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# Decrying violence in South African schools and institutions of higher learning

## Abstract

*In recent years, the South African Departments of Basic and Higher Education have been besieged by shocking forms of physical, verbal (including hate speech), psychological, sexual and socioeconomic violence. Although this has been a worrisome phenomenon dating back to time immemorial, of late, violence is increasing at a very concerning and alarming level. The profusion of violence serves as an indictment to various stakeholders, including the current government, which seems to have done very little, if anything, to mitigate the issue. Several media houses and numerous media platforms have tracked violence that has advanced to gruesome killings of learners and teachers alike at learning institutions on a daily basis. Very often, societies wake up to new and traumatising experiences that have since endorsed schools and higher education institutions as war zones where bloodbaths have become commonplace. The study sought to highlight the extent to which violence has ravaged schools, colleges and universities. The study drew its data from a qualitative content analysis of online newspaper articles and social media news. After tracing different versions of physical and sexual forms of violence experienced at the aforementioned institutions, the study established that institutions are experiencing a deluge of violent incidents. Several institutions have lost educators, principals, support staff and students through violent death. The study further suggests ways in which violence could be mitigated at learning institutions. Active stakeholder involvement, reskilling of teachers in handling 21<sup>st</sup>-century learners/students and the introduction of modules on teachers' soft skills in dealing with recalcitrant learners are some of the recommendations that result from the findings of this study.*

**Keywords:** *behaviour, learner, model, student, violence*



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## 1. Introduction

Violence at both the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and higher education institutions (HEIs) has reached alarming levels that need urgent attention. Consequently, there is a cause for concern about the safety of students and learners at South African universities and schools.

The nature of violence experienced at these institutions is similar to the community-based violence where the students and learners are raised. A study conducted in South Africa has established that at least one in every five learners in public schools is violated in various ways every week and that violence-related incidences could be a staggering 34% (Sikhakhane, Muthukrishna & Martin 2018:2). Additionally, Pappas (2023:1) declares, "School violence, aggression, and bullying are on the rise. It is a social phenomenon that affects more and more students."

These statistics are alarming and could account for increased anxieties about school and university safety. Despite numerous articles and proposed intervention strategies, violence continues unabated in both education sectors. Academic papers have been written about the devastating violence that has been ravaging institutions of learning globally since time immemorial. There is growing concerns about poor governmental efforts in mitigating violence in schools, colleges and universities. Nevertheless, even where governmental efforts have been visible, violence seems to be unrelenting. The root causes of violence should be searched in order to mitigate its effects. South Africa are prominent among countries that have been red flagged as high risk in terms of violence in schools, colleges and universities. Several voices have attributed the violence in South Africa to the violent behaviour of some communities.

This study focuses on physical and sexual violence and seeks to highlight the extent to which these forms of violence have destabilised peace and tranquillity in schools, colleges, universities and the country as a whole.

## 2. Definition of terms

### 2.1 Violence

Violence describes behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2024). *Violence* is aggression – usually physical aggression – that causes harm (Vocabulary.com). In the study, the word 'violence' is used to describe "negative and intentional actions that are aimed at causing physical and psychological harm to one or more individuals who have difficulty defending themselves" (Juan *et al.*, 2018: 2), "deliberate and repetitive aggressive behaviour over time, accompanied by an imbalance of power between the aggressor or aggressors and the victim" (Arhuis-Inca *et al.*, 2021: 2), and "any type of physical, psychological, or verbal and/or sexual aggression among students, teachers, and/or school personnel toward a student" (UNESCO, 2019).

### 2.2 Learner

A learner is someone who is learning about a particular subject or how to do something (Collins Dictionary, 2024). In the study, the term 'learner' refers to any pupil attending primary or secondary school in South Africa.

### 2.3 Student

The term 'student' refers to a person who is studying at a college or university (*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2024). In the study, the word 'student' refers to an individual learning at a South African institution of higher education.

