

# Manifestation of Violence in Primary and Secondary Schools in South Africa

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**Abstract:** The level of violence at primary and secondary schools in South Africa is extremely high. As such, there is no evidence to suggest that the Department of Basic Education has been able to address the escalation of violence in schools as well as the factors that contribute towards increased levels of violent behaviour. Therefore, the primary aim of this paper was to critically analyse the various ways through which violence manifests itself in primary and secondary schools in South Africa. Secondly, the paper reflects on various factors that contribute to violent behaviour in schools. The theory of planned behaviour was applied to understand increased levels of violent behaviour at schools. This paper is conceptual because it is based on the systematic review of scholarly and non-scholarly documents on school violence. The paper reveals that school violence manifests in different ways, such as bullying, sexual assault, physical assault, murder and teen suicides. Among the key factors that contribute to violent behaviour are the use of dagga, abuse of drugs, carrying of dangerous weapons in school precincts, learners' socialisation and immediate environment. The main argument is that both primary and secondary schools should strive to control and reduce violence in schools in consultation with the justice cluster institutions to identify practical and viable solutions to school violence. Equally important, the theory of planned behaviour reveals that when school children observe that fellow erratic and problematic scholars are not penalised for their wrongdoing, it is likely that they will engage in similar misdemeanours. This suggests that whoever engages in violent behaviour should be penalised in such a manner that those who are aware of their offences and penalties will not be tempted to commit similar offences.

**Keywords:** Bullying, Murder, School violence, Sexual assault

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## 1. Introduction

"Violence in schools is a global phenomenon and South Africa is not exempt from the scourge" (Banda, 2022a). For example, Khumalo (2019) mentions that countries such as Zimbabwe, Eswatini (Swaziland), Ghana, Canada, Germany, the USA, Australia and New Zealand are constantly faced with the issue of high levels of violence at schools. In line with this view, Leoschut (2008) asserts that although the issue of school violence is not a new social challenge, it creates a concern as it contributes to the death of school learners and teachers. The learning processes of children at school can be easily compromised when school children do not feel secure at school. According to Mncube (2014), the increased levels of school violence in South Africa could be attributed to numerous factors, namely the normalisation of violent behaviour, poor youth socialisation and inadequate child rearing.

Violence is defined as the "intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or

community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (Burton & Leoschut, 2013:2; Mncube & Harber, 2014:324; Department of Basic Education, 2016:12). Hoosen, Adams, Tiliouine and Savahl (2022) state that violence is an intensely negative process which involves the violation of the physical, social and psychological integrity of one person by another. School violence is specifically defined as "violence occurring on school premises, while traveling to or from school, or during a school-sponsored event" (Lester, Lawrence & Ward, 2017:1). The above definitions show that violence interferes with the freedom and rights of another person. Basically, violence can be categorised into three distinct variances: violence against oneself (suicide), person-to-person violence and collective violence (Department of Basic Education, 2016). Khumalo (2019) asserts that school violence needs to be construed as criminal and aggressive actions that have the potential to hamper the development of learners, since the school environment may no longer be conducive for learning.

According to Burton and Leoschut (2013), violence can have negative effects such as depression and fatigue. Depression can have far-reaching psychosocial effects that can affect the victims as well as their relations with other people. Additionally, Burton and Leoschut (2013) emphasise that violence at schools can affect learners' capacity to form healthy, consistent and strong relationships with other people. This can make victims of violence feel more pessimistic about the future, making it difficult to handle adversarial circumstances in their socio-economic spaces. In line with Burton and Leoschut's view (2013), the Department of Basic Education (2016) highlights that violence can result in the victim's failure to develop mentally and may also lead to physical injury or death. In other words, violence is extremely detrimental to the emotional and psychological well-being of its victims. While extant research (Hoosen *et al.*, 2022; Mncube & Harber, 2014) shows that violence can affect its victims psychologically, physically and emotionally, Burton and Leoschut (2013) argue that the magnitude of violence at schools has the potential to create an environment in which learners could easily choose to stay away from school as a way of avoiding violence.

