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# Exploring the Psychological Impact of School-Based Violence on Learners' Academic Performance

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**Abstract.** This study explored the psychological impact of school-based violence (SBV) on learners' academic performance. SBV is viewed as a proliferation of values within the society and shows high levels of lawlessness which hinders the smooth schooling process. This study employed Ubuntu paradigm to frame non-violence and through qualitative research method, the study purposively sampled 28 learners in two secondary schools from Grade 8 to 11. Focus group interviews were used to collect data on forms of violence perpetrated against learners inside of the school premises. This paper addresses the following questions: What is the psychological impact of SBV on learners? How does the impact of SBV affect learner academic performance? Data were collected over a period of three months and was analysed using a thematic analysis. The results revealed that the number of violent incidents reported are far from way less than the actual occurrences and owing to this, learners felt that schools continue to remain unsafe spaces of learning for them, and this had long-term psychological impact on them and their academic achievements. This study contributes to the ongoing attempts to create a peaceful education environment through Ubuntu.

**Keywords:** learners; learners' academic performance; psychological impact; school-based violence; Ubuntu paradigm

## 1. Introduction

School-based violence (SBV) is extremely harmful to both learners and teachers equally. In a similar vein, all South Africans are greatly distressed by the prevalence of SBV in the country (Baruth & Mokoena, 2016; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). Aldridge and McChesney (2018) conducted research on the relationships between school climate and adolescent mental health and wellbeing, and they

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have argued that it is also in the vanguard of mediating and intervening in violent situations that arise from political instability in many African countries. This include South Africa, despite being the Constitutional democratic state that claim to promote human rights through the Bill of Rights. This alludes that even though South Africa is a democratic country with one of the most progressive constitutions that supposedly protects human rights, the country is seeing an increase in human rights violations. These include, but are not limited to, the continued use of corporal punishment by teachers who believe that the promotion of human rights, which prohibits the use corporal punishment in schools, afford learners the liberty to disregard the teachers' rules. Consequently, schools have become the battleground of gangsterism, learner-to-learner violence, learner-to-teacher, and in rare cases, teacher-to-teacher violence, therefore leading to the rapidly increasing rate of violence in schools.

Despite the notable 10% decrease of violence in schools, 8.2% of the violence incidents reported were the results of corporal punishment by teachers (Statistics South Africa, 2021). On the same note, studies have showed that some teachers are still using corporal punishment as a strategy to discipline learners despite its abolishment by the government (Davids & Waghid, 2016). The instances of human rights violations have crept into South Africa's public schools with the reports about incidents of violence in schools and the presence of firearms in schools regularly featured in the media (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2020). Instead of being a place where learners can feel safe, schools have turned into places where they are vulnerable to violence, bullying and abuse. In addition to individuals who are physically harmed, SBV also has an impact on those who observe it unfolding. Additionally, there are studies on the increase in school violence, which includes gangsterism, cyberbullying, rapes of learners in classrooms, and the continuing of teachers' use of corporal punishment (Mpindo & Mphojane, 2024; Segalo, 2023; Segalo & Rambuda, 2018). According to these reports, such human rights abuses paint South Africa as a violent nation and are not good for its reputation as a human rights defender. This paper explores psychological impact of SBV on learners' academic performance and offers an Ubuntu theory that school communities might use to address this dilemma.

## **2. Conceptualisation of Violence**

Within the scope of this study, violence will be defined as any intention, threat or action aimed at the person with the purpose of inflicting harm, killing and injury (Coles & Powell, 2020; Turanovic & Siennick, 2022). At an individual or group level, violence could be aimed at the physical, emotional or psychological level. It could be seen that any form of violence has its intention to destabilise the status quo, to undermine the safety and security of others and to derail the progress of those harmed. Violence, on the other hand, shows a heightened psychological state of feeling superior to others, a feeling of power over others. Therefore, violence could be seen as unequal state of being. The perpetrators of violence feel that nothing will happen to them owing to the power they possess as compared to against their weak victims (Miller, 2023). In the context of a school, violence is defined as anything in school that is intended to cause harm or pain to an innocent learner, group of learners or teachers. Both citizens and non-citizens are

guaranteed safety under the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), Section 9 (equal treatment for all), Section 10 (human dignity), Section 11 (life and privacy), Section 24 (safe environment) and Section 28 (protection of children's rights) are a few examples. When taken as a whole, these several human rights parts highlight how crucial personal safety is. They also represent the Ubuntu way of life as a standard by which individuals ought to regard one another.

