Teacher Intervention Strategies on Reducing Youth Violent Behaviour in One Historically Disadvantaged School: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach

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Abstract

Youth violence, particularly learner-to-learner violence in South African schools, has significantly impacted on teachers, leading to increased stress and burnout. Consequently, there is a pressing need to devise strategies to address school violence. This study aimed to examine teachers' perspectives on a multi-disciplinary approach intervention strategy aimed at reducing youth violent behaviour, particularly in a chosen high school in the Vhembe District Municipality, Limpopo province, South Africa. The sample consisted of nine teachers and one school principal who participated in this study. Unstructured interviews were used to gather the data, and thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data. The key finding reveals the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach in fostering safer learning environments in a historically disadvantaged school. The study recommends collaboration between the Department of Basic Education and the National Youth Development Agency to develop a social and emotional learning programme. This social and emotional learning programme will help to equip learners to manage emotions effectively, particularly in conflict situations, thus mitigating the inclination towards physical violence.

Keywords: learner-to-learner; school violence; strategies; teachers; youth behaviour violence

Introduction

Global youth violent behaviour, including learner-to-learner violence, presents significant societal and educational challenges necessitating a collaborative approach between teachers and stakeholders (Finigan-Carr et al. 2016; Fraga et al. 2011). Approximately one billion learners worldwide are victims of learner-to-learner violence, with a disproportionate effect observed in lower-income nations (Devries et al. 2022). Research by Bucur et al. (2020) highlights the prevalence of physical fighting among Romanian youth in schools, and in the United States, school-related gun violence contributes to the high death rate among American youth (Langman 2011). South African schools have witnessed increased insecurity for both teachers and learners since the advent of democracy (Mabasa 2014). Furthermore, school violence correlates with adverse outcomes such as dropout rates and reduced academic performance of victimised learners (Burton and Leoschut 2013).

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perspectives of a multi-disciplinary approach intervention strategy aimed at reducing youth violent behaviour, particularly learner-to-learner violence in a chosen high school in the Vhembe District Municipality, in Limpopo province, South Africa, to make appropriate recommendations to mitigate the youth's violent behaviours. This study examines violent youth behaviour, specifically focusing on learner-to-learner violence within the school environment. Unlike previous research, which primarily addresses violence directed at teachers, this study aims to contribute novel insights by investigating intervention strategies employed by teachers to mitigate learner-to-learner violence—a pervasive issue in South African schools. The research emphasises the necessity of implementing a school social policy, advocating for the full-time presence of social workers and youth workers in schools to support teachers in preventing such violence. The primary research question guiding this study is: What intervention strategies are teachers currently utilising to address youth violence, and what additional strategies could be employed to mitigate school violence in selected high schools?

Literature Review

Prevalence of Learner-to-Learner Violence in South African Schools

Learner-to-learner violence is pervasive in Vhembe District schools, encompassing incidents of fighting and bullying (Singo 2017). Tugli (2015) found that 2 per cent of young males in the district take knives to school, while 29.8 per cent of young females report experiencing fights with peers in their schools. Notably, even schools in the Vhembe District with historically excellent academic performances have observed a notable surge in learner-to-learner violence, including fighting and gang-related activities. Specific incidents of learner-in-learner violence are chronicled below:

- A learner stabbed a security guard at a high school in Duthuni, and a learner at another school in Mashau village threatened and robbed fellow learners, signalling an increase in the severity of the issue (ZimoJa Lezinto 2022).
- In Limpopo, a tragic event occurred in 2024 when a learner was fatally stabbed by another learner during a fight at a high school in Mulamula village during a cultural school event (*Limpopo Chronicle* 2024).

Learner-to-learner violence is not confined to the Vhembe District nor to the Limpopo province; it is a prevalent issue across various provinces in South Africa:

- In Gauteng, incidents documented by *News24* (2015) depict learners in a Vereeniging school assaulting their peers, with one such incident occurring in the presence of a teacher. Similarly, in footage captured at a high school, two learners engaged in a physical altercation, resulting in both being suspended from the school (Jordaan 2019). Another case involved a female learner from a high school who was filmed assaulting another learner, sparking public outcry, with many advocating for criminal charges (Shange 2019). Additionally, a Grade 10 male learner from Nic Diederichs Technical High School faced suspension after attacking a female peer on school premises (Mlambo 2023).
- In KwaZulu-Natal, a 19-year-old Grade 11 learner was fatally stabbed by another learner (*News24* 2019). According to Mbalo Brief (2023), KwaZulu-Natal recorded the highest proportion of youth in public school subjected to learner-to-learner violence, with a prevalence rate of 35.9 per cent in 2019.
- In the Western Cape in 2021, a significant number of learners reported instances of theft of their school belongings perpetrated by other learners, with 70 per cent indicating occurrences at least once or twice. Additionally, racial discrimination emerged as a concerning issue, affecting 40 per cent of learners who reported experiencing such discrimination from other learners at least once or twice. Physical aggression among learners was also prevalent, as indicated by reports that 16 per cent had been subjected to punching, 22 per cent to kicking, and 17 per cent to outright physical beatings by other learners. Moreover, a substantial proportion, 32 per cent of learners, disclosed instances of physical harm inflicted by other learners at least once or twice (Western Cape Government 2021).

Interventions in Learner-to-Learner Violence in Schools

Within the school context, Burton and Leoschut (2013) emphasise the crucial role of teachers in mitigating school violence, advocating for the promotion of awareness initiatives targeting this issue (Mthiyane 2013). Additionally, Morin (2014) advocates for teachers to implement team-building activities to foster healthy relationships among learners. De Wet, Somefun, and Rambau (2018) emphasise the importance of creating safe social environments within schools to reduce violent behaviour among youth, organised by teachers. Espelage, Rose, and Polanin (2015) suggest the implementation of social-emotional learning programmes to address incidents like bullying and physical altercations.

Bailey (2012) advocates for teachers to incorporate activities fostering emotional intelligence among learners. *Mail & Guardian* (2013) suggests that community engagement initiatives led by teachers can enhance social cohesion and deter learner-to-learner violence. Moreover, the involvement of learners in extracurricular activities like sports has been found to positively influence school climate and reduce incidents of learner-to-learner violence (De Wet et al. 2018). Jacobsz (2015) emphasises the importance of teachers serving as positive role models for at-risk learners. Additionally, teacher training programmes should equip teachers with an understanding of factors contributing to violent behaviour in schools (Mthiyane 2013).

Merrill et al. (2018) argue that the emotional support that learners get from teachers at school is the future predictor for the prevention of school violence. Chitiyo et al. (2014) assert that some teachers in Zimbabwe hold the view that physical punishment is an effective alternative that teachers can use to mitigate school violence. Accordingly, a collaborative setting emphasises the importance of teamwork among teachers within the school environment. Even more so, teachers must work as a team to model positive behaviour for learners who resort to violent behaviour at school. In addition, teachers believe in looking at the factors that motivate a learner to behave inappropriately and should rather work together to find solutions to help learners who resort to violent behaviour (Institute of Education 2014). In addressing school violence, school leaders must have a positive relationship with other role players (Davids and Waghid 2016).

Ettekal and Mahoney (2017), Netshitangani (2014), and Kheswa (2015) propose that teachers can mitigate learner-to-learner violence through the demonstration of effective communication skills, necessitating attentive listening and comprehension of individual learner issues. Additionally, the World Health Organization (2019) suggests that teachers can proactively deter school violence by implementing activities aimed at fostering positive behaviours among learners.

There are many strategies that parents can use in the home and family context: for example, Heimpel, Qian, and Song (2018) and Lesneskie and Block (2017) highlight the role of parents in fostering self-regulation behaviours in children to combat school violence. However, what is significant for this study is the recommendation by Yavuzer and Gündoğdu (2019) of a collaborative approach involving teachers and parents to address school violence effectively.

This study concurs with the intervention strategies suggested by previous scholars, yet it identifies a gap in the literature regarding the exclusion of various stakeholders in the youth development sector. Thus, the current study contributes to existing knowledge by emphasising the importance of involving diverse stakeholders, such as parents, in designing programmes aimed at fostering positive youth development within school premises to address learner-to-learner violence.

A Collaborative Approach between Teachers and Other Stakeholders in Education to Prevent Learner-to-Learner Violence

A collaborative school environment underscores the significance of teamwork among teachers, particularly in modelling positive behaviour for learners prone to violence (Institute of Education 2014). Effectively addressing school violence necessitates strong relationships between school leaders and other stakeholders (Davids and Waghid 2016). Teachers sometimes resort to disciplinary measures such as suspension or expulsion of learners exhibiting violent behaviour on school grounds (Dzivhani 2000). The media plays a crucial role in addressing school violence in South Africa, as evidenced by Anthonowicks' (2010) study, suggesting a collaboration between educational stakeholders and the media to raise awareness of the issue and its impact on education quality.

