EVALUATING THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS AT SOUTH AFRICAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: CASE STUDIES OF TSHWANE SOUTH, DISTRICT 4

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Abstract.

Nelson Mandela, one of the South African Icon, the first democratic government president, regarded education as the key to open any door of life, the view that is embraced within the South African Constitution, 1996, Chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights, Section 29 Sub-section (1) paragraph (a) - (b) stipulates that everyone has the right to free basic education, and the State must, through reasonable measures, make progressively available and accessible. South Africa, just most countries world-wide is still embroiled with less economic growth that impact negatively on most citizens daily lives, something that pushes others to opt to criminal activities, the action that is spreading to schools that was supposed to be a crime free zone area. This study was applied following the qualitative research approach, aided by the case study research design, supported by evaluative research objective. This 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. This data collection tool was complimented with literature studies. The inductive Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) was used for data analysis.The findings, based on the criminal activities the schools' experiences indicate the lack of effective safety and security measures in place, the situation resulting as the predisposing factors for the criminals viewing a school as the soft target to commit robbery. Both educators and learners view themselves vulnerable to criminals, something that makes schools a risky area and not conducive to perform their tasks of educating and learning respectively. As a result, in line with the constitution, 1996, it is concluded and recommended that risk assessment in every school is conducted and provided with security measures that is deemed necessary to promote safety and security for both educators, learners, and everyone within for free and better education as everyone believe in.

Keywords: Case study, Crime, Educator, Educator, Gauteng Province, Learners, Safety and Security measures, South Africa

INTRODUCTION

It is most known scenario that South Africa in general is still deep rooted on crime that keeps of hampering every member of the society including educators and learners respectively. This symptom cut across various sectors including the economy at large. Everyone, including the police as the custodian of safety and security is the victim(s) of criminal activities that involves amongst robbery, murder, rape, damage to property, drugs, just to mention the few. Police even being in possession of firearms and relied upon by members of the community are not immune as they get killed. To highlight the prevalent of crime resulting in police being the victims, according to Sadiki (2024) in April and June 2023, 31 police officers were killed. This was almost double the number of officers killed by criminals during the same period in

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2022. The statistics indicate the fact that, during the year 2023, South Africa as a whole experienced 82 murders every day (Koko, 2023).

While in terms of Gauteng province as per the case study, the 2023/2024 October/November quarterly crime report, indicate that 1 787 persons lost their lives. When compared to the same period in 2022, this represents a growth of 3.8% (Ncwane, 2024:1). The killings of Educators and learners is experienced world-wide. 25 years ago, a massacre where 12 leaders and one educator were killed in Colombia combined school (Slevin, 2022:1). As per the National Teachers' Union (NATU), teachers are under constant threat from students and lawbreakers who sneak into schools, making them feel unsafe on school property (Maqhubela, 2022:1). According to the Minister of Basic Education Mrs Angie Motshekga, in response to killing of educators, emphasised the fact that safety at schools remains a top priority of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and focus on providing a conducive environment for teaching and teaching. As a result, the department will continue to work with the police, sister departments, our social partners, and communities at large to strive for zero incidents of crime in our schools (Republic of South Africa, 2022:1).

The stated assertions above are supported Baloyi (2022: 1) by indicating that, in the past years, South Africa in all provinces experienced a high number of resignation of teachers, specifically public-school teachers. The situation could have been triggered by various factors such as proposed change in pension funds, the heavy workload and intimidation and incidents of school violence that posed a threat to female teachers and their environment. The situation that had a negative impact on the education sector which plays an important role in shaping the future of the country through educating and training children as per the constitutional mandate. Emphasising the loss of educators on various reasons, Nkosi (2020:1) reports that over 57 000 permanent educators resigned between January 2012 and December 2019 alone because of stress contributed by various factors such as stress as a result of workload and other factors such as criminal activities experienced while online of duty.

According to Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga response to the parliament, the department, in 2024, was having more than 30 000 vacant positions as a result of various factors such as retirement, resignation, including the unexpected scenario of death in various format that include criminal killings of educators that cut across various provinces (Matya, 2024:1). The Educators, although spend their time in place that is viewed as a crime free area by almost everyone, including the DBE they find themselves at life risk and others get killed. Congress of South African Teachers Union [COSATU] (2023) highlight their concern in the killing of teachers and the lake of progressive arrest of the perpetrators. According to Shields, Nadasen, and Hanneke, (2015:48), although various research that was more interest on psychological impact of school and community violence on children South African perspective was conducted, less was done on the effects of exposure to school violence on teachers.

