



Prevailing of Learner Violence in South African Schools: A Call for Action to Ensure School Safety

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Abstract

Prevalence of School Violence is a widespread exercise of power/ physical/ verbal/ force, or intimidation that instils fear, suffering or injury, and is a form of aggressive and abusive behaviour within a school environment over time. This aimed to investigate and understand the prevailing nature of learner violence in South African schools. A qualitative research approach and interpretivism were used as a paradigm. A case study design was used, and Interviews were conducted to collect data, with the goal of obtaining an in-depth interpretation of policies and learner-teacher interactions regarding the prevalence of school violence. The findings are that schools are characterised by Broad and scattered dimensions of various causes of school violence found in a single school environment. their Ignorance and bias by Senior Management Teams towards available policies, aid and resources put in place to help with school violence The study recommended that Schools and the DBE must organise school awareness campaigns that inform students about the causes of violence and collaborate with the relevant stakeholders to alleviate challenges related to poverty, poor child upbringing, gangs and drugs in schools. Relevant stakeholders should regularly monitor and support the implementation of existing policies on school violence, and develop mentoring and coaching strategies to ensure their active and successful implementation.

Keywords

management, violence, Human rights, prevailing effects, teachers, learners, school safety

INTRODUCTION

According to Section 12 of the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996), every individual has the basic right to live free from violence and to be protected against punishment that is degrading, cruel, or inhumane. Despite this, school violence remains a widespread issue, often expressed through physical or verbal abuse, intimidation, or the misuse of power, which results in fear, harm, and suffering within the school environment over time. Research on the perspectives of school management regarding this persistent problem in South African schools remains limited, even though it continues to negatively affect both teachers and learners. Govender (2015) highlights that the victimisation of students and teachers in schools is a critical concern that demands urgent attention. The study sought to explore and interpret the nature of learner violence in South African schools through a qualitative research approach underpinned by interpretivism. A case study design was employed, with interviews as the primary data collection method to provide deeper insight into policies and learner-teacher interactions related to school violence. Contributing factors such as ineffective school management, challenges in child development, poor parenting, substance abuse, bullying, lack of awareness, and unequal power

dynamics have been identified as key drivers of school violence. Although the issue has persisted for years, little research has examined it specifically from a managerial standpoint.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical view on the understanding of school violence

The labelling theory puts the community's approach to the development of deviant behaviour in the spotlight, helping people understand that bad behaviour should be viewed as a social deviation rather than a crime. It further clarifies how aggressive behaviour in schools differs from the code of conduct a school has established for itself, rather than students committing crimes. Bernburg (2009) claims that the community establishes guidelines for behavioural demarcation that are to be protected through observation. According to the theory, those who violate principles are stigmatised to promote self-awareness and self-correction. However, it has been argued that those who are stigmatised for these reasons often use the stigma as a form of social intimidation, which encourages aggressive deviant behaviour. According to NSSF (2015), in South Africa, this suggests that the code of conduct for students in schools classifies acts of bad behaviour to inform the type of help individual students need. However, it has been the case that students who are labelled and stigmatised in schools use this stigma to intimidate both teachers and learners; they become well known for their acts, and learners turn to follow them, creating an unsafe environment as a result.

The threat of intimidation posed using stigma may be connected to the exercise of power over another person, which Govender (2015) defines as bullying. According to Bernburg (2009), negative image may be attached to label, “monster” behaviour may evoke and this may overcome positive behaviour a person might have, these types of learners become unruly in schools, they lack a sense of respect to both school activities, teachers and other learners, they develop sustainable negative aggressive behaviour that may be part of their lives, with possibility to pass to the next generation. According to Schonfeld (2005) parents who struggle with bad behaviour may raise children who are naturally aggressive.