Teachers Working with Psychologists and Social Workers to Address Learner-to-Learner Violence

UNESCO (2016) advocates for the implementation of school-based psychological interventions to address school violence, suggesting that trained professionals, such as psychologists, play a crucial role in providing counselling to learners. Aluede (2011) emphasises the priority of school counsellors and psychologists in fostering violence prevention through co-curricular activities. Magidi (2014) also highlights the necessity of psychological intervention for both victims and perpetrators of school violence. This study contributes to the existing literature by emphasising the collaboration between teachers and psychologists in providing psychological support to perpetrators of school violence, facilitating the development of conflict resolution skills, and promoting peaceful approaches to conflict resolution among learners.

In addressing school violence, schools must acknowledge the expertise of social workers (Astor et al. 1998). Research by Alvarez et al. (2013) supports the efficacy of school social workers in mitigating school dropout rates and reducing instances of violence. Additionally, Rogers (2016) emphasises the pivotal role of youth workers in alleviating the burden on teachers and tackling disruptive behaviour. Ngidi (2018) and the UK Home Office (2013) advocate for school collaboration with professional social workers and community involvement as essential strategies in combating school violence.

Teachers Working with Law Enforcement

Teachers in rural South African schools collaborate with police officers to implement safety measures (Debusho 2017). Police officers employ proactive strategies, including the threat of legal consequences, such as incarceration, to combat school violence (Radebe and Kyobe 2021). Xaba (2014) suggests hiring safety officers or coordinators to maintain discipline on school premises to address school violence. I support Xaba's (2014) recommendation, emphasising the need for assistance from safety officers to maintain discipline among learners outside the classroom, thereby preventing violence

in areas such as school toilets. However, Devlin and Gottfredson (2020) argue that the presence of police officers in schools does not effectively prevent crime, as learners continue to engage in violent behaviour on school grounds. Dolev-Cohen and Levkovich (2020) challenge the prevailing notion of integrating police officers into school environments as a proactive measure against school violence. Their study suggests that this approach lacks efficacy due to inherent deficiencies, particularly the observed lack of sensitivity exhibited by law enforcement personnel within school settings.

Teachers Partnering with Community Organisations to Address Learner-to-Learner Violence

Debusho (2017) advocates for the integration of non-governmental organisations specialising in school safety initiatives within educational institutions. This recommendation highlights the necessity of schools to engage with external entities committed to fostering safe learning environments. By forging strategic partnerships with such organisations, schools stand to fortify the nexus between local communities and educational institutions. This collaborative effort holds promise for mitigating the incidence of school violence more effectively than punitive measures aimed solely at individual learners (Maseko 2013).

Teachers Partnering with Traditional Leaders to Address Learner-to-Learner Violence

Several authors have asserted that traditional leaders are integral in preventing crime in rural areas by collaborating with stakeholders such as schools and police officers (Espelage et al. 2015; Mngomezulu 2020; Tshehla 2016). Similarly, Netshitangani (2014) advocates for collaborative efforts among stakeholders to mitigate school violence. Given the pivotal role of traditional leaders within communities, particularly in South Africa, they are essential partners for teachers in addressing school violence. However, an identified gap in the literature is the lack of detailed discussion on the specific role of traditional leaders in assisting teachers in addressing learner-to-learner violence. Hence, the present study aims to fill this void by elucidating the contribution of traditional leaders in supporting teachers to tackle school violence, particularly interactions among learners.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs the social learning theory to elucidate the factors motivating violent behaviour among learners in schools, while also exploring the potential of teachers to utilise this theory in fostering positive behaviours among learners. Developed by Burgess and Akers (1966), the social learning theory, initially framed as a differential association–reinforcement theory, posits that individuals acquire criminal behaviour through interactions with peers and family members. Building upon the foundational principles of behavioural psychology as outlined by Sutherland (1947), Bandura (1969)

expanded the theory to emphasise the role of observational learning or modelling in behaviour acquisition. Bandura (1976) further posits that the social learning theory emphasises the significance of environmental influences in shaping an individual's attitude and behaviour through interpersonal interactions. Moreover, the theory posits that ongoing interactions with diverse individuals contribute to the formation of individual behaviour.

