It contains the statement of the problem, rationale for the study, aim and specific objectives, main and sub-questions, delimitations, significance of the study, definition of keywords, an overview of the literature review and research methodology, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The second chapter discusses the theoretical framework and the review of related literature. This includes the frustration-aggression theory, teachers' views on school violence, the causes of school violence, the psychosocial problems teachers encounter at schools, its effects on teachers' work performance, and strategies to combat school violence.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Chapter 3 details the research paradigm, research approach, research design, selection of participants and research sites, sampling and sample size, instruments for data collection, data collection methods, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Interpretation of the Findings

The fourth chapter explains how the research was conducted, data analysis, presentation of findings, and chapter summary.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

Lastly, Chapter 5 summarises the findings, outlines the implications for further research, suggests recommendations, describes the study's limitations, and ends with a conclusion to the study.

1.13 CONCLUSION

The first section presented the background of the study; it revealed the problem statement by outlining the study's significance, the rationale of the study, the aim of this study, and its research questions. The second section continued by reviewing literature on the concept of school violence by demonstrating its implications on teachers' psychosocial well-being; its implications for their job performance and suggested ways in which school violence against teachers can be mitigated. Lastly, the final section discussed the research methodology employed to collect, analyse, as well as report on the findings of the study and the ethics that should be considered when conducting the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework and related literature necessary in order to consider the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance. These include the frustration–aggression theory, teachers' experiences of school violence, the psychosocial problems emerging from school violence, the impact of school violence on teachers' job performance, the psychosocial implications of school violence on teaching and learning, strategies to be adopted to deal with school violence, implications of the study, as well as a summary of this chapter. Thus, these aspects were discussed to explore the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK—FRUSTRATION–AGGRESSION THEORY

This study was informed by the frustration–aggression theory of Dollard et al. (1939). Frustration–aggression hypothesis is one of the earliest aggression theories (Kruglanski et al., 2023:445). This theory was first presented by psychologists from Yale in 1939. The initial theory proposed two declarations: that (1) frustration precedes aggression, and that (2) aggression is a result of frustration (Kruglanski et al., 2023:446). This theory was formally known as the frustration–aggression hypothesis, and it asserts that violent behaviour manifests because of frustration which at times causes some type of aggression (Breuer & Elson, 2017:1). The term “hypothesis” was used to denote that there is a proposed explanation for the relationship between frustration and aggression. Over time, as the theory gained empirical support and was further developed and reined, it became commonly known as the frustration–aggression theory.

The change in terminology reflects its transition from a speculative idea to a more established psychological theory. Thus, the original theory was later revised by Miller (1941) and Berkowitz (1989) (Gilbert & Bushman, 2020:83). As to the initial hypothesis, Dollard et al. (1939) postulated that the incident of aggression often assumes the presence of frustration and, in contrast, the presence of frustration often results in some sort of aggressiveness (Gilbert & Bushman, 2020:83). For example,

researchers have examined how factors such as excessive workload, lack of support from school management teams, or difficult interactions with learners and parents can contribute to frustration among teachers. Therefore, frustration in this context was defined as the thwarting of a target response, which was interpreted as the reinforcing last operation in a continuing behavioural chain (van der Dennen, 2005:2). Furthermore, the relationship between frustration and aggression in human behaviour was initially hypothesised by Dollard et al. back in 1939. They observed that when individuals identify hindrance in achieving their desired goal and face resistance, frustration develops, which often leads to aggression (Hasan, Imran & Naqvi, 2020:496). They also explained the role of ignorance, humiliation and interference as additional factors which could also lead to aggression.

Moreover, because this theory is also referred to as the frustration–aggression–displacement theory, it suggests that aggression is displaced by targeting an innocent victim when the source of frustration is not managed expeditiously or is misunderstood (Kruglanski et al. 2023:447). School violence, whether directed towards teachers or witnessed by them, can create frustration among teachers. The frustration arises from feeling unable to effectively control or prevent violent incidents. According to Chitrakar and Nisanth (2023:3), this frustration can manifest as aggression, which may affect teachers' interactions with learners, colleagues, and school management. Thus, frustration–aggression theory suggests that frustration can lead to aggressive behaviour. This is because humans have a natural desire to control their territory and fulfil their potential. They can use aggressiveness to regain control by symbolically expressing dominance and other forms of authority over others (Poon, Chen, Teng, & Wong, 2020:2). This suggests that if teachers experience persistent frustration, it may escalate into aggression.

However, factors such as inadequate support from the side of school management teams, challenging work conditions and, most importantly, school violence, contribute to teachers' frustration and potentially impacts their response. Moreover, dealing with the aftermath of school violence, such as addressing learner trauma, and managing safety measures, can contribute to chronic stress and burnout among teachers. This prolonged exposure to stressors can exacerbate feelings of frustration and increase the likelihood of aggressive responses, as predicted by frustration–aggression theory.

2.2.1 Frustration

The word frustration is derived from the Latin word “Frustra” which means in vain. According to psychologist Sigmund Freud (1933), frustration is a general response to any situation where gratification is not achieved, characterized by an underlying aggressive component. Also, Jalal and Rani (2023:268) defined frustration as an emotion that occurs in situations where a person is blocked from reaching a desired outcome or goal. One of the main negative emotions that stems from disappointment is frustration. According to Jeronimus and Laceulle (2017:1), frustration is characterised as irritable distress in reaction to exclusion, limitation, and failure (a state of dissatisfied insecurity). Negative impact from frustration signals that interactions and interests need to be modified, and emotional tension, or “arousal”, causes defensive or aggressive behavioural reactions, such as trying to lessen or remove the impediment. The psychological condition known as frustration is what people go through when they run across obstacles while attempting to complete various chores and activities and reach their goals and objectives.

2.2.2 Aggression

Although that scientific definition of aggression has slightly evolved over time, a constant fact is that aggression is a behaviour, not a thought or emotion. Thus, aggression is defined as a behaviour that is intended to harm another person who is motivated to avoid that harm (Allen & Anderson, 2017:1). Similarly, Anderson and Bushman (2002, in Allen & Anderson, 2017:1) defined human aggression as “any behaviour directed towards another individual that is carried out with the proximate (immediate) intent to cause harm”. Dewi and Kyranides (2021) defined aggression as any conduct that causes injury to another person. Aggression can be classified as instrumental or emotional (or reactive), according to Benjamin (2016). Aggression linked to unpleasant emotions, often rage, is hence referred to as affectionate aggression. In contrast, instrumental violence usually has no impact and is goal driven.

2.2.3 Implication of Frustration–Aggression Theory for this Study

In a nutshell, frustration–aggression theory suggests that the experience of school violence can generate frustration among teachers, which may manifest as aggression or other negative outcomes that impair their work performance and their psychosocial well-being. This is evident in the study conducted by Singh and Steyn (2014) which

revealed that when teachers are constantly victimised or witness victimisation, they develop strong feelings of aggression and resentment towards the perpetrator. Thus, the relevance of this theory in this study was to effectively address how school violence and teacher victimisation cultivates feelings of frustration which leads to aggression and retaliation in teachers. This theory effectively demonstrated how school violence affects teachers' work performance, by leading them to frustration, which also lead them to aggression towards their learners, towards their colleagues, and possibly towards their children and loved ones. It also demonstrated how teachers can use displacement as a coping mechanism in a case where their goals are frustrated but they are unable to project that aggression to their source of aggression because they fear losing their jobs. Moreover, the theory demonstrated how teachers feel towards their jobs, the disengagement that they experience, and lack of motivation, which leads to teachers leaving their profession, and opting for early retirement because of the violence that is directed to them. Lastly, this study effectively demonstrated various psychosocial implications that school violence has on teachers' work performance.

2.3 TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

2.3.1 School violence in the international context

Research from around the world classifies violence between learners and teachers as school violence and suggests that school violence is different from one country to another (Benevene et al., 2018). Thus, because of this classification, a study from the United States of America (USA) by Bounds and Jerkins (2018) indicated that it is challenging to describe this phenomenon, leading to varying interpretations of the term among academics. Other reports from Bass, Cigularov, Chen, Henry, Tomazic, and Li (2016) and Ajaps and Obiagu (2021) suggested that there could be a variety of causes for the global trend of increasing violent behaviour in schools. These authors further suggested that school violence may be related to educational systems that are inadequately governed, poorly planned infrastructure (such as inadequate or non-existent facilities), inexperienced and incompetent teachers, and/or the continued marginalisation of young people. In a similar study about crime and safety in schools in Norway, the same tendency, as described above, was observed (Montuoro & Mainhard, 2017).

Unquestionably, recent research on teacher safety and school violence in the USA shows that public schools face greater issues in this area than private schools (Sorlier & Ogden, 2018). Also, in the study conducted in Northern Italy by de Cordova et al. (2019:2), results demonstrate that violence directed against teachers is a behaviour executed by learners and/or their parents with the purpose of causing harm to the teacher. Furthermore, a study conducted in Korea revealed that public schools face more issues than private schools when it comes to issues like teaching quality, student performance, teacher-to-learner ratios, resources, gang activity, statements of hatred, hate-based graffiti, economic hardship, higher levels of incompetence, and drug-related issues (Musu, Zhang, Wang, Zhang, & Oudekerk, 2019). A study from a district in the North-Eastern USA has indicated that the presence of these characteristics in public schools leads to an increase in incidents of school violence (Bass et al., 2016).

Finally, another Norwegian study demonstrated that teaching is a demanding profession with high psychological demands, including the necessity to build strong relationships that eventually contribute significantly to the growth of teachers' sense of self-preservation and self-esteem (Skaland, 2016). The effect of any violence committed against a teacher by a learner, or even their parent, has the potential to be extremely detrimental, and it is a common illustration of the type of occupational well-being anxiety that teachers face daily in USA public schools (Reddy et al., 2018). Finally, violence has been shown to have a detrimental effect on the well-being of the victimised teachers, witnesses of school violence, as well as the standard of their work performance, this is according to Benevene et al. (2018) and de Cordova et al. (2019:2).

2.3.2 School violence in the South African context

Schools are meant to be environments that support efficient teaching and learning; however, at the present times, security is a major concern in many South African schools (Ngatane, 2019). Numerous public schools have degenerated into violent, criminal environments where gang activity, drug misuse, sexual harassment, and assault are prevalent (Riaan, 2019). Reports by the local media about violent incidents involving teachers are common (Naidu, 2019; Zwane, 2021). According to Waghid and Davids (2020), teachers frequently concede that they no longer possess authority over their classrooms; frequently, they are uninformed of substitutes for physical

disciplinary measures that are diplomatic, appropriate, and non-offensive to learners. Violence, according to Ogba and Igu (2019:57), is defined as an act of using physical force to harm, destroy, or even kill someone because those who perpetrate it are angry, depressed, or have experienced emotional trauma. Since violence frequently occurs in schools, Majong (2022:23) defined school violence as forceful behaviour resulting from physical manifestations of punching and armed assault that occur within school property, during school-related activities, and on the way to or from school, with minimal to no motive for causing fear in peers or teachers.

According to several local studies (Mncube & Netshitangane, 2014; De Wet, 2016; Grobler, 2018), a significant number of teachers have already dealt with incidents of violence against them during their teaching careers. Bullying, physical assaults, sexual abuse, relationship violence, and systemic violence are all included in the broad category of school violence; yet these actions are only considered school violence if they take place on school property. Additionally, Sibisi (2016) discovered, among other things, that one in five South African teachers experience violence from learners against them on a yearly basis. Additionally, he has found that there is still a rise in the number of threats of attacks, sexual assaults (including rape), vandalism, and thefts of teachers' possessions in public schools.

According to Makhasane and Mthembu (2019:50), South Africa is among the most violent countries in the world, hence school violence is inevitable in its educational facilities. While studies examining educators as victims of violence are still rare, Kgosi (2018:2) contended that this issue continues to be a global silent tragedy despite researchers' interest in studying school violence. Lastly, SACE (2020:14) has acknowledged that female and young teachers experience the highest levels of disrespect and bullying in public schools. It has also suggested that female teachers, particularly those in their early years of teaching, are particularly vulnerable to older male learners because they are incapable of disciplining or controlling them, to the point where the teachers become aggravated or depressed.

2.3.3 Various forms of school violence teachers experience

2.3.3.1 Verbal abuse

Verbal abuse is the most frequent type of violence committed by learners against teachers, according to several studies (De Wet, 2021; Singh & Steyn, 2014).

Beckmann (2019:1) defined verbal abuse as threatening others through a variety of tactics, including sending threatening letters or notes, spreading gossip, and name-calling. Fakude (2022:31) posited that in South Africa, a nationwide study on school violence by Burton and Leoschut (2013) found that learners' acts of violence against teachers took many different forms, with verbal abuse accounting for the majority of these acts. According to Fakude (2022:31), deliberate use of unsuitable and disagreeable language to cause harm to another individual is known as verbal abuse. Thus, according to Lokmic et al.'s (2013) survey, verbal abuse affected about 52.1% of teachers. Also, national research conducted in Luxembourg revealed that verbal harassment of teachers affected 23.9% of them on several occasions annually (Lowe, Picknoll, Chivers, Farrington & Rycroft, 2020:188). Verbal abuse between learners and teachers was the most reported behaviour according to research done by Woudstra, Janse van Rensburg, Visser and Jordaan (2018). However, only a small number of learners stated that they are aware that harassing teachers or speaking badly to them will not have negative consequences for them (Santos & Tin, 2018). Moreover, a study by Beckmann (2019:1) asserted that the majority of verbal abuse cases against teachers at school appear to be committed by learners, even though parents are occasionally also involved in the issues of verbal victimisation against teachers. Children who are verbally abused by their parents from homes, are more likely to employ the same language against their teachers at school.

2.3.3.2 Bullying

Bullying affects teachers worldwide, and bullying of teachers appears to be a common topic of conversation in South African schools (Sambo & Govender, 2023:21). Bullying that target teachers has been defined by Moon and McCluskey (2016) and Sambo and Govender (2023:21) as a range of violent actions in which learners victimise their classroom teachers. Similarly, Riley (2018) defined bullying as abusive behaviour that targets another individual with the aim of causing them pain or distress. It might involve various forms of harassment, property crimes, or physical assault. According to Uz and Bayraktar (2019), in contrast to non-verbal bullying, which involves intentional violent behaviour to physically harm the victim by slapping, kicking, hitting with an object, and beating, verbal bullying involves the purposeful, emotional, and psychological humiliation of the victim through acts such as mocking, insulting, name-calling, ridiculing, and spreading rumours. Furthermore, acts of bullying in schools,

threats made by learners against their teachers, the use of physical force, and the carrying of firearms on school grounds, have all been considered violations of this right to education (Poswa, 2022:7).

According to Mollema (2018:17), bullying occurs in schools all over the world in both verbal and non-verbal forms, and it can be used as a tool to purposefully injure other people. Bullying can take many different forms, including pressure, humiliation, intimidation, mockery, and injury to a person's dignity. In the same way, 48% of South African teachers acknowledged experiencing verbal abuse at the hands of learners they teach (De Wet, 2016). This reflects a global trend towards an increase in verbal bullying between students and teachers. Furthermore, research revealed that students in Australian schools bullied their instructors 74.1% of the time (Lowe et al., 2020). Because the behaviours involved in bullying are persistent and repeated over time, they differ from the other types of teacher-directed-violence (Koiv, 2015). Over 80% of teachers in USA are reported to have experienced bullying from their learners (McCluskey & Moon, 2016).

Bullying of teachers frequently results in humiliation, frustration, disruption of work performance, and a hostile working atmosphere (Mollema, 2018:4). Consequently, it is clear that learner-to-teacher bullying is a global issue that affects teachers everywhere around the world, not just those in South Africa. Ncontsa and Shumba (2013:5) claimed that bullying occurs most frequently in schools, where bullies rob fellow learners of their money or lunch, consume it, and then beat and abuse the victims when they do not have anything. According to the statistics mentioned above, bullying between students and teachers is becoming more common in South African classrooms and, if nothing is done, there will be a high teacher turnover rate, which would ultimately cause the educational system to collapse.

2.3.3.3 Sexual violence

Studies by Motsoeneng (2022); Mncube and Harber (2013) and Fakude (2022) demonstrated that sexual violence continues to be an alarming problem for certain teachers in schools, even though sexual violence displayed by learners against teachers is less common than physical violence. Violence towards teachers encompasses a variety of forms, including verbal, physical, sexual, and emotional attacks. Furthermore, Mncube and Netshitangani (2014:3) mentioned that in certain

countries, such as South Africa, there is a high prevalence of sexual violence in schools. Sexual violence, including rape and harassment refers to any unwelcome handling of a person's genitals or other body parts that causes discomfort, which may or may not include penetration (Williams, 2018). Khanyase (2022:25) further affirmed that acts of sexual harassment involve the following: persons who send unwelcome sexual invitations, calling out sexual remarks or insults, circulating sexual speculations, and making unwanted sex jokes. Furthermore, sexual violence is a type of violence that occurs both inside and outside of school facilities, according to Mncube and Harber (2013). According to Motshekga (2019:9) sexual assault can occur when one person forces another to contact them sexually without their consent.

The spectrum of harassment directed towards teachers extends beyond victimisation and, in addition, encompasses sexual harassment. According to Mabuza (2020:31), sexual harassment encompasses more than just physical gestures, as it can be easily misinterpreted. It can also involve verbal harassment (such as jokes about sex, remarks regarding the body, references to sex life, and remarks of a sexual nature) and visual harassment, such as the presentation of explicit photographs. While not all forms of sexual harassment, including rape, are experienced by teachers, Bondestam and Lundqvist (2020:340) argued that teachers are subjected to a variety of sexual harassment tactics from learners. Such behaviour can have devastating effects on victims' well-being and can also disrupt the learning environment. According to Mabuza (2020:31), teachers endure sexual harassment not only from learners but also from teachers of the opposite gender since the scope of sexual aggression against them is too broad.

However, previous research has demonstrated that sexual assault does not discriminate against any gender, as teachers of both sexes are at equal risk of becoming victims (Fakude, 2022:29). Efforts to address this problem should include comprehensive policies, training for teachers and learners, and support mechanisms for victims. Sexual abuse can have profound psychosocial implications on teachers, including emotional trauma, which develops negative attitudes toward school (Khanyase, 2022:25).

Impact on self-esteem and self-worth: Sexual abuse can shatter a person's confidence and sense of self, leading to feelings of worthlessness and self-blame (Choo & Ping,

2021:30). In terms of professional consequences, sexual abuse can affect work performance, leading to absenteeism, decreased productivity, and even career derailment due to the emotional toll it takes on the victim (Choo & Ping, 2021:29). Furthermore, physical health consequences may lead to stress, which can manifest in physical symptoms such as headaches, gastrointestinal problems, and sleep disorders. Thus, the psychosocial implications of sexual violence on teachers can be profound and long-lasting, requiring specialised support and intervention to help victims heal and recover.

2.3.3.4 Vandalism of property

Vandalism has been connected to learner violence in schools, alongside other forms of violence. Vandalism is defined by Mdhluli (2018:16) as intentionally inflicting harm or destroying someone else's property. Singh and Steyn (2014) suggested that violent perpetrators may destroy school property to relieve their anger with academic work. Learners vandalise teachers' homes, vehicles, and classrooms (Modupe, 2021). Thus, Reddy, Espelage, McMahon, Anderman, Lane, Brown, Reynolds, Jones, and Kanrich (2013) and Wicks (2017) maintained that learners actively damage school resources, including breaking windows, tables and chairs, blocking toilets, as well as scratching teachers' cars and puncturing their tyres. Moreover, learners not only vandalise school property or teachers' properties within the school premises, but they go as far as vandalising teachers' residences (Diale & Tshikalange, 2018) and vehicles (Wicks, 2017). Newspapers often inform their readers that although most incidents of violence between learners and teachers take place in classrooms or on school grounds, teachers are frequently the targets of attacks in their own homes, which are meant to be safe havens. In the early hours of Saturday morning, a learner vandalised a teacher's residence; when the teacher went outside to verify what had happened, the learner attacked him, according to Diale and Tshikalange (2018). Additionally, a study by Ncontsa and Shumba (2013:6) found learners frequently committed acts of vandalism in schools, breaking windows, stealing door locks, and locking most doors because the locks had been vandalised.

2.3.3.5 Theft

School violence against teachers can present itself in various ways, including theft of personal belongings and property. In a study conducted by Ngidi and Kaye (2022:7) stealing teachers' belongings was found to be one of the common violent behaviours

that originated outside the school premises. These authors found that this behaviour is learned in families and communities beyond the school premises. Also, teachers may experience theft of personal items such as money, electronics, or other valuables, leading to financial losses and inconvenience; this can be the result of learners disrespecting school authorities and lack of school property or simply destroying school property for no reason (Makendano, 2016). Theft can disrupt the learning environment, causing distraction and affecting the teachers' ability to effectively carry out their duties.

In addition, Agyapong, Obuobi-Donkor, Burbach and Wei (2022:1) reiterated that teachers may have psychological issues, lower-quality work, illness-related absenteeism and decreased work abilities, all of which profoundly contribute to their low work performance and productivity. Moreover, being a victim of theft can result in feelings of violation, frustration and anger, impacting the teacher's well-being and job satisfaction (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2020). According to Miller (2018) these learners' dishonest actions are a significant worry for teachers because every instance of dishonest behaviour incurs personal and societal costs, undermines trust, affects relationships and group cohesion, and negatively impacts the learning and social environments in classrooms and schools. However, when learners are provided with clear examples of what constitute theft, lying and plagiarism, the occurrence of lying, stealing, and cheating are diminished (Miller, 2018).

2.3.3.6 Physical violence

The unusual trend of learners, and even parents, physically attacking teachers is another example of how physical violence has grown more prevalent (Khanyase, 2022:24). Forshell (2021:4) defined physical violence as an act committed with the intention of causing pain or bodily harm to another person. Similarly, McMahon, Davis, Peist, Bare, Espelage, Martinez, Anderman, and Reddy (2020:1) and Perumal (2021:12) have defined physical violence as any action that can be seen, for instance, pushing, pulling, throwing of objects, breaking property or causing injury to another person's body. Also, Sambo and Govender (2023:23) stated that punching, kicking, pulling spitting, tripping, pushing, stealing, breaking, or harming someone else's property, and forcing someone to perform tasks they do not want to perform are examples of direct forms of physical aggression. Furthermore, Forshell (2021:4) posited that physical aggression can take many different forms, such as beating

someone else, burning, kicking, punching, biting, killing or using dangerous weapons. According to McMahon, Martinez, Espelage, Rose, Reddy, and Lane (2014), teachers who are the target of physical aggression may be hit with objects, assaulted physically, or have a weapon drawn on them.

Furthermore, the physical forms of violence, according to Fakude (2022:25), include punching, spitting, shoving, hair pulling, undesirable touching, and threatening phone calls. Non-physical abuse takes the form of verbal abuse, which includes remarks about the teacher's appearance, racial remarks, inappropriate sexual language, and threats of violence. Physical violence is known to have its roots in early childhood and is relatively common at that age (Perumal, 2021:12). Nevertheless, if the aggression continues to persist and progresses into later developmental stages, these children may experience challenges in the classroom, from peers, and in other instances of behaviours that are delinquent.

2.3.3.7 Disruptive behaviour

In the school context, learners' disruptive behaviour is considered by Okeke, Akobi and Botha (2023:504) as an improper behaviour which interrupts the process of teaching and learning. When their classes are full of disobedient, disruptive, and unmanageable learners who are eager to intimidate and harass both teachers and their classmates, teachers are easily victimised by the learners they teach (Fakude, 2022:31). As a result, teachers worry that they will not be able to control learners' disruptive behaviour, which can happen at any time within the learning environment (Atmojo, 2020:509). According to Sunday, Ogbeche and Adie (2022:78), every teacher has experienced the frustration of managing a classroom with disruptive learners. In addition, Works (2015, in Okeke et al., 2023:510) attest that disruptive behaviour amongst learners affects teachers' confidence, and when teachers' work performance is poor, their cognitive well-being suffers as a result of loss of confidence.

