



The Impact of Learner-Based Violence in High Schools in Modimolle, Limpopo Province

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Abstract

Literature indicates that South African schools are experiencing high levels of violence. This article investigated the phenomenon of learner-based violence in the Waterberg District in Modimolle Townshi, Limpopo Province. It was the researcher's intention to investigate and understand school violence in a disadvantaged community. The study employed a qualitative approach, and three schools participated in the study. Data was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the school principals, teachers, and learners. The study reached fifteen participants. The authors found that schools are characterised by high levels of violence with causal factors being multifaceted. However, easy access to the school premises and drug abuse was found to be primary factors fuelling violence in the schools. We conclude that an integrated approach involving all stakeholders is a required strategy to curb learner violence in the schools. The authors recommend to education authorities to urgently ensure that there are adequate security measures at the schools, to ensure effective access control to the premises of the schools in order to curb the scourge of violence.

Keywords: *Learner-Based Violence; Poor Performance; Safety; Intervention; Teaching and Learning*

Introduction

Studies reveal that there is an increase in violence in South African schools despite the Department of Basic Education's (DBE) efforts to address the problem (Fishbaugh, Berkeley & Schroth, 2003, Human Rights Commission, 2006). The scourge of violence in schools violates provision 12 1c of the Bill of Rights which states that no one shall be subjected to cruel treatment or be subjected to acts of violence. Ncotsa and Shumba (2013) point that educators spend much of their time focusing on resolving problems pertaining to school violence, rather than focusing on effective teaching and learning.

Learner-based violence is multifaceted and includes both criminal acts and aggressive behavior in schools. Violence has a detrimental effect on instruction and learning and create a school environment of fear and anxiety among the learners (Girmen et al., 2018). According to Mncube and Madiya (2014), there is a high prevalence of physical violence, sexual abuse, and gang-related activities in schools, and as a result (Makota & Leoschut, 2016), teachers and learners have good reason in fearing for their personal safety in schools.

The Human Rights Commission (2006) purports that the required environment for effective teaching and learning is increasingly undermined by a culture violence in the schools, and this has become a matter of national concern. The persistently high levels of violence in schools have inspired academics to conduct studies on the phenomenon of school violence (Makota & Leoschut, 2016; Niewehuis, 2014; Ngidi, 2018). However, there is a paucity of literature on learner-based violence, in the Waterberg District. Hence, we investigated learner-based violence in the Waterberg District in Modimolle. Like other townships in South Africa, Modimolle Township is characterised by unemployment and poverty. Our goal was to investigate and understand the phenomenon of school violence in underprivileged communities.

Studies on school violence indicate that factors driving learner violence are associated with broader socio-economic factors and exposure to violence (Burton, 2008; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011; Mncube, 2014; Ncontsha & Shumbe, 2013; Ngidi, 2018). Although societal factors are important in understanding the phenomenon of school violence, we investigated the variables within the school environment that perpetuate learner violence. We believe that such an approach is likely to suggest measures that might prove to be effective in curbing violence at the school level.

Literature review

Causes of School-Based Violence

Children's beliefs, attitudes, and values are primarily shaped by their families. Boys are expected to be brave, strong, and emotionless, while girls are taught to be sensitive and caring (SACE, 2011). Boys' heroic masculinity cannot exist in a vacuum, it requires victims and villains of violence. Hence, boys are primarily to blame for the larger part of violence that takes place in schools (SACE, 2011). Burton and Leoschut (2013) and Gasa (2010) both bolster the notion that behaviour modelling originates in the family. The family is the primary environment in which children learn about behaviours that are acceptable and unacceptable in society. Children who witness family members engaging in violent interactions with one another are prone to copy and reproduce such behaviour (Ngidi, 2018). According to Netshitangani (2014), chaotic homes with a lack of direction, leadership, and control also result in disruptive behaviour in the school, including violent incidents.

Communities with high levels of violence enhance a child's vulnerability and chance of being a victim of violence. Easy access to alcohol consumption and the use of drugs among teenagers increase the level of aggression, and therefore levels of violence (Niewehuis, 2014). Roux and Mokhele (2011) have reported a concerning high rate of substance addiction among South African youth. Zinyama (2019) notes that drug and alcohol addiction is frequently linked to school-based violence. Studies have indicated that those who use drugs are more prone to fight, steal, attack people, and act aggressively (Hill & Hill, 1994; Naylor, 2002; Human Rights Commission, 2006). Hence, Nortjie (2017) argues that, as problems like drug abuse and alcohol consumption increases in society, so will the discipline problems and violence in schools.