In the year 2019, Gauteng Province spent R121 million on repairs to infrastructure because of vandalism and burglary. These criminal acts are ongoing as in 2020, 336 schools experienced vandalism and burglary. Since the start of 2021, Gauteng schools reported 105 cases of burglary and vandalism cases (Mitchley, 2023:1). In highlighting the seriousness and negative impact of violence and crimes within South African schools, the Minister of Basic Education, the honourable Angie Motshekga presented the identified 1 345 "hot spots" that experience violence and crime in general per province as follows: Mpumalanga 414 schools, Gauteng 251 schools, KwaZulu-Natal 202 schools, Western Cape 147 schools, Eastern Cape 99 schools, Free State 90 schools, Northwest 80 schools, Northern Cape 40, and Limpopo 22 schools (Naidu, 2019:1). In the July 2021 unrest where the country witnessed looting and burning of shops and other business areas around Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces, the schools in both provinces became targets of serious vandalism. The Gauteng Province experienced damage to 14 schools with an estimated cost of R38 million, while KwaZulu-Natal was worse with a total number of 144

schools being the target of vandalism with an estimated cost of over R100 million. The overall estimated cost of the July 2021 unrest in these two provinces was over R141 million (Mbingo-Gigaba, 2021:1).

Moreover, the South African National Development Plan (NDP), Vision 2030 drafted by the National Planning Commission, supports the Constitution and emphasises building community safety. Emphasising the Constitutional mandate and support of the NDP, the DBE is responsible for developing national policies and guidelines concerning school safety and security and monitoring and evaluating school safety interventions across the country. The DBE currently has a solid partnership with the South African Police Services where schools are linked with the police stations within the area of their jurisdiction supported by the established school safety committees (DBE, 2021:1). The issue of safety and security in schools is not a problem of South Africa only, but a global phenomenon. A total number 246 million learners have become the victims of all types of violence around the world. South African schools experience various crimes such as threats of violence, psychological abuse, robbery, physical assaults, gang violence, corporal punishment, sexual violence, and bullying, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO] (2017:1). The violence in school is equivalent to a violation of learners' right to *"freedom and security of the person",* which involves the person's right to be free from all sorts of violence as enshrined in the South African Constitution, 1996. Most school violence is learner-on-learner violence.

Therefore, the problem statement is that South African schools are experiencing various crimes due to a lack of effective safety and security measures. It is the researcher's view that research needs to be conducted with the aim of determining whether such challenges are still persisting, if so, the safety and security measures that are currently in place. Various studies show evidence that students experience various forms crime and violence while within the schooling environment. The statistics from Statistics South Africa (2021:11) indicate that one million out of 13 million school-going learners experience maltreatment such as corporal punishment and physical violence by either teachers or other learners. Notably, violence amongst learners in South African schools is increasing despite existing legislation, such as: the South African Schools Act, 1996 (84 of 1996), and the Abolition of Corporal Punishment Act (No. 33 of 1997), which were aimed at reducing school violence and consequently the creation of a conducive environment for teaching and learning. Due to the prevalence of violence amongst learners within schools (Semenya, Maluleke & Kgosimore, 2023:57).

The widespread nature of school violence among public high schools negatively affects educational systems, resulting to school possible dropouts and poor academic results. Despite the DBE strategies and recommendations in managing this scourge, a gap exists concerning management of school violence in public schools of South Africa (Qwabe, Maluleke; Olutola, 2022:116). The lasting problem is that school violence and related challenges on learners and educators in schools affect everyone involved in the learning process and everyone within the school premises, learners, teachers, parents and other stakeholders (McMahon & Martinez, 2014) (in Qwabe, Maluleke; Olutola, 2022:118). Section 9(1) of the Bill of Rights stipulate that *"everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law";* teachers also need to be safe and protected in their workplaces (Coetzee & Van Niekerk, 2016) (in Qwabe, Maluleke; Olutola, 2022:118). In this study, the researcher explores various challenges experienced by both the educators and learners within their school environment (selected secondary schools of Gauteng Province, South Africa), to assist in evaluating the current safety and security measures and offer lasting and sustainable solutions effectively respond to school violence.

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 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

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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 exploratory research approach design is applied to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or individual (Maluleke, 2016; Creswell, 2007; and De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport, 2011). From a qualitative standpoint, this study followed the case study research design, guided by the evaluative research objective.

It 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. In total, 30 participants formed part of this study, and they were all subjected to the unstructured face-to-face interviews, supported by literature studies on this subject; some of gathered data 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: Phase 1: Familiarisation with data, Phase 2: Generating codes, Phase 3: Identifying a study theme, Phase 4: Reviewing a study theme, Phase 5: Defining a study theme, and Phase 6: Report writing.

PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

Educators/Learners exposure to life impacting criminal activities: Selected notable South African case studies

Amid growing incidences of attacks on educators, the NATU call for the national education department of education to scaleup security at schools (Maqhubela, 2022:1). This is concurred in Lesufi, the then MEC of education, currently (2024) premier of Gauteng Province statement, the lives of teachers, specifically female teachers, are still in danger in their working environment (Baloyi, 2022:1). Attacks with a gang affiliation have been occurring since the start of the year. circumstances that resulted in the closing of Greenpoint High School, Northern Cape province. Due to reports that some of its students are gang members, the school has been dealing with gang violence that starts on the weekends at neighborhood bars and spreads to the campus (Maqhubela, 2022:1). Although learners also experience criminal challenges, their situation is not that worse but realistic and existing. In addition to retirement and natural death, a high number of educators across the nation lost their lives as a result of killings that occurred both inside and outside of schools (Maqhubela, 2022:1).

On 18 March 2017, a 54-year-old, Mrs Priscilla Mchunu, the acting principal at Laduma High was gunned down by two men in front of her pupils while giving Saturday history extra classes preparing the students better for the end of the year results (McNally, 2020:1). In the same year, on 14 August 2017, a primary school educator in Mpumalanga was shot and killed within the school premises by her husband the criminal activity that live trauma, sorrow, discomfort, and insecure on both the educators and learners (Republic of South Africa, 2017:1). On Tuesday morning, September 2021, the 53-year-old, grade six

teacher, Thulani Manqoyi, Heinz Park Primary School, Heinz Park community was killed while sitting in his car on the premises of the school, the criminal activity that resulted in government placing a temporary security measure (Masson, 2021:1).

In 2021, at Sekhukhusa Secondary School in Shatale, close to Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga, a pupil in grade eleven passed away after allegedly taking a brick to the head from another student (Mhlathi, 2021:1). On 29 October 2023, Kluyts, 34, a 14-week pregnant teacher at Delta Park High, was found murdered at the George Lea Recreational Park in Parkmore, Sandton. A 21-year-old varsity college student was arrested and charged with the premeditated murder (Masilela, 2023:1). During the months of February, September, and November 2023 respectively, two principals and a teacher had been gunned down in different incidents in Lusikisiki, Eastern Cape this year alone. In February 2023, the principal from Siwali Senior Secondary School in Lusikisiki, Oscar Mnyandu, was gunned down. On 30 September 2023, in another incident the principal of Buhlanyanga Senior Secondary School, also in Lusikisiki, Richman Hlubi Ntintili (54), went missing while on his way to school and his body was found near Mtsila River in Lusikisiki while his vehicle was found abandoned in Flagstaff. On 10 November 2023, the Sobaba Senior Secondary School teacher also in Lusikisiki, Yonela Mahlangulu (34), went missing while she was on her way to school (Ndlanya, 2023:1). Showing a deep concern on the killing of its members, COSATU paid tribute to following educators killed criminal style.

In May 2022, educator who was also brutally murdered in May 2022. He was a teacher at Mgezwa Senior Secondary School and was on his way home after the evening classes as he was helping learners prepare for their mid-year examinations. On Friday afternoon, 21 January 2022, the female teacher at Phomolong High School in Tembisa, Gauteng was shot and killed in broad day light on Friday afternoon. The criminal activity that left both educators and learners highly traumatised, the killing that received harsh words from the Minister Basic Education - Mrs Angie Motshekga (Republic of South Africa, 2022:1). In May 2022, an educator from Rutanang Primary School in Geelhout Park in Rustenburg was brutally shot and killed by unknown suspects who later fled the scene on foot without taking anything from the victim's vehicle which was parked outside the school gates in the morning (Republic of South Africa, 2022:1). On Thursday night, 20 October 2022, a 35-year-old teacher, Matefo Mphosela from Kagisanong Combined School in Free State was stabbed to death by a 21-year-old grade 12 learner (Schnessl, 2022:1). On 16 February 2023, the Deputy Principal of Sewali High School was gunned down at his home. On 30 September 2023, the Principal of Ebuhlanyana High School was highjacked at gun point on the way to school and killed after, with his body dumped at Matsila River, and the vehicle was discovered at Flagstaff.