Furthermore, Khantsi, Okeke and Akobi (2024) and Sunday et al. (2022) have also highlighted the negative consequences of frequent classroom disruptions. Teachers may struggle to impose discipline with disruptive and violent learners. Some learners routinely challenge teachers and school principals with violent behaviour. It is extremely difficult to educate and facilitate learners that exhibit disruptive behaviour; teachers may experience de-skilling, stress, and an unpleasant work environment

(Fakude, 2022:31). Although teachers have authority over their classrooms, disruptive actions including backchat, verbal abuse, and other attention-seeking behaviours, as well as an unwillingness to work tactics, are often used by learners to gain control of the classroom (Ajimoto, 2020:510). Thus, violence amongst learners and between learners and teachers is especially prevalent in high schools. However, it is important to recognise the violent behaviours that occur in school settings, considering the negative socio-economic circumstances that are prevalent in South African communities.

2.3.4 Causes of school violence against teachers

2.3.4.1 Peer pressure

Not only do individuals who observe learner violence in schools suffer, but also those who are the direct victims of this violence. All South Africans are greatly distressed by the widespread epidemic of school-based violence (Hendricks, 2019:2). Peers are commonly recognised to have a significant impact on the behaviour and development of teenagers (Sussman & Arnett, 2014). Numerous studies have looked at the impact of bad peer pressure on the emergence of problem behaviours in teenagers, including affiliations with peers that act aggressively or in a delinquent manner (Assink, van der Put, Hoeve, de Vries, Stams & Oort, 2015). Moreover, Netshitangani (2014:400) asserted that peer pressure is seen as a serious contributor towards violence because the majority of perpetrators outside the school are perceived as successful “heroes” on account of their criminal exploits. Thus, when children see others committing crimes, they tend to think that violence is a good thing to do.

Adolescent problem behaviours have been linked to other types of peer behaviour, such as peer pressure to fight and friends' responses to the aggressive behaviour of the adolescents (Farell, Thompson & Mehari, 2017). Adolescents' behaviour can be directly impacted by peers through the regulation of the norms of the group and peer pressure, which is the encouraging of beliefs or behaviours (Bandzeladze, 2020). Moreover, learner aggression is exacerbated by unfavourable peer associations (Bender, 2010). Being friends with peers who commit violent crimes including stealing, fighting, and bullying is associated with this connection. Learners who are part of gangsters are considerably more likely to be deviant and use violence, even when this is strongly associated with negative peer associations (Millington, 2016). As a result,

peer pressure plays a pivotal role in learners' behaviour – how they behave and engage with other people around them.

2.3.4.2 Exposure to violence

According to Fakude (2022:31), violent acts that take place in society are reflected in school violence. According to McMahon, Peist et al. (2020:2), schools situated in areas with lower socio-economic status and denser residential populations are also more vulnerable to teacher-directed violence. Thus, learners' behaviour at school will be permanently impacted by the amount of crime and violence in the neighbourhoods where schools are located (Mkhize & Sibisi, 2021:721). The fact that violence occurs in both wealthy and impoverished schools in different ways and at different times is a reality. Managing violence is a difficulty for all schools (Botha & Zwane, 2021:2), especially when the communities they serve are violent. The problem of violence in inner-city schools and the problem of violence in society at large, in Gellert's (2010) opinion, are inextricably linked. Despite any policies these schools may have in place, the violence that takes place in neighbourhoods and communities bleeds into the classroom. Also, a study by McMahon, Anderman, Astor, Espelage, Martinez, Reddy, and Worrell (2022:400) revealed that due to the volume of violent acts they witness, children perceive violence as usual; this study demonstrates that children who have been subjected to more risk factors than protective variables have a higher propensity to use violence.

2.3.4.3 Gang-related violence

Gangsterism has been defined by Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube (2017:43) as the creation of organisations with the intention of perpetrating crimes and violence. According to Mncube and Madikizela-Madiya (2017:43), the term "gangsters" refers to learner groups that typically like hanging out in groups at school, where they get called names, participate in unscrupulous behaviour, and resort to violence in order to gain notoriety. The term "gang violence" mostly refers to unlawful and non-political incidents of violence carried out by gangs against property, innocent individuals, or rival gangs and is associated with membership in, or affiliation with a formalised or unofficial youth grouping (Majong, 2022). Most of the time, gangsters use violent acts to intimidate and earn the respect of other gang members and the general public (Hlatshwayo, 2018:21). Gangs participate in risky activities that may have a wide range of social implications. Learners involved in gang violence frequently have a

significant difficulty and are disdainful of lawful authorities. Majong (2022) also issued a warning, stating that violence associated with gang activity is frequently "instructive" (meaning it sends a message to another gang) or "retributive" (meaning it seeks retribution on a different gang or single member), but it also has the potential to encourage or enable gang membership. Such crimes have been committed by gangs of all kinds throughout history. Newer forms of violence have been added by modern gangs, and it is possible that this is how new members are initiated (Qwetha-Daza, 2022:18). Gangs and their actions thereby threaten community stability, particularly in the provision of services such as education, housing, health care and social grant payments.

Obadire and Sinthumule (2021:1) claimed that fights, weapons carrying, gang violence, and corporal punishment are widespread as teachers use these tactics to address difficult issues facing the new democratic society. These situations necessitate a shift in both the physical environment and the way people think, to establish a learning environment in schools. Even though it is illegal, some teachers still employ corporal punishment intended to disciplining learners. This is mostly because it can be extremely challenging for teachers to implement discipline on unruly, disruptive learners who show an overwhelming propensity towards violence. For example, violent incidents are more likely to occur at a school in a community where drug addiction, aggressive behaviour, and crime rates are prevalent (Jacobs & Slabbert, 2019:223). Teachers currently deal with learners who show up to class intoxicated with drugs or alcohol and who bring illegal firearms onto school property. These elements highlight how widespread criminal activity and violence from gangs are in the local communities.

2.3.4.4 Broken family structure

One of the most significant components influencing children's violent behaviour is family. Poor parent-child interactions can result in the child being rejected and neglected; a youngster who lacks exposure to empathy is unlikely to be able to develop empathy and form meaningful relationships with other people (Babedi, 2013:31). The home environment is the root of hostile and gang-related behaviours because children who grow up in a hostile atmosphere are more likely to turn violent (Venketsamy et al., 2023:51). Furthermore, these authors (Espelage et al., 2013) also noted that there is a connection between community and domestic violence and school violence. This

is because learners' behaviour is influenced by the way parents, carers, and siblings conduct themselves in their own families. Besides, this hostile environment affects how learners interact with others and whether they respect other people's morals and values (Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

Additionally, McMahon et al. (2022:395) suggested that children subjected to conflict and family violence—including abuse and violence against intimate partners—are inclined to violent behaviours as a means of resolving issues, and that these children are inclined to imitate the violent behaviour and believe that it is rewarding. Nonetheless, a study by Shah, Rao, Jawed, Siger, and Shafique (2019:605) demonstrated that encouraging a healthy lifestyle is a crucial protective step against victimisation. Thus, parental involvement in school is linked to learners' performance, increased attendance, and lower suspension rates, among others (Shah et al., 2019:604). However, research by Zhou, Wang, Yu, and Zheng (2022:1) revealed a favourable correlation between adolescents' perceptions of non-physical bullying at school, poor parenting practices, and bad emotional experiences. Other researchers have discovered similar findings, indicating that children who experience parental violence are more likely to be aggressive, impulsive, anxious, and socially awkward (Tiang & Zhang, 2022:546). Similarly, an inhospitable household marked by destitution, low socioeconomic standing, a dearth of resources and services, and starvation can lead to hostility, unfavourable relationships, poor health, stress, and illnesses in children (Babedi, 2013:31).

2.3.4.5 Parental encouragement

In various instances, the environment within the household also contributes to violence and gang-related activities. This is due to the fact that children who grow up in hostile environments at home are more likely to turn aggressive, as they pick up the habit of this behaviour by watching their parents' conflict and physical abuse of one another (Hlatshwayo, 2018:39). According to Burton and Leoschut's (2013) study, 10% of learners reported having experienced violence at home, compared to less than 10% who had experienced robbery or sexual assault. This brought up young people's likelihood of experiencing violence in the classroom. Moreover, Mkhize and Sibisi (2021:721) asserted that a high proportion of criminalised adults expose teenagers to these habits and encourage them to participate in violent activities.

Parents are significant stakeholders in the school community (Magwa & Mugari, 2017); however, negative relationships with teachers are predicted by unfavourable parent-child relationships. McMahon et al. (2014) contended that parents themselves may engage in violence against teachers in addition to having an influence on their children's behaviour. According to Motimele and Ramugondo (2014:390), young people learn about behavioural patterns that are deemed to be acceptable or inappropriate in their cultures, mostly from their families. For instance, frequent disagreement, poor communication, and negligence are some of the causes of violent behaviour in children (Tiang & Zhang, 2022:2). Thus, the characteristics of a young person's family and living conditions have a significant impact on the likelihood that the youngster may commit violent acts.

2.3.4.6 Access to drugs, alcohol and weapons

Addiction to substances is common among South African youth, both those enrolled in school and otherwise. Drug and alcohol misuse has been identified as one of the most prevalent, if not the main, contributing factor to violence in South Africa, according to SACE (2011). Khanyase (2022:27) pointed out that there has been a direct relationship between substance abuse, consumption of alcohol in the school, and school-based violence, which includes violence directed at teachers. Furthermore, Ramorola and Taole (2014:15) contested the notion that schools serve as places of learning by claiming that substance addiction is a problem that has severely hampered the productivity of the country's youth. Substance abuse among learners is associated with a range of criminal acts (Jacobs & Slabbert, 2019:223), which includes violence and bullying.

Learners who need money are easily drawn to the drug trade. According to Mamabolo (2020:10), drug misuse and alcohol consumption are major factors in violent learner crimes, particularly when they occur in a setting where there is a lot of social pressure to follow the rules. According to Baruth and Mokoena (2016:2), many people exhibit aggressive behaviour while very intoxicated. Hlatshwayo (2018:37) maintained that learners who use drugs exhibit violent and altered behaviours. They also gain the confidence to act inappropriately towards teachers and other learners, rape and abuse others at school, and they do not feel guilty about their activities.

The misuse of substances has been linked to issues with aggressive behaviour, classroom management, and problems with classroom discipline in the various academic settings. Numerous young people in South Africa own firearms for self-defence, and this has become the standard for even young learners; learners carry weapons to class and may even be under the influence of drugs or alcohol when they conduct these violent crimes (Mkhize & Sibisi, 2021:722). Furthermore, learners organise strikes, severely disrespect teachers, some carry hazardous weapons to school with the aim of causing teachers or other learners serious bodily harm, and show no regard for their teachers (Nhambura, 2020:2). As a result, neither learners nor teachers can feel comfortable in the classroom (Nhambura, 2020:2). According to Daniel (2018:2), Angie Motshekga, South African Minister of Education, said there is a link between high levels of criminality in the community and the transportation of firearms, knives, and rage into schools. The minister acknowledged the connection between the high rate of learner misconduct in South African classrooms and the country's general high rate of violence and criminal activity.

2.3.4.7 Low self-esteem

Individuals with low self-esteem have a higher probability of behaving violently than those with average or high self-esteem, according to Kassin, Fein, and Markus (2019:465). Furthermore, Abdel-Khalek (2016:2) has indicated that a person with high self-esteem respects and believes highly of himself. Thus, self-esteem is defined as an individual's general favourable appraisal of oneself. Lo and Cheng (2018:258) claimed that young people who aspire to be independent of their families and who encounter many obstacles in the process of forming a self-identity, end up with a negative self-concept. Therefore, social values and self-concepts may not develop if the family and educational system are unable to provide them with enough certainty and support; instead, they develop low self-esteem. Thus, Verma and Wagani (2023) suggested that self-esteem plays a significant role in the development of a child's personality. Therefore, a learner with high self-esteem or positive self-concept is more likely to behave in a good manner than the one with negative self-concept. Also, a negative self-concept affects learners' self-esteem, which will then affect their feelings, thinking, learning and how they behave or relate to others (Okeke & Akobi, 2023:123).

Furthermore, some adolescents may look to their rebellious classmates for approval in order to boost their self-esteem. Low self-esteem has been connected to sadness,

violence, a reduced ability to overcome obstacles, and a lower sense of well-being during adolescence (Stavropoulos, Lazaratou, Marini & Dikeos, 2015). In addition, Gasá (2005:53) indicated that some children begin to experience low self-esteem, poor anger management, and lack of problem-solving skills and demonstrate violent behaviours such as aggressive outbursts and lack of classroom rules conformity. According to the ecological theory of development, adolescents with strong parental support tend to have higher self-esteem and less violent (Wang et al., 2013). Because they lack behaviour control, adolescents who have a poor sense of who they are, and low self-worth are more likely to react physically and verbally aggressive towards others.

2.3.4.8 Overcrowded classrooms

Among various reasons that result in learners attacking teachers, overcrowded classrooms seem to be another factor that contributes to this phenomenon within South African public schools. According to Venketsamy et al. (2023), the high teacher-learner ratio in schools or in classrooms also negatively impacts teachers' classroom management, and most teachers cannot discipline learners in their overcrowded classrooms. In addition, West and Meier (2022:4) maintained that overcrowded classrooms cause stress in learners, which can manifest as negative behaviour such as a lack of attention, boredom, a lack of discipline, a tendency to quarrel or even fight, and even cause learners to damage school property. Thus, when teachers try to enforce discipline, learners become rebellious and violent towards the teacher. Because there is typically only one teacher supervising a class of up to thirty, forty, or even more learners, the perpetrators frequently find it incredibly simple to prey on overcrowded classrooms (Singh & Steyn, 2014). However, Hlatshwayo (2024) contended that the male-to-female staff ratio appears to have an impact on the disciplinary atmosphere in schools. It is clear from this that disciplinary difficulties are less common in schools where the proportion of male teachers to female teachers is higher.

2.4 THE PSYCHOSOCIAL PROBLEMS EMERGING FROM SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Workplace victimisation is a prevalent problem, with a heightened risk in the service industry and human services profession, and one location where violence and criminal activity can occur, both against learners and teachers, is at schools (Forssshell,

2021:3). Thus, the consequences of school violence in teachers, as reported by Maran and Begotti (2020:2), are to cause harm, both physically and psychologically, such as weariness, sadness, distress, discontent, turnover, and plans to quit the job. Moreover, the results of studies by Khuzwayo (2021) and the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2019) have acknowledged that teachers in schools are professionals who are susceptible to high levels of stress caused by their jobs, which can result in long-term issues with their mental, as well as physical well-being.

According to SACE (2018), every teacher has the right to a safe environment which is conducive to work. However, Chetty (2021) reported that teachers feel unprotected, threatened, and anxious in their work environment. Furthermore, Masinga (2019) argued that teachers are exposed and afraid to put in more time since learners might harm them after school. Additionally, Waghid (2016) stated that because learners are aware of teachers' private information, including where they reside, teachers have been the subject of harassment at their residences. Because of the high rates of crime and violence that are carried from society to schools, both teachers and learners likely experience psychological trauma and panic when they enter the building, knowing that they could become the victims of school-related violence.

2.4.1 Physical effects of school violence

School violence in South Africa can take many different forms, including bodily harm, sexual assault, theft, and even death. Being a part of violent incidents in schools can involve being a victim or a perpetrator, but it can also involve being a witness, which can have negative psychological effects of its own (SACE, 2020). Teaching is "a never-ending traumatic experience," a teacher who was the victim of learner-on-teacher violence told Diale and Tshikalange (2018:1). Additionally, a co-worker of a teacher who was fatally stabbed stated to Grobler (2018) that she was afraid to go to school and that ever since seeing the incident, she had difficulties falling asleep. Furthermore, among other factors, discipline among learners is one of the most frequently mentioned adverse working conditions whenever teachers decide to leave their positions (Qin, 2021:81). According to Kelly (2004:1), there is a strong link between attrition among teachers and learners' criminal behaviour. Furthermore, Mweli (2013) acknowledged that it is extremely challenging for the innocent teachers to return to work in the same class in which they were victimised after being humiliated by learners. They also avoid returning to school until they recover and feel better.

2.4.2 Psychological effects of school violence

The psychological implications of school-related violence on teachers' work performance are profound. Berlanda et al. (2019) explicated that victimised teachers may have an adverse perspective towards their work, which could impede the growth of their professional expertise, or they could become less motivated and dedicated. There is a decrease in established staff, particularly in semi-urban and urban settings where the issue is very prominent, as a result of teachers' psychological suffering from the stress they face in communities as well as schools that are vulnerable to gang violence (Makgoke & Mofokeng, 2020). Also, according to de Cordova et al. (2019), the consequence of school violence in teachers may include physical and emotional injury such as fear, anger, depression, disengagement, exhaustion, turnover and the intention to leave the teaching profession.

According to a study by Li (2023), psychological exhaustion and social interaction anxiety need to be mediated when it comes to violent victimisation among teachers in the setting of trauma. Additionally, teachers who see learner violence may suffer grave and long-lasting consequences from this extremely stressful experience. Additionally, Li's study (2023) showed that teachers who experienced verbal or physical abuse at the hands of learners or their parents experienced severe emotional and relational setbacks in both their personal and professional life. Teachers' personal health is negatively impacted by stressful work environments, which can result in poor performance and a bad attitude towards both their job and the learners they teach (Kapa & Gimbert, 2018).

Thus, school-violence is believed to negatively impact employee performance, create problems, and increase stress. School violence not only causes stress and difficulty for teachers to do their job, but it also causes discomfort for school management and principals who measure teachers' efficiency and productivity (Rasool, Wang, Zhang & Samma, 2020:2). Thus, these psychological challenges can significantly impair teachers' work performance, morale, and overall well-being, ultimately affecting the educational and learning environment and quality of instruction.

2.4.3 Social effects of school violence

The consistency and efficiency of instructional and educational activities in schools are negatively impacted by school violence. Furthermore, violence in schools is by its

very nature unpredictably volatile and harmful. The frequent incidence of violent and aggressive behaviour by learners attending schools has had a disastrous effect on the educational system and is a reason for significant concern among stakeholders in the South African education system, according to the authors (Payne et al., 2003). Moreover, Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) discovered that violence results in a loss of learning and teaching because teachers are constantly disturbed and often need to address disruptions and violations in the classrooms. Khumalo (2019:8) attested that it is extremely difficult to work in an environment defined by anti-social actions.

Also, the results of earlier studies by Maran and Begotti (2020:2) noted that schoolteachers may experience psychosocial problems which may include teachers' self-isolation, absenteeism, demoralisation, insecurity and feelings of disempowerment. Moreover, Okeke et al. (2023:509) concurred that learner's anti-social behaviour negatively impacts the social well-being of teachers, and that teachers' well-being is affected by the quality of relationships that teachers and learners have amongst each other. Thus, poor learner-teacher relationships negatively impact the social well-being of teachers. Furthermore, according to Burton and Leoschut (2013), when combined with other symptoms, depression can have long-lasting psychosocial implications on how each person interacts with and integrates into society at large. Thus, Khanyase (2022:37) concurred that the psychosocial effects of school violence have a very significant impact on teachers' work performance.

2.4.4 Emotional effects of school violence

An increasing corpus of literature from both developed and developing nations shows that school violence is linked to teacher disengagement, turnover, and other undesirable outcomes such as psychological and emotional well-being (Yang et al., 2021b). Generally, teaching is known to be one of the most emotionally distressing professions, thus the application of emotional regulation is essential and recommended for all who want to avoid anxiety, humiliation, and/or guilt (Valente & Lourenco, 2020:1). Also, because teaching is an emotional profession which at times weighs heavily on teachers, they need to develop emotional intelligence to deal with conflicts that may arise in the classroom due to poor learner-teacher relationships (Valente & Lourenco, 2020:2).

School violence can have profound emotional implications on teachers, impacting their work performance significantly. It can lead to feelings of fear, stress, anxiety, and trauma among teachers. The results of studies by Neto, Ferreira, Martinez & Ferreira (2017) and Wang et al. (2016) affirmed that a stressful work environment often leads to workplace bullying due to worsened interpersonal relationships caused by strained working conditions. Also, the emotional response can manifest in various ways, such as decreased job satisfaction, reduced morale, difficulty concentrating, and increased absenteeism (Venketsamy et al., 2023). Teachers may also experience burnout, fatigue, and a sense of helplessness in the face of ongoing violence. In addition, dealing with the aftermath of violence, including supporting learners and coping with personal emotions, can further strain teachers' emotional well-being and ability to perform effectively in their roles.

2.4.5 Financial effects of school violence

Acts of violence against teachers have severe repercussions that affect learners, taxpayers, and education systems, in addition to the teachers themselves (Baruth & Mokoena, 2016). Khanyile (2018) has reaffirm that an attacked teacher's early retirement or career shift could have disastrous effects on their financial state. Additionally, in New South Wales, violent incidents in schools during the first term of teaching resulted in 34 teachers requiring medical treatment, having been attacked by learners (Botha & Zwane, 2021:61).

Similarly, after being attacked by a learner in class, a KwaZulu-Natal teacher suffered eye injuries and damage to his spectacles (Masuku, 2019). Furthermore, Moreroa (2022) indicated that teachers spend money to produce books and other resources they could use to help themselves against violence and abuse from learners in the classrooms. In addition to increased damage and reimbursement expenses, legal costs, lost wages, reduced instructional time and worker efficiency, negative publicity for the school system, and unfavourable behaviours among learners are all possible outcomes of teacher violations (Sing & Steyn, 2014; Le Mottee & Kelly, 2017). Although the financial costs associated with school violence are equally high in developed and developing economies, Duncan and Lopez Cardoso (2017) and Zwane (2021) maintained that the effects on society, particularly education, are more severe and deeply felt in developing countries because of pre-existing problems with the growth of economic, educational, and social capital.

2.5 THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE ON TEACHERS' WORK PERFORMANCE

School violence disrupts the process of teaching and learning and interferes with teachers' efficacy in doing their job properly. Also, learners' disruptive behaviour exasperates teachers and interrupts effective teaching and learning (Zwane, 2021:81). Thus, the impact of school violence on teachers' job performance will be discussed in the following paragraphs by exploring the following aspects: teachers' emotional well-being, job satisfaction, teacher burnout, teacher-learner relationships and teacher professional development.

2.5.1 Teachers' emotional well-being

Teachers' work and emotional well-being are negatively impacted by violence in schools, and this was demonstrated by the study conducted by Pinheiro, Braz de Aquino, Vieira and Marques (2023:2) which revealed that learners are primarily responsible for acts of violence against teachers. Furthermore, stressful situations in many spheres of daily life impose a heavy psychological load that can impair people's productivity at work (Rasool et al., 2020:1). Also, learner-on-teacher attacks have detrimental effects on a teacher's physical, mental, and emotional well-being. However, although some people thrive in stressful situations, others try to avoid them; thus, resulting in work disengagement and resignation. When teachers resign from their jobs, this results in learners facing higher levels of academic risk (Torres, 2019:114). As a result, strengthening teachers' emotional management skills has grown to be a necessity for fostering positive interpersonal and professional interactions. Thus, according to Shah et al. (2019:604), there is a strong correlation between low academic achievement and aggressive behaviours such as physical altercations, abusive language, and harassment. School violence affects the quality of the learning environment and the teachers' work performance (Valente & Lourenco, 2020:1).

2.5.2 Teachers' job satisfaction

According to Hlatshwayo (2018:36), teachers have the right to psychological safety, and a sense of security extends beyond their physical well-being, as stipulated by the Occupational and Safety Act, 85 of 1993. Thus, there is sufficient evidence that when aggressive adolescents physically and psychologically attack teachers, the constitutional rights of teachers to a secure work environment are being infringed.