## 2.4 Community

The word 'community' describes a social unit (a group of living things) with a shared, socially significant characteristic such as place, a set of norms, culture, religion, values, customs, or identity (Wikipedia, 2024). In the study, the word 'community' refers to a group of people sharing the same place of residence with learners and students. The word includes places such as townships and other residential areas.

## 3. Theoretical framework

This study uses the Behaviourist and Social Learning Theories to navigate its trajectory. The prominent proponents of behaviourism are B.F. Skinner and J.B. Watson. Skinner emphasises the role of reinforcement in shaping an individual's behaviour (Skinner, 1963). The advocates of behaviourism contend that behavioural tendencies of learners are influenced by their parents or caregivers with whom they live, or the townships or communities where they are raised. Skinner contends that there should be ramifications for undesirable behaviour. He avers:

A formal statement of contingencies (cigarette smoking causes lung cancer) needs the support of carefully engineered aversive stimuli involving sanctions quite possibly unrelated to the consequences of smoking. For example, smoking may be classified as shameful, illegal, or sinful and punished by appropriate agencies (Skinner, 1984: 6).

Any undesirable behaviour should be matched with punishment directed at discouraging it. While learners are growing up, parents or caregivers have the privilege of identifying ill behaviour and design suitable punishment to discourage the children from bad behaviour. Parents and guardians have the task of raising children in a manner that helps them to become responsible citizens. The violence witnessed in schools could be reduced if such violence is identified and corrected while the child is still growing up. By the time the child reaches school, they are already aware of the consequences of ill behaviour.

Moreover, Watson argues that "there is a response to every effective stimulus and that the response is immediate" (Watson, 2017: 28). This contention speaks to the fact that every stimulus is followed by a response and reinforcement (SRR). If, for example, a child exhibits bad behaviour, the parent or caregiver might institute punishment (negative reinforcement) that may discourage the child from repeating the behaviour in future. Alternatively, if a child behaves well, an adult may give a reward (positive reinforcement), encouraging the child to continue on the trajectory of good behaviour in future.

Cherry (2022) refers to "radical behaviourism", which explains that behaviour can be understood by studying a person's past and present environments and the reinforcements within it, which influence behaviour either positively or negatively. The researcher of this paper concurs with Skinner and Watson's view mainly because children are raised by parents or guardians who should train them when they are still young and malleable. They can discourage undesirable behaviour by punishing the toddlers. The researcher believes that ill behaviour could be traceable to certain sources where it may have been adopted. Sources could be learners' homes, communities or schools where some horrific forms of violence have been recorded. According to Behaviourism, learners' behaviour can be shaped through operant conditioning. This suggests that a caregiver or parent can shape the behaviour of a child either through positive or negative reinforcement. In light of this view, the behaviour exhibited by learners in schools could mirror their families or communities' behaviours. In concurrence, Masilo (2018: 2) affirms,

The child imitates violent behaviour learned in the home if he is from a family that experiences domestic violence. As a way of trying to cope with the home situation, the child may be aggressive, not only to other learners, but also towards teachers at school.

This researcher is of the view that the dilemma of school violence would be mitigated if parents were invited to enter into debates and the generation of solutions to end violence, which has been a topical issue for way too long without any foreseeable solution. Parents, caregivers and communities model the kind of behaviour that eventually manifests in learners at different schools.

Furthermore, the Social Learning Theory (SLT) ascribes a child's behaviour to the immediate individuals surrounding them. The main proponent of this theory is Albert Bandura (McLeod, 2024). The individuals who are observed are called models. Apparently, "[c]hildren pay attention to some of these people (models) and encode their behaviour. Later, they may imitate (i.e. copy) the behaviour they have observed" (McLeod, 2024).