Violence in Schools

Statistics on school violence in SA

Angie Motshekga, the DBE minister, reported 1,345 incidents of school violence, according to Naidoo (2019). Hot spots in South Africa were reported, and Mpumalanga takes the lead on the list of hot spots, with about 414 that are consistently reported to have crime and violence on a daily basis. It is followed by 251 hot-spots in Gauteng Province, where it is also reported by research that the school violence is exacerbated by multiple races that are found in individual schools. It has been reported that social engineering also plays a significant role in this challenge. The Western Cape scored 147, the Eastern Cape 99, the Free State 80, the Northern Cape 40, and Limpopo Province, the lowest, with about 22 schools. Angie Motshekga, the minister of basic education, demonstrated how schools with lower enrolments are more likely to experience school violence than Quintile 4 and 5 schools, according to Naidoo (2019).

According to Naidoo (2019), basic education minister Angie Motshekga demonstrated how South African public schools that are free of charge are inundated with reports of bullying and violence. It was estimated that 48 percent of free schools experience bullying daily. In contrast, fewer than a quarter of daily reports are from private schools. Naidoo (2019) claims that boys are more likely than girls to experience bullying, with boys reporting weekly reports of bullying at a rate of 47% compared to 46% for girls. In addition, he said that bullying victims in primary Grade 5 perform worse academically than non-victims, who do so by a margin of 77 percent to 23 percent.

Physical bullying

The National School Safety Framework (NSSF, 2012) states that students who are less popular, kids who do not have friends at school, kids who do not get along well with others, people who are depressed, people who have low self-esteem, and people who do not fit into gender roles are more likely to experience physical bullying, such as pushing, hitting, stripping, and taking things forcibly. Hoffmann (2013) asserts that despite the DoE and SGB's policies governing schools and regulating issues related to violence in schools, this type of bullying results in publicity, humiliation, and actively promotes violence in a school environment. This is done both directly and indirectly by teachers and students.

Psychological bullying

According to Hoffmann (2013), psychological bullying involves malicious, purposeful intentions and is an intentional, occasionally purposeful act of abuse to the mind. Physical, online, and sexual harassment are all components of psychological bullying (NSSF, 2015). This kind of bullying takes on a variety of forms that directly impact and depress the mind. It also employs a more targeted approach to pressure victims mentally. Schonfeld (2005) asserts that psychological bullying causes traumatic effects in the victims' minds and further contends that bullies evaluate their initial methods of bullying and, if they are effective, may repeat them in the future, permanently imprinting the traumatic experience on the victims. According to Schonfeld (2005), this kind of bullying exhibits violent elements that, if enjoyed by the bullies, may prevail in a school setting, leaving victims subjected to sustained mental abuse and transgressing school violence policies.

Sexual bullying

Sexual bullying, as defined by NSSF (2015), is the use of sexual remarks and behaviours by a group or an individual to harass another person. According to research, this is a problem that affects people of all ages, but it is particularly acute in young adults and, if unaddressed, could lead to more serious problems like sexual assault. Hoffmann (2013) claims that this type of bullying includes physical, cyber, and psychological abuse; as a result, they are closely related to violent crime.

Verbal bullying

All types of verbal abuse, including name-calling, insults, and taunts, may be referred to as verbal bullying, claim Mayeza and Bhama (2021). As many young adults turned to social media platforms to verbally abuse others, current research has demonstrated how the introduction of social media platforms promoted and gave rise to verbal bullying.

Cyber bullying

Cyberbullying occurs when false, hurtful, and harmful content intended for someone else is posted, sent, and shared via SMS texts on social media applications using digital devices like cell phones and computers (SSF, 2012).

Trends of Violence Around the World

Trends in America

The study was conducted considering the increasing difficulties of bullying, commotion, and violence in classrooms, as these issues show signs of being a regular part of school life (Lunenburg, 2010). According to Lunenburg (2010), school challenges vary depending on the community and the school environment, and there is an increase in school violence. American schools face challenges related to violence (Lunenburg, 2010). Guns consequently enter the school, and in some states, school violence results in fatalities. To gain a deeper understanding of how communities may influence and contribute to school violence as well as to bring awareness to violence in a school environment, Lunenburg (2010) validated his hypothesis by asking questions about the different types of communities that his learners are from. For example, how many students feel unsafe at school? Are violent crimes more prevalent? How frequently does bullying happen at your school? Do you consider violence to be a challenge in the classroom? What types of violence are most common in schools? The following questions and their associated answers will address issues of race, gender, and class as they relate to school violence. Lunenburg (2010) provides answers and crucial hints on the types of difficulties facing schools.