Also, teachers are negatively impacted by gang activity in schools because they may feel like victims themselves, which could have a detrimental effect on how well they execute their duties at work (Dube & Hlalele, 2018). The teachers fear working in an atmosphere where criminal activity by gangs is prevalent because it could lead to a deterioration in their personal relationships with others at work, which would be detrimental to their productivity and work performance (Kapa & Gimbert, 2018). According to Fakude (2022:39), teachers may experience threats and feel intimidated when they are within the school premises, due to victimisation. Thus, resorting to absenteeism from time-to-time, they sometimes seek transfers from a particular school or even resort to resigning completely from the teaching profession (Singh & Steyn, 2014). Fakude (2022:39) posited that teachers resort to these decisions because of the threats exerted due to the violent attacks that learners inflict on them. Therefore, teacher absenteeism due to stress and depression might be viewed as a transient phenomenon that prevents teaching and learning. Due to these difficulties, a lot of teachers choose to teach in classrooms that they feel will not pose any difficulties. In carrying out its obligation, it is imperative to acknowledge that every learner is entitled to receive a basic education in a secure environment.

2.5.3 Teacher burnout

Though burnout can manifest in various occupational settings, it is particularly prevalent and detrimental in educational settings due to the day-to-day stressors such as school violence, among others (Wang et al., 2021:2). Teacher burnout emanating from school violence is a serious matter which has the potential for long-lasting negative effects on both teachers and the teaching and learning environment in general. The ongoing exposure to violence can erode teachers' sense of safety and trust in their workplace, leading to feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and burnout. Furthermore, studies conducted by Singh and Steyn (2014) and Fakude (2022) suggested that there is a relationship between school violence and teachers' loss of morale. These studies expressed teachers' views on how feelings of humiliation make them feel less important and how it forces them to lose the motivation to help and support learners in their classroom activities. Also, Xaba (2014) posited that each year, thousands of teachers' experiences of violence from learners, leave teachers feeling vulnerable and fearful to go the extra mile to support learners. Lastly, due to school violence, there is a high teacher turnover rate, which results in poor teaching

and learning, as well as a weaker relationship between learners and teachers (Singh & Steyn, 2014).

2.5.4 Teacher-learner relationships

School violence against teachers has the potential to damage the relationship between teachers and their learners. Naicker (2021:78) indicated that the teacher-learner relationship is a social interaction in which both sides agree on and understand the teachers' role in using social control techniques to regulate classroom behaviour. However, if learners refuse regulatory techniques and social control from teachers, negative social interaction will have a negative impact on the school's productivity and functioning. Also, according to Li, Ahn, Ko, Hwang, and Seo (2023:139), teachers may experience feelings of disrespect, betrayal and fear, which may result in a relationship breakdown between them and their learners. Furthermore, when learners attack their teachers, this may result in teachers being unable to effectively conduct classroom management and facilitate the process of teaching and learning in the classroom. On the other hand, there might be consequences such as suspensions or detentions on the side of the learners who perpetrate violence against teachers in the schools (Wang, Chung & Fang, 2021:2). This may lead to strained teacher-learner relationships, and resentment and disengagement from the learners' side. In a nutshell, violence between learners and teachers threatens the mutual respect and partnerships that are the cornerstones of a healthy and fruitful teacher-learner relationships.

2.5.5 Teacher professional development and career growth

School violence against teachers can have significantly negative implications on their professional development and career growth in the teaching profession (Yang et al., 2021b). Teachers may find it difficult to perform to the best of their ability due to stress, emotional trauma and burnout, which deprive them from focusing on their professional development goals. Furthermore, teachers may find themselves having to focus more on their safety and security (Mubita, 2021:78), which then will affect their evaluations and limit their opportunities for career advancement (Venketsamy et al., 2023:51). Moreover, teachers might lose valuable teaching time during their absence from work due to school violence (Bound & Jenkins, 2018), which will make it hard for them to regain the time lost in terms of curriculum coverage. Also, Lamula-Manthathi (2023:486)

posited that because time lost from teaching and learning happens at different phases, for instance, during the period of bereavement and counselling for both teachers and learners; during the period of the state's investigation and/or throughout the process of replacing the teacher who has passed away, recovering this time may be almost impossible. Lastly, Yang et al. (2021b) argued that teachers who feel unsafe and unsupported in their workplace might show little interest in professional networking activities engagement, and this might hinder their career growth opportunities and professional development. Thus, it is important that victimised teachers get psychosocial support within the learning environment in order to foster career growth and ensure productivity and success within the education system.

2.6 THE PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

School violence affects not just teaching and learning but also learners, teachers, and parents. There are mechanisms underlying the school violence against teachers in many schools; thus, identifying them is important in exploring measures which can be implemented to minimise these violent acts.

2.6.1 Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

It is important to acknowledge that being subjected to crime and violence in the classroom, detrimentally affect teachers' personal and professional lives (Joyce, 2013). These teachers may experience intense feelings of shame, guilt, fear, and anger, leading to psychological distress such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD (Duncan & Lopes Cardozo, 2017). Li et al. (2023:139) posited that teachers may continuously relive the traumatic experiences they had during a learner attack, and in turn express mistrust and fear of learners and their parents. Thus, these post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms may lead to teachers beginning to have doubts about the teaching profession and they may even consider quitting (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Thus, when teachers become victims of school violence, they develop symptoms of PTSD. According to Venketsamy et al. (2023:52), these symptoms include high levels of depression, social isolation, loneliness, anxiety and nervousness. In a study conducted by Wang et al. (2021:1), it was hypothesized that school violence results in psychological exhaustion, relational anxiety, self-destructive behaviours, and the intention to leave the teaching profession. According to Moon and McCluskey (2020),

traumatic events such as school violence and being attacked by a learner or even their parents in front of other learners and colleagues damages a person's perception of safety in the world and the positive value of self. Thus, victims in situations of terror will automatically seek their first sources of comfort and protection. However, this cry for comfort will not always be answered, and this may result in a sense of alienation and disconnection, which extends into every type of relationship. Thus, SACE (2020) has suggested that teachers need support from government departments and teaching bodies to deal with incidents of violence.

2.6.2 Social isolation

Social isolation due to school violence can have detrimental effects on teachers' job performance, particularly teaching and learning (Grobler, 2018). Teachers who experience school violence may avoid interactions with others and even overreact or become overly sensitive towards learners' problematic behaviours (Li et al., 2023:139). Also, when teachers feel isolated and unsupported, they may lose interest in their job; thus, leading to negligence in the process of teaching and learning (Ardestani, Saber, Dehghan, Iranpour & Baniyasi, 2022:3). Furthermore, feelings of isolation which are accompanied by fear due to school violence may stifle teachers' innovation and creativity. This is because, according to Windvoël (2023:56), victimised teachers may be less likely to try new teaching techniques or methods when they feel threatened. Lastly, social isolation of teachers may lead to poor relationships with colleagues, which in turn leads to a breakdown in teamwork and less cohesive working environments (Bravo-Sanzana, Bangdiwala & Miranda, 2022:29). Finally, social isolation due to school violence may be a result of chronic stress which can lead to physical health problems, and these health problems can further reduce a teacher's self-efficacy and job productivity (Ardestani et al., 2022:3).

2.6.3 Behavioural problems

Teachers may exhibit various types of behavioural problems due to violent attacks against them. These problems may include decreased job satisfaction, burnout, avoidance behaviour, trust issues and chronic stress and anxiety (Benevene et al., 2018). Some teachers tend to avoid certain learners or certain situations which may seem potentially threatening to them due to the traumatic experience of victimisation. Although SACE (2020) has stressed the importance of teacher safety and secure

environments in schools, violent acts against teachers continue to threaten the well-being of teachers within their workplace, resulting in teachers having low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, and battling with feelings of fear and apprehension. Also, teachers who have been directly victimised, and those who have witnessed school violence, develop frustration which leads to them behaving aggressively against others (Chitrakar & Nisanth, 2023:3), or even their loved ones. Therefore, Masinga (2019) asserted that when every learner has access to a high-quality education in a secure learning environment, their right to basic education is fulfilled. Similarly, when teachers feel safe and protected in their workplace, this will enhance their work performance and productivity; thus, teaching and learning will be efficiently and effectively delivered.

2.6.4 Low learner academic outcomes

School violence against teachers has significant negative impacts on the teaching and learning process, as well as on learners' academic performance. Violent attacks against teachers can lead to high levels of stress and anxiety, depression, resignation, or early retirement which eventually hinders effective teaching and learning within the school environment. This also takes an emotional toll that has the potential to reduce teachers' commitment and work enthusiasm (SACE, 2020:3). Also, Kennedy, Flynn O'Brien and Greene (2021) reiterated that due to school violence, the process of teaching and learning becomes disrupted, and this stems from teachers' inability to manage their classrooms effectively. Moreover, the emotional stability, health, and functionality of victimised teachers plays a pivotal role in successful interactions and experiences with learners who are well adjusted and successful in school (Kennedy et al., 2021). Thus, according to Obilor and Ikpa (2021:148), the consequences of school violence against teachers alters the school climate and school culture, it reduces academic progression on learners and increases disruptive and unfocused classroom behaviour. Furthermore, poor relationships between teachers and learners affect learners' academic performance, as well as the school's overall performance (Bravo-Sanzana, 2022:29). Thus, school violence undermines the educational process of teaching and learning (Obilor & Ikpa, 2021:149). It has also proved to have negative implications, not only on teachers' well-being, but also on learners' academic performance.

2.7 STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH SCHOOL VIOLENCE

2.7.1 Introduce school safety initiatives

The high levels of school violence in South African schools suggest that there is an urgent need to prioritise school safety (Venketsamy et al., 2023:50). According to Mubita (2021) a safe school is a place devoid of violence and conducive to teaching and learning without perceived fear or intimidation. South Africa's National School Safety Framework (NSSF) has articulated that ensuring a safe school environment requires all stakeholders to play a role in ensuring that schools are free from violence and any form of threat to teachers, learners and other stakeholders (Venketsamy et al., 2023:53). Schools and communities must create and implement an integrated school security framework that is adapted to the educational and societal context, involving police, youth justice agencies, mental health intervention groups, and school and community members to prevent and/or mitigate violence (Espelage et al., 2013:4). Systemic change is necessary to address systemic disparities in school discipline and education (Kingston, Mattson, Dymnicki, Dymnicki, Spier, Fitzgerald, Shipman, Goodrum, Woodward, Witt, Hill, & Elliott, 2018). Finally, the WHO (2019:37) has recommended that schools help teachers who have been the targets of aggressive behaviour in their place of employment. Teachers frequently hesitate to report incidents of violence to the school administration because they may feel ashamed of their inability to regulate the aggressive instance or fear that doing so will harm their profession. Therefore, it is imperative that school safety initiatives are implemented school-wide and include perspectives from a variety of stakeholders.

2.7.2 School code of conduct implementation

School administrators, School Management Teams (SMTs), and School Governing Bodies (SGBs) create the school code of conduct, which outlines the laws and regulations governing acceptable behaviour on the part learners as well as the disciplinary actions that will be taken for any infraction (SACE, 2021:32). According to SACE (2021:32), schools use a variety of policies to encourage moral behaviour and discipline. Manamela (2021:54) argued in favour of this by saying that responsible staff members apply the school safety policy and the learner code of conduct when it comes to learner discipline. Ntuli (2018:28) noted that SMTs are directed by a number of national regulations and a code of conduct to warn learners who exhibit aggressive behaviour in order to maintain the smooth running of the school. It is the duty of SMTs

to see to it that these policies are successfully put into effect and upheld. Bipath (2017:66) asserted that SMT members must assume a proactive role in guaranteeing the efficient implementation of safety regulations and procedures, hence endorsing this perspective.

Netshitangani (2018:104) issued a warning, noting that while SMTs oversee the coordination of the transition to violence-free schools, all other key players—including parents—also bear some of the responsibilities. In support of this, Nhambura (2020:173) suggested that for SMTs to effectively prevent learner-on-teacher aggression, they need to collaborate with relevant parties to engage directly with learners within the education setting. Security in schools must be assured, and no teacher should feel unsafe within the school environment. Thus, strict measures should be in place to ensure violent behaviours do not persist in schools.

2.7.3 Promote healthy teacher-learner relationships

Building solid peer and learner-teacher relationships is essential to ensuring school safety and preventing violence (Coyle, Weinreb, Davila, & Matthew, 2021:181). Research has demonstrated that learners who feel linked to their teachers, to other learners, and to the school, exhibit fewer behavioural problems and lower levels of hostility in the classroom (Robinson, Valido, Drescher, Woolweaver, Espelage, LoMurray, Long, Wright, & Dailey, 2023). According to Robinson et al. (2023), learners who have significant interactions with other people in their school are more likely to discuss concerns about school safety with authorities because they have a better sense of community and trust. Positive interactions foster a sense of relationship and connecting to the classroom, as well as a sense of trust and respect between learners and their teachers. (Kotok, Ikoma & Bodovski, 2016; Yang et al., 2021b). According to Pas, Cash and O'Brennan (2015) it is critical that schools cultivate a solid and positive relationship with the larger community in which they operate. Positive interactions can have a great impact on how learners behave towards teachers.

Furthermore, Qin (2021) affirmed that teachers who experience a sense of trust, appreciation, and rewards from parents and the community tend to remain in their current roles. A strong link of unity between schools and the communities around them is largely dependent on these kinds of school-community relationships. Healthy connections between the school and the community as well as between students and

their parents, in the opinion of Barnes et al. (2012) and Coetzee (2017), will foster an atmosphere that discourages acts of aggression towards teachers. This, in turn, could lead to a stable and more peaceful school environment which will promote effective teaching and learning, enhance good learner-teacher relationships, and manage the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance.

2.7.4 Encourage parental and community involvement

Schools can preserve acceptable behaviour by meaningfully involving parents as well as community members (Gage et al., 2014:260). It is important that parents teach their children the importance of respecting authority figures, including teachers, and model respectful behaviour at home, rather than learners having to behave through forced discipline by teachers in the classrooms (Esmaeili, Mohamadrezai & Mohamadrezai, 2015). In addition, Motsatsi (2023:89) proposed that parents ought to be encouraged visit their children at school in order to become aware of their children's behaviour; and that parents can be requested to accept responsibility for their children's actions, meaning that they need to be held accountable for the damage caused by their children at school. Also, there should be an advocacy for change at schools and community level to address underlying factors contributing to school violence, such as poverty, inequality, and lack of resources for education and support services (Swingler, 2022).

Parents are in charge of imparting ethical and moral principles in their children since they are the very first teachers of their children, even before they enter the educational system (Segalo & Rambuda, 2018:3). Therefore, if learners show anti-social behaviour towards teachers, parents should encourage children to adhere to school rules and disciplinary policies, and support consequences for their children's inappropriate behaviour. According to Segalo and Rambuda (2018:4), parents should be actively engaged in their children's character formation, morals, values, and overall well-being. However, Adjei (2021:18) argued that, despite the importance of parental involvement in school activities, some parents, particularly those that are working, frequently fail to fulfil their responsibilities in the home-school relationship.

Furthermore, according to Swingler (2022), strategies must also address systemic changes that promote the creation of a positive school atmosphere and learner involvement in the creation of school security plans by means of inclusive policy and

management structure development. In addition, according to the WHO (2019:50), parents should teach children constructive ways to resolve conflicts, such as using communication, negotiation, and compromise, without resorting to violence. Also, parents should partner with local community organisations, law enforcement agencies such as police officials, and religious institutions or local churches to raise awareness about school violence against teachers and involve these parties in prevention efforts (Gage et al., 2014:260).

Lastly, parents should seek assistance from school counsellors, social workers, or community organisations if their children are struggling with behavioural issues or experiencing violence at school, by actively engaging with their children, promoting respect and positive behaviour, and advocating for change and better learner-teacher relationships. Thus, with the help and involvement of parents, school violence against teachers can be managed, and safer learning environments can be created for the purpose of effective teaching and learning.

2.7.5 Psychosocial support and intervention programmes

Zwane (2021:78) claimed that school-based psychological treatments have been around since the early 1900s. Positive social and psychological programme development has given rise to novel strategies for intervention in recent years that aim to improve mental health and promote well-being within the learning environment for teachers, as well as learners. Offering counselling services for teachers who have experienced or witnessed violence can help them process their emotions, cope with trauma, and develop strategies for dealing with stress and conflict (Okeke & Windvoel, 2024). Many educational settings worldwide have been experimenting with various psychological approaches to enhance their classroom environments (Zwane, 2021:78). However, in a study conducted by Sigad (2024) teachers claim that they do not receive the necessary support, and they also described that they are being asked by the schools not to report the incidents. Also, other teachers noted that instead of receiving support, they were scapegoated by the administration.

Ultimately, the study by Sigad (2024) revealed that teachers were not cared for, but instead they were hurt, blamed, and marginalised in their workplace. According to a study by de Cordova et al. (2019), fostering job satisfaction, social assistance, and strong interactions at school is essential to raising the sense of well-being at work and

lowering perceived aggression. Because people react differently when faced with various situations, some teachers may be able to deal with and survive experiences of harassment at work, while others may not (Sambo & Govender, 2013:21). Thus, it is important to provide training and support to teachers on how to recognise and respond to signs of victimisation, manage classroom behaviour effectively, and create a safe and respectful learning environment. The findings indicated that school administration support functions as a protective factor when it comes to learners' violence against teachers (de Cordova et al. 2019). Ultimately, their findings showed that these phenomena have an impact on teachers' occupational fulfilment and efficiency with reference to perceived levels of violence committed against them by learners' parents.

2.7.6 Firearms for self-protection and defence

School grounds have become chaotic due to gang violence, murder, and criminal elements, prompting teachers in certain schools in South Africa, to encourage learners to bring weapons to school for protection (Khuzwayo, 2021). Over the past ten years, numerous reforms to both policy and procedure have been made to avoid and lessen the continual occurrence of violence in schools, which includes both shootings and more minor acts like bullying, threats, and fights. A few of these modifications are the expanded use of social and emotional learning, restorative justice procedures, and more funding for technological and physical safety precautions, as well as allowing teachers and other school employees to carry weapons (Jackson et al., 2023:2). To combat active shooter situations, there is a growing discussion about arming teachers in public high schools or on school grounds (McMahon, Todd, Martinez, Coker, Sheu, Washburn, & Shah, 2013). Winston (2016) noted that teachers in South Africa's Mpumalanga province are requesting guns to protect themselves against criminals and delinquent learners following a series of thefts, assaults, and hostage-takings. DeMitchell and Rath (2019:65) concurred that allowing teachers to carry firearms in schools may reduce violence and offer a safe atmosphere for learning. According to Chetty (2021), principals and teachers should be assured of protection against harm from learners at all costs.

2.8 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Teachers seem to be at the receiving end of school violence and studies have revealed that the strategies that have been applied to manage the prevalence of school violence, have not achieved the mandated expectation. This study aimed to create an awareness in the DBE, and all the relevant stakeholders in the education field, that teachers are not safe in their workplaces, and that not enough support is being provided to both the victims of school violence, and to the witnesses of school violence. The reviewed literature has demonstrated that psychosocial support is needed to allow teachers to manage the traumatic experiences they face of being attacked or violated by learners and/or their parents. Schools need to allow teachers to report cases of violence against them in a safe and welcoming environment, and proper measures must be put in place to protect teachers from being humiliated and harassed by learners, so as to prevent them from being frustrated and thus reacting violently to learners in retaliation to the humiliation teachers are experiencing within their workplace. Finally, if positive teacher-learner relationships are maintained and enhanced by the schools and the learners' parents, teachers' work performance will be effective; thus, the process of teaching and learning will effectively take place.

2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

An extensive framework for the causes of school violence has been disclosed by the reviewed literature. The analysis of the literature stated that while school violence is an international issue, the fact that it is becoming more prevalent in South African public schools is especially alarming. This point of view suggests that much more work needs to be done to address the problems that exist in schools today. The literature study demonstrated that the high rates of violence targeting teachers in South Africa are caused by a multitude of reasons. These factors vary from peer pressure, broken family structures, gangs, availability of drugs and weapons, parental encouragement, exposure to violence from the family and overcrowded classrooms. All these factors play a pivotal role in how learners behave and how their self-concept and self-esteem is developed. Thus, most significantly, it is evident that the prevalence of school violence has turned public schools into crime-ridden areas in which teachers feel unsafe and fear for their lives, always on the look-out not to be attacked by their own learners within the school premises.

Furthermore, school violence has been shown to have a negative impact on teachers' work performance, and their physical, emotional, as well as psychological well-being. Unlike several other nations, South Africa has regulations such as Schools' Code of Conducts, the South African Schools Act, SGBs and SMTs in place, among others, to safeguard and ensure the safety of teachers in their workplace. However, the task of managing school violence seems to be a challenging one since it takes many forms, and occurs at many levels, including bullying, theft, vandalism of property, and even deaths in the worst-case scenarios.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study explored the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance. This chapter therefore discusses the research methodology that this study adopted. It discusses the following sub-topics in depth: the research paradigm, the research approach, research designs, the sampling and the sample size, data collection instruments that were used, the data collection procedure that was followed, data analysis technique, trustworthiness of the study's results, the ethical considerations that were observed, and ultimately, it concludes by giving an overview and the summary of what was discussed in the whole chapter.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm is a set of recognised thoughts and perspectives amidst specialists in a field in regard to the proper ways to see and handle issues (Yong, Husin, & Kamarudin, 2021:5857). It is typically a perspective that highlights the significance of interpretation in comprehending reality (Okeke, Omodan & Dube, 2022). Chowdhury (2014:433) argued that interpretive technique commands that social phenomena need to be interpreted "through the eyes of the participants rather than the researcher". Chowdhury (2014) maintained that interpretive techniques strive to comprehend societal phenomena by placing them in context. According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) research paradigms are distinguished by their methodology, ontology and epistemology.

According to Nieuwenhuis (2019:58) the term ontology is used to describe the essence of our views regarding reality. Furthermore, since researchers need to know what is, and what exists in order to analyse reality, ontology studies the nature of existence as it relates to phenomena (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:58), and this allows for the researcher to reach the goals of the study. On the other hand, epistemology, according to Yong et al. (2021:5858), is the knowledge, or method by which the researcher knows reality. Furthermore, epistemology argues that humans construct their own reality from their own experiences, values and beliefs, rather than there being a single, objective reality

in knowledge (Okeke et al., 2022:279). Additionally, because epistemological preconceptions can affect a study's findings, researchers should be conscious of their prejudices and presumptions when conducting their studies (Maulana, Rehman & Prabowo, 2022). It is therefore popular for researchers to possess tacit presumptions about reality, how it exists, and how far we know it. Moreover, according to the interpretive paradigm, the researcher and certain steps in the research process are related. Thus, the significance of research contribution lies in the subjective interpretation of the researcher (Irshaidat, 2019). Rehman and Alharti (2016) posited that interpretivism rejects the notion that there is a single, verifiable reality that exists independently of our senses. Rehman and Alharti (2016) noted that interpretivists maintain that there are several realities that are socially manufactured, which means that truths and realities are created rather than inherited. It is also difficult to know reality as it actually is since reality is constantly facilitated by our perceptions.

Lastly, because interpretivism sees people as different from physical phenomena, it functions under the notion that people cannot be studied or examined in the same way as scientific events (Maulana et al., 2022). Thus, Aharahsha and Pius (2020) maintained that society shapes how we see the outer world, which led them to believe that reality is socially generated. Furthermore, because researchers' presumption about the natural world will inevitably influence how they interact with research, researchers need to be aware of their own ontological and epistemological presumptions about the world at large. Thus, Kruger (2019:32) suggested that interpretivism focuses on the individual, which assists the researcher's attempts to comprehend the subjective world as experienced by the participant.