Bandura used the Bobo doll experiment to illustrate his SLT:

A Bobo doll is an inflatable toy that is about 3 feet tall and is usually made of a soft, durable vinyl or plastic. The participants in this experiment were 36 boys and 36 girls from the Stanford University nursery school, all between the ages of 37 months and 69 months (3–6 years). The adult would start to show aggression towards the Bobo doll. Examples of this included hitting/punching the Bobo doll and using the toy mallet to hit the Bobo doll in the face. The aggressive model would also verbally assault the Bobo doll yelling "Sock him", "Hit him down", "Kick him", "Throw him in the air", or "Pow" (Nolen, 2023).

Bandura established that the children exposed to the aggression model were more likely to act in physically aggressive ways than those who were not exposed to the aggression model. That is, children learn social behaviour such as aggression through the process of observation, learning through watching the behaviour of another person.

The key tenets of SLT are that a child is more likely to imitate the behaviour of those people it perceives as similar to itself. "Consequently, it is more likely to imitate behaviour modelled by people of the same gender" (McLeod, 2024). Subsequently, the people surrounding the child will respond to the imitated behaviour through positive reinforcement or punishment depending on the desirability of the manifested behaviour. The child will then learn what happens to those they are imitating. If they are rewarded, the child will continue to imitate.

The SLT and behaviourist theories could be used to trace various forms of behaviour often displayed at schools and institutions of higher learning. The implications of the SLT are that the behaviour of a child replicates its models. Accordingly, the violence that affects schools could reflect the violent nature of societies in which the children grow up. SLT suggests that children can be discouraged from participating in violent acts by observing the negative consequences of their model's behaviour while they are still growing up. The same view is shared by the Behaviourist theory, which states that various forms of punishment may serve to deter children from engaging in violent behaviour.

#### 4. Aims

The study aims to highlight the extent to which violence has destabilised the operations in schools and institutions of higher learning. It also aims to expose communities' complicities in promoting violence among learners and students. Lastly, it aims to suggest ways through which violence may be alleviated.

## 5. Methodology

The study used qualitative content analysis. Textual documents were sourced from the internet and subjected to content analysis. As Gronmo (2020: 145) avers, “various kinds of textual, oral and visual documents have been stored and distributed online where they have been accessible and ready for content analysis”. News documents were searched from the following news websites: News 24, IOL News, *The City Press*, SABC News and *Weekend Argus*. The key words that were used in the search are: violence in schools, violence at institutions of higher learning and violence in communities in South Africa. The inclusion criteria only encompassed violence taking place in schools, institutions of higher learning, and South African communities.

The exclusion criteria covered all schools, institutions of higher learning and communities outside South Africa and all violence perpetrated in South Africa prior to before 2015. At least 120 news documents about violence at schools, higher education institutions and in South African communities were identified using Google as the main search engine. The purposively sampled documents were further refined by the researcher by selecting those that dealt with incidents that occurred less than ten years ago. The researcher’s aim was to analyse the recent forms of violence to ensure relevance. This means the researcher sampled news items from 2015–2024. Further screening was done to select a sample of ten news documents per category; that is, schools, institutions of higher learning and community-based violence. This selection process eliminated 90 documents leaving 30 for content analysis. Similar forms of violence were grouped together and three themes emerged from the groupings. The themes that emerged are murder or loss of life, grievous bodily harm and malicious damage to property.

## 6. Findings and discussion

### 6.1 Basic education

**Table 1:** The distribution of violence in schools

Source and date	Nature of violence	Perpetrating gender	Theme
Diole, 2019	Teacher stabbed to death.	Male	Murder/Loss of life.
Diole, 2019	Grade 8 child stabbed by a fellow pupil.	Male	Murder/Loss of life.
Seleka, 2024	Grade 6 pupil arrested for shooting primary school principal.	Male	Grievous bodily harm.
Singh, 2022	Principal shot and killed at a school.	Male	Murder/Loss of life.
Fengu, 2018	Petrol bombing of a police car at a Vereeniging school.	Male and female	Malicious damage to property.
Singh, 2023	Durban school shootout leaves teacher, suspected robber wounded.	Male	Grievous bodily harm.
Grobler, 2018	Grade 1 pupil stabbed to death.	Male	Murder/Loss of life.
Nggakamba, 2018	Stone thrown at teacher.	Male	Grievous bodily harm.