Violence at schools can be attributed to various factors such as gender and social norms as well as contextual and structural factors. In this regard, it is worth noting that "discriminatory gender norms that shape the dominance of men and the subordination of women and the perpetuation of these norms through violence are found in some form in almost every culture. Gender inequality and the prevalence of violence against women in society exacerbate the problem. Similarly, social norms that support the authority of teachers over children may legitimise the use of violence to maintain discipline and control (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2017:16). Violence in South African schools can be viewed as a systemic and long-standing issue because reactionary measures are applied to deal with violent incidents instead of introducing preventive measures (Banda, 2022a). According to Mncube (2014), although South African schools do have policies that are intended to prevent violent conduct, carrying of lethal weapons into school premises and the use of substances that have intoxicating effects, violence is still prevalent at schools. Clearly, violence at schools is an impediment to the environment and to a climate conducive for effective learning and teaching (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). Therefore, the aim of

this paper is to critically analyse the various ways through which violence manifests itself in primary and secondary schools in South Africa, based on the systematic review of literature. At the same time, the paper reflects on various factors that contribute to violent behaviour in South African schools. As a point of departure, the theory of planned behaviour is presented as a theoretical framework suitable for understanding or explaining high levels of school violence. Notably, this paper could be useful to researchers interested in issues of school safety, educators, principals and the Department of Basic Education, as it highlights factors that contribute to increased levels of school violence and how such violence could be curtailed.

## **2. Theoretical Framework on Violence**

The theory that was utilised for the purpose of this study is the theory of planned behaviour (TPB). This theory is important in explaining the incessant violence at schools since it seeks to assist in understanding why people would engage in a specific action. TPB was developed by Icek Ajzen in 1985 as a further expansion of the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and it was used in the field of social psychology to understand and predict human behaviour (Ajzen, 2012). TPB postulates that there are three precursors to or determinants of intentions, while intentions are viewed as antecedents of any behaviour or action (Ajzen, 1991; Allini, Ferri, Maffei & Zampella, 2017). Such independent determinants are attitudes towards the behaviour, perceived social norms and perceived behavioural control (Allini *et al.*, 2017). Ajzen (1991) explains the three precursors to intentions as follows: firstly, the attitude towards the behaviour is concerned with the extent to which an individual finds the evaluation of a specific behaviour to be favourable or unfavourable. Secondly, the perceived social norms suggest that an individual is likely to engage in a specific behaviour based on perceived social norms. Thirdly, perceived behavioural control is concerned with the perceived level of difficulty or ease with which a specific behaviour can be performed.

De Leeuw, Valois, Ajzen and Schmidt (2015:129) argue that attitudes towards a behaviour "are assumed to be based on behavioural beliefs, which are a person's beliefs about the likely consequences of performing the behaviour." This shows that if the performance of violent behaviour at school is associated with negative consequences, the attitude

towards engaging in violence will be unfavourable. In line with the view expressed above, Ajzen (2011) postulates that human beliefs generate attitudes, intentions as well as behaviours that are also in consonant with such beliefs. Further, Ajzen (2011) emphasises that beliefs regarding the possible consequences (whether positive or negative) for performing a specific action are likely to influence the motivation to engage in such act. Zhang (2018) emphasises that attitude serves as a strong determinant of behavioural intention. De Leeuw *et al.* (2015) drew a distinction between injunctive norms and descriptive norms. Injunctive norms refer to individuals' perception of what referent others think they have to behave, whereas descriptive norms refer to beliefs regarding the behaviour of referent others. In other words, people's perception about what other people think is the right or wrong thing to do may influence their intentions to engage in violent activity at school. Similarly, ideas that people start to develop about what another person is doing in the immediate environment tend to influence their proclivity towards performing violent actions. The issue of referent others is important because if referent others who have engaged in similar violent acts have never been penalised, it is more likely that those who were observers may engage in similar acts because of the absence of punishment.

Perceived behavioural control is based on the perceptions concerning the absence or presence of impediments and obstacles that could facilitate or prevent performance of an action (De Leeuw *et al.*, 2015). In this sense, if people perceive factors that could hamper their efforts to perform violent activities at schools, it is more likely that the motivation to engage in such violent acts would be extremely low. This suggests that such individuals may ultimately be deterred from performing violent actions. Conversely, if individuals do not perceive any possible obstacles in their effort to perform violent actions at schools, it could be much easier for them to engage in such actions. Similarly, Zhang (2018) asserts that the extent to which individuals think their actions are controllable is dependent on three aspects: resources, abilities and opportunities. This explains that before individuals engage in acts of violence at schools, they are likely to identify opportune times and abilities to perform such actions. In support of the views expressed above, Scharrer (2016:2) argues that perceived behavioural control "stands for the individual's perceived own capability and ability to conduct targeted behaviour."

### 3. Different Ways in Which School Violence Manifests

The various ways through which violence can manifest at schools in South Africa include bullying, sexual assault, physical assault, murder and teen suicide. These are discussed in detail below.