Age, school size, and the school system were all factors that Lunenburg (2010) connected to school violence. Social tensions in middle and high school, as well as age, are major contributing factors to violence. Middle school students perceive violence as a more serious issue than students in lower grades do. According to Lunenburg (2010), this is because middle school students are older and less willing to tolerate social tension and violence. According to Lunenburg (2010), students who join gangs and bring weapons like guns and knives to school are reported to have killed students and teachers in the schoolyard while also injuring others. According to Lunenburg (2010), because urban schools are larger, there have been fewer serious issues with hostile remarks, threats, destructive acts, physical acts, and gang violence reported in suburban and rural schools than in urban schools. There is a mixed-race culture in large schools, and in cases where violence has been reported, black American students have been more involved than white students (Lunenburg, 2010). Accordingly, schools with a high concentration of violent activities in urban areas pose a threat to the educational environment overall because students are forced to live in fear, and some end up joining gangs. School systems that provide support to students have reported lower levels of school violence, according to Lunenburg (2010). According to Lunenburg (2010), when teachers treat students with respect, students frequently reciprocate, which significantly reduces the number of incidents compared to when students are treated disrespectfully. When students are taught using effective methods and make use of their teachers, they are more likely to reduce violence in schools because they will emulate the love, passion, and tolerance their teachers model (Lunenburg, 2010). The results of research by Lunenburg (2010) showed that violence is increasing in schools, with bullying and chaos having higher percentages of students reported to be involved in this activity. They also showed that violence in schools is spread by communities, which makes it difficult to create a learning environment that is suitable for teaching and learning.

Trends in Kenya

In collaboration with Kenyatta University and the DoE foundation, Opere, Kamere, and Wawire (2019) conducted a study on school violence as a contributor to unrest in Nairobi's public secondary schools. The study was conducted in response to the current and historical experience of increasingly frequent reports of cases of unrest involving violence. Some of the violence has resulted in harm and the death of people; this is also done under the strictest guidelines that schools have established (Opere et al., 2019). The study demonstrated that education and the practice of peaceful education improve and reduce the risks of violence by identifying earlier forms, perpetrators, and causes of violence. According to Opere et al. (2019), there are an estimated 560,000 violent deaths each year, and this number is expected to rise. Up to this point, 246 million students have been impacted by school violence, with the first incident being reported in 1908 at Maseno School. Thomas Hobbes's social theory was used as a foundation for understanding school violence. The theory contends that since living things are competitive and insecure by nature, they are naturally aggressive. As a result, they turn to

authority, which in turn creates social order. Opere et al. (2019) assert that if one fails to manage authority, violence frequently results. As a result, schools with systems that lack leadership and authority frequently raise problems through violence. In schools with little authority, incidents like fights, vandalism, discrimination, social exclusion, blackmail, treatment, insults, and ridicule are common. Opere et al. (2019) identified bullying, physical punishment, verbal abuse, fights, discrimination, sexual violence, killing, and school burning as forms of violence in schools, with some schools having experienced some of the issues and others having experienced all of them.