Source and date	Nature of violence	Perpetrating gender	Theme
Grobler, 2018	Bus driver assaulted.	Male	Grievous bodily harm.
Tshangela, 2022	Learner sets teacher's car on fire.	Male	Malicious damage to property.
Department of Basic Education, 2018	24-year old teacher murdered by learner.	Male	Murder/Loss of life.

Table 1 reveals that violence in schools is mostly perpetrated by male learners. Stabbing and shooting are the most prevalent forms of violence and could be registered as higher degrees of violence as they result in the loss of life. After stabbing and shooting, it is assault and beating which lead to grievous bodily harm. Another violence with fewer incidents is malicious damage to property.

Table 1 shows a wave of violence perpetrated by learners on other learners, academic and ancillary staff. Violence has set apart schools as war zones and unsafe spaces for teachers:

Teaching conditions in South Africa are not conducive. Working in the schools, especially township schools, you go there at your own risk every day because we never know what will happen ... A day at work as a teacher could possibly be your last (Dlamini, 2019).

This report was revealed by *City Press* after interviewing new teachers who taught in Gauteng township schools. Cases of violence have been reported in all the provinces of South Africa:

In over half of the country's provinces, more than 50% of learners had been exposed to some form of crime. In the North-West, KwaZulu-Natal, Free State, Mpumalanga, and Limpopo, at least one third of learners were victims of bullying on a weekly basis. On the whole, provinces where the threat of crime to learners was high also experienced high concentrations of bullying at schools (Zuze *et al.*, 2016).

One of the prominent causes of violence is broken family structure and lack of models. Several articles confirm that the family plays a critical role in shaping the behaviour of a child (Masilo, 2018: 3; Kyobe *et al.*, 2018: 2; Khumalo, 2019: 2; Singh & Steyn 2013: 1). While families are expected to play a critical role in raising children, it is unfortunate that "60–70 per cent of our learners come from broken homes" (Fengu, 2019). Based on the high percentage of learners who come from dysfunctional homes, it is unlikely that schools would be free from violence. Learners need family models to shape their behaviour. Nonetheless, Sikhakhane *et al.* (2018: 2) hold the view that even where family structures are discernible, there is violence, which is often transferred from parents to the children. This view casts a bleak shadow on the families whose role is to nurture children. It forces parents to self-introspect and mend any behaviour that may mislead their children. For example, if a couple is always embroiled in incessant fighting, they should consider the negative impact of their conflict on the children. SLT, Behaviourism, articles and the news items all suggest that the immediate environment of a child plays a crucial role in modelling desirable behaviour.

Additionally, poverty seems to be partially responsible for the rise of crime in schools. Some of the studies cited in this study attribute violence to poverty:

Children from poverty-stricken families are likely to devise different means of fending for themselves. As a way of addressing the phenomenon of poverty, the bully might rely on the victim, for example, taking their lunch box, or instructing the victim to request or steal money from home (Masilo, 2018: 3).

A study conducted in South Africa confirm that learners in non-fee paying schools were exposed to violence more frequently than those in fee-paying schools (Juan *et al.*, 2018: 5). In a study conducted in KwaZulu-Natal Province, Sikhakhane *et al.* (2018: 3) established that 50% of learners from poorer environments/schools were more than likely to be subjected to violence on a weekly basis.