Thus, this study was informed by an interpretive research paradigm. This paradigm was helpful since it aimed to understand reality by examining how participants view their experiences. Also, this research paradigm facilitated an in-depth understanding of teachers' views and experiences on school violence in terms of their quality of interactions with learners within the school context. This meant that by applying an interpretive paradigm, I, as the researcher, was empowered to better comprehend the lived experiences of my participants by making sense of their sociocultural backgrounds. Thus, this paradigm effectively explored the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

The study adopted the qualitative research approach which is based on meaning and interpretations rather than statistics in terms of types of data analysis, and its reliance on linguistics skills rather than numerical data (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019:259). A research approach, according to Creswell (2014:3), is a set of strategies and procedures that address everything from general hypotheses to detailed data collecting, analysis, and evaluation. According to Ugwu and Eze (2023:20), a qualitative research approach focuses on the qualities of events, how they take place, the situation in which they occur, and the viewpoints from which they are seen. This approach hardly examines the phenomena's extent, regularity, or place in an objectively established causative chain.

Furthermore, the goal of qualitative research is to understand social phenomena in their natural setting and in depth. Ugwu and Eze Val (2023:20) posited that qualitative research emphasises the “why” of the social phenomena rather than the “what”, and it focuses on people's experiences as agents of meaning in their day-to-day existence. Thus, qualitative research focuses on real-world issues. Also, unlike quantitative research, which produces numerical ‘data points’ and presents interventions, qualitative research generates hypothesis to be further investigated and understood, and it offers deeper insights into quantitative data. Moreover, qualitative research, as pointed out by Nieuwenhuis (2019), involves the interpretation of meaning from data that is connected to the purpose of a study; this means that social meanings that people attribute to their experiences are embedded in collected data.

Chandra and Shang (2019:2) noted that the qualitative approach is an instrument utilised to investigate persons and groups in their natural setting to study their opinions, beliefs, as well as their motives. Thus, this research approach was relevant for this study as it allowed the researcher to engage with participants in their natural setting, in this case, at their workplace, for the purpose of comfortability and tension avoidance. Furthermore, this approach was appropriate in this study because it helped in establishing how school violence affects teachers' psychological and social well-being in terms of their work performance. Lastly, this research approach allowed me

to harness valuable data from participants in order to produce valuable raw data from the participants' views that produced useful and informative research findings.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is referred to as the blueprint of what is to be researched, in simple terms, it is the “glue” that holds a research project's components together (Akhtar, 2016:68). As defined by Thwala, Ugwuanyi, Okeke and Gama (2020:36), phenomenology is particularly effective in a case whereby the study's objectives are to examine a phenomenon with complex social and cultural implications, particularly when the phenomenon is difficult to quantify and when new and innovative viewpoints are required. Thus, this study pursued a phenomenological design, which is a method for conducting a study which looks at a phenomenon from the viewpoint of those who encountered it in order to try and capture its true nature (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019:90). Phenomenology, according to Neubauer et al. (2019:90), is qualitative research that which is centred on the examination of a person's real interactions in their surroundings. Also, Qutoshi (2018:215) explained phenomenology as a method which enlightens our perception, clarifies our stance, widens our perspective, and more deeply examines the life experiences of others.

The main objective of phenomenological research is to understand and describe the essential components of a phenomenon and to examine events from the perspective of the individual (Leavy, 2011:151). Ugwu and Eze Val (2023) asserted that phenomenology is essential in investigating human experiences in daily life, by setting aside the researchers' previous conceptions of the phenomenon. Moreover, to comprehend a phenomenon's universal nature in-depth, scholars employ phenomenological research methodologies to investigate the perceptions of individuals who experienced it (Badil, Muhammad, Aslam & Khan, 2023:9). This technique is often utilised to look into real-life situations, learn more regarding how people think, and enhance a researcher's understanding of the problem (Badil et al., 2023:9).

Furthermore, Tenny, Brannan and Brannan (2024:1) observed that phenomenology is basically the study of individuals' real-life situations which focuses on examining the

“how” and “why” questions as to why people behave the way they do, according to them. To explain social reality, phenomenologists are “interested in human consciousness, particularly how one ‘thinks’ about experience; in other words, how consciousness is experienced” (Leavy, 2017:129). Further, phenomenology is a doctrine which theoretically guides researchers to “understand phenomena at the level of subjective reality” (Qutoshi, 2018:215). Thus, phenomenology is known as a research strategy which examines an event based on the viewpoint of its victims so as to determine its nature (Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa, & Varpio, 2015).

In simple terms, phenomenological research examines real-world experiences to discover more about how people understand those experiences (Delve & Limpaecher, 2022). Accordingly, the purpose of phenomenology is to characterise the meaning of experience—either with regard to what the occurrence was, or how it was encountered (Teherani et al., 2015). Through the study of real-life experience, new interpretations and meanings can be created that can reshape or even inform our understanding of other people’s experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019:6). Thus, this design was essential in exploring and establishing the psychosocial effects of school violence on teachers’ work performance. The interview questions that were prompts to collect data from participants, those that ask the “how” and “what”, generated valuable data that were beneficial for analysis and reporting, by allowing participants to narrate their encounters of school violence in a way that revealed its psychosocial implications on their work performance.

3.5 STUDY SITE AND PARTICIPANTS

3.5.1 Study Site

A location or setting where a qualitative researcher uses their research tool to gather non-numerical data is known as a qualitative research site (Babajide, 2022:107). Thus, the study targeted four high schools in the Motheo District of the Free State Province, South Africa. Two schools were from a selected city, making these urban schools, whereas the other two schools were semi-urban schools from a different town within Motheo District. All four schools were township schools with a majority of black learners, particularly Sesotho and Setswana Home language schools. These high

schools were selected as study sites based on their availability, relevance in the study considering the high cases of violence within their surroundings and communities and, lastly, they were selected based on their accessibility and their geographic location.

3.5.2 Participants

Selecting participants is a crucial part in executing research. According to Leavy (2017:148), the goals, objectives, and research questions should guide the identification and recruitment of participants. Baxen (2021:45) stated that the quantity of participants chosen for a qualitative study is determined by the quantity of data required. According to Bryman (2016), research topics are the primary criteria used in sites and participants' selection. Thus, the title of the study and the definition of participants guided the selection process of participants. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, twelve teachers were selected as participants in this study, as they often fell victim to violence in schools and were willing to provide relevant information on this issue. In other words, high school teachers who had been victims and/or witnesses of school violence were identified to participate. Thus, the selection was informed by the participants' direct or indirect experiences with school violence. The twelve teachers that were selected for this study provided a comprehensible overview based on the psychosocial implications of school violence on their work performance.

3.6 SAMPLE AND SAMPLE SIZE

Leavy (2017:76) referred to sampling as a process of choosing several individual cases from a broader group. The quantity of distinct cases that one finally selects and uses to gather data is known as a sample. From research with a single instance to those with thousands, sample sizes vary greatly (Leavy, 2017:76). The study employed the purposive sampling technique in selecting high schools and teachers to participate in this research. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sample where the researcher consciously decides on what relevant and rich information the sample can provide; and so, according to the purpose of the study, the sample size was kept limited and manageable according to typical qualitative studies (Bekele & Ago, 2022:46). Therefore, twelve high school teachers were selected as the sample of this study. Purposive sampling, according to Tracy (2020:85), is a method that entails seeking out and selecting appropriate volunteers who possess the attributes necessary to facilitate responses to the study questions.

The scope of data that the researcher wants to collect, the investigation's goal, the implications, what may prove useful, what may appear credible, and what can be completed in the time and with the resources available, all affect the sample size in qualitative research, which is not regulated by any set rules (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:92). According to Daniela (2020:183), a number of factors influence how sample size is determined in high-quality studies, such as the study topic, questions the study must address, research complexity, theoretical framework, traditions of epistemology, approaches used in the study, methods employed, research participants' accessibility, available resources for completing the study, among others. Thus, Lee and Landers (2022) argued that this sampling method selects criteria that possible participants can meet based on the goals established by the researcher. This method was useful in this study because it enabled me to develop a better comprehension of participants' personal experiences.

3.7 INSTRUMENTS FOR DATA COLLECTION

Since this study followed a phenomenological perspective, semi-structured interviews were conducted to glean data from participants. This method typically consists of a dialogue between the researcher and participants, guided by a flexible interview protocol and supplemented by follow-up questions, probes and comments (Dejonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Thus, because qualitative research interviews attempt to understand the world from the point of view of research participants, conversations between the researcher and the participants aimed to unfold the meaning of their experiences and to uncover the phenomenon as they have experienced it (Ruslin, Mashuri, Rasak, Alhabyi & Syam, 2022:23). Qualitative questions are open-ended, according to Taherdoost (2019, 2022:15). Thus, as Neuert, Meitinger, Behr and Schonlau (2021:5) have indicated, open-ended questions are cognitively demanding on the participant, and work-intensive for researchers because a coding schema needs to be developed, and the research transcripts need to be coded, and this is often done manually.

Nonetheless, Elhami (2022:1) has argued that open-ended questions are necessary in empowering the researcher to collect related data from the participants in detail,

with personal feelings, emotions, ideas, and with less self-discipline. Therefore, this method allowed me to collect open-ended data, to explore participants' thoughts, feelings and beliefs about a particular topic and to delve deeply into personal and sometimes sensitive issues (Dejonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were based on an interview guide that was focused on the research topic and research objectives. According to Magaldi and Berler (2020), semi-structured interviews are generally based on the guide which is typically focused on the main topic that provides a general pattern. Also, Ruslin et al. (2022:26) commented that conducting a qualitative interview requires a set of skills and extensive preparation. This suggests that when someone wants to do an interview, they need to develop a simple interview guide and try to keep to it, ask questions as naturally as they come, and use a voice or tape recorder in order to capture raw data as narrated by the participants. Elhami (2022:1) noted that semi-structured interviews require a number of open-ended questions that are related to the study's objectives, followed by some probing questions which are intended to clarify the interviewees' responses and ideas that are raised during the interview. Thus, conducting semi-structured interviews and using open-ended questions, guided by an interview guide and voice recorder as a method of data collection, allowed me to garner important information from participants in order to have a clear picture of their experiences of the psychosocial implications that school violence has on their work performance.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The procedure of collecting data in this study entailed interviewing twelve teachers from four high schools within the Motheo District in the Free State province. The purposive sampling of participants was based on the relevance of the participants to the study. This means that I selected teachers who had experienced and/or witnessed school violence. Participants' accessibility and eagerness to form part of the study was observed. Therefore, from four selected schools, three teachers in each school provided informed consent by signing the consent forms and granting the researcher an authority to record the interviews. All interviews were recorded to ensure authenticity, verification, and accurate verbatim transcriptions for precise data analysis. Thus, a tape-recorder was used to record the interview for verbatim transcription purposes. According to Dewi (2021:30), the researcher needs to follow

the interview guide while recording the qualitative interviews, in preparation for transcription of the tape to allow for effective data analysis at a later stage.

The researcher used the interview guide to conduct interviews. All interviews were conducted in the participants' natural settings. This corresponds with Taherdoost (2021:34) who suggested that qualitative interviews are supposed to be conducted within the participants' natural settings to allow free participation. Thus, semi-structured interviews were conducted, with the use of closed and open-ended questions to afford participants the freedom to spontaneously articulate their opinions and experiences, guided by the study's objectives.

Since transcription produces a comprehensive and detailed verbal record that enables a close examination of the data by engaging with the real content from the conversations, it is widely used to handle qualitative data (Tracy, 2020; Farley, Hurley & Aitken, 2020:1). The process of turning recorded audio—typically spoken words—into written data which can be utilised to examine a specific occurrence or event is known as transcription (McMullin, 2023:141). Ultimately, the data collection procedure entailed face-to-face semi-structured interviews which were guided by an interview guide consisting of a list of closed- and open-ended questions, followed by probing questions to harness data from the participants.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

A variety of techniques and procedures are used in qualitative data analysis to transform the qualitative data into an explanation, comprehension, or interpretation of the subjects and circumstances under investigation (Hameed, 2024:29). However, Tadenhoost (2020:1) has contended that the process of turning collected data into information with meaning is all that data analysis consists of. Thematic data analysis was used by the researcher for this research. Dawadi (2020:62) defined thematic analysis as a qualitative research technique where researchers look for themes that can capture the narratives present in the accounts of data sets and use them to organise and evaluate complex data sets in a methodical manner. Also, Brailas, Tragou and Papachristopoulos (2023:22) posited that thematic analysis is an introductory and popular method for analysing textual qualitative research data. In

addition, Braun and Clarke (2023:66) reiterated that thematic analysis provides an outstanding approach for exploring and interpreting patterned meanings across a data set. Furthermore, Cernasev and Axon (2023:751) indicated that thematic analysis is commonly used in qualitative research when a researcher is seeking to explore complex, subjective phenomena and understand behaviours or thoughts from a set of data on how people make sense of what they have experienced. Similarly, Rosario (2023:1) suggested that in the context of thematic data evaluation, the researcher carefully reviews the data in order to pinpoint recurring themes, topics, concepts, and patterns that either address the research or provide insight into a social problem.

3.9.1 Familiarisation of data

Familiarisation of data entails listening to audio-recordings of collected data and after transcribing them, the transcriptions must be read and re-read it in order to be extremely acquainted with them (Byrne, 2022:1398). Braun and Clarke (2023:70) advised that it is important to take notes at this stage because this helps the researcher to start reading data as 'data'. Therefore, after data collection, the researcher listened to the audio-recordings and personally transcribed the interviews. The researcher then read the transcripts to check if they accurately represented the audio-recordings and, while reading, I took notes from the transcription, and this allowed me to have an intimate relationship with the data and helped me with the process of analysis.

3.9.2 Code generation

The procedure of coding is done to create descriptive labels for data sets that answer the research questions, since codes are the basic building blocks of what will eventually become themes (Byrne, 2022:1399). Braun and Clarke (2023:67) indicated that coding is understood as a method of identifying data that supports themes, or categorising information into predefined topics. Byrne (2022:1400) posited that any item of data that might be useful in addressing the research questions should be coded. Therefore, since it is rare that the researcher will follow a linear process through the six stages of thematic analysis, the researcher will need to move back and forth to identify themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012, 2023). Thus, the coding started with identification of data sets which addressed or answered the research questions. The preliminary coding was iterated through the use of Microsoft Word (2016) 'Comments'

to allow codes to be noted in the side margins, while also highlighting the area of text assigned to each respective code.

3.9.3 Theme generation

Dawadi (2020:66) indicated that theme generation commences with codes that are written on a long list which are extracted from data sets; its aim being to identify and establish relationships and patterns of codes across data sets. This means that during this step deeper analysis of themes takes place, rather than codes. Also, Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019:3) reiterated that it is important that codes are conceptualised in order to generate potential themes which relate to the research questions. Thus, based on points raised in the interviews, the transcripts were revisited by the researcher to enable the arrangement of main themes and sub-themes, based on their respective categories, to prepare for the next step of analysis.

3.9.4 Theme reviewing

This is the stage in thematic analysis in which the researcher needs to find the essence of each theme. Here the researcher needs to consider each theme both individually and in relation to others (Christou, 2023:9). Also, according to Byrne (2021:1404) this stage of thematic analysis entails two levels of theme reviewing. The first level is where data sets are reviewed concerning the relationships between data items and codes that inform themes and sub-themes. The second level of themes review entails reviewing candidate themes, in relation to data set. Thus, in this stage I revisited identified themes from the coded data sets for quality reassurance.

3.9.5 Theme naming and definition

The first objectives of this phase are to further define and refine the themes, pinpoint the core idea behind each theme, and ascertain which part of the data each theme captures (Braun & Clarke, 2023:76). At this point, the researcher's job was to give a thorough analysis of the thematic framework, defining each theme and sub-theme in terms of the research questions and the dataset (Byrne, 2021:1407). Thus, because there were many data items underlying each theme, defining them required a deep analysis. Lastly, the researcher further refined and defined themes by reading through all the main themes and sub-themes, codes and extracts. Then, final names along with their definitions were assigned to each theme to communicate a story about data findings.

3.9.6 Report writing

The last stage of the analysis was to compile a written report of the research results. Dawadi (2020:70) warned that the thematic analysis report must be convincing to other scholars who will read it through trustworthiness and validity of the analysis. Thus, this stage solidifies and completes the analysis and writing. Hence Braun and Clarke (2023:78) asserted that the goal of the researcher's report is to present a persuasive narrative derived from their data analysis, by ensuring that the story is both convincing and transparent, while also being intricate and grounded in academic research. In addition, Christou (2023:12) advised that in order for the study to be coherent and logical, sufficient evidence of identified themes must be provided, which means that the researcher was transparent and succinct when explaining how data were interpreted and how themes were chosen (Christou, 2023:12). Thus, the use of thematic analysis in this study was helpful in that it enabled the researcher to make sense of the experiences of participants. This method of analysis allowed the researcher to take note of the repeated themes from the data collected and themes that had been identified. Also, because this study was explorative, thematic analysis played a crucial role in determining the psychosocial implications of school violence and how it affected the work performance of participants.

3.10 DATA TRUSTWORTHINESS

Because qualitative research prioritises rigorousness and veracity, establishing the legitimacy and dependability of qualitative results requires that trustworthiness be ensured (Ahmed, 2024:1). Research findings which are supported by strong trustworthiness has significant impact on the formation and implementation of policies because policymakers depend strongly on evidence to formulate knowledgeable, flexible policies that address social challenges and promote equitable outcomes (Riazi, Rezvani & Ghanbar, 2023:1). Thus, by verifying that the research design, procedures, and operations possess credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, one can gauge how trustworthy a qualitative study is (Haq, Rasheed, Rashid & Akhter, 2023:150).

3.10.1 Credibility

A key component of qualitative research is the extent to which the results faithfully capture actual events that the participants encountered (Ahmed, 2024:1). Thus,

Stenfors, Kajamaa and Bennett (2020:597) indicated that a well-justified and explicable approach is necessary to ensure the research's credibility. As a result, phrases like "saturation" or "data sufficiency" are frequently used to denote trustworthiness and imply that sufficient data were acquired to identify all pertinent details needed to address the study question (Stenfors et al., 2020:597). Also, Eryilmaz (2022:346) asserted that member-checking can be applied when the researcher gives raw data such as interviews and analysis to check whether the researcher understood the participants correctly; this strategy prevents misunderstanding and biases. Thus, the researcher gave the interview transcripts to the respective participants to ascertain whether the transcripts accurately represent their interview responses. Lastly, the findings of the study were ensured by the researcher to reflect the psychosocial implications of school violence on participants' work performance and relied on the data collected from participants rather than on theory to produce reliable findings that maintain the credibility of the study.

3.10.2 Transferability

Transferability, according to Haq et al. (2023) and Riazi et al. (2023) is the extent to which findings of the study may be applied to different settings or contexts. Riazi et al. (2023) noted that the findings of a qualitative investigation will be deemed appropriate if individuals who were not involved in the research can relate the findings to their personal experiences. Also, according to Stahl and King (2020:27) transferability can only occur when detailed data depiction of circumstances can be applied to different contexts. They advised that influential participants, the time frame of data collection, and field duration should be clearly mentioned and described. Other scholars will consider the findings useful when applied to a different context; thus, allowing them to conclude whether the study's findings are transferable or not.

3.10.3 Dependability

Dependability is related to how stable and long-lasting the research results are throughout time (Haq et al., 2023:157). Also, Ahmed (2024:2) reiterated that dependability is related to stableness and long-lastingness which research results possess throughout time. Thus, to ensure dependability, researchers make sure to document all of their procedures, strategies, and methods for gathering and interpreting data. Moreover, Enworo (2023) posited that dependability is the third

criterion of trustworthiness and it implies data consistency over similar contexts. Reliability of the findings of the study is ensured by other researchers by producing the study with the help of an audit trail, which is an extensive journal that describes the choices made throughout the study (Eryilmaz, 2022:346). This indicates that the results of the study will be dependable if they are repeated with a comparable population, setting or situation.

3.10.4 Confirmability

The term confirmability, according to Riazi et al. (2023), refers to the findings' impartiality and objectivity, which ensures that the researcher's prejudices and personal interests have no bearing on the findings. This suggests that the researcher remained neutral throughout data collection journey, analysis and reporting, so that the findings reflect the true encounters of the participants, but not those of the researcher. Moreover, Stahl and King (2020:28) reiterated that for a research project to have objectivity, and to subject one's research to auditing, there should be evidence of objective reality. Thus, confirmability in this study was achieved through objectivity and transparency regarding how the entire study was conducted.

3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics, according to Bos (in Mirza, Bellalem & Mirza, 2023:442) refers to an inquiry into what is appropriate and inappropriate, and what researchers need to observe and do when conducting research. Thus, I adopted acceptable, correct, and appropriate research ethics while conducting this research. Also, according to Mirza et al. (2023:441) ethics are based on a researcher's responsibility regarding their participants, readers, the society at large and other scholars. Therefore, to maintain ethical consideration, permission was obtained from the University of the Free State. Ethics permission was also obtained from the DBE to conduct research. Thereafter, the principals from four selected schools were approached so that permission to approach and recruit participants prior the interviews could be requested and granted. In addition, the researcher approached the principals to ask for permission to conduct research in their sites and to collect data from the participants' natural setting. In addition, teachers who were expected to be participating in the study provided informed consent, voluntarily.

The research risks were communicated with the principals and participants. For the purpose of this study, the risk may have entailed a psychological risk whereby PTSD may have been experienced due to the fact that participants were reliving the traumatic experiences they had encountered due to school violence. Hence, Baker, Phelan, Snelgrove, Varpio, Maggi and Ng (2016:608) warned that researchers should be prepared for the unexpected (for instance, on what to do should the participant feel distress during an interview), as these unexpected moments usually occur suddenly, without warning, and the researcher was prepared to make ethically sound decisions. However, the risk management plan that was in place was indicated to participants to safeguard such outcomes. This entailed counselling provided by the wellness section in the DBE by professional or experienced social workers. Thus, participants were made aware of the choice to terminate participation any time they might feel distressed or burdened they were never coerced or forced to take part in the study.

Moreover, participants' identities were safeguarded throughout the recruitment process, data collection, and data distribution processes. Also, participants' anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout because only the researcher could connect the participants with the interview recording and data collected was held in a safe and confidential manner. Bos (2020:154) maintained that confidentiality entails the mutual trust between the researcher and participants which ensure the handling of sensitive and confidential data with the utmost care.

3.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter explored the research techniques from research design, research paradigm, to research approach. These strategies were employed to inform how data were collected and analysed in this study. In addition, aspects such as the study site, participant sampling and sampling size strategies, were outlined. Furthermore, instruments of data collection and its procedures were also discussed, as were data trustworthiness and ethical considerations. Findings of this study will be presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the data analysis and interpretation of the findings on the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance. The data that informed the analysis were collected using semi-structured interviews with twelve participants in the Motheo district schools. The face-to-face interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and analysed using thematic data analysis. The data analysis was informed by the below research questions:

- How do teachers perceive school violence?
- What are the psychosocial problems teachers encounter at school?
- How does school violence impact teachers' work performance?
- What strategies can be adopted to deal with school violence?

4.2 RESEARCH JOURNEY

The commencement of my research journey took place when I applied for ethical clearance from the University of the Free State and the DBE to get permission to conduct my study. Upon receiving the permission, I approached participants for consent form discussion. After collecting data, interviews were transcribed, and the analysis process began. Data were thematically analysed, and biographies of the participants were analysed on the table below.

4.2.1 Ethics approval

I applied for ethical approval through Research Information Management Systems (RIMS), an online platform which is utilised by the University of the Free State for ethical clearance. The Department of Basic Education was the first to approve my ethics application. The permission letter was received, and later the University of the Free State also approved my application and issued an approval letter with the following Ethical Clearance number: **UFS-HSD2023/2626**. After receiving both approval letters, I then approached the principals from four research sites (schools) to explain the nature of my study, as well as to ask their permission to approach the teachers so I could recruit participants and proceed with data collection. The response

I received from all four schools was positive. Permission was granted from the four different schools; participants were approached, and interviews were conducted to collect data.