Against the background of human rights protection, the question that is posed is how school communities have allowed schools to be ravaged by violence? What kind lifeworld are we living in? Available empirical data shows that violence has a devastating psychological harm on learners. Violence affects learners physically, emotionally and psychologically. These aftereffects of violence contribute detrimentally on their self-esteem and their academic development. Furthermore, research shows that victims of violence are likely to be perpetrators of violence themselves. Mncube and Netshitangani (2014), Ncontsa and Shumba (2013), and Mestry (2015) assert that SBV leads to learners bunking classes and deteriorating academic performance.

### 3. Literature Review

According to Mayeza et al. (2022) and Obadire and Sinthumule (2021), schools are typically viewed as places where people are primed for their future roles in society and as tools for cultivating and reaffirming pro-social, constructive citizens. However, against this popular belief, research and television shows suggest that schools are places of violence (Wolhuter & van der Walt, 2020). That violence is a serious concern in South African schools is obvious to the country's citizens. Another element emerging from the literature is that learners encounter various forms of violence, and emotional victimisation is more common than physical victimisation. Public humiliation, rejection, degrading treatment and isolation are the primary forms of emotional victimisation that occur in schools. Since there are no physical bruises to indicate a violation, emotional victimisation creates psychological discomfort in victims and negatively impacts learners' mental health (Heberle et al., 2020). In schools, the phrase "psychological victimisation" is used authoritatively to refer to the domains of extortion, provocation, victimization, harassment and annoying terrorisations. Inequitable violations can happen between learners and their classmates as well as between teachers and learners in a variety of academic contexts. Although there may be only one instance of violation, psychological violence frequently consists of several unwanted, unreturned and coerced actions that can cause the victim grief.

Psychological abuse prevents victims from realising their full potential, which prevents them from becoming competent individuals (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2020). Consequently, Oluwafeni et al. (2021) and Shields et al. (2015) suggest that psychological abuse should be avoided since it dehumanises and denigrates learners, ruins their sense of self, hinders their academic progress, demotivates them from learning, distorts their personalities, isolates them from their peers, confuses, disgraces and terrifies them. According to Akinsola (2010):

*"The symptoms of psychologically abused learners include excessive worry about grades; a shift from a positive to a negative self-perception;*

*fear that teachers will harm them; excessive sobbing over schoolwork; migraines; stomach-aches; a decline in social functioning outside of the classroom; nightmares or insomnia; school avoidance; and loneliness or depression.” (p. 651)*

Some people with dissociative identity disorder, in which one person rejects the presence of another, are blatant examples of survivors of psychological abuse who may violate themselves. Self-mutilation, burning, painful masturbation and eating disorders like bulimia and anorexia are just examples of the harmful behaviours that this condition frequently presents (Lebois et al., 2022; Wulandari & Samanik, 2022). Additionally, thrill-seeking behaviour includes high-risk sexual behaviours, including unprotected sex or sex with strangers, as well as driving while severely intoxicated (Netshitangani, 2014). Psychological abuse of children in schools can result in major emotional and behavioural issues, such as sadness, lack of compassion for a parent or guardian, low cognitive function that leads to poor academic performance and a lack of social skills.

According to a study that looked at children who had experienced psychological abuse from infancy and subsequently during preschool, these kids were consistently agitated, uncooperative and detached from their primary caregiver (Romero et al., 2021). In addition, the study’s participants, children lacked imagination, tenacity and performance zeal, and this showed that most youngsters who are rejected commit suicide (Rasool, 2022). In 2015, Sunday Times published a story about emotional victimisation of the girl at the centre of the infamous Jules High sex tape, who was 19 years old, committed suicide years later after being humiliated in public, rejected by her friends and harassed by the media. Two years before she committed suicide, the learner chose to overdose on her mother’s high blood pressure medicine after becoming embroiled in a sex scandal that caused psychological abuse and humiliation (Mabunda & McKay, 2021). Since psychological abuse is more damaging than physical abuse because there are no visible scars to verify the abuse, victims endure silent suffering that not only hinders their progress and well-being but also their health. As a result, several educational institutions have turned to social workers for assistance. These professionals are useful in helping learners who are feeling overburdened by their school situation.