On the 10th of November 2023, Mrs. Mahlungulu was highjacked on her way to school to assist the grade 12 learners as they write their examinations. She was a teacher at Sobaba High School. Her lifeless body was found thrown at the same Matsila River and her car was discovered in the Flagstaff area (COSATU, 2023:1). On Wednesday 15 November 2023, a 37-year-old teacher, who was a South African Democratic Teachers Union secretary, and his friend were killed execution-style in Sukani Trust outside White River in Mpumalanga (Tshikalange, 2023:1). On Monday 19 February 2024, a 52-year-old female teacher was found stabbed to death in her neck at her home in Ziphunzana locality in Libode. Four suspects who were providing renovation service were arrested and found in possession of the deceased's car and including house equipments such as aluminum windows (Department of Police, 2024:1). On 20 February 2024, a 51-year Germiston primary school principal was shot and wounded by the 13-year-old learner using the father's firearm (Zeeman, 2024:1).

On 05 April 2024, a 33-year-old Palesa Mofokeng, a Life Orientation educator from Riverside High School in Vanderbijlpark was shot and killed. Four men including the medical doctor ex-husband were arrested for the killing. On the same date, in a separate criminal activity, the Departmental Head of Commerce educator from Unity Secondary School in Daveyton was also shot and killed on the same day in Gauteng province (Diaspora, 2024:1; Archary, 2024:1). A Johannesburg Glenvista high school teacher

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was seen fighting in the class with the grade 9 learner where both the parties were using everything including the desk (SABC News, 2024:1). Despite crime against the educators, defenseless learners are also not immune to be the victim, the situation that is bad and dire to the learner purpose of acquiring knowledge in a free crime zone environment. The situation that might lead to drop-out, poor performance and committing suicide. 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 educators 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 (4IR).
- 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 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 (UNESCO, 2017:9).

Safety and security at South African secondary schools

All parents' send learners to school with a wish and hope that such children to a safe and secure schooling environment, which Dankor (2018:89) regards as a place where educators and non-educators work and teach, and learners learn without fear of violence, intimidation, humiliation, or ridicule; one that is free from risk and potential injury for students to receive quality education. The absence of effective safety and security impacts negatively on both the educators' mandate and learners' opportunities (Dankor, 2018:89). As a result, safety and security at school it is a matter that needs a direct proactive approach worldwide, including South African schools that continuously experience criminal challenges (Xaba, 2014:490). Therefore, every school must be a safe and peaceful working and learning environment in which the learners can be educated and become adults that have a positive impact on their family and the country at large, something that is still despite three decades of democracy (Zulu, Urbani & van der Merwe, 2004:170).

Sequelch (2001:137) declares safe schools as a "sine qua non (essential) for successful and productive teaching and learning" and the core of discipline and order within the school. According to Pacheco (1996:56), the culture of teaching and learning has a definite influence on the performance of the learners: a negative culture of teaching and learning resulting from an unstable environment can inhibit both educators and learners' performance. As a result, the culture of teaching and learning impacts the morale of both educators and learners. Further, a low morale amongst educators and learners contributes negatively to the culture of teaching and learning, resulting in poor performance leading to poor year-end results (Coetzee, 1994:1-3; Meintjes, 1992:48; Pillay, 1995: 37). In emphasising the importance of safety and security, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation [CSVR] (1999) considers safe schools as the place where:

- as per the Constitution and White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education Building and Inclusive Education and Training needs 2001 all learners can effectively learn, develop, and enjoy themselves and where educators are able to teach free from any threats of violence and crime.'
- human rights are respected, and a culture of teaching and learning is developed without compromise;
- all parents are welcomed for the exchange of ideas about learning and development; and
- members of the community at large can directly take part in supporting and taking joint responsibility in interaction with teachers and School Governing Body (SGB) in safety and security within schools (Zulu, Urbani & van der Merwe, 2004:170).

Due to high volume of violence communities experience daily, South Africa is regarded as one of the most violent countries (Singh, Srivastava & Sethi, 2021:3). According to Ncontsa and Shumba (2013:1), despite all safety and security measures the DBE has put in place, South African schools experience continuous violence. Khumalo (2023:1) supports this indicating that, although the DBE has made some efforts to promote peace in schools through a range of projects and interventions, schools keep on experiencing violence as a phenomenon that increasingly disturbs and disrupts school activities. According to Addington (2018:1), the security measures that will deal with crime at schools are not something new, but a philosophy dating back to the 1970s where measures such as metal detectors and guards were the main security measures complemented by the use of surveillance cameras. According to

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Section 40 of the Constitution, 1996, government is founded in the national, provincial, and local spheres that are "distinctive, interdependent, and interrelated in the daily running and in all country activities that include safety and security in crime prevention including schools as per the study purpose". Further, Section 41 of the Constitution, 1996 states that *"all spheres of government and all organs of state within each sphere must preserve the peace, secure the wellbeing of the people of the Republic; cooperate with one another in mutual trust and good faith by, inter alia, assisting and supporting one another and coordinating their actions and legislation with one another"* (Department of Police, 2024:1). Regarding the integrated criminal justice approach in promoting safety and security within the schools, the Gauteng provincial government and the DBE provide important guidelines that every school together with other internal/external crime-prevention stakeholders must consider, emphasise, and embrace. School ownership, in this situation, the lack of leadership, management, supervision and accountability is a contributory cause to most incidents in the schools. It expected that all stakeholders show their leadership accountability in school management.