#### 3.1 Bullying

Research conducted by the 1000 Women Trust indicates that approximately 57% of learners have been bullied at schools (Gcwabe, 2021). Although bullying appears to be a major challenge in primary and secondary schools in South Africa, Gcwabe (2021) points out that it continues unabated because most learners do not report bullying incidents for fear of being labelled weak. Nevertheless, UNESCO (2017) mentions that school learners who reported bullying at schools indicated that they were bullied due to their sexual orientation (25%), ethnicity or national origin (25%) and physical orientation (25%). In Lester *et al.*'s (2017) interpretation, bullying can be viewed as continued aggressive behaviour which reflects power imbalances between bullies and their immediate victims.

The Department of Basic Education (2016:15) states that "bullying happens when someone uses their physical strength, their position (e.g. prefect, teacher, team captain) or emotional force and influence over others, to hurt or frighten another person." In this regard, three forms of bullying can be identified: emotional bullying (making the victim feel scared and less confident), verbal bullying (name calling and labelling of the victim) and physical bullying (slapping, pushing and shoving the victim). An empirical study conducted by Mncube (2014) reveals that educators find it increasingly difficult to address some of the cases of bullying that are reported at schools. This could be due to the fact that bullying takes place out of sight, especially in places such as corridors, change rooms and toilets where school learners are not supervised by their teachers (UNESCO, 2017).

Mncube and Harber (2014) explain that bullying can result in anxiety, truancy, loss of self-esteem, reduced concentration levels, aggression and stress. It is not only the victims of bullying who are likely to experience adverse effects; the bullies can also experience anxiety and depression while being vulnerable to suicide and self-harm. For the

reasons stated above, Matthews (2021) posits that to address bullying at schools, it is important to ensure that a conducive environment is created to ensure that victims of bullying receive support and protection. At the same time, schools will have to ensure that detailed policies aimed at preventing bullying incidents are formulated and incorporated as part of learners' code of conduct. Mncube (2014) accentuates that bullying must be identified as problematic and addressed without hesitation at schools while also ensuring that anti-bullying policies are in place. In order to address bullying as a form of violence at schools, UNESCO (2017:10) suggests several preventive and control measures such as "strong leadership; a safe and inclusive school environment; developing knowledge, attitudes and skills; nurture effective partnerships; implementing measures for reporting and providing appropriate support and services; and collecting and using evidence." In other words, tackling bullying at schools would require multiple approaches, which should involve all key stakeholders such as parents and community members to play an active role in developing policies on violence prevention at school.

### **3.2 Sexual Assault**

South Africa has alarming rates of sexual violence and rape (Hoosen *et al.*, 2022). The Annual Crime Statistics report for 2019/2022 reveals that over 24 000 children were sexually assaulted in South Africa, while it is estimated that approximately 22.2% of school children have been victims of sexual violence (Bhana, 2021). Furthermore, Bhana (2021) reports that over 160 cases of sexual misdemeanour committed by male teachers were reported to the South African Council for Educators (SACE) between April 2020 and July 2021. According to the Department of Basic Education (2016), sexual violation occurs when the perpetrator touches the genitals of a victim using any body part or making a victim touch the perpetrator in a sexual manner. While incidents of violence against female learners at schools take different forms, such as sexual harassment and rape, Mayeza and Bhana (2021) highlight that these happen in varied school premises such as corridors as well as abandoned buildings on the school precincts. Mncube and Harber (2014) state that when aggressive conduct towards female learners by male learners is normalised and not punished by teachers, an abnormal environment can be created inadvertently where sexual violence could be rife. Nevertheless, Hoosen *et al.* (2022) argue that patriarchy, power imbalances

and socio-economic conditions in South Africa continue to create a difficult environment for young girls who are victims of sexual violence to report their experiences. Consequently, young girls may start feeling hopeless, weak and anxious because of a lack of support. UNESCO (2017:9) also notes with great concern that "sexual violence increases the risk of unintended pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections."