In this study, the social learning theory sheds light on the factors contributing to violent behaviour among learners in school settings. This theory shows the significance of learners emulating behaviours they have observed in others. Consequently, it emphasises the influence of external factors such as peer groups, family dynamics, religious institutions, and societal norms on shaping adolescent behaviour. The relevance of the social learning theory lies in its potential to inform strategies for creating a conducive teaching and learning environment, particularly in managing learner-to-learner violence. It demonstrates the role of teachers in modelling positive behaviour through socialisation, thereby enabling learners to observe and replicate constructive conduct. Employing this theory in the classroom setting can serve as a mechanism for reinforcing positive behaviours among learners prone to violence, thus contributing to school violence mitigation efforts in South African schools.

Problem Statement

School violence, particularly perpetrated by learners against their peers, presents a multifaceted risk. Victims of such violence often experience adverse psychological effects, including depression, suicidal ideation, and even dropping out of school (National Institute of Justice 2022). Additionally, the impact extends beyond the individual, affecting the overall learning environment and hindering teachers' effectiveness (Cetin, Danacý, and Kuzu 2020). The consequences can be dire, with instances of learner fatalities, particularly due to gun violence in schools (Langman 2011). Singh and Steyn (2014) highlight the broader implications, including disruptions to teaching and learning processes, as well as the mental health toll on victims, manifesting as stress and anxiety. In light of these challenges, this study aims to examine teachers' perspectives on intervention strategies employed in reducing violent youth behaviour in a selected high school in the Vhembe District, Limpopo province, South Africa.

Methodology

Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach characterised by its inductive approach and utilisation of a limited number of participants, offering researchers a degree of control over the research process (Mason 2017). This approach facilitated direct interaction with participants, allowing for probing inquiries and yielding precise insights within an unstructured interview framework. Furthermore, this study aimed to examine teachers'

perspectives on intervention strategies employed in reducing violent youth behaviour in a selected high school in the Vhembe District, Limpopo province, South Africa.

Research Design

The research design of this study was phenomenological. According to Fouché et al. (2021) a phenomenological research design is used in a study that focuses on the individuals' lived experiences to understand a social problem to propose solutions. The phenomenon of this study is the violent behaviour of learners. In this study, the teachers' lived experiences are interpreted to understand the interventions that they used to reduce school violence in the selected high school. The main research question is as follows: Which intervention strategies are teachers using to reduce the violent behaviour of the youth and what are the possible strategies that can teachers use to reduce school violence in selected high schools? The participants were asked the following two questions: What specific intervention strategies are teachers currently using to address youth violent behaviour in school? What are the most effective strategies that teachers can implement to effectively reduce youth violent behaviour?

Location

The study was conducted at a high school in Malamulele township, Limpopo province, South Africa, primarily attended by children of immigrant parents from Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Xitsonga was the predominant language spoken. This high school is notorious for its high levels of violence, notably highlighted by a fatal stabbing incident involving two learners on campus.

Population and Sampling

The study involved a sample of ten participants, consisting of five female teachers, four male teachers, and one male school principal, conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The decision to limit the sample size to ten aimed to safeguard participants against COVID-19. Purposive sampling was employed, targeting teachers who had witnessed learner-to-learner violence in the selected school. The principal aided in identifying participants based on their positions and experiences within the school setting.

Table 1: Background information of the participants

Participants' position	Gender	Teaching experience
P1 Principal	Male	14 years
P2 Teacher	Male	4 years
P3 Teacher	Female	10 months
P4Teacher	Female	6 years
P5 Teacher	Female	28 years
P6 Teacher	Female	4 years
P7 Teacher	Male	8 years
P8 Teacher	Female	6 years
P9 Teacher	Male	3 years
P10 Teacher	Male	6 years

Table 1 presents the gender and experience in school of participants in a group, comprising primarily female teachers with varying years of experience, alongside a few male participants, including a principal and several teachers with diverse experience levels.

