



TYPES OF CRIME EXPERIENCED BY SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS: CASE STUDIES OF GAUTENG PROVINCE (SOUTH AFRICA)

Tinyiku David Ngoveni¹, JT Mofokeng², D Khosa³
^{1,2,3} Thwane University of Technology

Corresponding Email : ¹ngovetd@unisa.ac.za, ²mofokengjt@tut.ac.za, ³khosad@tut.ac.za

Abstract.

Various crimes occur in South African secondary schools, with inefficient strategies to effectively respond to it. As a result, this study used case studies of Gauteng Province (South Africa) to explore the types of crimes experienced. The qualitative research approach, supported by the case study research design and exploratory research objectives were employed. For data collection, unstructured face-to-face interviews and literature sources, including scholarly books, internet resources, academic publications, newspapers and unstructured face-to-face interviews were adopted. This study was confined to the four (4) clusters attached to Gauteng Province. About thirty (30) participants, involving the following key stakeholders, secondary school (grade twelve - 12) principals, deputy principals, educators, learner representative council members, and School Governing Body (SGB) chairpersons were selected using non-probability: Purposive sampling method. The collected data sets were analysed using inductive Thematic Content Analysis (TCA). The findings reveal substandard safety and security measures in schools, particularly in township areas (clusters 1, 2 and 3) affirms, whereas cluster 4 demonstrates more effective security due to the use of private security services. The study recommends the establishment of robust safety and security measures, leveraging reputable security institutions and multi-disciplinary crime-prevention strategies, tailored to the specific risks and potential returns on investment, these attempts could possibly respond to different types of crimes witnessed in South African secondary schools and inform the existing legislative frameworks, policies and strategies against the identified crimes.

Keywords: Case studies, Crime, Gauteng Province, Secondary schools, Safety and security measures, South Africa

INTRODUCTION

Nelson Mandela once said that; “education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” (Oxford Essential Quotations, 2017:1). With education, a country’s economy stands to be in a stable position resulting in a better life for all. However, the environment in which both the educators and learners educate and access their education can determine their performance. Various crimes thrive in unsafe and hazardous school environments and may result in poor performance by both the educators and learners (National Education Association, 2002:17). Although the study focused on the South African perspective, as Mathe (2008:54) and Mabasa (2021:1) indicate, the challenge in terms of safety and security is not only in South Africa but also experienced by other countries globally.

This has resulted in the worldwide situation being considered for a broader understanding and comparison purpose. Further, there is a need to consider international safety and security conditions as it may assist in learning what is transpiring within their community and measures in place for deterrence purposes. During the period of 2003-2004 financial year, American schools reported a higher number of deaths in schools than the previous 2002-2003 financial year. The United States of America experiences various violent incidents in schools that involve shootings, harassment, possession of illegal drugs and use of weapons and bullying. Studies indicate that thousands of youths carry various weapons to school (Bucher & Manning, 2010:55; Mathe, 2008:25). During the year 2018-2019 financial year, 39 school-associated violent deaths were reported.

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Of these, 29 were homicides while 10 were suicides. Similarly, in the same year, 2018, Wang, Cui and Thompson (2022:8) recorded a total of 93 school shootings in both public and private schools collectively with fatalities of 43 deaths and 50 injuries. In Sweden, the Brå Report (2022) indicates that 45% students reported having experienced criminal activities such theft, assault, threats, robbery, or sexual offences. at least once in the past twelve months. The percentage is lower than the 48% experienced in 2019. Both boys and girls fall the victims to violence within the school environment. According to Uzuegbu-Wilson (2019), Nigerian schools experience safety and security challenges such as youth unrest, terrorism and insurgent attacks, kidnappings and hostage-taking for financial gain, political assassinations, arson, murders, cult-related activities and mass protests.

The existence of Boko Haram insurgency and lack of security in schools has led to many schools suffering to the extent that education in some areas has ceased. By 2013, attacks led to 22 schools of Bono State and 27 of local government areas being left without formal schools. By 2014, the Yobe state had no functional schools in two out of three educational zones, while 7 out of the 21 local government areas in Adamawa state had no schooling. Succumbing to the pressure of violence, all schools in Yobe state were relocated to Damaturu, the state capital. The ongoing insurgency in Adamawa resulted in the closure of 115 schools in eight local government areas, leading to the displacement of 285 632 prominent students and 8 150 staff. From 2009 to 2014, Boko Haram attacked schools in Yobe, Maiduguri and (Bono) Chibok resulting in deaths and injuries. The 2014 Chibok incident where 276 girls were abducted was the worst incident and gained international attention (Adewale, 2023:72).