4.2.2 Inviting and meeting participants for consent and data collection

After I had received ethical clearance from the University of the Free State, I made phone calls to all four schools to set up appointments with the principals. I visited four of my selected schools, two in an urban area and two in a semi-urban area. I approached the principals as per our set appointments, to discuss the reason for my visit in their schools. They allowed me to introduce myself to the staff members and do a brief presentation of my intention and I asked the interested teachers to share their phone numbers so that I could set up appointments with them when they were available. I specifically highlighted the fact that I was interested in conducting interviews with teachers who had a minimum of five years in teaching experience and those who had either been victims or witnesses of school violence.

Upon receiving the names and phone numbers of the teachers that were interested in participating in my study, I explained what a consent form is and asked them to sign them so we could start with the interviews. Most of the teachers asked to be interviewed after school hours, and four out of twelve asked me to call them over the weekend. The voice recording of the second interview that was conducted in the first school got lost, or rather, it was not recorded as expected. However, with the help of the notes that I had been taking while the participant was responding to the interview questions, I was able to get the most important aspects of our interview. Also, because I had his phone numbers, I was able to call him and ask for clarity on the notes that did not make sense to me during the data analysis stage.

4.2.3 Transcription

The interviews from the participants were transcribed using Microsoft Word Audio Player to transcribe them into texts. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, I assigned codes to each of the twelve participants I used in this study. All participants were referred to as P1 – P12, with P representing 'Participant' and numbers 1 – 12 representing the number of participants respectively, in order and sequence in which the interviews were conducted. Twelve interviews were used to organise, code, extract

themes and sub-themes, and to generate the findings for data interpretation and reporting.

4.2.4 Participants' background information

This study was conducted in four high schools in the Motheo District of the Free State province. Two of these schools are situated in an urban area and two of them are in a semi-urban settlement. From each school, three teachers took part in this study, thus the sum of the participant teachers was twelve. Seven of the participants were females, and five of them were males. The participants' age varied from 28 to 51 years old. Moreover, their years of teaching experience ranged from 5 to 16 years, and their qualification levels included Post-Graduate Certificates in Education (PGCE), honours in education degrees (B. Ed Hons), bachelor's degrees in education (B.Ed. degree), and a Higher Diploma in Education (HDE). The participants' details are tabled below.

Table 4.1: Participants' biographic information

Participants' codes	Age	Gender	Qualification	Teaching Grades	Years of teaching experience
P1	42	Female	PGCE	8	8
P2	40	Female	B.Ed. (Hons)	10	11
P3	31	Male	B.Ed. degree	9	5
P4	30	Male	B.Ed. degree	8	6
P5	31	Female	B.Ed. degree	9	6
P6	49	Female	B.Ed. (Hons)	12	15
P7	34	Female	B.Ed. (Hons)	11	6
P8	51	Male	HDE IV	10	16
P9	34	Male	B.Ed. (Hons)	11	7
P10	41	Female	B.Ed. degree	12	9
P11	33	Female	PGCE	9	5
P12	25	Female	B.Ed. degree	8	5

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This section analyses, presents, and interprets the findings from the interview transcripts. As stated in Chapter 1, the aim of this study was to investigate the psychosocial implications of school violence, to understand how the work performance of teachers is affected, and to identify the strategies that can be applied to manage school violence against victimised teachers, as well as witnesses of school violence. This study was informed by the frustration-aggression theory of Breuer and Elson (2017), which was the basis of the study's findings and interpretation to establish the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance. Furthermore, the study used thematic analysis, following the six steps of Dawadi (2020) and Braun and Clarke (2012). Thus, the themes and sub-themes in the table below emerged from the coding of transcripts of research interviews, and the analysis was based on six sub-research questions, as indicated above.

Table 4.2: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Teachers' perceptions of school violence	1. Lack of rights, safety and protection for teachers 2. School violence is a pandemic 3. School violence emanates from learners' backgrounds 4. Lack of departmental support 5. Nothing is being done to learners who violate teachers 6. Worst types of school violence
2. Psychosocial problems encountered by teachers at school	1. Stress, frustration and demoralisation 2. Difficulty coping 3. Social isolation and withdrawal 4. Substance abuse 5. Feelings of fear and anger 6. Embarrassment and humiliation
3. The impact of school violence on teachers' work performance	1. Loss of confidence, motivation and interest 2. Avoidance behaviour 3. Teachers' under-performance 4. Negative attitude towards work 5. Teachers' absenteeism
4. Strategies to deal with school violence	1. One school, one social worker principle 2. Teambuilding and counselling sessions 3. Educational workshops and training 4. Parental involvement and learner engagement 5. Tighter security measures in schools 6. Schools' policy amendments and implementation 7. Collaborations between DBE, social development and police

4.3.1 Theme 1: Teachers' perception of school violence

This theme responded to the interview question that tried to determine the teachers' perceptions of school violence. The following are the sub-themes that emerged from participants' responses: teachers' vulnerability, teachers not having rights, learners' backgrounds, lack of departmental support, learners having rights over teachers, and discipline problems in schools.

Sub-theme 1: Lack of rights, safety and protection for teachers

Ten participants pointed out that teachers are not protected. They emphasised that learners are protected over teachers and that learners are even aware that teachers do not have rights over them; thus, they violate teachers in any way possible. Here are the views of ten participants when responding to their perception of school violence.

P2: *"The education sector has put two people in a classroom, and these are learners and teachers, but between these two, only one has rights, and that is the learner. Teachers do not have rights."*

P3: *"Teachers do not have rights. Even when learners attack us, we are expected to stand still, we cannot defend ourselves as any other human being would do, and even if you touch a learner you end up being the one who's wrong, so we are not protected at all."*

P4: *"It feels like learners are more protected than teachers when it comes to physical violence."*

P7: *"We are not protected as teachers, learners are protected over us, and they can see that they are protected therefore they abuse us every day. And since parents are even able to get inside the school yard and start assaulting teachers within the school premises, it means we are not safe, and we are totally not protected."*

P8: *"When a learner is attacking you, you cannot defend yourself. So, that is why I am saying we as teachers, we are not protected, our government is not protecting us, our*

department is not protecting us, we don't have rights over learners, but learners have rights over us."

P11: "I feel like the department is failing us, there are not measures in place to minimise school violence or deal with violent learners. Teachers are not protected, and nothing is being done when learners attack teachers. They say we are professionals, so we need to behave like professionals."

According to the views of the participants, teachers are vulnerable, they are not safe, and they are not protected. Participants also mentioned that learners are aware that teachers do not have rights over them; thus, the learners take advantage of the situation and continue to violate teachers as much as they can. Also, the participants' views highlighted the fact that even when learners disrespect teachers, teachers are the ones who end up having to apologise. Even when learners attack teachers, the teachers are not supposed to defend themselves, they are expected to stand still for learners to assault them as they please because they are regarded as professionals and, therefore, they are expected to behave as such. This view is supported by the WHO (2019) who pointed out that most teachers are exposed to teacher-directed violence daily; however, they do not have grounds to stand because they are seen as responsible adults who can make responsible decisions. Also, Baxen (2021:64) noted that teachers, globally, experience violence against them but they are helpless. These views align very well with the participants' views when they say that teachers are not protected, and they do not have rights, yet the rights of the learners are considered over those of teachers.

Sub-theme 2: School violence is a pandemic

Some participants pointed out that school violence is a growing problem and that it is a pandemic. Participants feel that school violence that is directed to teachers is worsening and that teachers are vulnerable because they are not safe in schools anymore.

P3: "School violence is a global problem, and to be quite honest, teachers don't know how to deal with it anymore."

P4: *"I've noticed throughout the years school violence is becoming a growing issue, learners are becoming too comfortable in fighting and attacking teachers."*

P7: *"School violence is worsening; it's becoming worse, and we are abused each and every day."*

P8: *"Unfortunately, school violence is spreading, and no one seem to know how to deal with it, including the department."*

P10: *"School violence is a pandemic; we live with it on a daily basis. It damages us very badly; we can't even enjoy our work or even our families."*

The response from these four participants revealed that school violence is concerning and is a growing issue which teachers are no longer sure how to deal with. Participants associate school violence with abuse that they suffer from learners daily; thus, demonstrating how comfortable learners are in fighting and attacking teachers. Scholars such as Khanyile and Mpuangnan (2024) and Yang et al. (2021a) have acknowledged that school violence is prevalent, and a pressing social concern which elicits widespread discourse globally. This view showed that participants perceive school violence as a pandemic that is a global problem and that is growing day by day. Furthermore, a study by Milligan, Doss and Zungu (2024) identified the phenomenon of school violence as a global issue with tremendous consequences due to its lifelong psychosocial impacts. In addition, a growing number of studies by these scholars (Espelage et al., 2013; Ngidi & Kaye, 2022:2) have begun to examine the prevalence and consequences of school violence against teachers revealing that this is a serious and ongoing problem.

Sub-theme 3: School violence emanates from learners' backgrounds

Six out of twelve participants highlighted that school violence emanates from learners' poor and violent backgrounds. They stated that learners become frustrated by their parents' inability to provide for their basic needs. Here are the six responses from six participants on the issue of learners' backgrounds.

P1: *“Learners find it difficult to accept their backgrounds, they compare themselves with others, when their parents are unable to provide for their needs, for instance, proper shelter and proper clothes, so they get frustrated and act out their frustrations on teachers. Also, most of these learners are coming from backgrounds that are not good, they end up being very disrespectful to teachers.”*

P5: *“Some learners come from violent backgrounds and that is another factor that makes them the people that they are.”*

P6: *“Learners behave violently because of what has transpired in their homes, so they don’t have anyone to talk to.”*

P8: *“The learners come with anger from their homes, and they vent their emotions on us because we are closer to them.”*

P9: *“Unfortunately we are working in township schools, and we are dealing with learners that are quite angry, learners who come from very poor and very bad backgrounds. Some are coming from child-headed families, where they don’t even know where their next meal will come from. Some are parents themselves at a very young age, and these are the types of learners that are very problematic and very violent.”*

P10: *“You would find that their behaviour stems from their backgrounds of bad experiences, so they come here sad, unhappy, so, once you say something to them, they start to retaliate.”*

Participants stated that learners behave violently towards them because they come from violent backgrounds in which they are abused, they come from child-headed families, and some are already parents in their teenagerhood. Therefore, these learners are frustrated most of the time, they are sad, unhappy and they take everything that is said to them as abuse. Thus, they vent their emotions on teachers because teachers are the closest thing to their parents. This is in line with the findings of the study by Khantsi et al., (2024:13) which suggests that learners’ violent behaviour stems from their environmental factors which includes how learners were brought up.

Mwaniki (2018) concurred, by saying that learners' violent behaviour stems from their societal backgrounds, and their overall behaviour. Furthermore, studies by Meyer and Chetty (2017) and Sitoyi (2020) suggested that increased acts of violence are mostly experienced in poor and violent communities or where schools and classrooms are mostly overcrowded. Thus, the frustration-aggression theory states that learners are motivated to act aggressively by a frustration-produced drive. Aggressive energy is generated when learners face personal circumstances that frustrate them, and this energy then triggers prevailing aggressive behaviours (Singh & Steyn, 2014:82). These scholars' viewpoint aligns with the participants' responses when they suggested that learners come from families in which they are abused, and from violent societies where they are not cared for, thus, taking out their frustrations on teachers.

Sub-theme 4: Lack of departmental support

Seven participants pointed out that there is lack of support from the DBE. They feel that they are not cared for and that they are unfairly expected to conduct themselves professionally and be calm towards learners, yet the DBE does not offer the necessary support that the teachers are expecting. These are the responses from these seven participants.

P1: *"We are not cared for by the Department of Basic Education. The learners are prioritised, and we are not prioritised. Thus, we go seek help for ourselves and continue teaching."*

P5: *"The Department of Basic Education does not do anything to support us as teachers. In a case where the learner has abused a teacher, that learner will not be punished, but if it is a teacher at fault, we get dismissed or suspended immediately."*

P7: *"There is no psychological help at school and even from the department. They should even pay our medical bills—full medical bills—because emotionally we are not okay. Also, there is no book that tells you how to talk to a learner when they insult you, or when a learner pushes you; we are just told that we should act professionally because we are professionals, we need to keep calm, we are not taught how to handle such situations. But how do I act professionally when a learner insults me and abuses me? So, we are not supported at all."*

P8: *“We as teachers are not supported by the department; they simply do not care what happens to us in schools. Some of us are suffering from stress and depression but nothing is done to support us emotionally, or psychologically.”*

P9: *“When the department took away corporal punishment from schools, they did not provide another disciplinary measure that can be used in schools to curb learners’ misbehaviour. Unfortunately, now we are faced with a problem that we do not know how to go about and what’s worse is that we do not have support from our department.”*

P12: *“There is a huge gap between teachers on the ground and officials who are sitting in their offices at the department. However, the department is never there to give support to teachers, they never come to schools to check on the well-being of teachers.”*

The overall feeling of the participants on this sub-theme was that the DBE took away their rights as teachers and gave the rights to learners. Also, they felt it was unfair of the DBE to ban corporal punishment from schools without providing effective disciplinary measures that can be utilised to curb learners’ misbehaviours. Lastly, participants suggested that the DBE should at least provide them with the support that they need so as they are able to deal with violent learners. All these translated to the DBE offering teachers emotional and psychological support, as well as protecting their physical well-being. In this light, Woudstra (2015) posited that the difficulty that South Africa is currently experiencing is safeguarding teachers and allocating enough funds and support to end school violence against teachers to promote their mental health. The situation is exacerbated by the lack of support from the DBE and school communities (Grobler, 2018:1), thus forcing many teachers to continue working under hazardous conditions. In addition, Sambo and Govender (2023:24) explained that there are currently limited strict laws in place that protect teachers from being violated by learners at their workplace. In this light, Jacobs and de Wet (2018) warned that learners should obey the laws of the country as state in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996) that teachers have rights, and they need to be treated with dignity and respect.

Sub-theme 5: Nothing is being done to learners who violate teachers

Seven participants mentioned that nothing is being done to learners that violate teachers. According to these participants, learners seem to have rights over teachers, and learners get away with criminal acts. Here are their responses on this matter.

P2: *“Unfortunately, there are no rules that governs parents in our schools. They can show up in our schools, cause chaos and swear at teachers or even assault them. Even after this, nothing will be done to protect teachers because parents know that there are no rules that protects teachers.”*

P4: *“As you know, we are not allowed to be engage in corporal punishment, but sometimes you get incidents where learners attack the teachers, and nothing happens to them. I specifically was attacked and assaulted by a grade 9 learner, and nothing was done to him.”*

P5: *“Nothing was done to a learner who humiliated me; instead, I was the one who ended up apologising for raising my voice on her and I felt like I was victimised in that hearing because it ended up being me who came out to be on the wrong side of the law.”*

P7: *“For instance, we are told to reprimand learners and take whatever they sell within the school premises because selling is not allowed. Sadly, while I was doing that, one learner pushed me and I fell, but nothing was done to that learner to date. Also, another one hit me with a window opener stick, and nothing was done to him.”*

P8: *“My phone was broken by a learner in an incident where that learner was attacking me, and the learner was drunk, inside the school premises, but nothing was done to that learner, instead, the principal took the school’s money to fix my phone.”*

P12: *“No matter what the learner does to you ma’am, nothing will be done to that learner. You are expected to behave like an educator, a professional and be a bigger person.”*

These participants expressed their concerns about the fact that nothing is ever done to learners who violate them. These participants highlighted that even when the learners have attacked them, teachers are the ones who ended up having to apologise to learners because they are expected to behave like professionals and must conduct themselves in a professional manner. Participants further elaborated that even if they report the cases of learner-on-teacher attacks to the school management, nothing is done to reprimand, or punish learners who attack teachers, those who push teachers down and/or those who humiliate teachers. These views are supported by scholars who have posited that some cases of violence against teachers go unreported, but those that are reported serve as evidence of the torture that teachers deal with in their workplaces (Mosito & Sitoyi, 2024:132). Also, Venketsamy et al. (2023:59) revealed that with learners' disrespect towards teachers, and the fact that there is no support for teachers who are victims of this phenomenon, participants feel that nothing is being done to learners who violate them. This is in line with Santos and Tin's (2018) perception which suggested that another reason for the rise in school violence is that learners are aware that "teachers can do nothing" when learners act violently against them. Teachers have discovered that learners are aware that there will not be any consequences for violence or inappropriate behaviour towards teachers. Thus, this exacerbates the phenomenon of school violence even further.

Sub-theme 6: Worst types of school violence

There are several types of school violence that learners display in schools. These include fighting, insults, swearing, physical attacks, pushing teachers, spitting in their faces, carrying weapons, and some getting involved in gangster activities. Here are the responses of participants in this regard.

P3: *"Learners are insulting and swearing on teachers, they display violence and aggression towards other learners and teachers. Some use pointer needles from maths instruments sets as weapons to attack teachers."*

P4: *"I see learners fighting from time to time. I also had a learner threatening me that he wants to shoot me and meanwhile I know that the learner's father is in military, meaning that someone like him can easily have access to a gun. In another case a*

learner pointed a plastic gun in my face. Lastly, another boy whom we suspect he's autistic, tried to choke me, right in my class."

P6: *"Learners go to an extent of stabbing teachers and even killing them because they know that nothing will be done on them because they are considered to be minors."*

P7: *"In my first year of teaching I was pushed by a learner, and I fell; this year the other one hit me with the window opener. Last year there was this boy who would insult me, misbehaving, he would watch movie on his phone, and I had to stop my lesson so he can do as he please. Also, a learner pushed one of my superior and he fell, one was spat on the face, another one was swearing on a teacher by her parent's genitalia in Sesotho. Lastly, another teacher was beaten up by a learner's parent right in front of other learners, in his classroom."*

P8: *"Gangsterism is one of the worst types of school violence that we see. These gangster groups can even attack others within the school premises."*

P9: *"I saw an altercation between grade 12 boy and a male teacher. They ended up having a physical fight and the matter ended up being reported at the department and the teacher was suspended for nearly a year."*

Participants mentioned that learners displayed different types of violence towards teachers. They mentioned that learners insult them, swear at them, slap them on their faces, push them to the ground, physically fight them, and even body-shame them. In addition, learners carry dangerous weapons, and some even invite their gang groups to enter the school premises to fight other learners and teachers. In the worst-case scenario, learners have even stabbed or threatened to shoot and kill teachers at the workplace. In this light, Mollo (2024), supported by Grobler (2018), concurred that teachers' safety is a perennial worry in South African schools, as learners have violently seized teachers' necks, kicked them, bitten, and scratched them, thrown objects at them, stabbed them, and even killed them. Thus, it is evident that learners behave violently towards their teachers, and this results in teachers fearing for their lives as they continually work under hostile conditions.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Psychosocial problems encountered by teachers at school

This theme responded to the second question that investigated the psychosocial problems that teachers encounter due to school violence. Under this question, several sub-themes emerged from the participants' responses. Teachers talked about stress, frustration and feeling demoralised, difficulty coping, social isolation and withdrawal, substance abuse, feelings of fear and anger and, lastly, embarrassment and humiliation.

Sub-theme 1: Stress, frustration and demoralisation

Participants gave their responses on the psychosocial problems that teachers encounter due to school violence. Stress, frustration and demoralisation were some of the psychosocial problems that emerged from this sub-research question. This is how participants responded:

P1: *"Teachers become frustrated because when learners do not participate in the lesson, teachers are unable to deliver according to the department, the learning facilitator, and the HOD's [Head of Department's] expectations. Also, we become frustrated, we get stressed, and it leads to tension because we don't recover immediately, and we end up suffering from chronic diseases at a very young age."*

P3: *"Teachers end up suffering from stress and depression because of how learners behave towards them, and the disrespect that they get from them all the time".*

P5: *"To be quite honest, we become stressed, and when we are stressed there's not much that we can do."*

P6: *"School violence is very much stressing. It's stressful because imagine coming to class to teach and the next thing you end up being beaten by a learner, it's very stressful and demoralising."*

P7: *"Couple of weeks ago I had the same problem with a one learner who disrespected me badly in class, and then I had to go to the doctor because my blood pressure went up because of stress. Like it's stressful to work under such conditions."*

P8: *“Sometimes I get so frustrated because I am dealing with learners that are aggressive and violent.”*

Participants emphasised that they are always frustrated and stressed because of the level of disrespect and violence they are dealing with from learners. Also, they further explained that when they are stressed and demoralised, there is nothing that they can do, particularly where teaching and learning is concerned. This is reiterated by Sibisi (2021:38) when highlighting that loss of self-esteem, stress, frustration, anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation and demoralisation are some of the effects of school violence towards teachers. Also, a study conducted by Venketsamy et al. (2023:59) showed that participants expressed anger and frustration due to school violence that was directed at them. Furthermore, Terzoudi's (2020) study concurred that experiencing victimisation at work can lead to emotional anguish, which can impact an individual's relationships with friends and family. School violence can result in teachers being aggressive and hostile toward learners, colleagues, and even loved ones. This can happen when learners humiliate teachers, threaten them, or challenge their authority (Botha, 2018; Marolen, 2019). This is in line with the frustration-aggression theory of Dollard et al. (1939) which asserted that violent behaviour manifests because of frustration which at times causes some type of aggression (Breuer & Elson, 2017:1).

Sub-theme 2: Difficulty in coping

Seven participants responded on the issue of the psychosocial problems that teachers encountered due to school violence, and they mentioned difficulty in coping as one of the problems associated with school violence against teachers. Participants voiced their opinions in this way:

P1: *“My colleague who was a victim to violence, was attacked by a Grade 12 learner, and she could not cope, and even to this day, she does not want to talk about the incident.”*

P3: *“We are not coping; we just go to work for the sake of going to work. We simply go because we have responsibilities, financial commitments and the likes. It's difficult.”*

P4: *"I saw my poor colleague having difficulty to cope, and I watched him battling with depression. Because of that I had to quit my job and move to another school, fearing that I might go through the same situation."*

P6: *"I experienced school violence and I've seen it happening to my colleagues, but what I can tell you is that we could not cope. I am not coping."*

P7: *"It's difficult to do your work in class because if a learner sees that I did this and nothing was done to me, they do it more. I'm only here because I have a child, and I have a house that I need to pay for, so I must work."*

P8: *"Sometimes learners become rude to us, and it becomes very difficult for us to cope, so teachers are not coping at all."*

P12: *"I don't think anyone is coping in this situation; it's really difficult for all of us."*

It was evident from these responses that teachers find it difficult to cope in stressful situations, particularly when dealing with violent and problematic learners. Participants further explained that it is extremely difficult to cope in an environment where violence is the order of the day and knowing that learners are aware that even when they attack teachers, nothing is being done, they continue to behave badly towards teachers. Therefore, Baxen (2021) concurred with the ideology that it is difficult for most teachers to cope in schools due to the verbal, physical, psychological and emotional violence they experience. Teachers are afraid for their own safety and are therefore unable to take any firm action against problematic learners. Thus, the impact of school violence on curriculum is detrimental, and lessons are disrupted by school violence, and the school's objectives are ultimately unfulfilled (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). Teachers' feelings of powerlessness, frustration, and difficulty in coping have a negative impact on their work performance.

Sub-theme 3: Social isolation and withdrawal

Seven participants voiced their opinions on psychosocial problems encountered by teachers due to school violence. They mentioned that some of the teachers isolate

themselves from social activities because of school violence. Here are some of their opinions:

P3: *"I've seen some colleagues withdrawing from social activities because of the violation they went through in our workplace. It's not a nice feeling to isolate yourself, but when you feel like you have heard enough, you will simply remove yourself from the public."*

P6: *"Teachers become stressed and then withdraw from social involvement. You start seeing people gossiping about you and laughing at you saying: 'That is the teacher who was beaten and insulted by a learner.'"*

P8: *"It's not easy going out to face people when you know that you are not okay emotionally. You turn to lock yourself in your house and avoid going out on public because you are emotionally drained."*

P9: *"One of my colleagues ended up not coming to work, not attending even the school functions or teambuilding activities because of the stress that she was dealing with after her learner slapped her in the face."*

P10: *"I isolate myself in a way, and it will take maybe three to four days to heal, then I will go back to my normal self. Remember, some people are introverted, so it means that they are not telling anyone about their feelings, they are dealing with them alone."*

P12: *"You end up not going out on weekends anymore, you start to be socially isolated because you don't want to be around people anymore."*

The views of the participants exhibited that school violence negatively affects teachers' social life. Participants confessed that some of the teachers avoid going out in public or do not participate in social activities because of school violence. In this light, these scholars (Motsoeneng, 2022; Sibisi, 2021) pointed out that the psychosocial result of school violence against teachers includes loneliness, isolation, withdrawal from social activities, and loss of concentration. Long-term stress in teachers is positively correlated with quitting the teaching profession and adversely correlated with job

satisfaction which could lead to withdrawal symptoms (Agyapong et al., 2022). Furthermore, Okeke et al. (2023:509) agreed that antisocial behaviour on the part of learners has a detrimental effect on teachers' social well-being and that the nature of the relationships between teachers and learners has the potential to force teachers to self-isolate and withdraw from social activities.