## 6.2 Violence in higher institutions of learning

**Table 2:** The distribution of violence perpetrated in institutions of higher learning

Source and date	Nature of violence	Perpetrating gender	Theme
Petersen, 2019	Student bludgeons, stabs flatmate to death at University of Johannesburg.	Male	Murder/Loss of life.
Petersen, 2018	Kidnapping, rape and murder of Stellenbosch University student.	Male	Murder/Loss of life.
Africa & Nel, 2022	Belongings of two black students allegedly urinated on by a fellow student.	Male	Malicious damage to property.
Mbokotho & Nqunjana, 2024	One injured after North-West University protest turns violent.	Male and female	Injury, malicious damage to property.
Fengu, 2020	North-West management shuts down campus after student protest.	Male and female	Intimidation and malicious damage to property.
Grobler, 2020	Violence forces North-West University to close.	Male and female	Intimidation, injury and malicious damage to property.
Pijoo, 2023	'Totally, totally unacceptable': VC 'fully disappointed' with UFS students after violent protests.	Male and female.	Intimidation, injury and malicious damage to property.
Tshangela, 2022	The South African Union of Students (SAUS) has described an alleged rape incident at the University of the Free State campus as regrettable and shameful.	Male	Emotional and physical pain.
De Klerk, 2023	UWC student who stabbed a CPUT student appeared in court for attempted murder.	Male	Grievous bodily harm.
Mekuto, 2023	Protesting University of Venda students allegedly burn SAPS vehicles.	Male and female	Intimidation, injury and malicious damage to property.

The most common form of violence at higher education institutions is malicious damage to property, followed by rape and murder. The perpetrators of murder and rape are males, whereas both males and females participate in violent protests, which often result in malicious damage to property. Most universities have experienced violence in the form of malicious damage to property. Injury often results from violent protests staged at the universities.

The predominant fuelling agents of violence in South African universities are uneven funding of students' fees and Gender-Based Violence (GBV). These protests may have genuine causes, but are sometimes hijacked by criminal elements. For example, the #FeesMustFall movement was infiltrated by miscreants who were perpetrators of rape, exclusion of gender and battles for leadership (Langa, 2017: 11).

Higher Education minister, Dr Blade Nzimande, perceives the violence perpetrated at HEIs as a reflection of the behavioural patterns of the larger communities where the students come from. Nzimande claimed that the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) sector is a microcosm of our larger society. According to Nzimande, "The emergence and frequent instances of reproduction of societal pathologies on our campuses, such as rape and violent murders, typically committed against women, are a clear example of this" (Ndlovu, 2023).

This acknowledgement from the minister accuses parents and local communities being responsible for the violence experienced at South African universities. The view that violent behaviour is adopted from communities concurs with the SLT. The South African media is replete with narratives of murder, rape, robberies and many hair-raising issues. It would seem the minister's observation is that the same violence that is perpetrated in societies is mirrored at university institutions.

Moreover, the South African Union of Students (SAUS), has raised similar concerns about gender-based violence and femicide at HEIs. The student body registered its concerns about the scourge of Gender Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) at universities. They deplore the fact that crime statistics indicate that 10% of all reported GBVF cases in South Africa occur at institutions of higher learning (Moichela, 2023).

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHE) issued a statement on 5 May 2023 about gender-based violence, which was described as the "most complicated pandemic facing South Africa. A pandemic unlike Covid ... no vaccine to kill it." GBV is a societal issue. This begs the question of the role the society has played in promoting or demoting GBV. The DHE report tracks the GBV issue back to the homes and societies where the perpetrators of these crimes are raised up. The patterns of behaviour that students have been raised with at home and in their societies reflect how the students treat one another on university campuses. The internecine violence which manifests itself in rape cases and other versions of violence could be reflecting the values students have been raised to embrace. Table 2 indicates that rape and murder are the most prevalent forms of violence at South African universities, which mirrors the societies where the students are raised. For example, Table 3 indicates that the majority of cases in communities are murder and rape. According to a Higher Health research, 62% of students in South Africa consider themselves at high risk of GBV, while the same goes for 60% of service staff and 71% of academic staff (DHE, 2023).