South Africa as whole, just like other countries in the world has a high crime rate, a situation that includes our secondary schools. Within a South African context, a report by Saferspaces (2021:1) and Le Roux and Mokhele, (2011:126), revealed that South African schools experienced various crimes ranging from burglary, theft, arson, bullying, rape, other sexual violence to murder. This may be attributed to the absence and poor security measures. The study under the auspices of the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) and the South African Department of Basic Education (DBE) also established that 20% of educators in South Africa believed that schools are crime-prone spaces, where they suspect their learners and colleagues bring weapons to schools (HSRC, 2017:1). Therefore, evaluating how safety and security measures are implemented in the prevention of various crimes within the Tshwane South District secondary schools is crucial.

According to Hamdan (2022:1), if the country resolved to improve human security from the threat of crime amongst its community members, such members and community at large would benefit positively. Within the context of this enquiry the school community should benefit as well, as safety and security in many South African public schools is compromised. The DBE should put in place clear policies and regulations complemented by actions that are sound and well-structured to ensure safety and compliance with the law. The existing policies meant to promote safety and security such the discipline policy, school safety policy, code of conduct for learners, code of conduct for teachers, Chapter 2 (the Bill of Rights in the Constitution, 1996), the South African Schools Act [SASA] (No. 84 of 1996), the White Paper on Education and Training of 1995, just to mention the few, seem inadequate or have not been applied appropriately. It is worth noting that crimes within the context of this inquiry refer to the dominant crimes occurring within the school context such as:

- Bullying.
- Corporal punishment.
- Sexual harassment.
- Gangsterism.
- Vandalism in various format.
- Discrimination.
- Drug dealing and smoking.
- Gossiping.
- Swearing or vulgar language to both learners and educators.



- Murder as one of the dangerous crimes which both the school learners and educators are highly exposed.

Given the outlined list above, the researcher is of the view that schools still experience various crimes resulting in the safety and security within the school environment being deemed inadequate to promote a safe working environment for both learners and teachers. As a result, the gap in relation to weaknesses in safety and security in the prevention of crime needs to be investigated and bring a new perspective to addressing the challenge. Although numerous research studies on school safety and security have already been conducted, the ongoing occurrence of severe crimes, including murder, highlights the importance of this study. It aims to evaluate the current security measures, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and understand the persistent causes of these crimes. The study will also provide recommendations for improvements, building on the suggestions from previous research, to promote a safer school environment.

To problematise this study, According to Xaba (2014:158) generally, all schools in South Africa are concerned with the issue of making the learning space for both educators and learners safe and effective. Le Roux and Mokhele (2011:1) support the latter statement stipulating that crime and violence are regarded as the way of life in South Africa, resulting in a high rate of abuse and violence against school children within their learning environment with no sign of a decrease. The hostile and violent behaviour of many South Africans results in producing violent learners within their learning environment and the country at large. The 2008 findings by the national research project on school violence in South African indicated that 1.8 million (15.3%) of Grade 3 to Grade 12 learners have experienced violence of one form or another during their time at school. The 2009 report found that between January 2007 and April 2009, the issue of school violence was reported every month (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011: 127; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013: 1). This is emphasised by Pijoos (2020:1), indicating that between April 2019 and March 2020, the SAPS recorded nine (9) murders and nineteen (19) attempted murders in schools caused by bullying amongst learners. In addition, 345 assaults with intent to cause grievous bodily harm and 546 common assault cases amongst the school learners in the country were opened. The criminal challenge by learners is also against educators.