Learner violence can also be attributed to poverty and unemployment. Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) cited a case in which a student from a particular school saw another student rob another student on the school grounds while brandishing a knife. According to their research, 57.5% of learner-based violence in schools is caused by poverty.

Khumalo (2019) asserts that the increase in violent incidents in schools can be attributed to easy access to school premises. Unrestricted entry to the school premises enables students to bring drugs and dangerous weapons to school, which perpetuate violence. According to Gater and Isaacs (2012), who were quoted by Nortje (2017), schools without recreational facilities typically have higher rates of violence. The finding appears to confirm the claim made by Makota and Leoschut (2016) that student involvement in extracurricular activities promotes social and life skills development, personal growth, constructively occupy learners, and facilitate learner identification with the school, all of which have a negative impact on school violence. Khumalo (2019) identified various forms of indiscipline among secondary school students such as truancy, cultism, insulting language, stealing, and rioting as antisocial behaviour that contributes to school violence.

Bonilla-Mathe (2013) defines gangsterism as the development of an urban identity through in the formation of groups that commit violent and crimine. Many young people are drawn to the attraction of gang membership because it reflects an identity that suggests power, a sense of belonging, and protection (Makota & Leoschut, 2016). Wolhuter and Van der Walt (2020) point hat, the general legacy of violence within a community creates a context in which gangsterism flourishes and spills over to schools. According to Ngidi (2018) and Mncube and Madiya (2014), there are daily reports of violent gang-related incidents at schools.

Sibanda and Mpofu (2017), argues that learners who exhibit disobedient personality traits and low academic achievement are more likely to be school vandals who cause property damage to schools. Such learners oppose the authority of the school (Ancer, 2009). Singh and Steyn (2014) point that, the destructive nature of these aggressive learners, and their domineering attitude towards teachers and other learners, is likely to fuel violence in the schools.

Duy (2013), identifies bullying as the primary type of violence in schools, which is primarily carried out by students who exhibit aggressive behaviour. The bullies take money from other kids, eat their lunch, and when the learners do not have money or lunch, they are beaten and harassed. The development of information and communication technology has given rise to a new type of violence among high school learners called cyberbullying (Geldenhuys, 2015).

Violence in schools is also exasperated by the number of weapons brought onto school property by learners (Mncube & Steinmann, 2014). According to Burton (2008), weapons are available in many schools across the country, and these weapons are not limited to traditional items such as guns or knives. When students are in conflict with other students, they convert things like bottles or pencils into weapons (Masingi, 2017). This is consistent with the findings of Gina and White (2014), who reported that a student on school property stabbed another student with a sharpened rod and that a student in grade 12 shot another student in grade 12 over a girlfriend.

Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) affirm that, ineffective supervision caused by school overcrowding creates a conducive environment for aggression and violent behaviour. Due to the difficulty of maintaining order in packed classrooms and the tendency of students to misbehave undetected, large class sizes and inadequate facilities are contributing factors to school violence. According to Le Roux and Mokhele (2011), the existence of violence in schools jeopardizes student safety and creates an unsettling atmosphere that hinders socialization and effective learning.

Effects of School-Based Violence

Carroll-Lind, Chapman, and Raskauskas (2011) pointed out that school violence negatively impacts children's lives, teachers' careers, and parents. Among the psychological repercussions of violence on learners, Ngidi (2018) emphasized suicidal ideation, depression, and low self-esteem. Students who struggle with feelings of fear, insecurity, and anxiety find it hard to concentrate on their studies, which has a detrimental effect on their academic performance. They might also lose focus, stop attending school, or develop an apathy toward learning and other activities (Singh & Steyn, 2014; John, 2017).

Students affected by school-based violence face academic deficits that are detrimental to their development because of their high absenteeism rates (Motseke, 2020). Singh and Steyn (2014) contend that teachers employed in violent schools often take long leaves of absence from work as a result of work-related stress, which negatively affects instruction and student development. The South African Human Resources Commission Report, that a considerable proportion of educators are resigning from their positions as a result of the emotional and physical abuse they receive from students (Dibetle, 2008). In certain instances where the violence escalated to a fatality, violent students have been held accountable for the deaths of teachers and students (Dibetle, 2008; John, 2017). There is a correlation between high levels of violence breeding high levels of stress, which have an adverse effect on learners and educators (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010).