Trends in China

According to Han, Zhang, and Zhang's 2017 study, bullying affects all pre-college school types in China's schools, including primary, middle, high, and vocational schools. The effects of school bullying, according to Han et al. (2017), are numerous and include PTSD, psychosocial issues like loneliness, depression, anxiety, and emotional disorders, low self-esteem, poor academic achievement, long-term mental health issues, violent behaviour, deviant behaviour, and suicidal behaviour. The secret to understanding bullying-related challenges may lie in our understanding of Chinese adolescents. To gain a thorough understanding of bullying activities in a school, general questions like "have you done or your peer done the following things?" Have been used, according to Han et al. (2017). These questions are based on common trends identified in studies conducted worldwide on bullying and school violence. And the researcher went on to list more questions about bullying at school that participants had to respond to, such as, "Have you done any of the following to your classmate or peer this year?" Questions such as "In this year, have you witnessed any of the following?" were used to gather information about experiences of bullying in schools. These questions were used to gather the number and trends of perpetrators and their behaviour within a school environment.

Han et al. (2017) included six variables to understand the type of school environment, including the type of school, whether it produces results, which factors educators use for self-evaluation, how much students evaluate their relationships with classmates, and whether they board. This has shown that vocational students behave badly due to their high failure rate and the fact that older students make up a larger percentage of their student body. According to Han et al. (2017), to bring the collected data to life, a relationship must be established, and controlled variables such as family and community behaviour must be linked to the level of education for both the community and the family. This is because families with low levels of education do not view aspects of violence and bullying as a major challenge for children as they grow up, but rather as a disciplinary measure. According to Han et al. (2017), to gain a thorough understanding of these challenges, it is necessary to interview male and female family members, including parents, siblings, and community members.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Durkheim's (1897) labelling theory, as discussed by Bernburg (2009), provides the theoretical framework for this study. Durkheim argued that deviance is not only determined by violations of written codes but also by actions that offend social norms. Both Durkheim (1897) and Bernburg (2009) maintain that an individual's identity is socially constructed and reconstructed through interactions within their community. In this process, individuals are labelled based on how society interprets their behaviour, and they develop self-awareness by observing others' judgments across different roles and contexts. This study applies the labelling theory to explore the perspectives of School Management Teams (SMTs) on learner violence. The theory serves as a lens through which learner behaviour, policies, and teacher-learner interactions can be critically understood (Maree, 2012). In South African schools, SMTs consist of experienced teachers and managers who hold responsibility for decision-making and discipline, as mandated by the South African Schools Act (SASA, Act 84 of 1996) and the Employment of Educators Act (EEA). Within this framework, SMTs are tasked with ensuring schools operate effectively and with making judgments on both acceptable and deviant learner behaviour.

According to Bernburg (2009), labelling theory positions the self as a subjective construct shaped by others' evaluations, with individuals such as teachers, judges, and police officers serving as social representatives who render authoritative judgments. In school contexts, learners are expected to comply with policies, rules, and regulations. Deviant roles arise when learners behave contrary to these expectations, enabling teachers and SMTs to identify and respond to such behaviour. While studies by Govender (2015), Meyer (2005), and Le Roux and Mokhele (2011) have examined school violence, they often overlook the perspectives of SMTs. Since factors influencing violence are multifaceted, the labelling theory provides an important interpretive tool for understanding how SMTs perceive and manage deviant behaviour in schools. Bernburg (2009), citing Durkheim (1897), stresses that deviant roles significantly affect how authority figures perceive individuals and how individuals view themselves and their relationships within society. When deviance is internalised through labelling, it can lead to stigmatisation.

In the school environment, violence- including bullying, assault, and other forms of aggression can be understood as manifestations of social stigma. Recognising these behaviours as deviant roles allows SMTs to fulfil their mandate under SASA by addressing learner misconduct fairly and effectively. Ultimately, this study seeks to capture SMTs' insights into the stigma attached to violent behaviour in schools and contribute to more effective strategies for addressing learner violence in South Africa.

METHODOLOGY

This research was guided by an interpretivist paradigm and employed a qualitative approach. Rubin and Babbie (1989) describe qualitative research as inherently inductive, allowing meaning to emerge from the data. A case study design was adopted, as Simons (2009) notes that such an approach enables an in-depth investigation of diverse perspectives on a problem within its real-world context. Data was gathered through participant interviews and observations, and thematic analysis was used to interpret the findings.