### **3.1 Department of Basic Education Policy Position on SBV**

Section 10 of the South African Schools Act (SASA) (84 of 1996) places the responsibility of maintaining peace in schools in the hands of teachers (South Africa, 1996). However, other studies have argued that teachers alone cannot handle such responsibility because this culture of violence is deeply rooted in our societies and is leading many learners in schools to adopt a culture of violence (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2020). This has led the Ministry of Education to promulgate legislations that will also regulate and compel teachers to cease implementing corporal punishment in schools. The Abolishing of Corporal Punishment Act (33 of 1997) banned the use of corporal punishment in schools (South Africa, 1997). This was the attempt from the Ministry of Education to have a stance or a position against violence in schools which is not fully implemented.

Despite the ban, Statistics South Africa (2021) has published a notable decrease of use of corporal punishment, from 18% to 8%. These stats show that corporal punishment is still being used as a form of discipline more than 20 years since it was outlawed. SASA went further to criminalise the use of corporal punishment in schools to try curb the violence in schools. This position is also encouraged at the school level through the formation of Schools Code of Conduct that is formulated by the School Governing Body, teachers and the Representative Council of Learners to ensure all stakeholders in the school understand and contribute towards the non-violent and peaceful education environment. This position is currently reiterated on the recent Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (BELA Bill, 2024), that school management teams and school governing bodies must work together to formulate the school's code of conduct that strives to eliminate any acts of violence in schools.

### **3.2 Learner-Centred Pedagogy as a Foundation for Learners' Academic Performance**

In contrast to traditional Teacher-Centred Pedagogy, which involves learners passively receiving knowledge from teachers, Learner-Centred Pedagogy (LCP) is a generic approach to teaching and learning that aims to position the learner at the centre of the learning process. Most countries across the globe have implemented LCP in one form or another (van der Merwe, 2016), and several donor and international organisations have actively supported it (Schweinfurt, 2015). Despite this method of instruction, additional research suggests that traumatised learners have difficulty learning (Opere et al, 2020). Similarly, when learners are continuously exposed to different types of violence, the ensuing traumas restrict their capacity to participate and reach their full academic potential. Learners who experience violence suffer from exacerbated traumas leading to ongoing tension and anxiety. In South Africa, victimisation of learners owing to exposure to various forms of violence is common. This is supported by recent crime statistics and reports on child violence by South African Police Service (SAPS), which indicate that children are not safe in their communities, at school, at home or with their peers (Mestry, 2015; SAPS, 2022).

## **4. Framing Violence: Ubuntu as a Perspective**

Incidents of violence show that there are absolute absence values such as respect for the dignity and life of others. Likewise, violence shows that there is disintegration of values among the community. Violence intends to destroy the moral fibre of the community to cause a state of anarchy and to create a psychological state of lawlessness. It is largely agreed among scholars that Ubuntu [Humanity] refers to an African worldview or paradigm which emphasises the importance of cohesion, spirit of unity and a sense of compassion for one another within the community (Sanni & Ofana, 2021; Swanson, 2014; Worthington, 2011). This view is reinforced by the African idiom that "a child is raised by the whole village". Again, this worldview shows that a child is a very important member of the community, and it is the responsibility of every adult to teach that child values that are consistent with the spirit of Ubuntu. Within the paradigm of Ubuntu, violence could be viewed as being aimed at disintegrating the essence of unity and creating inequality within the community. Henceforth, Ubuntu should be

viewed as mitigating mechanism to create equality among people in the community, whether rich or poor, with the aim of preserving life for eternity.

## **5. Methodology**

### **5.1 Research Paradigm and Method**

The study used interpretivist qualitative approach to gather data. When using a qualitative technique, participants share their knowledge and experiences without the researcher passing judgment (Marovah & Mutanga, 2024). Moreover, using a qualitative technique gives the researcher the opportunity to learn about and comprehend various sociocultural circumstances. Comprehensive explanations of circumstances, people, interactions, behaviours, processes, attitudes, ideas and beliefs, as well as direct quotes from those who have experienced or are experiencing the topic being studied, are examples of qualitative data (Aigbavboa et al., 2023). Importantly, qualitative data is usually presented as text, such as interview transcripts or organisational documentation, but it can also include non-textual data, such as tables, photos, audio and video recordings (Borgstede & Scholz, 2021).

### **5.2 Research Questions**

Having conceptualised and framed SBV on learners, the following questions were raised:

- What is the psychological impact of SBV on learners?
- How does the impact of SBV affect learner academic performance?