The risk assessment approach by all stakeholders must be proactively conducted with the aim of minimising or eliminating the threat before such a threat exists; for example, the use of drugs, bullying, by both educators and learners and other known crimes such as break-ins and theft that occur frequently. In this case, leadership can be collectively provided by implementing security measures such as installing Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras at access points, employing physical human security measures, and conducting patrols by everyone as planned. Partnerships, various stakeholders, such as the Department of Community Safety, the provincial department of education, the community, South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Social Development, the Department of Health and the Department of Arts and Culture together with other legitimate civil organisations, must work together with the schools to strengthen the school-police-community partnership. All institutions must collectively strategise to combat various criminal activities such as violence, drugs, drug abuse, carrying of dangerous objects, bullying, and gangsterism experienced by schools resulting in negative productivity (Republic of South Africa, 2017:14).

It is a well-known fact that the main custodian of community safety including the safety of the teachers and learners at school is more in the mandate of the SAPS. Dealing with crime prevention for the community and schools at large cannot be justified without first highlighting the history of policing from the South African perspective. Fighting crime effectively can be achieved with the buy-in from the members of the community at large as per the Constitution (1996) of the country that emphasises community policing. In this case, both members of the police and the community through various criminal justice platforms are expected to collaborate in fighting crime within the area of their jurisdiction (Bruce, 2011:3; Smith, 2008:2; van Vuuren, 1996:101). Immediately after 1994, the government's policy agenda on safety and security was focused on two objectives: to transform the police and make sure that they perform their tasks in promoting community safety, and to make sure that members of the community become custodians of safety and security partnering with the police (RSA, 2016:1).

The study by Semenya, Maluleke and Maluleke (2023:70) recommended that, in order to influence policy direction and effectively address the issue of violence amongst learners in schools and school violence in general, change within the education sector in the form of review and promulgation of new laws or policies that govern operations and discipline is warranted. Such policies and laws, however, will have to be pertinent, inclusive, transformative, considerate and responsive to the conundrum of school violence, since clearly previous laws and policies had shortcomings, since school violence continues to escalate. It is also recommended that future studies consider focusing on educators to get more insights from their perspective. The results of this study have indicated that educators, directly or indirectly, appear to play a role in perpetuating violence within schools.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The question about the necessity of establishing safety and security measures within the schools was posed to all 30 selected school participants, divided into six (6) categories in terms of their verbatim responses. 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.

- **Category 1: The Principals**

*"To provide a healthy and safe environment for all the entire school community, to liase with relevant stakeholders and draw programme that seeks to bring awareness and preventative measures (**Participant 1**).*

*"Is to create a conducive environment for managing all stakeholders within the school. To instil a culture of discipline and respect for the school property" (**Participant 2**).*

*"The main priority is for the learners and staff at the school to feel safe. A conducive and a safe environment allows learners to be productive in the classroom. Safety is essential or important to avoid socioeconomic issues such as crime" (**Participant 3**).*

*"Necessity to establish safety and security measures within the school: to ensure to safe entry and exit of all who enters the school. To ensure that a learning environment is created and maintained. To take care of, support and protect learners. To implement safety practices against potential hazard. To create a safe environment where learners can excel both academically and in sport/cultural etc. to keep the school violence and drug-free. To create an ordered environment. To have access control. To ensure the safety of the learners, staff and visitors on the school premises. To inculcate in the learners the importance and advantages of a structure environment and their part therein" (**Participant 4**).*

*"It is vital important to establish safety and security measures within the schools. This is primarily because we have had several incidents of fighting and stabbing at the school. If we have safety and security measures in place, these incidents can easily be prevented. I think it is better to be proactive than reactive" (**Participant 5**).*

*"To make sure that educators and learners are protected at all times. To serve as a barrier from unwanted elements in the school premises. To make sure that learners learn in an environment which is conducive to learning (**Participant 6**)*

- **Category 2: Deputy Principals**

*"To make sure that all learners and educators feel safe and secure" (**Participant 1**).*