Sampling

Purposive sampling

Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques are employed in research, with non-probability sampling commonly applied in social studies (Maree, 2012). This study focused on teacher–learner interactions and the growing problem of violence in South African schools, examining behaviours within the school context where participants were situated as members of a social setting. Non-probability sampling allows for rich description (Merriam, 2009). In this case, purposive sampling was adopted, as not all teachers and learners are equally affected by the issue under investigation. Participants were therefore deliberately selected to capture diverse perspectives on learners' rights and teachers' safety. Variation sampling was further applied to ensure representation of different viewpoints.

Sampled size

According to Huberman and Miles (1994), the number of participants in a study is influenced by its objectives, available resources, and the composition of the population. This research was carried out at a secondary school within the Maleboho East Circuit of the Capricorn North District in Limpopo, located north of Polokwane, an area that has received extensive media and Department of Basic Education (DBE) reports regarding learner violence. The circuit comprises a total population of 380 staff members, including 27 principals, 6 deputy principals, 33 heads of department, and 380 teachers.

All participants were required to have experienced the challenge either in the past or currently. The sample included principals, deputy principals, and heads of department. Principals were specifically chosen to provide leadership perspectives on the challenge, as well as on the interpretation, implementation, and alignment of policies related to it. Given the study's focus, neither victims nor perpetrators were included in the sample.

FINDINGS

One aspect of drug and alcohol abuse has been identified as a reference to its common figure in academic research around the world to gain a deeper understanding of the sustainability of school violence. This will enable researchers to determine whether educational institutions are making any efforts to combat the already known causes of school violence. Teachers are occasionally under a lot of work pressure, which causes them to take each day and its problems as they come, while overlooking the fact that there have already been discussions about possible solutions. Radios, TV, social media advertisements, and posters are all used to raise awareness of drug and alcohol use. However, some school administrations continue to struggle despite receiving this much attention.

P3 stated that: *“Our school confiscated more cigarettes per day than other drugs, the second one is dagga”*.

DP2 said: *“Our drug and alcohol challenges are mainly on Mondays, learners come to school drunk on Mondays. This learner stays at the toilet, smokes, and becomes disruptive at school. When they are forced to attend classes, it becomes chaos: teachers complain about them, they steal and beat other learners, lessons cannot continue, and teachers are always threatened during lessons”*.

P1 stated: *“Our learners smoke, and it looks like parents have given up. Older learners who failed a grade more than once are the ones who smoke. The problem is that they teach and bully the younger students to join them”*.

DH3A said: *“There is nothing we can do to stop learners from using drugs, with no security to search them. They just do as they please, they stay in the toilets and smoke. We are not sure about alcohol in a school yard, but you go to the boys' toilet, one will find a pack of smoke left over from dagga and cigarettes in many qualities”*.

Participants made it abundantly clear that drugs and alcohol were present in their school and that they were linked to school violence. As other students look to teachers for guidance, it becomes difficult for other staff members to maintain order and control issues of school violence because teachers are also involved in the use of alcohol and drugs in schools.

DH2A showed that: *“I was attending to an issue where one teacher found learners smoking in a school yard and one of the replies was that teachers do it as well”. ... “learners did not continue, however, the point was valid, if we say no drug, it must not make exceptions”*.

DH2C said: *"It is a challenge; our teachers also do the same, some are struggling, they can't go to class without smoking first. This sets an example to our learners". ... "Always when you go to class, learners are not available for the 1st 10 minutes"*.

DH3C said: *"We caught a learner selling cigarettes in our school, and he also told us the names of people who buy, and one of them was a teacher's name"*.

More nuances exist in the alcohol and drug problem than was initially thought by researchers. These students are in groups, and occasionally someone from the villages visits and gives them cigarettes to sell in a classroom setting, according to reports of conflicts between these teachers and students.