Mayeza and Bhana (2021) suggest the following solutions towards addressing sexual violence against female learners at schools. Firstly, there is a need to address the issue of gender power imbalances. Secondly, schools need to create a safe physical environment thereby identifying and managing spaces that increase the risk of sexual violence. Thirdly, the school curriculum should focus on issues of sexuality and relationships, especially in relation to girls' daily experiences of violence at school. In this sense, a comprehensive sexuality education programme will have to be structured in such a manner that it challenges violence perpetrated by both boys and girls. Fourthly, schools need to provide adequate support to female learners who report incidents of sexual violence. In this regard, schools can promote active bystander programmes that encourage bystanders to take action against violence when it arises. Consistent with Mayeza and Bhana's views, the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2019) points out that sexual violence can be managed by nurturing the school learners' capacity to identify risky and unsafe situations. Moreover, this can include improving the level of awareness about sexual violence and encourage learners to report such incidents. In this sense, clear policies or procedures concerning sexual offences involving learners must be readily available and publicised widely so that school learners are aware of their rights.

### **3.3 Physical Assault**

Ideally, schools are expected to be places where learners can grow and learn in an environment that is safe. However, in South Africa, there is increasing concern about physical violence in the classrooms. For instance, in June 2022, an assault incident occurred in KwaZulu-Natal where a school principal was stabbed in the shoulder by a learner, and a week before that another incident was recorded where a teacher was shot in the head and subsequently died in hospital (Cloete, 2022). In March 2018, a male high school teacher at Bergylam High School

in Mpumalanga was assaulted by a learner in the classroom where he sustained injuries in the head and eyes and suffered fractured ribs (Broughton, 2022). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that teachers are also responsible for physical assault when they enforce corporal punishment as a method of disciplining learners. In line with this view, Stoltz (2022) states that the enforcement of corporal punishment is a major challenge because 169 complaints of corporal punishment were lodged with the South African Council for Educators (SACE) between 2020 and 2021. Further, Stoltz (2022) mentions that most incidents of corporal punishment occurred in rural schools in South Africa.

The Department of Basic Education (2016:17) defines corporal punishment as "any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light, by a person in authority." Based on this definition, the primary goal of using corporal punishment is to inflict pain or make another person uncomfortable. This can be interpreted as violent conduct towards the victim of corporal punishment. In 1996, corporal or physical punishment was banned in South African schools and South Africa has since endorsed international conventions such as the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Despite the abolishment of corporal punishment in South Africa, it is evident that some teachers continue to make use of corporal punishment in order to enforce discipline at school. The Department of Basic Education (2016) reports that 49.8% of school learners who participated in the 2012 National School Violence Study revealed that physical punishment was used against them by teachers as well as principals.

Lester *et al.* (2017) note that the use of corporal punishment constitutes school violence. In line with this view, Hoosen *et al.* (2022) found that school learners feel humiliated, resentful and helpless when corporal punishment is used against them at school. When educators are found using corporal punishment against learners to enforce discipline, it is important to ensure that the matter is reported to the law enforcement agencies (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). According to UNESCO (2017), fatal and non-fatal injuries are normally reported as a result of physical violence, which includes corporal punishment. However, Cloete (2022) maintains that the issue of physical assault in schools can be

curtailed successfully if parents cooperate with schools when corrective steps are taken against offending children. It is possible for teachers to instil discipline at school without resorting to violent means. For instance, the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2019:37) indicates that teachers can make use of positive discipline which includes "setting clear expectations of behaviour in the classroom and praising and encouraging students who meet those expectations" and use classroom management which requires the creation of a "structured classroom environment that supports academic and social and emotional learning and manages student behaviour in a positive way." However, it is worth noting that some offences by school learners may require measures beyond positive discipline and classroom management. When such a situation arises, it would be prudent to apply school policies and involve law enforcement agencies to deal with such matters. This will ensure that offenders (learners and educators) receive punishment that is commensurate with the offence committed.

### 3.4 Murder

Matthews (2021) reveals police statistics recorded between April 2019 and March 2012 indicating that 9 murder and 19 attempted murder cases were reported at schools. For example, Banda (2022a) reports several incidents of murder that took place at schools: in 2020, a learner was stabbed to death at Eerste Rivier in the Western Cape; in August 2021, a Grade 10 learner from Entokozweni Secondary School in Kwaggafontein, Mpumalanga, was beaten to death by a fellow learner; also in August 2021, a Grade 8 learner from Pholosh Junior Secondary School in Alexandra, Gauteng, was stabbed to death by a fellow learner; another incident in which a Grade 7 learner was stabbed to death at Pholosh Junior Secondary School occurred in September 2021; in January 2022, a deputy school principal from Phomolong Secondary School in Tembisa was shot to death. Boxer (2022) highlights five possible ways through which violent crimes such as murder could be prevented and minimised at schools. Firstly, restricting access to guns is essential because there is a link between high rates of gun murder and access to firearms, irrespective of whether such firearm is legal or illegal. This should also include the prevention of carrying of any other dangerous weapon into school precincts. Secondly, risk assessments must be conducted in schools in order to examine the school learners' inclination towards