Sub-theme 4: Substance abuse

Participants shared their views on the fact that some teachers end up abusing substances in their mission to cope with school violence. Of the twelve participants, six of them agreed that substance abuse became one of the coping mechanisms which teachers used to cope with violent attacks from learners in school. The following are their views:

P3: *"Teachers end up abusing substance while trying to cope with the violations they face from learners. They try to cope and in the process of using substances and coping, they become addicted, leading to the end of their careers."*

P5: *"It's very difficult because we see some of the teachers resorting to alcohol and you think they just want to unwind."*

P7: *"Obviously we are not allowed to do it at work, but this situation does push a person to drink alcohol just to distress."*

P8: *"Some teachers end up being alcoholic or when they get home, they take out that anger to their wives or children."*

P10: *"You would find that most teachers are even alcoholics, because they are trying to cope, some of the teachers came here without drinking alcohol but at the end of the day they are alcoholics, they are drug addicts in a way because of the torture that they are facing every day and it's painful."*

P12: *"You know when they say people become numb? Teachers deal with the abuse of learners and their parents and eventually teachers start to find other solutions to*

cope with violence because they can't afford to go to psychologist. Therefore, they use substances."

Participants' comments revealed that teachers end up drinking alcohol and even using drugs because of school violence. Some participants pointed out that their colleagues were not drinking alcohol when they started working in schools, but they ended up drinking alcohol and even using other substances while trying to cope with the negative effects of school violence on their emotional and psychological well-being. To support this view, Agyapong et al. (2022) alluded that chronic stress may also lead to inappropriate anger and increased alcohol and drug consumption. Therefore, it is evident that the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance are negatively affected. Teachers end up abusing substances in a quest to cope with the challenges they endure in schools, and this evoke feelings of frustration and anger, as elaborated in the frustration-aggression theory discussion in chapter 2, section 2.2.3.

Sub-theme 5: Feelings of fear and anger

Participants voiced their opinions on the psychosocial problems that teachers encounter due to school violence in response to one of the sub-research questions. They pointed out that they experienced feelings of fear and anger towards their learners. Here are some of the responses from seven of the participants:

P3: *"With all the violence that we see even on social media platforms today, there's no doubt why teachers live in fear these days. Naturally, as a human being you are bound to have anger towards the unfairness that we receive from our management and the department itself."*

P4: *"I get angry but always fear that if a learner will attack me again, what if I defend myself in a way that I'll harm the learner and then end up losing my job because of it?"*

P6: *"I cannot work in that stressful situation. I am angry with those learners, and I no longer enjoy what I'm doing; I live in fear of what might transpire in the classrooms. How can you blame someone who is traumatised, who is going to work with fear?"*

P7: *"I am not okay ma'am, I'm angry towards this profession, I feel very frustrated because I am fearing for my life. These learners can do anything to us, and we are not protected."*

P8: *"You would be surprised how old people like us fear such young learners! As angry as you can get sometimes in your classroom when they disrespect you, you just turn a blind eye and ignore it to save your job."*

P9: *"It's not easy to be a teacher these days and we are always in fear of what learners might do to us. Also, because no adult can stand the disrespect that we get from our learners, we get angry and very frustrated."*

Participants declared that they are not at ease within their workplace, they emphasised that they are fear for their lives. This emanated from the kind of violence that they are dealing with every day and the fact that learners get away with a lot of wrongdoing against teachers. Furthermore, participants expressed their feelings of anger towards the unfairness from education management with regard to school violence incidences against teachers. This is in line with the study by Sibisi (2021:38) which noted that teachers fear victimisation and feel helpless against violent learners, and their fearful attitude negatively affects their work performance. Victims of violent behaviour suffer feelings of anxiety, insecurity and fear. Also, Mosito and Sitoyi (2024:132) commented that in the same way that learners deserve to learn in a safe environment, teachers also deserve to teach in a safe environment, free from fear and aggression. In addition, Fakude (2022) explained that teachers live in fear of their lives as well as infringing learners' rights when they retaliate out of anger, and that this could affect or threaten their jobs, or even open lines for further attacks from learners and their parents.

Sub-theme 6: Embarrassment and humiliation

This sub-theme emerged from the sub-research question that explores the psychosocial problems encountered by teachers due to school violence. Six participants responded by saying that they feel humiliated and embarrassed when learners violate them. The following are some of their responses:

P1: *"My colleague had to continue teaching in the very same school, teaching the very same learner who humiliated her, who embarrassed her, who stripped off her dignity."*

P7: *"First of all, it's embarrassing to be insulted by a child or disrespected by a child. You get discouraged. It's difficult to do your work in class because when one learner sees that another one violated you and nothing was done, they do it more."*

P6: *"It's humiliating and embarrassing to be insulted or beaten by a learner, you end up avoiding going out in public because you feel like you are a laughingstock because people are gossiping about you because they don't understand what you are going through."*

P12: *"The first thing that will happen is that you will be embarrassed, and when a teacher is embarrassed, s/he will not be able to stand in front of the learners and teach them."*

P8: *"I was humiliated by learners on several occasions. A learner attacked me physically and I avoided to retaliate because I knew other learners might take a video of me retaliating and I might end up being on the wrong side of the law."*

P3: *"These learners even know what to do, or which buttons to press just to embarrass you in class. They go out of their way to humiliate you, especially when they have noticed that you get irritated easily."*

These responses revealed that participants feel embarrassed due to school violence. They emphasised that they even avoid retaliating when learners attack them to protect their jobs. According to Sibisi (2021:38), even though teachers are supposed to lead and manage their classrooms, they are often embarrassed and humiliated by the learners they teach, right in front of other learners. Also, a study by Qualter, Rouncefield-Swales, Bray, Blake, Allen, Probert, Crook and Carter (2021) revealed that anxiety and sadness are significantly preceded by feelings of embarrassment. Regardless of the amount of time that has gone, victims of humiliation frequently experience vivid memories of the humiliating occurrence because humiliation is an intensely self-conscious feeling (Li, Heward, Merrick, Astridge & Leow, 2024:2). When

there is a witness to an embarrassing incident, the victim is likely to feel small, helpless, and inferior. This makes them perceive the situation as unfair, which creates a distinct combination of fundamental and self-conscious feelings (Elshout, Nelissen & van Beest, 2017). Thus, this is in line with the frustration-aggression theory of Breuer and Elson (2017:1) which suggests that individuals who experience frustration or whose goals are being stifled are more likely to demonstrate humiliation, embarrassment and aggressive behaviour.

4.3.3 Theme 3: The impact of school violence on teachers' work performance

This theme responded to the interview question that tried to establish the impact of school violence on teachers' work performance. The responses of participants to this question resulted in the emergence of these sub-themes: loss of confidence and interest, avoidance behaviour, teachers' under-performance, negative attitude towards work, and teachers' absenteeism.

Sub-theme 1: Loss of confidence, motivation and interest

Seven participants gave their responses with regard to the impact of school violence on teachers' work performance and the first sub-theme that emerged from this sub-research question was participants' loss of confidence, motivation and interest in the teaching profession. Here are the responses from these seven participants:

P1: *"You end up losing confidence and motivation. You can't work with pride, and you don't feel worthy of standing in front of those learners and teach them. You even lose your self-esteem."*

P2: *"Many teachers are salary collectors. In the schools nowadays, teachers can't even scold learners. They are either stabbed or beaten up by learners."*

P3: *"Learners do all sorts of thing to make teachers feel humiliated or embarrassed. They can even go as far as to body-shame teachers or make comments such as, 'Why did you choose to work in this school?' That is their way of suggesting that you are not worthy of being their teacher."*

P6: *"We are no longer interested in what we do; we don't know how to handle learners anymore."*

P7: *"I am thinking of leaving because honestly, I'm no longer happy in this environment. I want to leave this job because my health is deteriorating because of whatever is happening around me. This violence is taking a toll on my health and my emotions, so I'm no longer interested to be a teacher or work with kids anymore."*

P12: *"You know, you'll even end up losing interest in your work; you find yourself not having any confidence whatsoever to stand in front of the learners and teach. We are discouraged and less motivated as teachers. to be honest."*

Participants' responses exhibited that school violence negatively impacts teachers' functionality in schools. They pointed out that learners' attacks on them demotivates them and result in low self-esteem and lack of motivation in their work. Also, they expressed that they are no longer interested in their work because of violent working environment that they live in daily. In this light, Cabaron and Oco (2023:2) highlighted that teachers' motivation is an important factor in creating a conducive environment for teaching and learning. On the other hand, Singh and Steyn (2014:87) warned that poor self-esteem, low morale, a lack of motivation, and lack of confidence in oneself can result in feelings of insecurity, which ultimately leads to fear and anxiety. Therefore, it is evident that when teachers are not comfortable in their workplaces, they will lose a sense of motivation and confidence, which will in turn affect their work performance.

Sub-theme 2: Avoidance behaviour

This sub-theme emerged from the participants' responses to the question of how school violence impacts teachers' work performance. Five participants responded by saying that they avoid going to classes in which violent incidents occurred. Here are some of their responses:

P3: *"The only thing that you can do to save yourself from troubles, and to save your job is to avoid whatever you think might provoke you or hurt your feelings. So, avoiding altercations with learners is the best way to deal with their misbehaviour."*

P4: *"I tried to ignore learners who are violent, and I'm always on edge. I'm always trying to avoid confrontation as much as I can. I just try to avoid it and try to keep peace in my classroom as much as possible. Also, one of my female colleagues does everything in her power to avoid going to class because her class is so unruly and when the bell rings she takes as longer time as possible to avoid going to class."*

P8: *"You find that doctors book us off just so we can rest and be away from work".*

P10: *"If something happened today, tomorrow it's very difficult when you must go back to class to face learners."*

P12: *"One coping mechanism that I use is to always be on defence. Whatever it is that learners are saying to me, I just avoid them and ignore them by putting a long face already so that they don't even get to say anything that will affect me. You walk away and that means the work will not be covered because you are avoiding getting into situations with learners."*

Participants declared that they avoid confrontation with learners, they avoid arguments and altercations just to keep peace in their classrooms. They even confessed that they try to walk away from situations that might trigger learner attacks, and they ignore violent learners or provocation from them, and they go as far as avoiding going to those classes in which they were attacked by learners. With these views being expressed, Sambo and Govender (2023:24) attested that violation is painful for its victims and it has the potential to cause health problems for some victims; some may even develop avoidance behaviour because they avoid going back to the places where their violation occurred to limit the chances of its re-occurrence. In addition, Moreroa (2022) warned that teachers are reluctant and avoid going to classes due to the high level of school violence which needs to be dealt with urgently, to prioritise safety within the school environment. Furthermore, Venketsamy et al., (2023:52) posited that teachers who are exposed to school violence feel belittled and helpless, making them scared and anxious about going into the classrooms and facing these learners.

Sub-theme 3: Teachers' underperformance

Participants expressed their concerns about their work performance that had declined and was still declining due to school violence. Six participants confessed that learners' violent behaviour affects their work performance, and the following were their responses:

P5: *"Obviously the performance will be bad because we set targets, and it's very difficult in reaching a target with learners who are not interested in listening to you. Also, when there's no good relationship between a learner and a teacher, obviously your performance will be affected, which paints you as a teacher who is underperforming."*

P6: *"A lot of these schools are underperforming, and then the department is blaming teachers. How can you blame someone who is traumatised, who is going to work with fear? So, obviously the performance will be poor, from higher grades to lower grades."*

P7: *"Obviously my work performance has declined because it's not easy working under such conditions. Even when you wake up in the morning and knowing that you're going to face such conditions! It's difficult."*

P8: *"It affects our work negatively, you just go to work for the sake of going; you just tell yourself let me just go to class, present the lesson and go. You no longer go an extra mile to assist learners anymore."*

P9: *"The biggest problem about our work is that it is gauged on competence, so it is very difficult to produce the kind of results that you want if you deal with quite violent learners. So, it plays a very big and negative role in your performance as a teacher because it is very difficult to perform to the best of your ability if you are dealing with violent learners."*

P10: *"School violence affects my work performance very badly. If something happened today, tomorrow it's very difficult when you must go back to class to face learners. Yes, I teach but without that oomph."*

From these responses, it is evident that participants have lost interest in their work, and this results in their work performance and competency declining because they are traumatised and struggled to perform to the level of the school's and department's expectation. The participants confessed that they no longer go the extra mile in teaching learners, and that they found it difficult teaching learners who are not even willing to cooperate and engage with lessons. Thus, Aldrup et al. (2018) warned that violence not only impacts quality education but also affects teachers' well-being. Also, violence has a detrimental effect on the well-being of the victimised teachers as well as the standard of their work performance, according to De Cordova et al. (2019). In addition, Mahaye and Ajani (2023) warned that a significant percentage of teachers have experienced school violence in their careers, and these experiences have the potential to result in fatigue, or posttraumatic disorder. This view concurs with participants' responses when admitting that they find it difficult to deal with violent learners, particularly when they (teachers) are traumatised and do not feel like going to work to face learners anymore.

Sub-theme 4: Negative attitude towards work

This sub-theme emerged from participants' responses with regard to the impact which school violence has on teachers' work performance. Six participants voiced their opinions in this way:

P2: *"School violence is killing the passion of teaching in our schools, and teachers have withdrawn from being positive about their work; they have slowly been developing negative attitude towards this profession."*

P5: *"You find yourself being affected negatively, and somehow losing interest in going to the classroom. Each time you must go to class, you ask yourself what am I going to do in that classroom? Somehow, as a teacher you end up having negative attitude towards your work."*

P7: *"Sometimes you start questioning your career choice by saying, did I really do the right choice here?" Because I suffer from hypertension and whenever I experience that it shoots up, I had to go to the doctor because of it."*

P8: *“When you are frustrated and you are angry at how things are done in your workplace, you will have negative attitude towards that job. There is no way that you can be happy.”*

P10: *“I will not even encourage anyone to become a teacher because emotionally and psychologically I am damaged.”*

P12: *“You know, when learners disrespect you, you end up having negative thoughts and attitude towards your own job. You end up not enjoying waking up in the morning to come to work.”*

Participants expressed that they have lost interest in their work and even developed a negative attitude towards the teaching profession. They further declared that they are no longer enjoying being teachers, and that they will not even encourage anyone to become a teacher as this profession is psychologically and emotionally damaging. In this light, Baxen (2021) found that violence against teachers has led to them becoming disillusioned, anxious, depressed, stressed and hostile towards the profession. Also, Zhou et al. (2022) pointed out that people who are experiencing negative feelings may choose to cope by avoiding situations or denying reality. Thus, Kapa and Gimbert (2018) reiterated that stressful work conditions have a detrimental effect on teachers' personal health, which can lead to poor productivity and a negative attitude toward both their profession and the pupils they teach.

Sub-theme 5: Teachers' absenteeism

Participants responded to the impact of school violence on teachers' work performance and they mentioned that teachers are regularly absent from work due to school violence against them. Here are some of the responses from the six participants who commented on this aspect:

P3: *“You hesitate to go to work and eventually you decide it's better to be absent from work to stay away from unpleasant situation you are facing every day.”*

P4: *“Honestly, I agree that school violence can force teachers to be absent from work.”*

P7: *“The teacher that was slapped by a learner was absent from work for almost two weeks and she even left the school; she’s no longer working here because of that incident that happened to her.”*

P8: *“Sometimes, as a teacher, when you have to wake up and go to work you think about all the challenges that you are going through, you decide to go to the doctor so the doctor can book you off, so you don’t go to work.”*

P10: *“Teachers even become absent from work hundred percent.”*

P12: *“Definitely, we avoid even coming to work sometimes because we are trying to heal and recuperate from home. Being absent does not necessarily mean that we don’t want to work anymore but it is a coping mechanism to some of us because we are demoralised.”*

Maslach (2017) explained that the teacher in the exhaustion stage would no longer go the extra mile to present and support their learners. These teachers will often be absent from school and eventually resign from the profession (Bounds & Jenkins, 2018). Teacher absenteeism due to stress and depression might be viewed as a transient phenomenon that prevents teaching and learning. In addition, (Turanovic & Siennick, 2022) concurred that teachers may experience depression and prolonged absences from work due to illness because of the extreme stress that occurs from school violence. This is in line with a study by Singh and Steyn (2014:85) which suggested that teachers who experience stress-related issues often take extended leaves of absence from school, which negatively impacts both teaching and learning in the classroom.

4.3.4 Theme 4: Strategies to deal with school violence

This theme responds to the interview question that tried to establish the strategies that can be adopted to deal with school violence. The responses of participants on this question resulted in the emergence of the following sub-themes: one school, one social worker principle, teambuilding and counselling sessions, educational workshops and training, parental involvement and learner engagement, tighter

security measures in schools, schools' policy amendments and implementation, and collaborations between the department of education, social development and police.

Sub-theme 1: One school, one social worker principle

The one school, one social worker principle was one of the strategies suggested by participants to deal with school violence. Six participants expressed their concerns about the fact that teachers are not trained to handle problematic learners in schools; they need the assistance of professional social workers to intervene in challenges that might be the influencing factors in learners' violent behaviours. These are some of their responses:

P1: *"There is no need for the whole district to have only three or four social workers who are expected to deal with more than hundred schools. Each school need to have their own social worker who will be available every day for learners."*

P3: *"We as teachers cannot deal with learners on our own. We need social workers in our schools to help learners with the challenges that they face because, at the end of the day, whatever they are going through, they bring it along in the classrooms."*

P6: *"The department must provide schools with social workers and psychologists, because most of the schools don't have social workers. And the psychologists and social workers are trained, they know more about children, and they will be able to speak to those children who might have challenges."*

P7: *"We do have a social worker in our school, but I think the services provide to learners are not enough in terms of containing these learners' behaviour. Maybe teachers need to identify learners who are problematic and refer them to the social worker right away."*

P9: *"We do have social workers in Motheo District that are helping learners with the underlying issues that I spoke about, however, they are not enough. This is because you would find that about three or four social workers are working with all schools in a district, and they are unable to reach all learners and the challenges they face. It would*

have been better if each school has a social worker who is full time at school to enable him/her to make follow-ups on these learners.”

P10: *“Also, availability of social workers in schools will help a lot because these learners are going through a lot of challenges. So, you would find that their behaviour stems from bad experiences, so they come here sad, unhappy, so, once you say something to them, they start to retaliate.”*

Participants expressed their concerns about the lack of social workers in schools. They even pointed out that every school must at least have a resident social worker who will be available for learners within the school premises daily. In this light, Reyneke (2018) alluded that teachers are not trained to provide the psychosocial support to learners; thus, it is important that schools hire social workers to provide these services to learners. However, although role players, policy documents and court findings directly or indirectly suggested the need for social services for learners, social workers are not commonly employed in South African schools (Reyneke, 2018). Thus, Vergottini and Weyers (2020) commented that from the review that places South African learners at risk, it has become evident that they need social worker services; however, the local response to this need has been insufficient. This concurs with participants' views on the fact that there is lack of social workers in schools, which makes it difficult for teachers to deal with learners who have underlying issues.

Sub-theme 2: Teambuilding and counselling sessions

Teambuilding and counselling sessions were one of the strategies which seven participants suggested that through its implementation, school violence could be dealt with. They also suggested that not only do learners need social services, but teachers who are victims and witnesses of school violence need teambuilding, psychosocial support and counselling. Here are some of the responses:

P1: *“As victims and witnesses of school violence, we need debriefing, we need teambuilding because we become traumatised because of this. Frustrated, and we end up suffering from chronic diseases while we are still young.”*

P3: *"I think mental health support and counselling can be very helpful to victims and witnesses of violence against teachers. Also, parents, teachers and learners all need to be counselled because we are all affected one way or another by school violence".*

P5: *"I think that teachers should be afforded counselling."*

P7: *"We need emotional support from our superiors, because if they can't support you, how are you going to continue working and giving your best?"*

P8: *"As teachers we need psychologists that are provided for by the department. So, people from wellness department must come to our rescue because we are dealing with so many problems."*

P10: *"I think that we need to have psychologists that will work with us only. Those that will always be available for us without me taking my medical aid and go somewhere to get help. Teachers must not wait for the South African Democratic Teachers' Union [SADTU] to come and engage when there is an issue because they take too long to come to us. So, I think teachers need to have their own psychologists that are paid by the DBE and by the schools."*

P12: *"We need mental health care and psychologists are expensive. If you want to give people benefits, move with the times because mental health is very important. So, in their busy schedules the departmental officials need to find time to make sessions and talk to teachers about their challenges, where they ask teachers to say their grievances, so that they can close the gap between us and them, so that they understand what we are going through daily."*

It was evident from the participants' responses that teambuilding, debriefing sessions and psychological counselling is essential to give participants a sense of support and to allow them to process and deal with school violence trauma. Participants mentioned that they are traumatised due to acts of violence against them, and since psychologists are expensive, they need to be afforded free counselling and be provided with emotional support from their superiors, the school management and the DBE. In this light, Venketsamy (2024:172) suggested that the DBE should offer support through

training and development, psychological services, social workers, or counsellors who can help teachers cope with or manage school violence. Also, according to De Cordova et al. (2019) a school management structure that favours team-working and participative decision-making can help teachers cope with the emotional and psychological activation caused by school violence. Thus, it is important for teachers who have fallen victim to school violence to receive psychosocial support so that they are able to provide good quality education to learners and maintain good relationships with learners and their parents.

Sub-theme 3: Educational workshops and training

In this sub-theme five participants shared their perceptions on strategies that can be applied to deal with school violence against teachers. They highlighted that educational workshop, and training are needed to guide teachers on how to deal with violent learners. Here are some of their responses:

P5: *"I also think that there should be training because obviously corporal punishment is not allowed, so we should be given training where we are trained on how to discipline learners."*

P8: *"This is where wellness department comes in. We need workshops, or people from wellness must come to school from time to time to advise us on how to deal with this trauma."*

P7: *"Also, there is no book that tells you how to talk to a learner when they insult you, or when a learner pushes you; we are just told that we should act professionally because we are professionals, we need to keep calm, we are not taught or trained on how to handle such situations."*

P9: *"We are not trained to deal with some of the challenges that learners experience. The level of training in terms of psychology is quite limited; therefore, we are unable to deal with parent learners, or learners who do not know parental love; therefore, we need to be trained for such."*

P10: *"I think it is important that we get training because it will help you as a teacher not to do certain things when a learner retaliates. So that training is very important to deal with certain things."*

These participants felt that it is vital that they get training on how to deal with learners, with regard to disciplinary measures that they need to apply in the classrooms instead of corporal punishment. Also, participants highlighted that they are not told how to handle school violence against them; rather they are told to behave and act like professionals, yet they are frustrated with the level of disrespect that they endure from learners. In this light, a study by Waghid and Davids (2020) revealed that teachers frequently concede that they no longer possess authority over their classrooms; frequently, they are uninformed of substitutes for physical disciplinary measures that are diplomatic, appropriate, and non-offensive to learners. In addition, there should be teacher workshops during which the developmental traits of every age group as well as the social and psychological expectations of each stage will be discussed (Zedain & Jawad, 2020:1207). Lastly, Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) posited that schools must conduct awareness workshops on teaching learners and parents about different types of school violence and training teachers on how to deal with violent learners.