### **5.3 Sampling**

A purposeful sampling was conducted using 28 learners in Grade 8 to 11 at two Lejweleputswa secondary schools, one in Welkom and one in Kutlwanong. The researchers believed that Grade 8 to 11 were justified for this study more than the Grade 12s which are more grown-ups and can stand for themselves against most forms of violence that they may encounter. On the other hand, Grade 12s programmes made it difficult for them and researchers to sit down and have the interviews since the participants in the focus group interviews were interviewed over the course of three months. To guarantee that the volunteers were treated with decency and respect, the researcher complied with all ethical requirements. Since human interactions are the focus of this study, the researcher ensured that the participants' rights and welfare were upheld. A thematic analysis was performed on the data. The information gathered from the interviews was transcribed, and meaning was extracted. The words of each respondent were examined to determine the influence of their perspectives. The researchers separately transcribed the interview transcripts to create themes in accordance with the research questions, which allowed the respondent's thoughts to be more properly portrayed and linked to their behaviour. To clarify any ambiguous results, the researchers followed up with the participants as part of a member check to avoid having the voice and perceptions of the researchers on the responses from the participants of the study.

#### 5.4 Data Collection Tool

To collect data from the participants, focused group interviews were organised separately to guarantee that the quality of the data collected accurately represents the actual issues under investigation. Nassaji (2020) defines a focus group as a structured, assisted discussion with the sole purpose of gathering scientific data. The questions' phrasing permitted both clarification and in-depth conversation. The Ubuntu setting allowed time to elicit the members' positional ideas on a matter before the panel, much like the Commission of Inquiry where the chairperson and evidence leaders listen carefully, probe further and restate remarks where there is a lack of clarity. The information was audio-recorded along with the note-taking technique, and a scribe was selected from among the participants to take notes on what transpired because the researchers felt that this method was the most effective.

#### 5.5 Ethical Considerations

Permission was sought after consultation with the Department of Education (Free State) and the University Research and Planning Committee (HREIC 02/22/11 ST. M. Ed). Each participant received an explanation of the study's goals, research techniques, nature of participation, confidentiality, anonymity and possibility of study results publishing. This viewpoint is in line with that of Pillay (2014) and Naidu and Prose (2018), who contend that a qualitative interview is a place where knowledge is formed and should be regarded as a moral inquiry. This ethical viewpoint could be regarded as embedded in the organisation given the ideals of Ubuntu, which include humility and respect (Maluleke, 2024).

#### 5.6 Trustworthiness

The researchers conducted a member check, where they contacted the participants to clarify any ambiguous parts of the findings, and a peer check, where they independently transcribed the interview transcripts with a senior researcher (Gunawan, 2015; Mthombeni, 2023).

#### 5.7 Data Analysis

The main objective of analysing qualitative research data is to offer a thorough description that facilitates understanding of the setting being studied (Maree, 2015). Guidance from Dube and Segalo (2022) was used to provide a thorough description of how learners connected to their bullying experiences so that their interviewees' statements could be understood. Using a thematic data analysis, the main themes that surfaced from the focus group interviews were categorised and patterns were identified (Oluwafemi, et al., 2021). To evaluate the data, the following format, which was suggested by Laws et al. (2003), as cited by Dube and Segalo, (2022), was employed:

- Step 1: Go over the collected data twice.
- Step 2: Make an initial list of the subjects that were found.
- Step 3: Go back over the information and determine whether the themes identified align with the investigation queries and participant responses.
- Step 4: Connect the topics to citations, expert commentary, and annotations.

- Step 5: Browse the categories to understand the themes. When analysing the data, keep the investigation queries in mind.
- Step 6: Develop an instrument to aid in identifying trends in the information.
- Step 7: Analyse the information and draw conclusions. In this step, the data are categorised based on the research questions or the ideas behind them, and the research outcomes are highlighted.

The authors ensured the validity of the study by using the member checking approach. The participants were provided with transcribed data so that they could evaluate how well the themes and conclusions matched the interview questions and their responses.