violence. However, this should be a team effort that includes police officials, psychologists, counsellors and school teachers. Thirdly, evidence-based strategies meant to decrease violent behaviour at schools must be expanded. The strategies should contribute to the prevention of aggressive conduct, thereby assisting school learners in resolving problems easily when faced with peer conflict. At the same time, school learners who are extremely violent can be taught new constructive behaviours and communication skills. Fourthly, physical security measures at schools should be implemented and maintained. Metal detectors may be used at the entrances of school premises in order to prevent smuggling of lethal weapons which may be utilised to harm others. Lastly, exposure to violent conduct via media and social media must be reduced. Since school learners who are exposed to violence through entertainment media are likely to display aggressive conduct and be callous to violence, it is important to restrict usage of devices that may contain visual images that portray acts of violence.

### 3.5 Teen Suicide

Most teen school learners who experienced discrimination and bullying at South African schools resorted to committing suicide (De Barros, 2022). This explains why teen suicide should be viewed as a reflection of violence at schools. As a matter of fact, the teen suicide rate constitutes 8% of deaths reported in South Africa, while at least 20% of teenagers have reportedly attempted to commit suicide (De Freitas, 2022). Teen suicide is rated as the fourth most common cause of death among 15-19 year olds. This problem has not been given enough attention because of a lack of awareness regarding suicide as a main public health challenge (World Health Organisation, 2021). Further, Shilubane, Bos, Ruiters, Van den Borne and Reddy (2015) note with great concern that teachers at schools are not adequately equipped to deal with issues of suicide among school learners, suggesting that they cannot provide support to school learners who are showing signs of suicidal behaviour. According to the WHO (2021), teen suicide can be managed successfully through collaboration and coordination among key actors in various fields such as law, business, health, education, labour and politics. Shilubane *et al.* (2015) suggest that teachers be given appropriate training in which they can learn to identify school learners who are at risk of suicide and respond by referring learners to qualified health

professionals. Moreover, it is important to ensure that school-based suicide prevention programmes are introduced in such a manner that they can assist teachers in identifying school learners with suicidal tendencies and help learners to cope with incidents of suicide at school.

## 4. Factors Contributing to Violent Behaviour in Schools

There are several different factors that contribute to violent behaviour in schools.

### 4.1 Use of Dagga and Abuse of Drugs

Decriminalising the use of dagga since 2019 has created a huge problem for schools in South Africa. For example, cases of school children who used dagga were reported at three schools in Gauteng, namely: Mamellong Secondary School, 36 Leondale Secondary School and Randfontein High School (Banda, 2022b). Milligan, Radunovich and Wiens (2012) found a direct link between substance abuse and violence among school learners and that the use of dagga was prevalent among school learners in Grades 8-12. In 2018, about 59.9% of primary school children tested positive for drug use and 72.9% of high school learners also tested positive in the Western Cape Province (Malema, 2019). Furthermore, Malema (2019) mentions that the "South African Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (SACENDU) reports that 21% to 28% of the patients treated for substance abuse in 2016-17 were under the age of 20." Leoschut (2008) argues that easy accessibility to alcohol and drugs by school learners increases the risk of violence at school. In support of this assertion, Burton and Leoschut (2013) point out that there is a link between school violence and access to substances that have intoxicating effects and that some learners were familiar with individuals that sold illegal drugs such as cocaine, whoonga or nyaope, ecstasy, heroine, tik and mandrax. The problem associated with the use of dagga and drugs can be addressed successfully through the establishment of a safe school environment which involves high levels of cooperation among community leaders, law enforcement agencies, government and educators (Ramorola & Taole, 2014).

### 4.2 Possession of Dangerous Weapons

In 2021, the South African police conducted major operations at schools in Daveyton, Cloverdale

and Etwatwa where dangerous weapons such as knives and scissors were confiscated (Masilela, 2021). According to Leoschut (2008), easy access to dangerous weapons such as firearms creates a precarious environment for the school learners since learners can harm one another. A study conducted by Burton and Leoschut (2013) shows that one out of four school learners knew of fellow learners who brought firearms and knives to school. What is concerning is that most incidents go unreported to the school because of learners' fear of victimisation, especially if there are no clear mechanisms in place to deal with such disorderly behaviour by learners. Khumalo (2019) reports that male learners are the ones that frequently carry lethal weapons to school in comparison to their female counterparts. Furthermore, Khumalo (2019) indicates that while knives and guns are frequently carried by learners to school, other dangerous weapons include pangas, bats, screwdrivers and pepper spray. In order to assist schools in addressing illegal behaviour, Mncube (2014) suggests that police need to be continuously and consistently involved.