Data Collection and Analysis

Unstructured interviews were conducted to collect research data utilising open-ended questions to facilitate insightful responses. These interviews fostered a conducive environment for participants allowing for clarity on issues raised and accommodating inquiries regarding unclear questions. Audio recordings of the discussions were transcribed verbatim, with translations provided for Xitsonga responses. Thematic analysis, following Clarke and Braun's (2014) method, was employed to analyse qualitative data, involving steps such as data familiarisation, code generation, theme identification, review, refinement, naming, and integration into the research report. This systematic approach ensured a thorough exploration and interpretation of the interview data, aligning with the study's objectives.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines and received clearance from the Tshwane University of Technology (reference number FCRE/PE/STD/2019/14). Permission was also obtained from the Limpopo Provincial Department of Basic Education to access the school for research purposes. Informed consent was obtained from participants, who were informed of the study's objectives and assured of the voluntary nature of their participation. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw and assured of privacy and confidentiality. To address privacy and confidentiality concerns, participants' identities, including real names and school affiliations, were withheld, and personal information such as identity numbers and addresses were excluded. Data anonymisation further safeguarded participant privacy. In establishing a balanced power dynamic between principal and teachers, a conducive environment was fostered, wherein both parties' voices and perspectives were valued and respected. Opportunities

for uninterrupted dialogue were provided, ensuring equitable participation and contributing to the integrity of the research process.

Findings and Discussion

This section examines a multi-disciplinary approach teacher intervention strategy aimed at reducing youth violent behaviour, particularly learner-to-learner violence, within a chosen high school in the Vhembe District, in Limpopo province, South Africa. The predominant theme identified is the utilisation of a multi-disciplinary approach by teachers to address such violence. The findings, categorised into five sub-themes derived from thematic analysis, are presented and discussed herein.

Theme 1: Collaboration with Law Enforcement

This study revealed a comprehensive strategy adopted by teachers to uphold discipline in the school environment, extending beyond conventional enforcement tactics. A key component of this strategy is the collaboration between schools and the Malamulele police station. This finding aligns with prior studies by Debusho (2017) and Xaba (2014), underscoring the significance of teachers forging strong alliances with law enforcement, particularly police officers, to mitigate instances of learner-to-learner violence. Furthermore, the study indicates that this collaboration encompasses not only reactive measures, such as apprehending learner-to-learner violence, but also proactive initiatives geared towards raising awareness about behaviour that put school-attending youth at risk. P4 shared that:

> We have a good relationship with a police officer from the Malamulele police station who often comes to school and informs learners about the dangers of crime for young people even beyond the school years. We make learners aware of the disadvantage of having a criminal record when one is looking for employment. This approach, I think, is very helpful because learners also get a chance to interact with the police by asking the police questions and providing them with inside information.

Similar to P4, P2 mentioned, "I think the presence of the police and their raising awareness helps because learners start to understand the consequences of bad behaviour."

In light of these responses, it can be argued that heightened vigilance regarding risk behaviour among law enforcement officers in school settings plays a crucial role in assisting teachers in addressing instances of learner-to-learner violence. This assertion is corroborated by Radebe and Kyobe's (2021) study, which indicates that police officers collaborate with teachers to mitigate school violence through proactive strategies, including preventative measures such as raising awareness of the consequences of obtaining a criminal record. Such initiatives convey an implicit message to learners that engaging in criminal violence may hinder their future employment prospects due to obtaining a criminal record. However, despite these

efforts, the efficacy of police involvement in reducing school violence remains uncertain, as evidenced by the lack of compelling empirical evidence (Devlin and Gottfredson 2020).

This study further shows the importance of collaborative partnerships between schools and law enforcement entities in enhancing school safety and mitigating instances of learner-to-learner violence. Additionally, initiatives focused on promoting awareness of at-risk behaviour can play a crucial role in pre-empting such incidents, thereby cultivating a conducive and secure learning atmosphere. However, in contrast to the findings of this study, Dolev-Cohen and Levkovich (2020) contend that police involvement may not be an effective strategy for curtailing peer violence, citing deficiencies in emotional support provided by law enforcement personnel during interventions.

Theme 2: Teachers Acting as Role Models

Teachers play a crucial role in cultivating a safe and conducive learning atmosphere that encourages both academic and personal growth of learners. A study reveals that one effective intervention strategy employed by teachers to diminish instances of learner-to-learner violence is the practice of acting as role models. Yavuzer and Gündoğdu (2019) have stated the significance of teachers assuming responsibility for their conduct and fostering collaborative teamwork as key components of effective role modelling in mitigating school violence. Additionally, Jacobsz (2015) emphasises the importance of teachers serving as role models, particularly for learners in vulnerable environments. The study also highlights that teachers exhibit behaviours consistent with ethical standards, which positively influence student behaviour. These findings are echoed by P5, who remarked that:

> Our learners come from poor backgrounds; if we can have resources such as simulation stations, teachers can show people who come from a poor background how to behave. They share with them that they worked hard to achieve their dreams through education, which can assist in curbing school violence.