DH1A stated that: *"A learner was nearly in a physical fight with a teacher. Words were said that I cannot say now. A teacher took a cigarette from this learner on credit, later refused to pay, telling this learner that he had made mistakes, and the issue nearly brought the school to a standstill."*

P2 said: *"There was a gang of learners defending another learner from a guy after school one day, apparently he gave one learner a cigarette and dagga to sell, and one learner stole a cigarette, which sparked a fight, and the owner had to come claim his money from the suspect, his pose posed a great challenge and started a fight"*.

DP2 showed that: *"There was a fight over Facebook between two girls who were accusing each other of using drugs and alcohol, and later submitted to the elderly boys. This dragged me to class, and this girl fought until one learner was taken to a hospital"*.

DP3 said: *"We had two cases in the previous year of learners registered in grade 8 already with problems of alcohol and dagga"*.

These negative effects include disruption, low academic achievement, and the encouragement of gangsterism, which is used as the primary fuel for all types of school violence in schools. SMTs reported that managing teachers and students who regularly use marijuana, alcohol, or tobacco daily is challenging. The department does not currently have a programme in place to deal with students who have witnessed drug or alcohol use. There are programmes for teachers, but their participation is contingent on their willingness.

P2 states that: *"It's very difficult to manage this type of learner in class, especially when it is time for them to go for a smoke, I ... I ... don't even know how they talk, but they will leave class one by one and to my surprise, this happens in all classes where friends of these learners are found"*.

DH3B said: *"In our school, there is always classroom disruption whenever these learners finish smoking whatever they smoked. Teachers always complain about their behaviour whenever they enter the classroom. "One time, one teacher was literally insulted in front of other learners, and this learner only got a suspension of five days and came back to school later, and the teacher had to face him again in class"*.

The use of drugs and alcohol is still prevalent in schools, and there are no immediate signs that it will decline. Students use these drugs and substances to engage in violent acts and display aggressive behaviour in a setting conducive to school violence.

It is evident from the participants' report that ending drug and alcohol abuse in our school is not an easy task. The South African government has established programmes to address the problem of drug and alcohol abuse in schools, but they are overwhelmed by ignorance and other elements like peer pressure and "gangsterism." SMTs are stuck between a hard rock because they must deal with drug-fueled school violence where students and teachers are at fault, and there is little that the SMTs can do to deal with these students and teachers.

A significant factor in the types of drugs used and sold in Maleboho East Circuit schools is the use of tobacco and dagga. Although schools have policies to address this issue, teachers continue to smoke in front of students who serve as role models for them, making it difficult to fully eradicate the problem. Classes are interrupted because of the challenges of school violence between students or between teachers and students. Students are being bullied in various ways, while teachers are being threatened and insulted. This led to the conclusion that there is a lack of awareness of the current policies available to schools.

The responses given to the researcher have provided a chance for the researcher to comprehend the typical causes of school violence in Maleboho East Circuit. As the main contributing factors to school violence in their respective schools, participants generally identified poverty, low self-esteem, older students, drugs, alcohol, and gambling, as well as authority (power struggles), a lack of teacher preparation, peer pressure, and negligence. Participants have demonstrated a thorough understanding of the various root causes of violence in schools. Respondents have identified challenges related

to poverty, older age, drugs, self-esteem, a higher rate of failure, and power struggles as being dominant. Additionally, the use of smart devices for social media on various social media platforms is also identified as a contributing factor to the existence of school violence. Students share a platform to exchange different types of school violence through its triggers, and a lack of preparation from teachers leads to bad behaviour during class hours. The identified triggers develop on their own without the knowledge of the teachers because they only manifest when students are overtly participating in acts of school violence. The difficulties that students face are bottled up until they fuel their aggressiveness; they are unable to speak out in front of others at home or at school; and their lack of knowledge regarding violent issues causes problems with school violence.