Sub-theme 4: Parental involvement and learner engagement

Participants expressed their concerns about parents' non-engagement in their children's education. They felt that parents are not involved in their children's learning and the day-to-day running of the school. Seven participants shared their views in this way:

P2: *"There are no rules in the education ministry that abide parents to their obligations as the education stakeholders. Some parents don't even show up for parents' meetings at schools, they don't entertain the affairs of the school. Even when you call them to school because their children done something wrong, they never come."*

P6: *"Parents must be involved; they must know what ubuntu is and teach their children about ubuntu. They must stop complaining when they are told what their children are doing at school, they must be involved and assist us as teachers."*

P7: *"The problem with parents is that they forget that their children disrespect us because they know that we are not their biological parents. The behaviour that their children display at home is different from what we see here. So, parents need to be involved and assist with their children bad behaviour."*

P8: *"During our times education system used to be referred to as a three-legged pot. One leg represents teachers, the other represents parents and the other represents learners. If that pot lacks one leg, it will not be able to stand on the fire and cook good food. So, there must be an interrelationship between the parents, the learners and the teacher, whereby there must be communication from time to time. There shouldn't be lack of communication."*

P9: *"There's a Sesotho idiom that says, 'E maoto a mararo' meaning 'A pot has three legs', meaning that if one leg breaks, the whole pot will fall. Therefore, there should be a good relationship between parents, teachers and learners for the smooth running of the school. They should be in collaboration with each other because teachers spend long hours with learners, so parents should be involved in their children's education. Also, parents must be encouraged to come to school from time to time and not come only when there is a problem."*

P10: *"That is why it is conducive for me as a teacher to have a certain relationship with their parents. Whatever a learner is doing I have to call their parents, I must engage their parents, I must ensure that whatever the learners are doing their parents knows. Because if I form healthy relationships with their parents, it will be easier for me to form a healthy relationship with their children."*

P12: *"I think parents need to teach their children respect; they need to teach them that the same way their children respects them, they need to extend that respect to their teachers as well."*

According to these participants, parents should be involved in assisting teachers and schools with regards to their children's misbehaviour. Also, participants highlighted that some parents avoid coming to school when they are requested to do so. They also suggested that it is important that parents teach their children good manners,

respect and the principle of ubuntu. This is supported by Nhambura's (2020) study which suggested that parents must monitor and support their children at home and support schools for effective interventions to be successful. Moreover, if parents work together with schools, issues of school violence can be addressed successfully (Sibisi, 2021:79). Also, there should be meetings and workshops for parents to showcase the techniques and strategies of good parenting that are concentrated on allowing youngsters to have a space to express their opinions and thoughts, emphasising the positive elements of their personalities, and employing techniques of reinforcement (Zedain & Jawad, 2020:1207). According to research by Sibisi (2016:49) and Van Zyl (2022), parental involvement in school-based activities, community support, and involvement in school-wide violence prevention initiatives enable schools and teachers to foster and uphold appropriate behaviours.

Sub-theme 5: Tighter security measures in schools

This sub-theme responded to strategies that could be applied in dealing with school violence against teachers by either learners or their parents. Here five participants felt that there should be tighter security measures to regulate the movements of people, particularly the parents within the school environments. Here are some of their responses:

P3: *"Schools need to implement tighter security measures, particularly from the main gate. When parents want to meet with a teacher, there should be a mediator between the parents and the teacher to monitor the meeting."*

P5: *"We need to have tighter security measures because if a teacher is attacked by parents inside the school yard, we should ask ourselves, what happened at the gate, what happened in the admin block?"*

P6: *"The department must make sure that they hire security in schools. Learners must be searched when they get inside the school yard for guns, knives, etc. Security needs to control the movements of everyone that is coming in and out of the school yard, particularly parents, they should be escorted and not be left alone to go confront teachers."*

P7: *“Schools need security guards, but you can’t just hire an old man to come and assist with security at school, a man who can be easily pushed by the learners; they need to hire professionals to assist us, because we are dealing with learners who use drugs, we are dealing with learners who have emotional issues.”*

P12: *“There should be strict security measures, especially with regards to parents visiting our schools. They cannot just demand to see teachers or even go as far as going to the teachers’ classrooms. They need to set appointments and wait for the teacher in the receptions at least. I believe it is safer that way.”*

Participants felt that it is unfortunate that parents can walk through the securities and the admin block and start attacking teachers within the school premises. Also, their concerns derived from the fact that schools lack trained security guards that will secure the school environments and ensure teachers’ safety. A study conducted by Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) suggested that securing the school premises and being strict about who is admitted to the school grounds is a practical problem that needs serious attention. Also, according to Chetty (2021), principals and teachers should be guaranteed security from learners’ attacks. There must be assurances about school security, and no teacher should ever feel in danger within the school environment, because strict measures should be implemented to make sure that similar behaviours do not happen again (Chetty, 2021). According to South Africa’s National School Safety Framework (NSSF) everyone involved in the school system must take a leading role in making sure that there is no violence or other threat to teachers, students, or other stakeholders. School safety should be determined by data-driven decision-making, with defined regulations and guidelines serving as the foundation, according to Reimers, Schleicher, Saavedra and Tuominen (2020). Creating a weapon-free school zone, reporting violent offenders to law enforcement, and utilising security guards, peer mediation, and crisis intervention teams are some suggested strategies for reducing violence (McMahon, 2019; Peist et al., 2020).

Sub-theme 6: Schools’ policy amendments and implementation

This sub-theme resulted from the participants’ responses when asked about the intervention strategies that could be applied in schools to curb the violent school acts against teachers. Seven participants responded this way:

P2: *"The only highest form of discipline applicable for violent learners right now is suspension and unfortunately these learners want to be suspended because they know they'll still be doing their schoolwork from home, so there's nothing different."*

P3: *"I think our schools need to rethink and restructure their policies. For instance, the School's Code of Conduct should be adopted in such a way that it assists by dealing with violence in our schools. Learners need to know that they will be punished if they are found to be at fault with any of the rules."*

P7: *"Schools should implement a no-tolerance principle. If a teacher at any point feels threatened, abused, insulted by a child, that child must be punished, they must go home. We cannot call parents to come to school and come negotiate to bring a child back to school."*

P8: *"The Department of Basic Education needs to reconsider the disciplinary measures that needs to be implemented to reprimand learners."*

P9: *"Since corporal punishment isn't used anymore, it is very important for us to play by the book. By this I mean as schools and teachers we should establish policies that are aligned with the country's legislation. We need to make sure that we have clear policies in place that deal with all sorts of violence in schools; policies that stipulate the kind of violence and disciplinary measure that needs to be implemented against."*

P10: *"The Department of Basic Education and School Management Teams must ensure that the very same way they deal with situations when a teacher is doing something wrong to a learner, that must also be done with a learner who has violated a teacher."*

P12: *"The sooner schools review and revise the school's code of conduct, the better. Learner cannot be allowed to do as they please and get away with crimes in our schools. They must know that they will be punished."*

From these responses, participants are concerned about their safety in schools, thus they suggested that school management teams, as well as the DBE should reconsider the school policies. They further suggested that in the same way that the DBE deals with teachers who violate learners, learners who violate teachers must be dealt with accordingly. In addition, their views highlighted that schools lack effective disciplinary measures that can be applied to learners who attack or violate teachers. However, Okeke (2020) has argued that the moment teachers are not able to reprimand disruptive learners, especially considering the abolishment of corporal punishment, the elements of safety and discipline in schools collapse. Therefore, McMahon, Peist et al. (2020) suggested that protocols and processes should be in place in schools to guarantee the security of both teachers and learners.

Sub-theme 7: Collaborations between department of education, social development and police

Five participants in this study suggested that it is necessary that there should be collaborations between different law enforcement agencies to mitigate school violence in South African schools. Participants also highlighted that schools cannot fight school violence on their own without working with other governmental departments to assist in fighting this phenomenon. Here are the views of these participants:

P1: *“All departments need to work together in fighting school violence against teachers. The social development, South African police and DBE must work together to fight this matter because really, it is getting out of hand.”*

P3: *“I believe there should be collaboration between different governmental departments. Like for instance, the police should be involved in cases whereby learners attack teachers. Also, the department of social development needs to see to it that learners with underlying issues get rehabilitation. The DBE cannot work on their own in this regard.”*

P6: *“There should be a collaboration between the DBE, SAPS, correction services and social development. Police officials need to come, invite prisoners and prison warders to come and talk to these learners, they need to know how bad it is inside jail, so that they can be informed about the life in prison.”*

P7: "It's time that our schools, or even the department of education, they need to collaborate with the police because this violence cannot be contained by schools alone, we need help from the South African Police Services (SAPS) and Social development because some of these learners are emotionally and psychologically damaged."

P12: "I think we need to bring back motivational speakers in our schools. I think schools need to invite people from prisons, and other departments to come and talk to learners to make them understand the importance of being a learner."

From these views, it is evident that participants believed that schools are incapable of containing or curbing school violence on their own. Participants suggested that there should be collaborations between various law enforcement agencies to fight school violence. Also, participants suggested that motivational speaking and raising awareness about life in prisons may discourage learners from misbehaving and instil morals that are seemingly lost from learners' behaviour. These views are in line with Radebe and Kyobe's (2021) study, which suggested that it is vital for schools to collaborate with law enforcement to mitigate school violence through proactive strategies such as raising awareness among learners about obtaining a criminal record which might negatively affect their employment opportunities in future. Also, Chauke (2024:10) reiterated that collaborative partnerships between schools and law enforcement agencies have the potential to mitigate acts of school violence and enhancing a safe environment within a school setting. However, Devlin and Gottfredson (2020) argued that the efficacy of police involvement in minimising school violence remains questionable and uncertain. Lastly, the department expressed concern about the violence in schools and, as per Motshekga (2019), they are making every effort to collaborate with the Department of Social Development, the South African Police Force, and communities to stop violence against teachers in South African schools.

4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the findings of this study based on the data that were collected through semi-structured interviews from twelve participants in four high schools of the Motheo District of the Free State. The data were analysed through the utilisation of the thematic data analysis method. Four secondary research questions were used to extract four corresponding themes from the raw data of the participants. Furthermore, sub-themes were developed from the coded data. Thus, the findings were compiled from both themes and the sub-themes which responded to the main research and the sub-research questions.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the discussion of findings and summarises the study's findings. It further discusses the implications of the study and recommends ideas for future research. Also, it highlights the limitations of this study and presents a conclusion of this study on the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance. Thus, the findings that are discussed in this chapter emanates from these primary research questions:

- How do teachers perceive school violence?
- What are the psychosocial problems teachers encounters at school?
- How does school violence impact teachers' work performance?
- What strategies can be adopted to deal with school violence?

5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

In Chapter 4, the participants' responses to the first sub-research question: teachers' perception of school violence, were analysed, presented and interpreted. Thus, this section discusses the findings thereof. These findings are discussed in relation to scholarly articles that were presented in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of this research paper. This discussion will focus on the four main themes that emerged and were discussed in Chapter 4. Therefore, the question "How do teachers perceive school violence?" was responded to by the following views of the participants:

5.2.1 Theme 1: Teachers' perception of school violence

The findings of this study revealed that teachers feel vulnerable as they are not protected and supported by the schools' management and/or the DBE. Govender (2015:96) supported the idea by highlighting that teachers end up feeling frustrated by the fact that they do not get much support from the management and that schools' policies let them down. Also, teachers felt that learners are more protected than teachers. They explained that even when learners attack teachers, teachers are not supposed to defend themselves, they are expected to stand still for learners to assault

them as they please because they are regarded as professionals and, therefore, they are expected to behave as professionals. Thus, Chatty (2020:36) pointed out that teachers find it difficult to defend themselves against learner violation and attacks or seek support as it is unlikely that the parents, principals, or the department would believe them. Also, there is a high possibility of teachers experiencing violent attacks from learners (Mdhluli, 2018:12), and this affects the classroom environment because teachers end up feeling powerless and demotivated to deal with learners' violence against them (Zuze et al., 2016:2). In addition, teachers expressed that they are not safe within their workplaces because some parents are able to walk inside the school yard and go to teachers' classrooms to physically attack them. Also, Peist McMahon, Davis and Keys (2020) corroborated that there is an absolute lack of support for victimised teachers from administrators.

Furthermore, teachers emphasised that they are not safe in their workplaces and that they are not protected by their superiors or/and their employers. They felt that the violence that is directed to them, is not only coming from learners but even from the learners' parents. One teacher even explained that parents can attack teachers right inside the school premises, and this leads to teachers developing frustration and ending up showing signs of aggression towards learners.

P7 "We are not protected as teachers, learners are protected over us, and they can see that they are protected therefore they abuse us every day and since parents are even able to get inside the school yard and start assaulting teachers within the school premises, it means we are not safe, and we are totally not protected."

Moreover, the findings revealed that learners' backgrounds influence their moral behaviour and how they behave towards others. Teachers pointed out that learners' violent behaviour emanates from their poor and violent backgrounds in which they are abused, neglected, some come from child-headed families, and some are already parents while they are still in their teenagehood. Also, Mwaniki (2018) concurred, saying that learners' violent behaviour stems from their societal backgrounds, and their overall behaviour. Moreover, Mkhize and Sibisi (2021:721) suggested that learners' behaviour at school will be permanently impacted by the amount of crime and violence in the neighbourhoods where schools are located.

According to Mkhize and Sibisi (2021:722) the problem of violence in inner-city schools and the problem of violence in society at large, are inextricably linked. Thus, teachers alluded to the fact that some schools are situated in the townships; this environment plays a bigger role in how learners behave as they observe the livelihoods of their surroundings. Also, as discussed in Chapter 2 (sub-section 2.3.2), a study by McMahon et al. (2022:400) revealed that due to the number of violent acts that learners witness, they perceive violence as a normal way of life; this study has demonstrated that learners who have been subjected to more risk factors than protective variables have a higher propensity to use violence. One of the teachers explained the influence of poor and violent backgrounds of learners and how it affects their overall feelings and behaviour.

P9: *“Unfortunately we are working in township schools, and we are dealing with learners that are quite angry, learners who come from very poor and very bad backgrounds. Some are coming from child-headed families, where they don’t even know where their next meal will come from. Some are parents themselves at a very young age, and these are the types of learners that are very problematic and very violent.”*

Findings revealed that the teachers’ feelings about the issue of violence in schools is that, since they are unable to deal with school violence in their classrooms, learners take advantage of the situation and attack teachers because they know that nothing will be done to them. This frustrates teachers and eventually they become aggressive towards learners. This is evident in the study by Chitrakar and Nisanth (2023:3) which suggests that frustration can manifest as aggression, and this affects teachers’ interactions with learners, colleagues, and school management. Meanwhile, Sambo and Govender (2023:24) explained that there are currently limited strict laws in place that protect teachers from being violated by learners at their workplace. However, the findings revealed that teachers are concerned with the fact that when teachers have done wrong to learners, the DBE is quick to react by punishing the teacher at fault, but when a learner is the one who is at fault, nothing is being done about it.

P5: *“The Department of Basic Education does not do anything to support us as teachers. In a case where the learner has abused a teacher, that learner will not be punished, but if it is a teacher at fault, we get dismissed or suspended immediately.”*

The overall feeling of the teachers is that the DBE took away their rights as teachers and gave the rights to learners. Also, they felt it was unfair of the DBE to ban corporal punishment from schools but failed to provide effective disciplinary measures that could be utilised to curb learners' misbehaviours. Thus, Khanare, Munje and Mbambo (2019) agreed that a lack of alternatives to corporal punishment is directly related to violence. This means that teachers have not identified alternative disciplinary measures, and this is perceived by learners as weakness and teachers' inability to effectively conduct classroom management. Thus, according to the findings, teachers felt that this lack of disciplinary measures exacerbates an increase in learners' violent behaviour (Khanare et al., 2019). Teachers in this study highlighted the types of violence that they experience from learners which include insults, swearing, slapping, pushing, physical fights, and even body-shaming. In addition, some learners are said to carry dangerous weapons, and some even invite their gang groups to school to fight teachers and, in the worst-case scenarios, learners even stab or shoot and kill teachers at school. However, nothing is being done to the perpetrators of violence in schools.

P4: *"As you know, we are not allowed to be engaged in corporal punishment, but sometimes you get incidents where learners attack the teachers, and nothing happens to those learners."*

Sadly, school violence against teachers not only affects their well-being, but also affects their morality and threatens their personal safety in their work environment.

5.2.2 Theme 2: Psychosocial problems encountered by teachers at school

The findings revealed that teachers felt demoralised and stressed because of school violence. Some teachers battle with the psychosocial problems such as depression, low self-esteem, burnout, social isolation, fear, anger and humiliation and embarrassment. Also, it was revealed in the findings that some teachers are so demotivated that they even want to quit the teaching profession as they fear for their lives and safety in their work environments. This is supported by Maran and Begotti's (2020) study which suggested that the effects of school violence on teachers include psychological and physical suffering such as fatigue, depression, anguish, dissatisfaction, turnover, and plans to leave the position. Furthermore, because teachers are demoralised, they do not want to put more effort into their work, they do

not want to go the extra mile for their learners anymore as they fear for their safety. Masinga (2019) concurred with this view by adding that teachers are afraid to put in more time in their work to assist learners since learners might attack them even after school. Also, Chetty (2021) reiterated that teachers feel unprotected, threatened, and anxious in their work environments.

Furthermore, it was clear from the findings that teachers suffered these psychosocial problems, irrespective of whether they were victims or witnesses of school violence. The phenomenon of school violence affects both the victims and the witnesses the same way. This is exhibited by Govender's (2018) study which revealed that a teacher who saw her colleague being stabbed to death, was afraid to go to work and, ever since the incident, she has experienced difficulty sleeping. Also, this is evident in one of the participants' comments when narrating how school violence affected his colleague to the point of suffering from depression, which in turn affected the witness and influenced the witness to quit his job in fear of experiencing the same violation.

P4: *"I saw my poor colleague having difficulty to cope, and I watched him battling with depression. Because of that I had to quit my job and move to another school, fearing that I might go through the same situation".*

Furthermore, the findings revealed that school violence affects teachers' social lives. After they have been attacked by either learners or their parents, they tend to isolate themselves from the public; they withdraw from social activities because they feel humiliated and embarrassed. This is supported by Li's (2023) study which suggested that teachers who were subjected to physical or verbal abuse by learners or their parents showed significant emotional and social problems in their personal and professional lives. Additionally, the findings of past research by Maran and Begotti (2020:2) support the notion that psychosocial issues may arise for teachers, including feelings of uncertainty, demoralisation, self-isolation, and disempowerment.

Furthermore, Okeke et al. (2023:509) agreed that antisocial behaviour on the part of learners has a detrimental effect on teachers' social well-being and that the nature of the relationships between both teachers and pupils has an impact on teachers' social well-being. In addition, these scholars (De Wet, 2016; Sibisi, 2021; Motsoeneng, 2022)

pointed out that the psychosocial result of school violence against teachers includes loneliness, isolation, withdrawal from social activities, and loss of concentration. Thus, teachers in this study felt that they ended up experiencing withdrawal behaviour and isolating themselves from the public because of the violence and humiliation they experienced from their learners. One of the teachers made a comment which explicitly demonstrates the psychosocial problems they experienced in this way:

P3: *"I've seen some colleagues withdrawing from social activities because of the violation they went through in our workplace. It's not a nice feeling to isolate yourself, but when you feel like you have heard enough, you will simply remove yourself from the public".*

The findings further revealed that teachers who are affected by school violence end up resorting to substance abuse, attempting to cope with the humiliation and embarrassment of being attacked by learners. This is supported by Agyapong et al.'s (2022) view when they stated that when a people experience chronic stress, this may lead to inappropriate frustration or anger and an increased alcohol consumption and drug abuse. Teachers in this study felt that the torture they face daily from learners at their workplace forces them to end up abusing drugs as a coping mechanism. They said they end up even directing their anger to their loved ones as they are afraid of losing their jobs if they attempt to retaliate towards learners' violence. This view is supported by the frustration-aggression-displacement theory which proposed that aggression is displaced by targeting an unfortunate scapegoat when the source of frustration is not managed swiftly (Kruglanski et al. 2023:447). Moreover, one teacher expressed how teachers who never touched alcohol before they started working in schools, ended up drinking alcohol to cope with the pain of violence that is directed to them in schools.

P10: *"You would find that most teachers are even alcoholics, because they are trying to cope. Some of the teachers came here without drinking alcohol but at the end of the day they are alcoholics, they are drug addicts in a way because of the torture that they are facing every day and it's painful."*

Finally, it is obvious that there are several psychosocial problems that teachers encounter due to school violence and these problems not only affect teachers' work performance, but they also affect their psychological well-being and social activities and relationships.

5.2.3 Theme 3: The impact of school violence on teachers' work performance

The findings of this study disclosed that teachers' work performance is negatively affected by school violence. This means that school violence affects the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom, and it also affects the overall performance of a teacher (Valente & Lourenco, 2020:1), which in turn affects the academic performance of the school. The findings also revealed that some teachers fear working in a hostile environment where gangsterism and violence is prevalent because this could lead to a significant decline in their personal relationships with their colleagues and superiors, which might be detrimental to their competence and school's academic results (Kapa & Gimbert, 2018). Thus, Shah et al. (2019:604) concurred that there is a strong relationship between low academic achievement and aggressive behaviours such as physical attacks, verbal abuse, and harassment. Also, Khanyase (2022:37) reiterated that the psychosocial effects of school violence have seriously significant effects on the overall performance of teachers.

Furthermore, the teachers in this study confessed that their work performance has declined and has kept on declining because they no longer have an interest in what they do. They have low self-esteem, and some have lost confidence in even standing in front of the learners to teach them. In addition, teachers explained that after experiencing violations and physical attacks from learners, it was difficult for them to go back to work the next day and face the same learners who had violated, embarrassed and humiliated them. This view is supported by Rasool et al. (2020:1) who pointed out that stressful situations in many spheres of daily life impose a heavy psychological load that can impair people's work performance. Moreover, Cabaron and Oco (2023:2) indicated that it is vital that teachers become motivated as this is necessary in creating a conducive teaching and learning environment, as well as classroom atmosphere.

Moreover, the findings also revealed that teachers have developed avoidance behaviour. This means that teachers avoid going to classes in which they were attacked or humiliated. To support this view, Moreroa (2022) signalled that some teachers are reluctant to go to some classes due to the prevalence of school violence which needs serious attention to prioritise the safety of teachers in their workplaces. Also, it was revealed that they avoid having altercations with learners, they avoid confrontational situations which might trigger learners' attacks and ignore provocations to maintain peace in their classrooms. This is a demonstration of fear from the teachers' side, and it suggests that teachers have lost control over their classes, which leads to poor classroom management and a decline in productivity and work efficacy. In support of this view, Venketsamy et al. (2023:52) concurred that when teachers are exposed to school violence, they feel disrespected and helpless, which makes them fearful, and they develop anxiety when they have to go to classrooms to face learners who have violated them. One teacher expressed how school violence affects her work and the feelings she has when having to go to work.

P10: "School violence affects my work performance very badly. If something happened today, tomorrow it's very difficult when you must go back to class to face learners. Yes, I teach but without that oomph."

In addition, the results revealed that teachers have developed a negative attitude towards the teaching profession. Teachers confessed that they have lost interest in waking up in the morning to go to work. The findings showed that teachers no longer look forward to a new day or look forward to teaching their learners with passion and enthusiasm because they have developed a negative attitude towards the teaching profession. This is supported by Kapa and Gimbert (2018) who highlighted that stressful work environments negatively impact teachers' personal health, and this can result in poor performance and a negative attitude towards both their job and the learners they teach. Also, Baxen (2021) alluded that violence against teachers has led to them becoming disillusioned, anxious, depressed, stressed and developing negative attitudes towards their profession.

P12: “You know, when learners disrespect you, you end up having negative thoughts and attitude towards your own job. You end up not enjoying waking up in the morning to come to work.”