The high school under consideration primarily serves learners from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. To increase motivation among these learners, teachers could incorporate occasional video recordings showcasing successful individuals who have similarly emerged from impoverished circumstances and achieved notable success through educational pursuits. This approach aligns with previous research findings by Ettekal and Mahoney (2017), Netshitangani (2019), and Kheswa (2015), who emphasise the significance of teachers' communication skills in addressing school violence. Effective communication entails attentive listening to learners and understanding their individual challenges. Additionally, teachers may choose to share personal narratives illustrating their own journeys to becoming teachers, fostering relatability and aspiration among learners towards educational attainment. Such strategies have the potential to instil in learners from disadvantaged backgrounds a belief in the feasibility of success

despite socio-economic constraints, promoting a resilient mindset conducive to academic progress. Moreover, the use of motivational videos can also play a crucial role in mitigating learner-to-learner violence. In this sense, P3 contended that: "We believe that acting as role models to these learners will make them focus on education rather than on bad behaviour at school."

In the context outlined above, it becomes apparent that teachers occupy a crucial position within the societal framework, thereby making substantial contributions to national progress. Accordingly, the demonstration of exemplary behaviour by teachers emerges as a fundamental consideration, fostering inspiration among learners grappling with socio-economic challenges. The World Health Organization (2019) contends that teachers can mitigate incidents of violence among learners by implementing activities that foster their development and uphold their dignity. However, scholarly investigations regarding the potential effectiveness of role modelling in reducing learner-to-learner violence, facilitated by teachers, remain scarce. Hence, this study endeavours to address this gap by indicating the importance of teachers adopting the role of positive role models as a feasible approach to diminishing instances of learner-to-learner violence in schools.

Theme 3: Tribal Authority Involvement

The findings highlight the enduring influence of tribal authority structures within South Africa's societal framework, particularly in the context of conflict resolution within local communities. Despite the proliferation of modern educational institutions, traditional conflict resolution methods persist significantly, as indicated by the participation of tribal authorities in addressing instances of school violence. The findings further emphasised the necessity for a nuanced governance approach that integrates indigenous practices with formal systems to foster community cohesion and tackle contemporary challenges effectively. Tshehla (2016) contends that traditional leaders can play a pivotal role in mitigating youth violence, as evidenced by their collaboration with schools in promoting safer educational environments and bolstering parental involvement in children's education. This highlights the complexity of social dynamics in South Africa and advocates for comprehensive strategies that amalgamate traditional and modern frameworks to combat learner-to-learner violence in schools. This assertion aligns with Mngomezulu's (2020) findings, which advocate for the involvement of traditional leaders such as *Izinduna* or *Amakhosi* in school violence prevention and discipline enforcement among learners. However, the study raises a pertinent concern by illustrating that the absence of indigenous practices rooted in Ubuntu values in the relationship between teachers and traditional leaders hinders efforts to curtail learner-to-learner violence. Consequently, this study posits that to enhance the efficacy of collaboration between teachers and traditional leaders in mitigating learner-to-learner violence, schools should afford traditional leaders the opportunity to incorporate indigenous practices grounded in Ubuntu values within educational settings.

In this regard, P1 mentioned: "We respect our traditional leaders, and we work with them in involving the community in dealing with school violence perpetuated by learners in our school."

Similar to P1, P8 said:

> The school management team works with the tribal office where we, as a community, are summoned by traditional leaders to iron out the burning matters that affect the community including the school violence that contributes to the killing of learners at school.

The aforementioned statement highlights proactive measures such as community engagement to emphasise the crucial role traditional leaders play in curbing such incidents.

Theme 4: Parental Involvement

The study revealed a consensus among participants on the importance of teachers recognising the significant role parents play in addressing instances of violent behaviour among learners within the school setting. This aligns with a prior study by Gündoğdu and Yavuzer (2012), showing the efficacy of parent–teacher collaboration in mitigating school violence. Additionally, the study found that involving parents when a learner exhibits violent behaviour on school premises was a common practice, consistent with the findings of Heimpel, Qian, and Song (2018), who highlight the correlation between increased parental involvement in school activities and decreased incidents of learner-to-learner violence, particularly in schools situated in violent communities.