Measures to Curb Learner-Based Violence

Schools should be safe places where instruction and learning may occur, free from violence and crime. The Department of Basic Education (DBE), UNICEF South Africa, and the Center for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) worked together to design the National School Safety Framework (NSSF). The NSSF was implemented in 2015 by the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2015). However, Burton (2019) point out that schools are usually unable to apply the program due to a lack of resources.

Management of schools and environment modification are key components of learner-base violence prevention strategies. In order to address some of the underlying reasons of violent behaviour, working directly with children is a key component of school-based violence prevention (WHO, 2015). The World Health Organization (2015) states that it is advantageous to include in the curriculum the teaching of skills related to identifying violence, staying safe, resolving problems without resorting to violence, to access help and support, and to support someone who could be experiencing violence. According to SACE (2011), teachers need to be trained in a variety of subjects, such as how to handle conflicts in the classroom, how to implement effective disciplinary measures, how to stop violence in the classroom, and how to keep students safe from school violence.

It is believed that communal toilets provide more opportunity for assault against females (WHO, 2015). Therefore, according to UNESCO (2017), separate, hygienic toilets should be installed in safe areas to replace communal toilets. Kapueja (2014) point that, efforts aimed at preventing violence in schools should include security measures like proper perimeter fence, security guards, and access control, as well as architectural upgrades like replacing or repairing damaged facilities. The South African Schools Act make provision for random searches and seizures, and these measures should be conducted by the schools (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011).

Educational leaders (SACE, 2011) should develop a collaborative team of parents, students, teachers, and management team to prepare an incident reduction plan against violence. School Governing Bodies and school principals should work together for effective school management responding to early warning signs, and promote a culture of human rights, and intolerance to violence within the school.

No single factor in isolation causes school violence, hence, Mncube and Steinmann (2014) argues that, the more learners, parents, and staff are involved in school policy and decision making, the more there is a genuine community, the more the school can resist violence, hence, violence in such a school will be minimised.

Theoretical Framework

The social learning theory serves as the foundation for this investigation. The theory states that, youngsters pick up behaviours from observing how other people behave in a community. While children can learn positive behaviour from positive role models, they can also learn negative behaviour especially violence by watching others model negative behaviours (Niewehuis, 2014). Literature indicate the causal factors of school-based violence emanate from society, and violence in schools mirror the types of violence taking place in a society (Mncube & Madiya, 2014). Schools are thus, a microcosm of society. Violence is an anti-social behaviour that children learn within their social context, hence, social learning theory provides a useful lens to investigate the phenomenon of learner-based violence within the school setting.

Research Methodology

Qualitative research was used in the study to investigate causes and effects of learner-based violence and measures to curb violence in schools. A case study approach was chosen because the study was aimed at engaging participants to obtain insights and understanding of their experiences with learner-based violence (Creswell, 2009). Using information gathered from the Nylstroom circuit office in the Waterberg District, a purposive sample of three (n=3) schools in the district was chosen based on their attributes and alignment with the issue being investigated. Two schools with a high prevalence of learner-based violence and one school with a relatively low incidence of learner violence served as the selection criteria for the three schools. Like other townships across the country, Modimolle Township is characterised by poverty. Our goal was to learn more about and get insight into the phenomena of school violence in underprivileged communities. Two educators, two students, and the principal from each school were chosen to take part in the research. Three principals, six educators, and six learners took part in the study.

Findings

The findings are presented according to the hermeneutic steps of data analysis. What appear in this paper are the themes and verbal quotations from the participants? Participants are categorised as follows: School A participants: principal of school A (PA), teacher 1 (T1A), teacher 2 (T2A), learner 1 (L1A) and learner 2 (L2A). School B participants: principal of school B (PB), teacher 1 (T1B), teacher 2 (T2B), learner 1 (L1B) and learner 2 (L2B). School C participants: principal of school C (PC), teacher 1 (T1C), teacher 2 (T2C), learner 1 (L1C), and learner 2 (L2C).

1. Description of School-Based Violence

The study found that participants have a common understanding of the concept of learner-based violence, because their description of school violence was relatively the same. Interviewees cited the following:

PB: “When learners are fighting at school, or the fight that started at home ended at school”.