Lastly, the findings revealed that teachers opt for absenteeism from time-to-time. They are forced to stay away from work in the process of dealing with the violence that they suffer from learners. Thus, when teachers are absent from work, the process of teaching and learning is hindered, and when the curriculum suffers, so does the teachers’ work performance. This view is supported by Venketsamy et al. (2023:52) who suggested that the emotional response can manifest in various ways, such as job disengagement, reduced morale, concentration difficulties, and regular absenteeism. However, Okeke and Windvoel (2024:149) argued that school violence is exacerbated by teacher behaviours including absenteeism, abandoning classrooms without supervision, and frequently taking time off during work hours. Nonetheless, De Cordova et al. (2019) reiterated that violence has a negative impact on the well-being of the victimised teachers as well as those who witnessed violence, and it further affects the competency of their work performance.

P8: “Sometimes when you are teacher, when you have to wake up and go to work you think about all the challenges that you are going through, you decide to go to the doctor so the doctor can book you off, so you don’t go to work.”

The findings further revealed that teachers end up going to general practitioners to get booked off from work in order to avoid going to school to face the challenges they encounter with violent learners in their classrooms. Lastly, it was evident from the findings that loss of confidence, motivation and interest, absenteeism, under-performance, avoidance behaviour, and negative attitude towards the teaching profession are some of the main results of school violence that affect teachers’ work performance.

5.2.4 Theme 4: Strategies to deal with school violence

This study’s findings revealed that there should be effective strategies that should be adopted to curb the incidences of school violence. Teachers in this study mentioned that there is a need for each school to have a social worker who will be readily available

to assist learners, particularly those that have underlying issues and problematic behaviours. This view is supported by a study conducted by Khantsi et al. (2024:14) whose findings suggested that school social workers should provide intervention measures when learners battle with underlying challenges at school. Thus, teachers in this study felt that there is a shortage of social workers in schools because not all schools have a social worker who is present at school daily. Furthermore, teachers felt that they are not trained to deal with learners who battle with underlying issues, therefore, they believed that the DBE and schools should hire social workers in each school. This view is supported by Vergottini and Weyers (2020) who maintained that South African learners seem to be at risk, since it has become evident that they need social worker services. However, the response to this seems to be lacking. Thus, the findings revealed that there should be an intervention of professional social workers to assist with challenges that might be influencing learners' problematic behaviours in schools.

P1: "There is no need for the whole district to have only three or four social workers who are expected to deal with more than hundred schools. Each school needs to have their own social worker who will be available every day for learners."

Moreover, in the findings, it was evident that teachers who are victims or witnesses of school violence needed psychological counselling to help them deal with school violence. Also, the findings revealed that teachers felt that the issue of school violence not only affects them physically, psychologically, socially or emotionally, but it also affects them financially. It was evident from the study that violence against teachers left detrimental effects on a teacher's physical, mental, and financial health. This is reaffirmed by Khanyile (2018) that teachers who experienced violence either as victims or witnesses are likely to quit their profession, thus, early retirement or career shift could have disastrous effects on their financial state, as discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.4.5. The findings further revealed that teachers are spending significant amounts of money to seek psychological help after they have experienced school violence, and this affects their financial status negatively. Thus, they need the DBE to provide them with free psychological help, the same way it provides free social services to learners. In this light, Venketsamy (2024:172) posited that the DBE should

offer support through training and development, psychological services, social workers, or counsellors who can help teachers cope with or manage school violence.

P8: "As teachers, we need psychologists that are provided for by the department. So, people from wellness department must come to our rescue because we are dealing with so many problems".

Furthermore, the findings suggested that since parents are the primary caregivers to their children, they must teach their children to respect other people, instil in them morals, values and good manners so that the same respect they demonstrate to their parents, can be extended to others, including their teachers. Sadly, the findings disclosed that learners severely disrespect teachers, and some carry dangerous weapons such as guns and knives to school with the aim of attacking teachers to cause them serious bodily harm. Thus, the safety of teachers should be prioritised, and the DBE should start hiring trained security guards in schools to search learners for weapons they might possess, to maintain order and control movements within the school premises. This view is supported by McMahon, Peist et al. (2020) when suggesting that schools should be weapon-free zones, and using security guards, and crisis intervention teams to reduce school violence. Chetty (2021) added that teachers should be guaranteed security from learners' attacks in their workplace.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that school policies such as Learners' Code of Conduct should be reviewed and amended in such a way that it assists teachers with dealing with violence in their classrooms. Also, findings revealed that schools lack disciplinary measures to be applied to violent learners. In this light, Venketsamy et al. (2023:62) pointed out that the DBE created the "Safety in Education Partnership, Safety in Education pledge, and School Safety Framework" regulations and guidelines; however, they are ineffective to stop or protect teachers from violence in schools. Lastly, the findings of this study suggested that collaborations between the schools, DBE, social development, police and correctional services is needed to fight school violence against teachers. Also, these views are in line with the study conducted by Radebe and Kyobe (2021) which disclosed that it is important that schools collaborate with law enforcement agencies to mitigate school violence through proactive measures such as raising awareness among learners about the danger of

obtaining criminal record which might negatively affect their employment opportunities in future. Thus, the findings revealed that motivational speaking is crucial in shaping learners' behaviour.

5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section focuses on findings and implications based on thematically analysed data.

5.3.1 Theme 1: Teachers' perception of school violence

Under the theme of teachers' perception of school violence, teachers pointed out that school violence is a pandemic. According to Yang et al. (2021b) the occurrence of school violence against teachers is a pandemic and is an urgent concern that sparks extensive discussion around the world. Teachers further mentioned that learners end up behaving violently because they see and experience a lot of violence in their schools, surroundings and communities. Therefore, Sitoyi (2020) pointed out that increased acts of violence are mostly experienced in poor and violent communities and Mwaniki (2018) supported this view by saying that learners' violent behaviour stems from their societal backgrounds and their overall behaviour. Moreover, participants expressed their concerns about the lack of support from the DBE and the school management. This leaves them vulnerable, mainly because even when learners have attacked teachers or violated them in any way, nothing is being done to such learners to punish them or make sure that they account for their violation. Lastly, they believe that the DBE should have given teachers alternative disciplinary measures to deal with learners' misbehaviours since corporal punishment is no longer allowed.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Psychosocial problems encountered by teachers at school

The psychosocial problems encountered by teachers due to school violence, according to participants, includes stress, frustration, demoralisation, difficulty in coping, social isolation, withdrawal, substance abuse, feelings of fear and anger, embarrassment and humiliation. Thus, Sibisi (2021:38) posited that stress, frustration, depression, and feelings of isolation and demoralisation are some of the effects of school violence towards teachers. Furthermore, a study conducted by Venketsamy et al. (2023:59) showed that participants expressed anger and frustration due to school violence that is directed to them. Also, due to learners' disrespectful behaviour, threats, and challenges to teachers' authority in the classroom, teachers feel overwhelmed,

frustrated and react aggressively towards learners, colleagues, and their own families (Botha, 2018; Marolen, 2019; Okeke & Windvoel, 2024). Moreover, school violence can result in teachers being aggressive and hostile toward their learners, their colleagues and their family members. This is aligned with the frustration-aggression theory (Breuer & Elson, 2017:1) which suggests that violent behaviour manifests because of frustration which leads to aggression when peoples' goals are frustrated.

5.3.3 Theme 3: The impact of school violence on teachers' work performance

This theme emerged from thematically analysed data which revealed the impact of school violence on teachers' work performance. School violence against teachers negatively impacts their work performance by pushing teachers to lose confidence, motivation and interest. Also, teachers end up developing avoidance behaviours, negative attitude towards their work and profession, they perform poorly, and they are often absent from work. Moreover, Okeke and Windvoel (2024:156) concurred that the consequences of such violence on teachers include chronic health issues, depression, anxiety, fear, grief, humiliation, substance abuse, career shifts, social withdrawal, job detachment, quitting their jobs, and heightened aggression, as well as the development of more callous attitudes due to these traumatic incidents. Thus, Cabaron and Oco (2023:2) pointed out that teachers' motivation is an important factor in creating a conducive environment for teaching and learning.

5.3.4 Theme 4: Strategies to deal with school violence

This theme responds to the secondary research question that tried to establish the strategies to be adopted when dealing with school violence against teachers. Here are the suggestions that teachers suggested to deal with school violence:

- There should be one social worker in every school to assist learners with behavioural problems and underlying issues.
- The DBE should conduct teambuilding meetings and counselling sessions to assist teachers who have experienced school violence to cope with the trauma.
- There should be educational workshops and teacher training on how to deal with violent learners in the classrooms.
- Parental involvement and learner engagement should be encouraged to assist teachers with learners' behavioural problems.

- There should be tighter security measures that are implemented in schools to promote a safe working environment for the teachers.
- The DBE must reconsider and amend schools' policy and ensure proper implementation to guarantee the safety and security of teachers.
- Collaborations should be encouraged between the DBE, correctional services, social development and the police to fight school violence.

Teachers suggested that protocols and processes should be in place in schools to guarantee the security of both teachers and learners (McMahon, Peist et al., 2020:3). Also, teachers highlighted that motivational speaking and raising awareness about life in prisons may discourage learners from misbehaving and instil morals that seem to have been lost from learners' behaviour. Thus, Chauke (2024:10) reiterated that collaborative partnerships between schools and law enforcement agencies have the potential to mitigate acts of school violence and enhance a safe environment within a school setting.

5.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.4.1 Implications for the policy - Department of Basic Education

The findings revealed that the DBE should protect teachers and be proactive in ensuring their safety in schools. Also, as the DBE has an obligation to provide social services to learners in schools, they must also provide psychosocial support to teachers, particularly those who have experienced violence, either as victims or witnesses. Furthermore, this study revealed that the DBE reacts very harshly to teachers who violate learners, but they do not show the same interest when learners violate teachers. Thus, it was revealed in this study that the DBE should not be biased when it comes to acts of violence within the schools' settings. Rather, it should make necessary amendments in the education policies to promote teachers' job satisfaction and motivation, to promote better working conditions and to ensure teachers' safety and security in schools. Moreover, it was evident from the findings that there are not enough social workers in schools to assist with learners who show behavioural problems. Thus, the DBE needs to hire school social workers and ensure that every school in the Motheo District has a social worker that is providing social services to learners. Lastly, it was suggested that the DBE must hire trained security guards in

schools and work with other law enforcement agencies to fight the issue of school violence in schools.

5.4.2 Implications for schools

The study's findings revealed that school violence is a pandemic and a growing issue which has become a serious problem in schools. Thus, it was evident from the findings that schools cannot work alone to deal with this issue, but they need to collaborate with other education stakeholders and other law enforcement agencies to mitigate the phenomenon of school violence. It was also evident that schools need to reconsider, review, and restructure school policies and implement workable disciplinary measures to deal with learners who display violent and unacceptable behaviour. Also, the findings showed that schools need to create safer environments for teachers and apply tighter security measures to protect them not only from violent learners, but also from violent parents who attack them within school premises. Finally, the study's implications for schools suggested that schools must provide teachers who are victims and witnesses of school violence with emotional and psychological support and protect them from violent learners who negatively affect the process of teaching and learning in schools. Thus, this will enhance teachers' positive attitude towards the teaching profession and help promote a better working environment.

5.4.3 Implications for teachers

The study revealed that teachers in the Motheo District fear for their lives, they are demoralised and have a negative attitude towards the teaching profession. This is because they feel that they are not protected and supported by the DBE, and that the protection of learners is prioritized such that even when learners have violated them, nothing is being done about it. The teachers expressed their concerns that the DBE has not provided them with effective and diplomatic disciplinary methods as a substitute for corporal punishment to deal with violent learners in schools. On the other hand, the findings of this study highlighted that teachers also lack proper coping mechanisms for the traumatic experiences they suffer due to school violence. Thus, teachers emphasised that they needed psychosocial support from the DBE, they needed free counselling and psychological services, the same way that learners are receiving free social services in schools. Also, the findings revealed that teachers

needed workshops and training on how to deal with violent learners to mitigate violence against them.

5.4.4 Implications for parents

It was evident from the study's findings that there is a lack of parental involvement in children's education in the Motheo District. Also, there seemed to have been child negligence, irresponsible behaviour, child-abuse and poor parenting skills from some parents as they were nowhere to be found when they were requested to visit their children's schools, with some not even attending parents' meetings. Also, parents in this study were said to be available only when they were ready to attack teachers, thereby resorting to violence against teachers in support of their children's misbehaviour in schools. Thus, since parents are the primary caregivers of their children, the study's findings imply that they need to assist by instilling in their children morals, respect, good manners and ubuntu which will help them to acquire good social skills. Thus, this will enable teachers to work harmoniously with learners and develop their academic and cognitive skills. Lastly, the findings suggested that parents should attend workshops that will train them in good parenting techniques, enabling them to maintain good relationships with teachers, and facilitating collaborative efforts in developing well-mannered, disciplined and respectable youth and future leaders.

5.4.5 Implications for learners

The findings of this study revealed how peer pressure and gangsterism can have a direct influence on learners' behaviour. Also, the study revealed that learners who witness multiple violent acts in their schools and in their communities, end up seeing violence as a normal way of life. As a result, the level of crime and violence in the communities surrounding schools will always influence learners' behaviour (Chapter 2, sub-section 2.3.2.4). Furthermore, the findings highlighted that some learners come from poor and violent backgrounds and are faced with a lot of underlying issues, and this influences how they live and their overall behaviour. Some come from child-headed families, some from broken families, some are abused by their parents or guardians, whereas some are already parents themselves due to teenage pregnancy. Therefore, all these are contributing factors to learners' violent behaviour. Thus, it is necessary that learners get parental care and support and be provided with social services that will address their emotional and psychological problems effectively.

Lastly, learners should know that as much as they respect their parents, they must respect their teachers, and that if they violate their teachers in anyway, they will be reported to law enforcement which will result in serious repercussions and accountability.

5.5 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The following are the recommendations for further studies:

- A study that investigates teachers' coping mechanisms in the face of teacher-directed violence.
- A study which establishes schools' collaborations and the formation of a schools' forum to mitigate learner-to-teacher violence.
- A study which investigates schools' diplomatic disciplinary methods to regulate learners' violent behaviour in schools.
- A study which explores ways to maintain and enhance parent-learner-teacher relationships in schools.
- A study which will examine the effectiveness of parental involvement in minimising learners' behavioural problems in schools.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Firstly, the study focused only on four high schools in the Motheo District of the Free State province. Of these schools, two are situated in an urban area, whereas the other two are situated in a semi-urban area. This suggests that the data that were collected apply only to a few schools in the Motheo District, and the study did not include the schools in the rural areas. Therefore, further studies on this topic may include schools in rural areas and expand the study's focus to a higher number of schools to get a better representation of the sample size and more improved reliability of the findings. Secondly, there was a lack of sufficient literature on the psychosocial implications that teachers encounter due to school violence and the teachers' coping mechanisms thereof. No literature was found to back up some of the responses and comments that were made by the participants. For instance, only one article on teachers' substance abuse tendencies was identified. This demonstrates that more literature needs to be produced on teachers' coping mechanisms against school violence.

Another limitation was that considering the number of schools and participants to be interviewed, data collection time was not enough. In the process of data collection, two of the recordings were lost. However, the researcher took notes during the interviews and those notes assisted in the data coding and analysis processes.

5.7 CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

Teachers in this study revealed that school violence is an ongoing issue, a pandemic that emanates from learners' poor and violent backgrounds, violent schools' surroundings, and violent societies, poor parental skills, negligence, teenage pregnancy, and other underlying issues that learners are faced with. Also, it was evident from the findings that teachers experience different types of violence which includes verbal abuse, e.g. insults, swearing and body-shaming; physical abuse like slapping, pushing, and physical attacks; emotional abuse, as well as bullying. All these types of violence have resulted in social problems that teachers encountered, and which have negatively impacted their physical, emotional and mental well-being. Also, school violence has been shown to have a negative impact on teachers' confidence, motivation, work interest, and job satisfaction. It also exacerbated feelings of frustration, fear, social isolation, withdrawal, anger, inability to cope and substance abuse and misuse.

Teachers who experienced and witnessed school violence highlighted that coping strategies are required. These strategies include the one school–one social worker principle, team building and counselling sessions for teachers, provision of workshops and teachers' training to deal with violent learners, parental involvement and learner engagement. In addition, the findings revealed teachers' suggestions of introducing tighter security measures in schools to maintain order and safety and introducing revised and reviewed schools' policies with diplomatic disciplinary methods for successful implementation to mitigate school violence against teachers. Lastly, teachers proposed collaborations between the DBE, other education stakeholders and law enforcement agencies to work together through motivational speaking and raising awareness to learners about the implications of criminal records on their future employment opportunities.

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Appendix A: UFS Ethical Clearance Letter

UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

Registration Number: REC-112922-058

18-Jun-2024

Dear Miss Moneilweng Khantsi

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

The psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2023/2626

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 via an Amendment on RIMS to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit a Final Report on RIMS for your study/research project to the ethics office once the project has concluded. Should you require more time than the allotted 12 months to complete this research, please apply for an extension by submitting a Continuation/Report on RIMS. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance. We wish you 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:
2024.06.18
17:33:10
+02'00'

205 Nelson Mandela P.O. Box 339
Drive Bloemfontein 9300
Park West Tel: +27(0)514019337
Bloemfontein 9301 duplessisA@ufs.ac.za
South Africa www.ufs.ac.za



Appendix B: FSDE Permission Letter

Enquiries: M.Z. Thango
Ref: Research Permission: M. P. Khantsi
Tel. 051 404 8808
Email: MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za



56532 Dark City
Phahameng Location
Bloemfontein
9323

Dear Miss M. P. Khantsi

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: MOTHEO 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 Motheo Education District. The details in relation to your research project with the University of the Free State are as follows:

Topic: The psychosocial implication of school violence on teachers' work performance.

- List of schools involved:** Comm-Tech S School, Kagiso S School, Kgoro ya Thuto S School and Tjhaba se Maketse S School.
- Target Population:** Twelve educators teaching in grades 8 to 12 at the selected schools.
- Period of research:** From the signature of this letter until 30 September 2024. 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.
- The approval is subject to the following conditions:
 - The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
 - 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.
 - You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
 - The ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
- 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: 20/02/2024

RESEARCH APPLICATION BY M. P. KHANTSI. PERMISSION LETTER 15 FEBRUARY 2024. MOTHEO DISTRICT
QASME, M&E and Strategic Planning Directorate Private Bag X20565, Bloemfontein, 9300 - Thuto House, Room 101, 1st Floor, St Andrew Street, Bloemfontein

www.fsdoe.fs.gov.za

Appendix C: FSDE Wellness Letter

Enquiries: N.G. Koenane
E-mail: n.koenane@fseducation.gov.za



education
Department of
Education
FREE STATE PROVINCE

EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLNESS: MOTHEO EDUCATION DISTRICT

"A DISTRICT ON THE RISE TO GREATNESS"

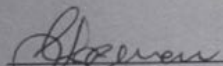
ETHICAL CLEARANCE: M.P. KHANTSI

I Ntombikayise Grace Koenane, ID 701210 0409 08 3 confirms that I am a registered Social Worker with the South African Social Services Professions (SACSSP- 10-16767). I am employed as an Assistant Director- (Employee Health and Wellness) by the Free State Department of Education.

I commit to offer mine and my department's assistance to the research participant in the event of any emotional and discomfort during the data gathering processes. All sessions that will be provided at no cost and will be conducted personally, telephonically, and other online platforms.

I hope you will find this in order

Regards


Mrs. N. G Koenane

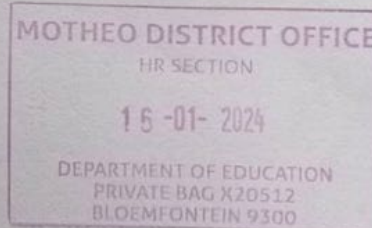
Assistant Director

Motheo Education District

Cell: 082 928 7576

E-Mail: n.koenane@fseducation.gov.za

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www.fsdoe.fs.gov.za

Appendix D: School Permission Letter



PERMISSION LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a full time B.Ed Masters Degree student from the University of the Free State, specialising in the field of Psychology of Education. I am conducting a study on the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance. I will be interviewing high school teachers to collect the data that is needed for this study. Each school from the four selected will be represented by three teachers and making a total of twelve educators to be interviewed.

My request is for your permission to conduct interviews with educators in your school.

Confidentiality and voluntary participation:

The selected high school educators will be interviewed on face-to face basis. The interview will stay strictly confidential, and all information gathered from the interviews will only be used for the purpose of the study. No interview will be conducted without the freely given consent of you, as the principal or of the educator. No educator will be forced to participate in an interview. The name of the school will remain strictly confidential.

Informed consent:

I, the principal of the school, am aware of the research that will be conducted, and I give full permission to the researcher conducting the research in the premises of my school.

.....

Principal Signature

Appendix E: Sample of Participant Consent Form



PERMISSION LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a full time B.Ed Masters Degree student from the University of the Free State, specialising in the field of Psychology of Education. I am conducting a study on the psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance. I will be interviewing high school teachers to collect the data that is needed for this study. Each school from the four selected will be represented by three teachers and making a total of twelve educators to be interviewed.

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Confidentiality and voluntary participation:

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Informed consent:

I, the principal of the school, am aware of the research that will be conducted, and I give full permission to the researcher conducting the research in the premises of my school.

.....

Principal Signature

Appendix F: Interview Guide



QUALITATIVE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Dear Participant,

I am Miss Moneilweng Patience Khantsi, a Masters student in the Department of Education Foundations, in the Faculty of Education, University of the Free State Bloemfontein Campus. Let me take this opportunity to thank you for agreeing to participate in my study titled: **“The psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers’ work performance”**, which is aimed at investigating the psychosocial implications of school violence on teacher’ work performance. Please note that your participation in this study is voluntary and confidential. Feel free to share your experiences on school violence so we can foster better teacher-learner relationships within the school environment. Rest assured that your participation will remain anonymous. Also, note that this interview will last for less than 45 minutes and will be recorded for accuracy. I want to apologise for any inconvenience this may cause you. Thank you once again for accepting to be part of this study.

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Firstly, I would appreciate if you could tell me a little about yourself. Probes here may include but not limited to: participant’s age, gender, years of teaching experience, grade, qualification, etc. as indicated in the table below. This will be used to capture your background information that will be necessary for this study.



Date of interview	
Participant code	

Gender	
Participant's educational qualification/s	
Teaching Grade	
Number of years in teaching	

SECTION 2: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do teachers perceive school violence?
2. What are the psychosocial problems teachers' encounters at school?
3. How does school violence impact teachers' work performance?
4. What strategies can be adopted to deal with school violence?

SECTION 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are the worst types of school violence you have personally experienced or witnessed?
2. What are the psychosocial problems that you encounter as a result of school violence?
3. How does school violence impacts your work performance?
4. What psychosocial support do you need from the education stakeholders, particularly the Department of Basic Education?
5. What coping strategies do you use to manage the impact of school violence?
6. What strategies do you suggest could be adopted in maintaining good relationships between teachers, learners and parents?

Thank you once again for participating in this study!

Appendix G: Language Editor Certificate

Cell: 076 389 3246
gill.hannant@outlook.com

Mrs G C Hannant
28 Hillcrest Avenue
CRAIGHALL PARK
2196

25 November 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I certify that I have edited the Master's thesis:

THE PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE ON TEACHERS' WORK PERFORMANCE

by

MONEILWENG PATIENCE KHANTSI

However, the correction of all errors/missing information remains the responsibility of the author.



G.C. HANNANT (BA HED)

Appendix H: Turnitin Report

The psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance

by Moneilweng Khantsi

Submission date: 28-Nov-2024 12:33PM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID: 2364282752
File name: Patience_Khantsi-_M.Ed_Dissertation.docx (3.42M)
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The psychosocial implications of school violence on teachers' work performance

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