P1 was of the view that: "The school involves parents in dealing with unruly learners; as we are speaking, we are now dealing with a case where we found a learner with a big knife. We called the parents of that particular child to deal with this matter." Similar to P1 and P2, who agreed with each other, P3 opined that: "We value parents, so we invite them to deal with school violence so they can know what their children are doing at school."

This response indicates the pivotal role of teachers in mitigating learner-to-learner violence within school environments, chiefly through engaging parents in the intervention process. Parental involvement is deemed indispensable owing to their nuanced comprehension of their child's disposition, triggers, and underlying issues, thereby facilitating the formulation of efficacious strategies in conjunction with teachers. This study's findings align with those of Lesneskie and Block (2017), who posit that schools benefit from decreased rates of violence when parents actively participate in school-related activities. Direct interactions with parents further afford teachers insights into contextual variables that may influence a learner's inclination toward violent conduct. These collaborative endeavours between teachers and parents

not only enhance the efficacy of interventions but also advocate for a holistic approach to addressing learner-to-learner violence.

Theme 5: Social Worker Involvement

The present study has unveiled a notable intervention strategy implemented by teachers to address instances of school violence, specifically, the incorporation of social workers within the educational milieu. This intervention has been recognised as an effective approach in ameliorating instances of aggressive conduct displayed by learners within the school premises. The findings of this study align with those of Alvarezet al. (2013), which indicate that the engagement of social workers has proven effective in diminishing school dropout rates and curtailing the prevalence of school violence among youths. P2 mentioned:

> We have decided to involve a social worker in dealing with school violence. We saw a considerable change at school while the social worker was there. There were some issues that learners could not discuss with us, as teachers, but they were more comfortable to discuss these issues with a social worker. Sadly, the social worker's contract came to an end.

Similarly, P10 noted: "After a young person was stabbed to death within the school premises, a social worker was hired to provide counselling to school learners who witnessed such an incident."

Considering these narratives, it can be contended that the integration of social workers within the school setting held significant importance. Ngidi (2018) and the UK Home Office (2013) state that the involvement of social workers in reducing school violence is important since social workers play a pivotal role in aiding learners by introducing therapeutic interventions aimed at addressing the trauma resulting from the passing of their peers.

Learner-to-learner violence persists, necessitating rigorous scientific inquiry to devise effective eradication strategies. This study advocates for the engagement of youth workers and social workers by teachers in schools to cultivate positive behaviour among learners exhibiting violent tendencies.

Limitations

Unlike prior research, this study focuses on learner-to-learner violence within a specific high school, elucidating the multi-disciplinary approaches employed by teachers to address such behaviour. However, generalisations beyond this context are cautioned due to the study's limited scope within Malamulele. Future research should explore diverse strategies employed by teachers across schools in Malamulele and other regions of South Africa to tackle learner-to-learner violence.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that teachers use a multi-disciplinary approach to reduce learner-to-learner violence in the selected school by recognising and enlisting the expertise of other professions responsible for safety, social, and youth development. Additionally, it shows that teachers collaborate with other stakeholders, such as social workers, police officers, community members, and most importantly, parents, in response to violent youth behaviour.

The following recommendations have emerged from the findings:

- The selected high school, with the assistance of professional youth workers, psychologists, and social workers, should organise a parents' workshop to help parents understand the important role of encouraging their children to focus on their schoolwork rather than engaging in anti-social behaviour.
- The Department of Basic Education, in partnership with the National Youth Development Agency, should design a social and emotional learning programme where social workers and youth workers, acting as school ambassadors, can teach learners empathy and social relations skills. This programme can help learners to regulate their emotions through conflict resolution and management rather than resorting to physical violence.
- Teachers need to receive training in learner discipline practices to equip them with the necessary skills needed to address learner-to-learner violence. Since this study was conducted in one selected high school, a similar study sampling more participants should be conducted in other schools in South Africa.

These recommendations will serve to support the teachers in schools affected by learner-to-learner violence and will not only help learners to manage their emotions and behaviour but also assist teachers in managing violent learner behaviour with appropriate protocols and partners in place.

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