*"For education (teaching and learning) to take place meaningfully, the school environment must be safe and secured. Safety could refer to the general safety of the school environment, the classroom, playgrounds, learners and educators. Security – school entrances are learners searched when entering the schoolyard to apprehend those coming to school carrying weapons. Does the school fence have illegal entrances? Is the fence or wall high enough to prevent learners from jumping over? Security patrollers on the ground guarantees learners and educators that no intruders will illegally enter the school premises and intimidate learners" (**Participant 2**).*

"For protection: Both teachers and learners have to be protected against criminal elements when they are in the school premises. Learners should also be protected from any kind of abuse by either teachers or any other employees around the school either in the form of policies or code of conduct. Teachers and other staff members should also be protected from any type of abuse from learners by either policies, code of conduct, etc. The policies should not be one-sided because everyone has the right to be free and

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receive good treatment. The policies now protect learners, but teachers and other employees are left alone in the cold" (**Participant 3**).

"To ensure the safety of learners at school" (**Participant 4**).

"Establishing safety and security measures in schools/within schools offers a more encouraging and learning atmosphere for learners. It assists to protect the learners from physical harm, injuries and emotional trauma. A safe school environment promotes a sense of security and reduces stress and anxiety among learners" (**Participant 5**).

"It is necessary to establish safety and security measures at our schools. The crime is very high in the communities that we serve. There are drug substances, like marijuana, which are being smoked. We have learners who carry dangerous weapons at school. Safety comes first, so learners should feel safe at all times. As a school, we should provide security to all the stakeholders i.e., Teachers, learners, PS, Staff, vendors, property of our school" (**Participant 6**).

"As in look parents is at play establishing safety and security measures is essential to ensure the safety of every learner" (**Participants 7**).

- **Category 3: Educators**

"Access control; this limits entry points and monitoring who enters the school premises. Establishing safety and security measures within the school is crucial for creating a conducive learning environment. Visitors management based on verifying the identity and purpose of visitors before allowing them to enter the school incident reporting and response; it is important to encourage students and staff to report safety concerns and have a clear response protocol. Bag checks and mental detectors; implementing random or regular checks to prevent weapons and harmful items from entering the school" (**Participant 1**).

"Crime protection" (**Participant 2**).

"These measures help with the smooth running of the school and ensure that every person in the premises is protected" (**Participant 3**).

"To minimise danger, to all learners and all the stakeholders within the school. To ensure no damage to school property. To make sure that we curb accidents at school. To minimise hazards within the school" (**Participant 4**).

"School security enables learners and educators to feel safe/secure within the place of teaching and learning" (**Participant 5**).

"It is extremely important to have safety measures/regulations/code of conduct in a school. This is not just a simplistic process as it would have to incorporate an outside facilitator/monitor/evaluator to instruct, develop and monitor the creation and implementation of said regulations. This would, in certain cases, also include severance/funding, which many schools do not have. It requires staff to do additional work or funds to pay staff" (**Participant 6**).

- **Category 4: Representatives council of learners**

"Our school site of teaching and learning should deliver their educational mandate only in safe and secure conditions. School safety and security are basic features that are essential to a school" (**Participant 1**).

"Establishing safety and security measures within the school ensures that learners, teachers, and the faculty can come to a safe environment where teaching and learning are not disturbed or fractured by unplanned situations" (**Participant 2**).

"The necessity of establishing safety security measures within the schools. Schools as sites of teaching and learning can deliver their educational mandate only in safe and secure conditions, free from injuries,

crime and also violence. Because learners have to feel safe and protected. Therefore, school safety and security features are essential at schools" (*Participant 3*).

"This is to improve class attendance and avoid learners leaving during school premises. The importance of this measure within the school is to avoid failures that can lead to enforcement notice prosecutions, civil actions for compensation. To avoid indirect cost of accidents such as emotional distress, loss of morale of stakeholders, negativity publicity, social media. The necessity of establishing security is important in order to keep resources of school safe. Crime is one of the complex problems in our schools, people steal the informative communication technology (ICT) as well as efficient resources of learning. In order to keep the school safe, the safety and security measures should be improved (*Participant 4*).

"Ensuring safety and security measures in schools is imperative, given the increasing prevalence of violence and threats in educational settings. Such measures not only protect the physical wellbeing of students and staff but also foster an environment conducive to learning and emotional wellbeing, however, it's crucial to approach this issue with a critical lens. While implementing security measures like surveillance cameras, metal detectors and security personnel can enhance safety, there's a risk of inadvertently creating prison-like atmosphere that stifles creative and trust. Moreover, an overemphasis on security may divert resources and attention away from addressing underlying issues such as mental health support, conflict resolution strategies and building inclusive communities. Therefore, while prioritising safety is essential, it is equally important to strike a balance between security measures and maintain a nurturing educational environment that promotes wellbeing" (*Participant 5*).