T1B: “I think is unwanted violence between educators and learners at school premises”.

L1A: “I think is when learners are fighting and bullying each other in school”.

Data analysis revealed a higher level of violence in the schools. However, it is imperative to note that, out of the three schools that participated in the study, one school indicated a relatively low level of violence. According to the analysis, the violence that occurs in schools is a reflection of the anti-social behaviour and violence that occur in the surrounding community.

PB: “There is a high level of violence in the school. Learners usually come to school late, fight one another over minor issues, carry dangerous weapons and illegal drugs into the school premises, bullied other learners, and stole other learner possessions.”

L1B: “The level of violence is very high in the school because of the high crime rate in the community”.

PA: “Due to high crime rate in our community, learners have easy access to illegal substances and weapons and they bring them to school, and this perpetuate high levels of violence”.

The high levels of violence in the participating schools mirror the violence that exist in society, thus pointing to the notion that violence from the community spills-over into schools.

2. Forms of Violence

Data analysis pointed to the following common forms of violence characterising the participating schools. The interviewees mentioned the following:

PA: “Bullying, vandalism, fighting, physical and emotional abuse, sexual abuse and gangsterism are common in our school”.

PB: “Bullying, physical violence, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, vandalism and gangsterism are common in our school”.

The study's findings are consistent with previous research (Mncube and Steinmann, 2014; Ngidi, 2018), which shows that bullying, vandalism, sexual abuse, physical and emotional abuse, gangsterism, fighting, stabbing, and even murder are the most common types of school violence in South African schools.

3. Causes of Learner-Based Violence

We found that learner-based violence in schools is hugely fuelled by learners' easy access to drugs.

T1B: “Learners come to school high on drugs such as nyaope and dagga, and when they are high, they get into fights with other learners”.

T1A: “Learners comes to school high on drugs and they also smoke drugs in the school premises. When they are high teaching and learning is disrupted by their violent behaviour and aggressiveness”.

The analysis indicates that drug abuse is taking place within the schools, and such an anti-social behaviour do not only contribute to learner violence, but also disruptive to schooling activities. The findings of the interviews are consistent with Mokhele and Le Roux's (2011) assertion that drug-using students have a propensity for violence, suffer from short-term memory impairment, and have other intellectual impairments that negatively impact their academic performance.

Participant indicated that, easy access to school premises is another primary factor that cause violence in their schools.

T2B: “Gangs and people around the community have an easy access to school premises, because of lack of securities at the gates”.

The safety of students and teachers is compromised by easy access to the school premises. The finding of easy accessibility to the school premises confirm the study findings that learners bring dangerous weapons into the schools, and that drug abuse by learners is taking place within the school premises.

The analysis found that dysfunctional families contribute to school violence. The participants mentioned the following:

T1A: “Some learners are raised by single parents, without any father figure in which boys tend to disrespect their mothers, and they lack respect for others including teachers. Disrespectfulness contribute to violent behaviour”.

L1B: “The main cause of learners’ misconduct is the family background. Some learners come to school angry from problems at home and they take out their anger on educators and other learners”.

This result is in line with a study conducted in 2013 by Ncontsa and Shumba, which discovered that violent attitudes and behaviours that are carried out by dysfunctional families influence students and increase their risk of engaging in violent behaviour.

Gangsterism is another contributory factor to violence in the schools.

T2B: “There are gangsters from the community in which learners are members and often unresolved gang disputes resulted in fighting among these groups during school hours, thereby causing violence in schools”.

We also found that poverty and unemployment cause learner violence. Interviewees mentioned the following:

T1A: “Unemployment and poverty is the cause of school violence. Learners tend to tease those who do not have a proper school uniform, as a result the victims retaliate with violence”.

L1A: “Unemployment is the cause of school violence, children whom their parents are not working are likely to be the perpetrators of school violence by stealing from other learners, even robbing them”.

The findings harmonize with the study conducted by Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) which revealed the following causes of school violence: unemployment, poverty, violence and crime in the community, indiscipline, and intolerance.

A learner code of conduct based on policy and legislative framework with an emphasis on safety and security can curb school violence. However, the analysis found that the schools are disregarding the school code of conduct.

L1C: “We don’t follow code of conducts and is not properly explained to us”.