The components of drug and alcohol abuse have been identified as a reference to its common figure in academic research around the world to gain a deeper understanding of how school violence can continue. The South African government has established programs to address the problem of drug and alcohol abuse in schools, but they are overwhelmed by ignorance and other elements like peer pressure and "gangsterism." SMTs are stuck between a hard rock because they must deal with drug-fueled school violence where students and teachers are at fault, and there is little that the SMTs can do to deal with these students and teachers. A significant factor in the types of drugs used and sold in Maleboho East Circuit schools is the use of tobacco and dagga. The schools have policies to address this issue, but teachers continue to smoke in front of the students, who serve as an example to these students, making it difficult to end this issue. Classes are interrupted because of the challenges of school violence between students or between teachers and students. Students are being bullied in various ways, while teachers are being threatened and insulted.

DISCUSSION

Broad and scattered dimensions of various causes of school violence are found in a single school environment

Findings showed that there are numerous factors, some of which can be found in a single setting, that contribute to learners' aggressive behaviour, making it very challenging for SMTs to deal with problems involving violence. SMTs become frustrated because they lack the resources to manage numerous learners from diverse backgrounds and facing a variety of challenges. One learner experiencing multiple triggers at once is extremely confusing for school SMTs and, as a result, challenges from these learners are typically ignored. In his labelling theory, Durkheim (1897) argued that every member of the community who exhibits deviant behaviour should be subjected to a corrective action. As some SMTs demonstrated, challenges that can be found in a single student include poverty, home circumstances, anger developed from home, gangsterism, high failure rates, peer pressure, and older age. SMTs have expressed how challenging and frustrating they are to deal with, and how they bring judgment to learners facing various societal problems.

As they feel helpless in these situations, and this type of learner feels like a winner in their understanding, SMTs are said to simply understand and let matters fade away. However, teachers observe these responses from SMTs while their misbehaviour is not addressed. Teachers' perception of the SMTs' response to their concerns is that the SMTs do little. According to Hoffmann (2013), when teachers quit or transfer to safer and better schools before their normal working years have ended, it threatens academic performance and gives bullies the impression that they have control over teachers and the educational system. Inaction in addressing student challenges directly contributes to school violence. The decision made by SMTs in response to their frustrations and lack of resources encourages sustainable school violence.

Ignorance and bias by Senior Management Teams towards available policies, aid and resources put in place to help with school violence

Bernburg (2009) and Durkheim (1897) suggested that those in proximity should make labelling decisions. Due to their proximity to the community's members, those given responsibility will be able to observe. This observed behaviour should be used to assess individuals and suggest the most suitable corrective actions. SMTs are unaware of the difficulties that alcohol and drugs present for students and teachers daily. This indicates that SMTs are ignorant because they only select and work on issues that interest them. SMTs are also biased in favour of policies and aid because they show interest in those that will directly benefit them personally or as SMT members. According to Hoffmann (2013), school disruption and chaos are caused by school administrators' ignorance. School violence is fuelled by the ignorance that SMTs exhibit there.

The researcher is alerted to media platforms and government initiatives about challenges of alcohol and drug abuse in schools by participants' complaints about their difficulties and lack of knowledge to deal with the problem. Television programmes such as Skeem Saam and Soul City, newspaper articles, social media advertisements, and a village-to-village campaign through clinics and local government were intended to provide information on alcohol and drug addiction. However, SMTs have no idea how to deal with alcohol and drug addicts in their school, which, to the researcher, is a sign of ignorance. The DoE has partnered with the Department of Social Services and established a social welfare department to support teachers' and learners' wellness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and interviews with SMTs, the following suggestions have been made regarding prevailing violence in high schools of Maleboho East Circuit of the Capricorn North District:

- Schools and the DBE must organise school awareness campaigns that inform students about the causes of violence and collaborate with the relevant stakeholders to alleviate challenges related to poverty, poor child upbringing, gangs and drugs in schools.

- Relevant stakeholders should regularly monitor and support the implementation of the available policies on school violence, as well as develop mentoring and coaching strategies to ensure active and successful implementation of the policies.
- The DBE must introduce systems that will ensure accountability to policy practice in schools to safeguard that policy practice is maximised and ignorance of policy implementation is addressed.

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