## 6. Findings

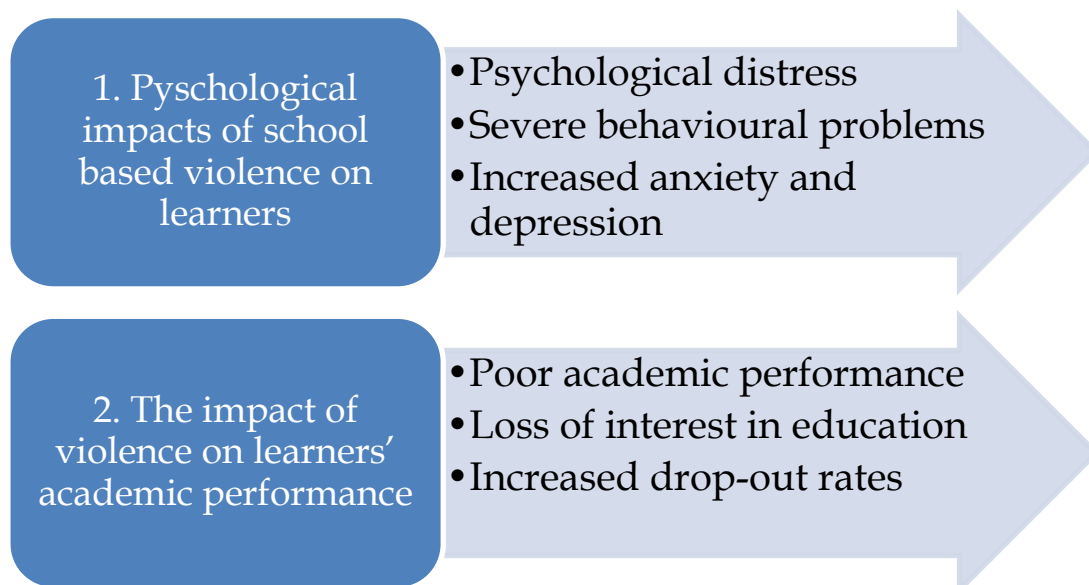
According to the systems theory of both Learner-Centred Methods and the Ubuntu ideology, schools that condone abuse and lack disciplinary rules are harming learners' mental health because they make them fear their lives in the classroom (Ngubane & Makua, 2021). Additionally, most depressed learners, learners with mental disabilities and even suicides occur in government or public schools, making it clear that there is still a significant disparity in educational opportunities. Learners attending private schools have access to human resources that help them to overcome their difficulties because their parents can afford to get help when they need it.

The results of this study support those of Fields (2020), who discovered that among South African secondary school learners, SBV is a contributing factor to low academic achievement, a high prevalence of anxiety and depression, learner dropout, and eventually suicide. According to a Cape Town study on the correlation between suicide risks and high school learners, some of the factors that contribute to suicide include aggressive behaviour, low self-esteem, stress, violence in schools and unmet academic objectives (Ngubane & Makua, 2021). Vandeyar and Mohale (2022) investigated the relationship between environmental conditions and high school learners' attempts at suicide. Conflicting interpersonal interactions with peers, a history of family and peer suicide attempts, forced sexual encounters, a shortage of counsellors in schools, and substandard housing conditions were some of the characteristics that were found.

## 7. Discussions

Since teachers are expected to be lifelong learners, they should also acquire new strategies for addressing complex issues in the schooling environment. The research findings are presented and discussed in this section. More crucially, after the qualitative data was collected and examined, the focus group interviews produced the following themes, presented in Figure 1.





**Figure 1: Themes and subthemes emerged from data analysis**

## 7.1 Psychological Impacts of School Violence on Learners

Violence can undoubtedly cause a long psychological disturbance on learners. Most learners who participated in this study preferred a school environment that is violence-free and encourages and upholds the principles of ubuntu. The primary goal of schooling, which is teaching and learning, become impossible in an unsafe learning environment since violence is thought to draw learners' attention away from successful teaching and learning (Qwabe et al., 2022).

### 7.1.1 Psychological distress

School violence can have a psychological impact, leading to long-term mental illness, psychological discomfort and persistent emotional instability. The psychological effects are less evident because they involve emotional trauma, which might lead to suicide or homicide fatalities. Numerous research has demonstrated links between corporal punishment as SBV, and poor mental health (Heekes et al, 2022; Mncube & Netshitangani, 2014; Portela & Pells, 2015). Some have concentrated on violence in schools, which always has a negative social impact, whereas the majority have concentrated on violence in families. In addition to becoming passive and overly cautious, victims of violence are also inclined to fear expressing their thoughts and feelings freely and may even commit psychological violence themselves. Some learners had the following to say:

*"Sometimes we just agree in class and not ask any questions to our teachers because we are being attacked for raising questions by other learners." (Grade 10 learner)*

*"In our class, they always throw paper at us who sit at the front, and you would never see anyone when you look back. What we do is ignore it because if you ever respond, you are also getting in trouble with the teacher for disrupting the class." (Grade 11 learner)*

The preceding sentiments alluded by learners are echoed by Mncube and Netshitangani (2024) that learners who experience psychological abuse are less likely than other learners to internalise moral principles, resist temptation, act philanthropically, sympathise with others, or utilise any form of moral judgment. They are more likely to engage in violent and disorderly behaviour, including assaulting their parents, siblings, classmates and romantic partners as they grow up. Additionally, they might grow up to be violent adults who are likely to discipline their own children. This contradicts the tenets of Ubuntu, which view schools as a setting for the development of conscious citizens.

#### 7.1.2 Severe behavioural problems

It is quite common for all learners to occasionally act impulsively, defiantly and naughtily. However, learners who are exposed to violence exhibit very tough and complex behaviours that are not typical for their age. According to Ncontsa and Shumba (2013), learners are more likely to exhibit severe behavioural difficulties, which include a continuous pattern of resistance against authority, argumentative or defiant behaviour, loss of temper and purposeful annoyance (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2020). According to some studies (Khumalo, 2019; Mestry, 2015; Shields et al., 2015), learners who exhibit behavioural issues are more likely to exhibit noticeably more signs of oppositional defiant disorder (ODD).

Masekela et al. (2024), for example, hinted that to examine teachers' variables related to the development of externalising and internalising comorbidities, as well as deficiencies in academic and social activities in learners with behavioural problems, it is necessary to demonstrate how SBV exacerbates learners' functional impairment. According to Khumalo (2019), they also face higher social and academic challenges, family conflicts and substance misuse. These comorbidities frequently have lasting impacts and increase the likelihood that these children may experience more mental health issues in the future (Masekela et al., 2024). This was supported by other learners who reported that:

*"Some of the boys in our class do not listen to teachers anymore. Last month another boy wanted to fight with the English teacher." (Grade 9 learner)*

*"In our class, they do not care whether the teacher is there or not; they sing with the teacher in front and disregard our feelings us who want to learn." (Grade 10 learner)*

Learners that exhibit self-regulation issues and a propensity to act without thinking through the consequences of their actions include losing their temper, acting irascible or purposefully irritating, and disagreeing with and disobeying adults' authority (Mestry, 2015). According to Hendricks and Mutongoza (2024), social impairments frequently seen in learners who encounter violence in schools may be caused by their impulsive defiance and poor self-regulation, indicating that these comorbidities present social challenges at home and at school as these learners frequently struggle to meet demands and expectations.

### 7.1.3 Increased anxiety and depression

Learner' emotions and cognitive abilities are hampered by exposure to violence, which eventually raises their anxiety and depressive symptoms. Physical and psychological suffering are common among victims of violence in schools. Long-term psychological trauma, such as anxiety, sadness and post-traumatic stress disorder, may also affect them (Hendricks, 2019). In general, learners in the sampled schools defined the effects of school violence as both physical harm and emotional harm to learners in connection to their education. Additionally, school violence victims have emotional trauma that may be identified as such in later adulthood (Garner, 2014). Additionally, it makes the classroom environment poisonous and unpleasant, making learners feel uneasy and frightened, therefore, affecting the smooth active learning and teaching process endorsed LCP. This uneasiness occasionally develops into sadness, and these learners eventually commit suicide. These were the responses to from learners:

*"I have come to despise the educational system because it is inciting youth suicides rather than preparing them for a brighter future." (Grade 9 learner)*

*"In only one month, two of my best childhood friends passed away by suicide. The disgrace of being sexually assaulted by a male teacher was too much for one of my friends, and the public humiliation from cyberbullying was too much for another." (Grade 10 learner)*

One of the most frequent outcomes of SBV was the increase in anxiety and sadness among learners. In addition to resulting in psychiatric issues for the victims, anxiety and sadness may force learners to retreat from their studies, and in rare circumstances, they may even lead to suicide or the death of student initiatives.

## 7.2 The Impact of Violence on Learners' Academic Performance

The frequent occurrence of violent behaviour displayed in schools has had a devastating effect on the schooling system and become a great concern all stakeholders involved in South African education. The violent activities in schools compromise the safety of learners and educators in schools and further affect negatively on the ethos of the school, which in turn affects teaching and learning adversely in the classroom (Maphalala, 2014).