The shared assertions are supported by Kirsten, Viljoen and Rossouw (2005:13) by highlighting that the broad social ills are experienced even by educators during their teaching in their classrooms and staff rooms. All the stipulated incidents above are an indication of the vulnerability of both learners and educators within the school environment. These criminal activities within the schools led to educators being provided with a new textbook that guides them in dealing with violence against them while in the classroom (Pijoos, 2020:1). The concern about the killing of teachers as one of the challenges experienced by South African schools was raised by the late Zulu monarch, King Goodwill Zwelithini, indicating that the death of one teacher is one teacher too many. He suggested the establishment of a commission to investigate the killings (Pijoos, 2020:1). Any crime within the schools impacts negatively on the ability of the educator to educate and on the learner to learn. The communities are impacted negatively as such violence can spread into the communities. It further impacts negatively on country's development goals, and has extensive health and economic costs for the country.

In another incident, in 2021; a rape case took place at *Nkhesani* secondary school, in Ga-Rankuwa (Pretoria, under Gauteng Province), and the rape and murder of a seventeen-year-old matric girl from Ntsako secondary school, in Soshanguve (Gauteng Province) serve provide evidence of criminal activities to which learners are exposed. In terms of murder, between April 2019 and March 2020, nine (9) murders and nineteen (19) attempted murders were reported by the police as a result of bullying in schools. To address violent and abusive pupils in class, a textbook is being drafted by the South African Council for Educators (SACE) for educators in primary and high school lessons (Pijoos, 2020:1).

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to evaluate safety and security measures within the school that is aimed in the prevention of crime to promote effective teaching and learning. Therefore, to

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accomplish its objective, the qualitative research approach, aided by the exploratory research approach was regarded the preferred method. The chosen Qualitative research approach starts with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems enquiring into the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem, while emphasising the use of a qualitative research approach. supports that “to study an identified research problem, qualitative research approach is often used to inquire, the natural setting comprising human subjects and places that inform the collection of data, and inductive data analysis establishes the study theme, while the case study research design and exploratory research objective were used to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon (types of crimes committed in the secondary school setting), community or individual, as responsible for safety and security of learners and teachers (Maluleke, 2016; Creswell, 2013; De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delpont, 2011).

This qualitative study was confined to the Gauteng Province, focusing on Tshwane District secondary schools (D4) comprising 04 clusters. The non-probability: Purposive sampling was adopted to select seven (7) school principals, seven (7) deputy principals, and six (6) educators, five (5) learner representatives council members, and 5 SGB chairpersons. In total, thirty (30) participants formed part of this study, and they were all subjected to the unstructured face-to-face interviews. Furthermore, the gathered information was obtained by using Google Scholar and Research Gate search engines, as well as data from a variety of online (Internet) newspaper articles and media reports, academic books, peer-reviewed journals articles, and other relevant sources. articles, internet searches, as well as the electronic databases, such as the ‘Google Scholar, EbcoHost, Emerald Insight, Jstor, ProQuest, Sabinet, Sage Online and Science Direct (Maluleke, 2020).’ The researcher examined previous and present studies in relation to safety and security in the crime prevention within the schools. Based on Braun and Clarke (2006) inductive TCA, this study focuses on the identification and classification of study theme in qualitative manner, while adhering to the following Six (06) phases: 1) Familiarisation with data, 2) Generating codes, 3) Identifying a study theme, 4) Reviewing a study theme, 5) Defining a study theme, and; 6) Report (article writing in this context) writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is very important to be familiar with various types of crime and violence that usually happen within the school environment against both teachers and learners. This will assist in drawing up suitable safety and security measures. According to Kollapen (2007:10), South African school-based violence is multi-dimensional and takes on various forms. For example, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO] (2017:2) schools represent a critical space for learning, including knowledge by learners in understanding the issue of gender roles. Gender is identified as one of the factors that influence persistent violence in the school environment. Further, “less attention on gender discrimination and power imbalances in schools encourages attitudes and practices that subjugate school children, uphold unequal gender norms and allow the toleration and continuation of gender-based violence”. In relation to violence experienced by learners inflicted on them by other learners, Mashaba, Sibanda, Tsebe, Ngidi and Maile (2022: 117) and Shumba and Ncontsa (2013:2) list the types of violence criminal activities experienced, such as the following:

- Bullying.
- Corporal punishment.
- Sexual harassment.
- Gangsterism.
- Vandalism in various format.
- Discrimination.
- Drug dealing and smoking.
- Gossiping.
- Swearing or vulgar language to both learners and educators.