#### 4.3 Learners' Socialisation and Immediate Environment

A study conducted by Hoosen *et al.* (2022) found that young people who are constantly exposed to incidents of violence are likely to develop some short and long-term mental and physical health problems. As a matter of fact, young people who have continuously experienced violence are at risk of higher psychopathology and may start externalising negative behaviour such as bullying and aggressive conduct towards other people (Hoosen *et al.*, 2022). In support of this assertion, South African Council for Educators (2011) posits that when children are exposed to violent situations, they tend to adopt aggressive and violent behaviour or acquire complex social behaviour through the social learning process. Khumalo (2019) also acknowledges that "experiences of violence during adolescence and childhood will affect the health, wellbeing, and capacity of the next generation to shape society, as they navigate rapid social and political change." In other words, when learners are exposed to violent action from an early age, they are more likely to perpetuate and condone violent behaviour. In support of this argument, Hoosen *et al.* (2022) state that the culture of violence can create an intergenerational legacy where victims of violence turn to be perpetrators of violence in their own spaces.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Evidence from the review of literature reveals that school violence in South Africa has some major negative physical, psychological and emotional consequences on its victims as well as perpetrators. School violence manifests through bullying, sexual assault, physical assault, murder and teen suicide. With regard to bullying, most school children continue to experience bullying due to their sexual orientation, ethnicity or national origin and physical orientation. In order to address bullying at schools, it is imperative to ensure that policies that prohibit and provide clear sanctions against the perpetrators of bullying are in place. South Africa has the highest rate of sexual violence involving young school children in which male educators are primary perpetrators. Evidence suggests that young girls are at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases due to forced sexual engagements. Sexual violence at schools can be minimised by addressing gender power imbalances and creating an environment that allows victims of sexual violence to report without fear while also providing emotional and psychological support to the victims.

The issue of physical violence in South African schools is a growing concern because on the one hand school learners unleash violence against educators and fellow school learners using lethal weapons, while on the other hand some educators make use of corporal punishment to instil discipline, despite the fact that physical punishment has been banned in South Africa. South African schools should be able to take proactive steps to involve parents as active partners in dealing with misconduct concerning their children while also making use of positive discipline and classroom management approaches. Incidents that cannot be addressed using the above approaches may need to be reported to the law enforcement agencies, depending on the magnitude of offences by learners or educators. Incidents of murder are also one of the ways in which violence manifests in South African schools. It is therefore important to introduce various programmes in schools that could help reduce the level of aggression often displayed by school learners against one another or the educators. At the same time, the use of detectors by security personnel at school entrances could help reduce the number of dangerous weapons on the premises. It is worth emphasising that where murder has taken place, the matter cannot be handled by a school; instead,

the police must immediately be informed. This will ensure that a thorough investigation takes place so that offenders receive punishment commensurate with the offence. This view is in line with the theory of planned behaviour. Teen suicide is also on the rise in South Africa because young school learners who feel discriminated against and ill-treated resort to suicide. To deal with this challenge, it is necessary to equip educators and train them in basic skills to identify learners who portray suicidal tendencies so that such learners can be referred to psychological professionals.

Evidence emanating from the above research has shown that the use and abuse of drugs are directly linked to increased levels of violence in South African schools. Safe school environments need to be created in order to restrict and prevent the use of dagga and drugs on school premises. Regular unannounced searches must be conducted at schools in order to deter learners from carrying any substance that has an intoxicating effect. Possession of dangerous weapons on school premises by learners is also linked to various forms of violence occurring at schools in South Africa. To deter the possession of dangerous weapons on school precincts, metal detectors should be used regularly. Equally important, a learner's socialisation and immediate environment can immensely influence their proclivity to commit violent acts. This is because when learners are exposed to violence incidents, they tend to exhibit violent behaviour themselves. This is also consistent with the theory of planned behaviour, which reveals that those who observe an occurrence use it to evaluate their intended actions. For this reason, it is important that those who engage in violent action receive a penalty proportionate to the offence in order to deter those who may wish to engage in similar conduct, hoping to escape without any consequences.

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