"Protecting school safety offers a more encouraging and learning atmosphere for students and the students/learners can feel more comfortable and at ease in school" (*Participant 6*).

"The establishment of safety measures within our school is necessary due to how were noticed as an exco is the one of the most factors that hinder the success and image of the school" (*Participant 7*).

"For safety and security of learners, educators, administrators, gardeners and cleaners. To create an environment that will make learners and the staff feel safe and free to interact with each other without interference. To minimise the occurrence of crime. For parents to trust the school with learners since there is no parent can send their children to school, they believe is not safe. It contributes to building a good image of the school. (*Participant 8*).

"Ensuring safety and security within school is crucial for protecting students, staff and visitors from harm and creating a conducive learning environment by implementing measures such as controlled access points, surveillance, systems, emergency response protects and compliance with regulations" (*Participant 9*).

- **Category 5: SGB chairpersons**

"The necessity of establishing safety and security measures within the schools? The learners, educators, staff and visitors are free to interact without fear or threats and it helps with teaching and learning to run smoothly. They can work without fear or intimidation, harassment, humiliation or violence" (*Participant 1*).

"Bullying, drugs, gambling" (*Participant 2*).

"It is very necessary to establish safety and security measures within the school premises, and very crucial for creating a safe and conducive environment for learners and for learning. This safety measures include protection from violence, gang related activity, bullying, drug prevention, ensuring a safe environment for both learners and educators, encouraging a positive and friendly culture. Measures that could help implementing access control, regular searches (unannounced), student & teachers dialogues on safety & security" (*Participant 3*).

"Children need a safer and comfortable environment to learn to the best of their abilities. This means that they have to feel safe in their school and be able to positively interact with their teachers and classmate. Protecting school safety offers a more encouraging and learning atmosphere for students.

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Children are more at ease in the school environment when their fundamental needs are met. It also allows children to investigate, learn and grow. Security measures of lot schools are installing CCTV and school surveillance cameras; implementing a visitor management and access control systems; conducting regular security assessments and drills; perimeter security and protection; installing intruder alarms and detection devices security and safety. Is important in learning because ensuring safe and secure educational environments is crucial for promoting physical, emotional and social wellbeing among learners and also because students perceptions of safety and unsafety in study space can vary influencing their learning experiences and outcomes" **(Participant 4).**

"Protection from harm schools should provide a safe environment for students, teachers and staff to prevent physical harm, bullying and emotional trauma" **(Participant 5)**.

"Learners have the right to feel safe at school. Some learners experiencing behavioural problems due to ill-discipline, aggression, fights become a regular occurrence. Bullying is also concern. Cyber bullying on the rise" **(Participant 6)**.

"By assisting schools in understanding all security issues and threats. Creating a safe & violence free learning environment. Monitoring school progress and report incidents" **(Participant 7).**

- **Category 6: SGB Chairperson**

"To ensure that the schools are safe for all and that effective measures are employed to address issues related to discipline, drugs, violence, rape, assault, etc. **(Participant 1)***.*

"It is highly importance that safety and security measures are established within our schools because these elements ensure the conducive environment for both learners and educators, that of which protects an effective education to take place. The is in fact stipulated in the Bill of Rights that learners and teachers should teach and learn in an environment that is safe and free from all forms of violence" **(Participant 2)***.*

"There is a huge necessity of establishing safety and security measures within the schools due to: fact that we have kids in our premises. The environment we are in is too impoverished, which might lead to daylight robberies with the school. To safeguard assets and infrastructure of the school. To safeguard the properties of teachers, including their safety. To ensure smooth and safety daily operations. To eradicate the use of drugs in school" **(Participant 3)***.*

"Ensuring the safety and security of students and staff within our school community is paramount. It's not just about creating a conducive leaning environment; it's about fostering a sense of trust and wellbeing. When students feel safe, they are more likely to engage in their studies, participate in extra-curricular activities and develop socially and emotionally" **(Participant 4).**

Considering the crime challenges experienced within schools, such as vandalism, burglary, arson, rape, other forms of sexual violence, drug use, corporal punishment, gangsterism, discrimination, gossiping, swearing, bullying, and murder, which ultimately impact the primary purpose of education and learning, all participants from their respective roles understand and agree on the necessity of establishing safety and security measures within schools to prevent crime. This is particularly relevant in Tshwane South District 4, Gauteng Province. Various schools in Gauteng Province at large experienced heinous criminal activities where criminals enter the schools rob both educators and leaners of their belongings such as laptops, cellphones and car as their gate way using dangerous weapons like guns. As a result, both educators and learners felt unsafe, and deemed their lives are at risk. Even though education is regarded essential service, the experience of crime and its impact led to educators with the support of their Unions resort in tools down and compliment this by strike marching to their White Hazel District, in Mpumalanga province South Africa to demonstrate their genuine concern that is nationwide. As a result,

the study objective is to explore safety and security of both educators and learners at school as per the case above.