In terms of the scope of school violence that exists and experienced by both teachers and learners within the school environment, the UNESCO (2017:9) identifies the following challenges:

- School violence involves physical violence, including corporal punishment by teachers to learners; psychological violence that might evolve in various ways, including verbal abuse; sexual violence, including rape and harassment; and bullying, including cyberbullying that is increasing during this period of 4th Industrial Revolution.
- Bullying, which is a type of violence, is a form of behaviour rather than an isolated event, and it has a hostile impact on the person being bullied, the bully and bystanders. It is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school-aged learners that involves a real or perceived imbalance of power. If it is not detected and dealt with, the behaviour is repeated or has the potential to be repeated, over time’.
- Bullying and cyberbullying are a key concern for learners and adolescents. The extensive use of social media contributes to this.
- School violence and bullying is perpetrated by other learners, teachers and other school staff. Violence that occurs on the way to and from school may also be perpetrated by members of the wider community in which the school is situated. It is important to differentiate between violence perpetrated by peers and violence perpetrated by educational institutions or their representatives as this distinction influences both the impact of and the response to violence.
- There is some evidence to suggest that girls are more likely to experience sexual violence and that boys are more likely to experience corporal punishment, or more severe corporal punishment, in school than girls, although girls are not exempt.
- The underlying causes of school violence and bullying include gender and social norms and wider contextual and structural factors. Much school violence and bullying are linked to gender; Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is violence that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering against someone based on gender discrimination, gender role expectations or gender stereotypes or based on differential power status linked to gender.
- The most vulnerable children and adolescents, including those who are poor or from ethnic, linguistic, or cultural minorities or migrant or refugee communities or have disabilities, are at higher risk of school violence and bullying. Children and adolescents whose sexual orientation, gender identity or expression does not conform to traditional social, or gender norms are also disproportionately affected.
- Teachers and learners can experience school violence and bullying inside and outside the classroom, around schools, on the way to and from school, as well as through social media. In school, the following places, such as toilets, changing rooms, corridors, and playgrounds where children and adolescents are less easily seen or supervised by teachers and other school staff, provide opportunities for bullying, overall, schools violence needs effective safety and security measures if it is to be minimised or stopped (UNESCO, 2017: 9).

Selected types of crimes and misconducts and irregularities

- **Secondary school break-ins:** As already highlighted, the symptoms of school vandalism just like other crimes, are not South African challenges only. From an international perspective, even developed countries such as Canada spend taxpayers’ money repairing schools because of vandalism. The criminal activities are sometimes caused by the learners themselves (Cooze, 1995:1). Although vandalism is not limited to any social or economic sector, these criminal activities usually take place in areas of low economic status where educational provision is of a lower standard (de Buzna, 1975:8). School vandalism refers to wilful or malicious damage to school place and buildings or furnishings and equipment. Glass breakage, writings and general property destruction serve as examples of school vandalism, while school break-ins refer to an unauthorised entry during closing hours. School vandalism causes serious challenges for schools and communities, police and fire departments as the custodians of ensuring safety and security for everyone within the school including the resources themselves (Dedel, 2005:1).

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At a breakfast meeting with the Gauteng Province Education Member of Executive Committee [MEC] for community safety, one principal expressed great concern about vandalism in their buildings, particularly during the school breaks (Pijoo, 2019:1). Sokutu (2023:1) indicates that Gauteng Province was reeling from a scourge of public schools being burgled and vandalised complemented by the theft of furniture, gates, window frames, doors and taps. As emphasised by Weatherburn (2021:1), understanding the underlying reasons is crucial. The report by the Minister of Basic Education highlights that the presence of valuable items such as laptops and steel equipment for metalworking, which can be sold by syndicates for profit, is a significant factor behind the criminal vandalism of schools. According to the report by the Gauteng Province Education MEC, during the 2022 learning period alone, a total of 120 schools were vandalised, while 24 schools experienced vandalism during the December holidays while a year before, 57 schools were reported to have been damaged. In total by the year 2023, 488 schools were designated for infrastructural maintenance. For the year 2021, in Gauteng alone, the department spent R50 million to fix 54 schools that were targeted by vandalism (Sokutu, 2023:1; Lindeque, 2022a:1; Lindeque, 2022b:1). Rogers, Van Schalkwyk and Ngoveni, (2017:39) highlight the importance of determining the factors that cause people to commit crimes. This can be based on the predisposing factors which are factors present in individuals that cause them to commit a crime, such as the desire or motivation to commit a crime. Familiar with these motivational factors is of utmost importance to assist during the safety and security planning stage and to ensure that productive relevant security measures are implemented. In terms of break-ins, one of the high-volume crimes, Dedel (2005:2) classifies these into three (03) categories of break-ins, demarcated as follows:

- **Nuisance break-ins:** The break-in where youth break into a school building, seemingly as an end with less serious damage but take nothing of value for their benefit.
 - **Professional break-ins:** Offenders use a high level of skill to enter the school, break into storage rooms containing expensive equipment, and bulk items are removed from the school for the private benefit. In this situation, less incidental damage is caused when the stolen goods are sold for lots of money.
 - **Malicious break-ins:** Involving significant damage to the school's interior and may include arson. In this case, sometimes these lawbreakers destroy equipment rather than steal items of value, for example, break-ins because of strikes in community services.
- **Secondary school vandalism**

From the learners' perspective, Dedel (2005:7) provides the following motivational factors to school vandalism incidents:

 - **Vandalism:** Often occurring due peer pressure.
 - **Acquisitive vandalism:** The vandalism is committed to obtain property or sell it for money.
 - **Tactical vandalism:** Used to accomplish goals such as getting school cancelled, especially by the disgruntled student or those who failed in their class.
 - **Ideological vandalism:** Orientated toward a social or political cause or message, such as a protest against school rules.
 - **Vindictive vandalism:** Such as setting fire to the principal's office after being punished is done to get revenge.
 - **Play vandalism:** Occurring when youth intentionally damage property during play.
 - **Malicious vandalism:** Used to express rage or frustration. Because of its viciousness and apparent senselessness, people find this type particularly difficult to understand.
 - **Drugs:** Despite efforts by various institutions including non-profit organisations and the government, the use of drugs in secondary school is still a major problem (Nzama & Ajani,



2001:1). Substance abuse is significantly influenced by the social environment, including the behaviour and guidance of older individuals who are supposed to be role models. Adolescents, in particular, are often pressured by their peers to use drugs. Additional factors such as curiosity, the desire to appear mature, varying levels of discipline and parental supervision, and family dynamics contribute to the likelihood of learners turning to drugs. Nzama and Ajani (2001:1) support this view, noting that family challenges, inadequate care or neglect, and insufficient support from educators increase the risk of substance abuse, particularly among learners raised by single mothers without a father figure.

The use of drugs in and outside the school by the learners and its impact is high in South African schools. Violence and bullying among learners are often driven by substance abuse. The consequences include mental disorders, social disorganisation, deviant behaviour, and increased social interaction with deviant groups (Mokwena, Nomkanka & Setshego, 2021: 1). From the schools' perspective, drug usage among learners is linked to a lack of school discipline, a tendency towards aggression, and poor classroom management. Substance abuse hampers teaching and learning, leading to poor performance and increased dropout rates (Mokwena, Nomkanka & Setshego, 2021:1). Nzama and Ajani (2001:1) identified cigarettes, marijuana (*dagga*), and alcohol as the most commonly used substances among learners.

STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The safety and security can be established as a result of crime experienced within the school. The question was aimed at identifying the types of crime(s) the schools are challenged by. All participants concurred that, just like other institutions and the country as a whole, schools are not immune to various types of crime in various categories that hamper their daily activities. The question about the necessity of establishing safety and security measures within the schools was posed to all 30 selected school participants, sub-divided into six (6) categories in references to their shared verbatim expressions on this subject. All participants, across their various categories, provided similar responses. They unanimously agreed on the necessity for all schools to establish safety and security measures focused on crime prevention. This is essential for the safety of both educators and learners, as well as everyone within the school premises, to ensure productive education and learning in line with the school's purpose. In reference to the objective of this study described different types of crime in verbatim as follows:

- **Category 1: The Principals**

“Substance abuse, bullying, burglary, theft and violence” (Participant 1).

“Selling of intoxicating substances, e.g., dagga. Bringing dangerous weapons to school. Bullying” (Participant 2).

“Bullying, sexual violence, cyber bullying, physical violence, carrying a weapon in the school environment, illegal drug use, physical fights, theft, homicide, crime against teachers” (Participant 3).