### 7.2.1 Poor academic performance

Learner violence militates against the principles and goals of LCP and the provision of a safe school environment in which effective teaching and learning can take place. Irrespective of its origin, violence emanating from learners' ill behaviours has catastrophic and dire consequences for teachers, parents and learners (Garner, 2014). In support of this, Grade 10 learner stated:

*"I am always scared in our school, and I no longer have the same confidence as before when walking on the school premises, and I have started failing on other subjects."*

Grade 11 learner supported with:

*"Sometimes we can't even answer in the class because we are being bullied and humiliated when we get answers wrong. We can't even focus on the class."*

The foregoing statements show that victims of violence suffer from low self-esteem, lack of confidence and low morale, ultimately leading to poor academic performance. Furthermore, SBV produces parents or future citizens who are anxious, insecure and fearful (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2020).

#### 7.2.2 Loss of interest in education

While some learners experience SBV struggle academically, this always becomes the reason they lose interest in learning. However, other learners' education is not affected because some learners who experience SBV do well academically by immersing themselves in school life and work can serve as an escape (Maphalala, 2014). Most learners, however, lose interest in attending school because they are afraid of perpetrators of violence. This was confirmed by one of the learners (Grade 9) who made the following remarks:

*"I remember this other day when one of the boys in Grade 11 last year was always taking my lunch and homework, I would pretend to be sick to my parents just to avoid coming to school."*

The preceding comments reveal that the consequences of SBV on learners usually manifest themselves in the form of poor or deteriorating learner performance. These learners lose interest in their schoolwork because of the violence perpetrated on them on the school premises (Khumalo, 2019).

#### 7.2.3 Increased drop-out rates

SBV has detrimental effects on education, including reduced school adjustment and bonding, absenteeism, fear of school, and hindered academic development (Mkwanazi & de Wet, 2014). SBV victims frequently experience behavioural problems, cognitive impairments and poorer academic performance, which increases the dropout rate (Sing & Maringe, 2020). Violence victims report worse relationships with classmates and more loneliness, and they are more likely to be at risk for truancy and school disengagement than the offenders, victims of SBV, and uninvolved learners (Sing & Maringe, 2020). Since violence is linked to negative outcomes, which are linked to dropping out of school, it stands to reason that SBV behaviours could predict dropping out of school (Mkwanazi & de Wet, 2014). Some learners said the following:

*"And when you are constantly getting lower marks, there is no point of always coming to school and attending classes. Even our teachers will always tell us that we are going to fail." (Grade 10 learner)*

A direct correlation between school violence and school dropout has been empirically supported by several studies. According to Mkwanazi and de Wet (2014), 10% of dropouts had left school early owing to violence. Similarly, Sing and Maringe (2020) demonstrate a special connection between antisocial behaviour and dropping out of high school. In this study, antisocial behaviour includes small interpersonal unpleasant behaviours, rule breaking and verbal and

physical aggressiveness. Two pervasive and detrimental issues that learners worldwide deal with are school dropout and SBV.

## 8. Recommendations

In line with the principles of ubuntu, this paper proposes the integration of the following aspects to improve the humanity practised in schools. The recommendations of this study include the following, Multidisciplinary Strategy: Implement a multidisciplinary approach to review and treat SBV victims appropriately. Awareness Campaigns: Conduct government-led awareness campaigns to ensure that parents and learners appreciate the significance of education. Early Intervention: Emphasise the importance of education and continuous monitoring of learner attendance and progress. Parental Involvement: Encourage parents to engage in school activities and understand the importance of education. Teacher Training: Educate teachers on identifying and reporting SBV and involve victims in the recovery process of victims of violence. Law Enforcement Collaboration: Work with law enforcement and state personnel to regulate stay-at-home policies when the school environment is dangerous. Support Systems: Develop support systems to help schools struggling with violence that may lead to child abuse and school dropout.

## 9. Conclusion

This study employed Ubuntu as a framework to promote peace and non-violence in schools. The study answered the research questions posed earlier in this paper. The results of this study demonstrated that violence had a detrimental impact on school learners. Secondary school security measures are insufficient to guarantee learners' academic performance and general well-being. It was evident that bullying and violence was quite common in the schools, which caused learners to fear for their lives and, in most situations, hindered learning and teaching.

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