The absence of effective safety and security measures makes the schools vulnerable to the criminals which result in the environment being not favourable to either the educators or the learners in executing their daily tasks of educating and learning. The establishment of safety and security is deemed important and emphasised using all known security measures starting from access control, patrols and unannounced visits and searches by the police within the school. There was established by this study and it was found that indeed the secondary schools in general are experiencing serious challenges in terms of crime, a situation that is hampering schools from learning and teaching. This is supported by the study of the HSRC and the DBE that also established that 20% of educators in South Africa believed that schools were crime-prone spaces, where they suspected their learners and colleagues brought weapons to schools. Hamdan (2022:1) supports the participants' views, highlighting the fact that if the country took a resolution to improve security from the threat of crime, community members at large would benefit. The established policy by the DBE serves as guidance on the necessity and importance of the establishment of safety and security within the schools in crime prevention. Therefore, the safety and security committees within the school must be familiar and compliance with these policies.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking took into consideration the high volume of crime South Africa continues experiencing, and the vulnerability of both educators and learners within the schools, the condition that plays negatively on both the mandate and rights to teach and learn, all the nineteen (19) participants highlight the importance and the necessity to implement safety and security within the schools. In fighting crime, to promote safety and security within the schools, South African government established various policies and documents to rely upon such as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act of 1996, that is the country supreme law. The is the law that serve as the baseline to all policies and documents established to promote right to education in a crime free zone environment.

Other local and international collaborated policies and documents to compliment the constitutional right to teach and study in a safer schooling environment evolved such as the National Crime Prevention Strategy, of 1996, the Municipal Structural Act (No. 117 of 1998), National Development Plan (NDP), 2030, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 2030, SAPS Act (No. 68 of 1995), South African School Act [SASA] (No. 84 of 1996), White Paper on the transformation of the Public Service (*Batho Pele – People's First* - Principle) of 1997, White Paper on Safety and Security of 1998, White Paper on Safety and Security and Crime Prevention Measures, 2016, The Municipal System Act (No. 32 of 2000), the SAPS Regulations for Community Policing Forums (CPFs) and Boards of 2001, the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act (No. 13 of 2005), DBE Regulations on Safety, the National School Safety Framework, and UNESCO. These are the policies that guarantee the right to crime free learning environment. The policies and the documents must serve as the guidance to establish and monitor the safety matters within the schools. All stakeholders are required by these approved policies and documents to enforce safety and security within the schools in general. The policies and documents herein can be utilised to held whoever is involved accountable, especially in time of exposure to crime. Therefore, to do the constitutional right in terms of safety and security within the schools, all participants in safety and security within the schools must be familiar with the policies and documents herein.

As already discussed, and discovered, the country at large experiences high volume of crime and the schools are not immune. Educators and learners fall the victims of crime. The situation of crime within the schools instills the heart of fear to everyone entering the school environment. The situation that hampers teaching and learning as the business of the day. Some educators and learners lost lives while at schools because of crime. School educating and learning equipments such as tablets, laptops and other

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stationery machines within the schools gets stolen. As a result, it is recommended that all stakeholders in crime prevention such as the SGBs, SAPS, CPFs, private and public security officers, school patrols, members of the community in general needs to gather, analyse, discuss about the issue of crime within the country and the level the schools are exposed, and come up with the plan to enforce safety and security within the schools. The assessment, outcome and implementation must be based and guided by the policies and documents for compliance purpose.

For recommendations, various motivational factors can lead individuals to commit crimes, such as biological, psychological, social and psychiatric influences. To minimise these factors, it is essential to establish comprehensive security measures. Given the high risk of threats and traumatic situations experienced daily by educators and learners, such as murder, bullying, drug abuse, vandalism and theft, the establishment of robust safety and security measures is recommended. Government bodies, including the DBE, provincial government, municipalities and other relevant national structures, should proactively safeguard everyone within the schooling environment. Conducting risk assessments in every school to determine necessary safety and security measures is crucial.

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