“Types of crimes experienced within the school: theft, physical violence, fighting, bullying, smoking-narcotics and other drugs or abusing different substances” (Participant 4).

“Stabbing, fighting” (Participant 5).

“Burglary is the most prevalent crime in the school. Bullying of other learners by fellow learners. Stealing of cellphone amongst learners. Learners selling illegal substances, for example; dagga” (Participant 6).

- **Category 2: The Deputy Principals**

“Burglary at the beginning of the year 2024 (February). A smart board was stolen, reported to the police, it was recovered but the case is being postponed all the time to date. Bulling of learners by the fellow learners. Stealing – learners stealing branded products like cellphones, school bags” (Participant 1).

“Crime within the school: Bullying. Theft. Mugging. Drug peddling” (Participant 2).

“Bullying, drugs, carrying dangerous weapons, gangsterism” (Participant 3).

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“Bullying, theft, drug abuse” (Participant 4).

“Drug-related fights. Theft. Vandalism of school infrastructure” (Participant 5).

“The burglary is the serious crime we are experiencing at school. In February 2024 there was arson where books and laptops were burnt to ashes. The second type is stealing laptops among learners. Everyday a child will lose his/her laptop. The third type is selling of drugs within the school premises, smoking drugs at the toilets. We experience break-ins, which are committed at night by thieves” (Participant 6).

“We have major issues with the following: theft especially cellphones, drugs (dagga and tik), minor gangs due to the selling drugs, “vaping” is becoming an issue” (Participant 7).

• **Category 3: The Educators**

“Burglary has been affecting our school in the past few years, criminals have been stealing our smartboards. They also stole the learners scripts and burnt them. Some of the learners tablets were missing and they were never found” (Participant 1).

“Bullying, fights among learners” (Participant 2).

“Theft, assault, cyber bullying, Drug use (illegal substances)” (Participant 3).

“Bullying, Smoking, drugs, theft” (Participant 4).

“Dangerous weapons: Learners in possession of a dangerous weapons. Bullying: verbal and emotional bullying. Burglary: unlawful entry to school, with intent to commit theft” (Participant 5).

“Theft, bullying, assault (physical/cyber), plagiarism, property damage, sexual assault, underage drinking & Smoking” (Participant 6).

• **Category 4: Representative council of learners**

“The theft of electronic gadgets like laptops, tablets and printers and has become an element of disruption to learning, the rising theft too was of tables and chairs creating a shortage with some learners receiving education while on their feet for over seven hours”. (Participant 1).

“What types of crime(s) experienced within schools? Bullying, Theft, Drug use/drug abuse, sexual harassment” (Participant 2).

“Theft; this kind/type of crime is the most complex problem in school. Without security measures people steal the learners tablets, SDLR smart boards and some of the teaching resources. Security without proper security measures, people tend to resort to theft when the schools are about to close. This gives the school negative academic impact. Bullying (Participant 3).

“Schools experience a range of crime that threaten the safety and wellbeing of students, staff and the learning environment. These crimes range from physical violence; bullying; substance abuse; cybercrimes; theft and assaults on teachers” (Participant 4).

“The school space can have a lot of issues and same issues take a long time to deal with and those issues being drug abuse, gang violence and poor performance rate (academically)” (Participant 5).

“Bullying, salesmanship of illegal substances, corporal punishment, theft, assault, vandalism, gambling, intake of illegal substances, verbal efficacy” (Participant 6).

“Bullying and harassment; Take many forms including physical, verbal and cyberbullying. Drug and alcohol abuse; learners put illegal drugs in their bags on their way to school and sell them to their classmates or fellow learners. If school fence is not proper, learners go out to buy alcohol and drink during the break time. Theft; includes stealing that occurs between learners, e.g., stealing money or stationaries. People from the community may break through and steal school property. Assault and battery; A physical fight can occur between the learners or between learners and educators” (Participant 7).

“Assault, sexual harassment and items being sold at school (with the school gates) (Participant 8).

• **Category 5: The SGB Chairpersons**

“Drug abuse, stealing and burglaries” (Participant 1).

“Usage of drugs” (Participant 2).