PA: “Code of conduct is not properly implemented in our school, hence learners don’t know what is right or wrong”.

The study findings indicate a lack of proper implementation of code of conduct by the schools which contribute to violence. This finding supports the argument by Jinot (2018) that, rules and regulations are meant to guide and control activities in the school, but when they are not effectively implemented they tend to breed violence.

4. Effects of School-Based Violence

Data analysis in the participating schools point that learner violence results in lower attendance rates, poorer concentration, a decreased ability to learn, depression, and in the worst cases, suicide. These findings are in line with the argument by Mncube and Harber (2013) that learners who experience school violence have severe, long-lasting physical, emotional, and psychological problems, including low self-esteem.

Data analysis also point that learner academic performance is adversely affected by violence in schools. The interviewees mentioned the following:

T1B: “Absenteeism and underachievement are a major effect of violence in our school”.

PB: “Learners are exposed to an environment of fear and anxiety. This results in an increased learner absenteeism.”

T2B: “Violence in the school makes learners depressed, causing them not to come to school. This results in poor learner performance”.

T2C: “Victims even think of committing suicide, do not focus in class and end up dropping out of school”.

The interviews also found the following effects on educators: resignation, absenteeism and bunking classes. Such negative effects on teachers is likely to impact negatively on teacher morale, resulting in a severe teacher demotivation with negative consequences on learner scholastic performance. Interviewees mentioned the following:

PA: “Teacher’s bunk classes and end up resigning”.

L2C: “Our teachers bunk classes, they stay in the staff room and when we go call them they say we must first speak to our class mates to behave properly in class”.

Violence thus results in poor classroom attendance by teachers who are not only demotivated, but also scared of their learners. (Ncontsa and Shumba, 2013). The findings indicate that every member of the school community is negatively impacted by acts of school violence.

5. Measures to Curb School Violence

Participants gave various ways in which school violence can be curbed in schools. The following was mentioned: Code of conduct should be explained properly and followed by learners, train teachers on conflict management skills, more security personnel, police search and seizures, involvement of pastors, parental involvement and creation of more extra-curricular activities.

Interviewees cited the following:

L1C: “Code of conduct should be properly explained to learners so that we can know what is right and wrong in school”.

PA: “Learners don’t know content of the code of conduct. It must be properly explained to them and also to their parents”.

PB: “Children are the reflection of their parents, so if parents play their role at home, I think violence in school can be minimised”.

L1A: “We need enough securities in our school and also the police must come and search learners for drugs and weapons once a month”.

PC: “We do have security personnel but they are not enough for school to be safe at all the time because its only one person, therefore we need more personnel to help with patrolling and search students more often”.

The interview analysis revealed the need to have social workers in schools to assist in curbing learner violence

T2A: “We need social workers to come and help victims with counselling and to assist perpetrators to stop their violent behaviour. Police officers must come for search and seizures and to explain to learners the dangers of violence and drug abuse”.

The above data analysis indicates that, there is an urgent need by the schools to be provided with adequate security personnel and proper school fencing, a strong school partnership with the South African Police (SAPS).

Ngidi (2018) argues that, SAPS needs to embark on providing proactive school-based crime prevention services that are characterized by the creation and use of interventions that empower both potential victims and former victims as well as deter potential offenders.

Another measure mentioned by the participants in the school is religion. The need to involve pastors to preach and to instil moral discipline as a measure to curb violence. The participant response:

L1B: “A pastor must visit once a month at the school to help discipline trouble learners by preaching moral values”.

Training on conflict resolution is viewed by interviewees as a measure to curb school violence.

L2B: “Teachers must be trained on how to resolve conflict. Conflict management is crucial in curbing violence in the school”.

T2B: “We need a training on how to handle minor issues such as conflicts amongst learners”.

The study findings support Ngidi's (2018) assertion that parents, educators, administrators, and learners should work together in combating violence. This is further supported by Department of Education (DoE) (2014) that parents should also be encouraged to take the initiative in violence management by remaining good role models to their children.

Adequate functional recreational facilities as a measure to curb violence in the schools was mentioned.

T1C: “If learners are involved in sports activities such as rugby, chess and soccer, will helps them to know each other very well and acquire positive attitude towards each other”.