Apart from GBVF, in October 2022, newspapers were awash with versions of an incident where a student urinated on other student's belongings. "The belongings of two black students were allegedly urinated on by a fellow, first-year white student in the early hours of Saturday morning." (Africa & Nel, 2022). This adds to the plethora of violent incidents that are incubated within South African universities. It is not clear why the young man urinated on the belongings of the other man. However, the fact that a white student urinates on a black student's belongings raises questions of racial prejudice. This may force the government to



ponder on whether the issue of race has been dealt with and put behind the nation. This incident could easily rupture the wounds that the South African government has vainly been trying to suture the pain of years through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and many other endeavours.

The sampled articles endorse the internecine violence that continues to ravage the country's universities and colleges. Based on different versions of violence, the researcher is convinced that such social ills are sown and cultivated in the communities where the students grew up. The families and the communities of the perpetrators might be guilty of transferring violent behaviour to the student perpetrators.

### 6.3 Community-based violence

**Table 3:** The distribution of violence perpetrated by communities

Source and date	Nature of violence	Perpetrating gender	Theme
Grobler, 2020	Krugersdorp killings.	Male	Murder/Loss of lives.
Grobler, 2020	Rape and murder of Uyinene Mrwetyana.	Male	Murder/Loss of life.
Grobler, 2020	Raping of a 7-year-old girl in the bathroom of a Dros restaurant in Pretoria in 2018.	Male	Grievous bodily harm.
Grobler, 2020	Killing wife and faking her suicide in Stellenbosch.	Male	Murder/Loss of life.
Grobler, 2020	Murder, rape, attempted murder, armed robbery, possession of an unlicensed firearm and ammunition.	Male	Loss of life, grievous bodily harm and trauma.
Grobler, 2020	Murdering a family of seven in a house at Vlakfontein.	Male	Murder/Loss of life.
Grobler, 2020	Killing Coligny teenager.	Male	Murder/Loss of life.
Grobler, 2020	Man hanging and killing his four children	Male	Murder/Loss of life
Tshangela, 2019	48-year old teacher shot and killed by an unknown man on the school premises.	Male	Murder/Loss of life
Molefe, 2022	Musician Thoriso killed.	Male	Murder/Loss of life.

The above table reveals that community-based violence is predominantly perpetrated by the male gender. The most common violence in South African communities is murder, followed by rape. The inclusion of this table only serves to compare the statistics from the identified themes. The proponents of SLT and Behaviourism have suggested that communities provide models that have the ability to shape the behaviour of children. Table 3 above confirms that there are various forms of violence perpetrated in the communities. Evidently, similar forms of violence are discernible in Tables 1 and 2. The findings from the articles reinforce the tenets of SLT and Behaviourism.

## 7. Comparison of themes from schools, institutions of higher learning and communities

### 7.1 Murder

Murder is the most prevalent form of violence. The highest number of murder cases is in the communities, followed by schools. It would seem there are more murderous male learners in schools than at universities. Similar weapons are used in all murder incidents, for example, guns and knives. The danger these weapons pose reveals the intention of the user. Simple logic would mean that the intended use of these weapons is to kill. Moreover, it is a cause for concern that culpable homicide happens despite the provision in the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996: B65). The Act explicitly criminalises the bringing of weapons to school. It further empowers the school authorities to do random searches for such weapons and confiscate them if found.

- (3) A police official or in his absence, the principal or delegate may, without warrant –
- (a) search any public school premises if he or she has a reasonable suspicion that a dangerous object or illegal drugs may be present in the public school premises in contravention of the regulations;
  - (b) search any person present on the public school premises; and
  - (c) seize any dangerous object or illegal drugs present on public school premises or on the person in contravention of these regulations (SASA, RSA, 1996: B65).