“We experience a lot of crimes, for example, violence (amongst learners), assault (amongst learners, a couple of cases of learners towards teachers), drug-related (possession, distribution and use),



firearm possession, gang activity, hate crimes (motivated by racism, class-disruptions (though minimal), robbery (outside the school yard, Online bullying & harassment” (Participant 3).

“Bullying, vandalism, gangsterism, ill-discipline, intolerance and gambling” (Participant 4).

“Schools like any other community can experience a range of incidents and crimes some examples of crime or incidents that may occur in a school setting include bullying and harassment, physical altercation or fight, theft or vandalism of property, cyberbullying or online harassment, trauma or absenteeism” (Participant 5).

“Gangsterism, Fights, Stabbing using knives, scissors, selling and using drugs at a school, bullying, theft (bags, cellphone)” (Participant 6).

“Bullying, Violence, Selling of drugs” (Participant 7).

- **Category 6: The SGB chairperson**

“Bullying, gangsterism, physical and/or sexual abuse, initiation practices” (Participant 1).

“The types of crimes experienced within our school are amongst others: drugs abuse, stealing, gambling, harassment and abuse amongst learners. These unlawful conducts they take place within the schools premises, for instance the felling of drugs, it is clear that learners are sent by older people from our surrounding communities. These negatively impact the progress of teaching and learning because it makes learners lose concentration which results to poor performance academically” (Participant 2).

“Vandalism of property and infrastructure. Violence against teachers, stealing of pipe switches” (Participant 3).

“Types of crimes experienced within schools. While our goal is to create a safe and nurturing environment, it’s essential to acknowledge the reality that schools can be vulnerable to various type of crimes. These may include physical altercations, theft of cellphones, lunch monies etc, drug-related incidents, bullying and harassment, cybercrimes such as hacking or online harassment, conducting sexual interviews amongst learners wearing school uniform” (Participant 4).

“Substance abuse- a lot of children are smoking all kinds of substance in public. These substances are; kat, weed, vape, crystal, cigarettes. Sexual harassment- girls are mostly reported to touch boys buttocks/private parts in means of plying. Muggings-outsiders come into the school’s premises to mug learners of their possessions. They take things from money, phones, bags & food. Physical assaults-also boys from other schools come to hit our children inside the school. Cyber bullying, taking snapshots (photograph) of learners create funny provocative comments especially when they are sleep in class during the lessons. Theft-searching and stealing from learners bags during assembly on Friday” (Participant 5).

All the participants agreed that their schools experienced various types of crimes such as bullying, theft, break-ins, vandalism, use of drugs, mugging, corporal punishment, sexual harassment, gangsterism, vandalism in various format, discrimination, drug dealing and smoking, gossiping, swearing or vulgar language. The crimes were already identified and highlighted in paragraph. Participants agreed that crime had a negative impact on both educating and learning, something that cannot be ignored. All parents wish and hope to send their children to a safe and secure schooling environment, which Xaba (2006:1) describes as a place where educators, non-educators, and learners can work, teach, and learn without fear of violence, intimidation, humiliation, or ridicule, and one that is free from risk and potential injury, allowing students to receive quality education.

The absence of effective safety and security negatively impacts both the educators' mandate and the learners' opportunities. According to Xaba (2014:1), the criminal activities within schools require a proactive approach by the safety and security school committee that involves all stakeholders in line with their mandate. This approach will lead to learners being educated and becoming adults who contribute positively to their families and the country, which is still a problem after three decades of democracy (Zulu, Urbani & van der Merwe, 2004:170). For a recourse, to effectively respond to the various types of crimes experienced at the selected secondary schools in Gauteng Province of South African, the following factors should be practiced towards the improvements of the nature of school violence across South Africa:

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- **Modifying the curriculum:** Generally, Life Orientation (LO) subject focuses on life perspectives, personal growth, rational and emotional decisions of learners. Participants recommended that DBE curriculum planners should include concepts that deal with trauma, positive conflict resolution skills and conflict avoidance. Therefore, this in turn will encourage peace through constructive engagements in our fragile schools.
- **The involvement of stakeholders:** There is a need of collective efforts by all relevant stakeholders in order to combat the alarming rate of school violence. Schools, community members, parents, school governing bodies, police officers and the state should always come together and intervene if there is spotted school violence in schools.
- **Strategy to best deal with violence related to drugs and alcohol abuse:** It is recommended that parents must intervene. This will endorse opportunities for family dialogue, household focused prevention efforts and adolescents' programmes to embrace peer group discussion. Support aid systems must be in place to aid learners with a safe environment and drug abusers must be taken to Counsellors or qualified therapist for constant support.
- **Strategy to deal with sexual violence and harassment:** It is recommended to monitor that learners keep rational behaviour in classrooms and toilets as it is perceived that most cases of sexual harassment happen in the toilets. It is also recommended that learners must know human rights to avoid tarnishing of dignity of their fellow members. In the end/long-run, they will appreciate and respect other learner's rights and human dignity.
- **Strategy to deal with bullying:** Generally, schools should have a policy that is specifically established to protect learners from bullying and other forms of violence, aided by strict rules and regulations, which should be carefully monitored. Local monitors [Including DBE employees, teachers, relevant stakeholders and SGB members, amongst others] can be selected to watch out for bullying and related school violence and reporting it to relevant stakeholders, Qwabe, Maluleke, & Olutola, 2022:128-129)

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Like many other nations, South Africa generally has a high rate of crime, which has a detrimental effect on the nation's economy, educators and learners teaching and learning and the overall populace. As a result, the government decided to raise the police force by 10,000 per year and 20,000 by 2024. Complementing the plan, the initiative received special attention from the Minister of Finance, who allocated R765 billion to the peace and security cluster to deal with the problem of crime that affects the country spreading to the most vulnerable learners and educators at schools. The statistics on the high rate of crimes and violence, including bullying and murder, in this area attest to the ongoing difficulties schools face and the necessity for proactive intervention using a multitasking strategy. The data below describes the number of crimes that occur in schools and provides information that may be used to determine preventative measures that can be implemented.

This study confirmed that several horrible crimes and acts of violence that teachers and students must deal with in a school setting. Schools are meant to be a drug- and gun-free zone for improved learning and instruction. According to what numerous writers have already established, the following forms of violence are encountered by both teachers and students: bullying, physical punishment, sexual harassment, gangsterism, vandalism, discrimination, drug use and sales, gossip, profanity, kidnapping, and even the murder of students and teachers, in that order. The crimes and violence identified require a proactive, multitasking strategy including a range of expertise is required. The SAPS alone are not able to resolve the problem.

The National government has created several documents and policies to combat the problem of crime. These papers and policies are directed at the several parties tasked with addressing the criminal issue and how a cooperative strategy can be successfully applied without causing misunderstandings or duplications. The government highlights the significance of a collective approach in crime prevention and provides guidelines for everyone involved after realising the rise in crime, the decline in the number of police officers, and the value of democratic policing. Moreover, it



is recommended that the Department of Basic Education provide sensitivity training to both educators and learners so that they can both learn and appreciate the impact that school violence has on victims, perpetrators, the community and society at large (Semenya, Maluleke & Kgosimore, 2023:72).

For policy implications, effective safety and security measures are crucial for crime prevention in schools. South African schools experience various crimes, including burglary, theft, arson, bullying, rape, sexual violence and murder, often due to inadequate security measures. To address these issues, it is recommended that proactive safety and security measures, aligned with the return on investment, be implemented. Installing required security measures such as alarms, fencing, private security guards and Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras is essential. Strengthening access control and prioritising restricted movement compliance are necessary.

Increasing safety and security measures during school holidays to prevent vandalism and theft is advised. The established multi-disciplinary criminal justice team should play a crucial role in monitoring and evaluating these measures. According to Semanya, Maluleke and Kgosimore (2023:72), [secondary] schools should integrate school violence into their curriculum, in this way learners will know about it from an early age. In essence, learners will potentially be able to understand what impact it has on victims, perpetrators and the community at large, its short and long-term consequences (emotional, mental and physical) and which steps learners can take or follow when confronted by it. The latter will empower learners to make informed decisions and consequently contribute to the reduction of school violence patterns, since they will be in an informed position. Furthermore, schools within the context of this study can use the results to guide them in terms of amending their school's code of conduct so that they are responsive and address the challenges pertinent to their schools. The SGBs should also be cognisant of the results of this study so that they are informed about what is contributing to school violence within their area and work collaboratively and complementarily with the schools to help address such issues.

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