Agbor (2012) affirm that inadequate infrastructure has a negative impact on educational quality. Makota and Leoschut (2016) point that learners who participate in after-school recreational activities develop their personal skills, strengthen their social and life skills, and keep themselves busy in a

productive way. This helps learner identification with the school and their peers, which reduces student misconduct and violence. Makota and Leoschut's assertion enhances the participating schools' requirement for sufficient recreational facilities to support extracurricular activities.

Discussion

Literature indicates that school violence is a nationwide problem and that its prevalence is rising. Hence, it was worrying to find that learner academic performance is being adversely affected by violence in schools. Teachers are also adversely impacted by higher levels of stress related to their jobs, which lead to their bunking classes or even quitting their positions as educators, which has grave detrimental effects on both teaching and learning.

We found that the violence that take place in schools mirror the violence that take place in the community. It was not surprising that the same kinds of violence is taking place in the schools and the surrounding community, because schools that participated in the study are situated in the same geographical area of Modimolle Township. The common forms of violence in schools provide credence to the literature that contends that social variables play a role in school violence and that schools are a microcosm of society. The study findings are consistent with the social learning theory, which maintains that children's exposure to the negative behaviour of others in society causes them to become less socially adept (Niewehuis, 2014).

Data analysis identified several factors causing learner-based violence which includes, unfavourable family environment, level of violence in the community, drug abuse, unemployment and poverty, easy access to the school premises, indiscipline behaviour among learners, and gangsterism. These findings are in line with literature. However, literature indicate that the two primary factors fuelling violence in the schools are gangsterism, and alcohol and drug abuse (Mokhele, 2011; Zinyama, 2011; Mncube & Madiya, 2014; Ngidi, 2018). The findings in this study are contrary to literature, because the two primary factors perpetuating learner-based violence in the schools are easy access to the school premises and drug abuse.

The study found that learners can easily obtain drugs in their community, and easy access to the school premises allow students to bring illegal substances into the school. This leads to drug abuse within the school premises which increases learner violence and disrupts teaching and learning activities. Our findings are supported by Mokhele and Le Roux (2011), who contend that drug-using students frequently exhibit violent tendencies. We also found that easy access to the schools compromises student and teacher safety by making it simple for weapons to enter the schools.

Three schools participated in the study, and with regard to the level of violence in the schools, data analysis and our personal observation when we visited the schools to collect data revealed the following: We found that two schools have a high level of violence, and the other one school is characterised by a low level of violence. It is imperative to note that, based on our observations, the school that does not experience a significant level of violence has security guards at the entrance and appropriate school fencing, whereas the other two schools do not have such security measures. This data strongly indicates that controlled access to schools reduces the level of violence within schools. Therefore, we argue that the provision of adequate school fencing and security staff by education authorities to the schools is an urgent necessity.

The South African School Act no. 84 of 1996 mandates that in order to regulate acceptable student behaviour, schools must develop and appropriately implement a learner code of conduct. While the participating schools lamented the presence of violence within their schools, it was alarming find that these schools are disregarding the student code of conduct, with students not having the necessary content

knowledge of the code. According to Jinot (2018), policies and procedures are designed to direct and regulate school activities, but when they are not implemented, they encourage violence.

The fact that the participating schools do not employ the protocol agreement between the Department of Basic Education and the South African Police Services regulating searches and seizures in schools to curb violence in the schools is another worrying factor. Management of the schools must ensure that there is active cooperation between the schools and SAPS in order to curb violence in the schools.

Conclusion

Violence at school has a serious negative impact on the environment for effective teaching and learning. School violence is a complex multi-systemic problem and the causal factors of learner-based violence are multifaceted, which creates the need for an integrated approach to curbing school violence. This study points that easy access to drugs by learners and drug abuse within the school premises by students are primary factors fuelling the high levels of violence in the schools. Hence, we recommend that, there is an urgent need for education authorities to ensure that, there are adequate security measures at schools that would curb the entry of illicit substances into the school premises. Such security measures should include adequate perimeter fencing and security personnel. Education authorities must also ensure that the partnership agreement of search and seizure between schools and SAPS is strengthened, and conflict management training is provided to teachers and learners.

However, we conclude that, for school safety measures to be successful, it is necessary to go beyond mere policy formulation and learner disciplinary efforts, to also include other critical interventions such as referring troubled learners to the appropriate counselling and support services, parental and broader community stakeholder engagement, maintaining school buildings and school grounds, maintain recreational activities, and establishing a school culture of intolerance to violence.

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