Another prominent feature under this theme is that murder is committed by males. This finding reveals that both young and old males have been found guilty of murder. Drawing from the SLT, male children might have copied this behaviour from their models in communities or families. The revelation that male children are predominantly guilty of murder in the sample could be blamed on the societal behaviour of males that model behaviour for male children.

### 7.2 Grievous bodily harm

Assault is widespread in schools compared to the rest of the groupings. The perpetrators of assault in schools are mainly male learners. However, the incidents should not be trivialised, as they could easily lead to grievous bodily harm that may maim the victim.

### 7.3 Malicious damage to property

This theme is the most prevalent at higher institutions of learning followed by schools. Buildings are torched and several other properties destroyed. The perpetrators in this category are both males and females. Injuries often result from this kind of violence. The violence often culminates in arrests of student leaders and intimidation of protestors. In most instances the protests are fuelled by lack of or delayed funding and poor service delivery. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds have to wait for the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) to provide funding, but in most cases they have to resort to protests to receive the grants. Sometimes they protest about service delivery; for example, the North-West University students on the Vaal Campus had to embark on a week-long protest in February 2024. Their grievances included, but were not limited to transport from their residences and cleaning of their hostels (Mbokotho & Nqunjana, 2024).

## 8. Recommendations and Conclusion

Teachers need staff development in handling modern violence. This should be done as a matter of urgency to reduce the number of teachers who lose their lives in the classroom. Universities ought to introduce a new compulsory module of which the aim is to equip student teachers with methods of handling recalcitrant learners. In many instances, teachers are killed while they are totally oblivious of the developments in their classrooms. This means they have to be taught how to 'sense danger' in their classrooms and perhaps how to avoid conflicts that may culminate in injury or loss of life. The module should broaden the teachers' views about learners and alert them to dangers that lurk in their classrooms. There should be awareness campaigns in teachers' meetings about prevention of violence in schools.

Communities should be tasked with modelling good behaviour to learners. They should report those miscreants who waylay and rape learners coming from school to law enforcement agents. There should be policies to protect learners from social ills such as alcohol abuse. Members of the public who are caught selling alcohol to learners should be arrested and tried before a court of law and the ramifications of such behaviour should be published to discourage would-be perpetrators. Some communities have subjected young people to gruesome murders, for example, the Enyobeni tragedy that took place in the Eastern Cape where 21 young lives were lost in a tavern on 26 June 2022. The Enyobeni tavern tragedy cast a dark cloud on the entire country in 2022. This shows the extent to which communities neglect the lives of young people. The law enforcement agents should speed the process of arresting the perpetrators and those found guilty should be given long custodial sentences. The justice system that has often been viewed as slow and porous in some cases should be improved to protect young people. Moreover, the DHE should improve the rate at which it addresses the grievances of students in order to avoid damage to property and delayed annual resumption of university calendars.

Lastly, the study only focused on physical and sexual violence as its primary concern for the purpose of this study. Moreover, the chosen versions of violence are the most prominent and easily traceable ones. However, the researcher is not oblivious to the existence of other forms of violence such as emotional, verbal (including hate speech), psychological and socioeconomic violence. Nevertheless, the researcher hopes to conduct further research on the remaining forms of violence in future.

The academic articles identified a number of causes of violence in schools such as absent models. The reviewed articles established a critical point that might have been overlooked: dysfunctional or broken families. From Skinner's behaviourist theory, a parent can train a child to behave in the way the parent desires. Moreover, the SLT indicates that a child who exhibits unpalatable traits can be punished to abandon the trait as long as there is a parent/caregiver closely monitoring the child. In most cases, as it was highlighted in articles and news items, parents are unavailable to support their children. The underlying clarion call in this article to condemn violence in schools and at higher institutions of learning sought to highlight the extent to which violence has destabilised those institutions. In light of the SLT and Behavioural theories, it is possible to alleviate violence in schools if all stakeholders commit to ensuring the safety of learners, educators, students, lecturers and the vulnerable members of society.

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