



**THE MANAGEMENT OF INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION  
PROGRAMMES FOR SCHOOL-RELATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE  
IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DURBAN AREA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) is a global and highly concerning phenomenon. In response to the urgent need of addressing it the South African Department of Education has developed policies and protocols and intervention programmes were implemented. Despite the notable development of frameworks there is paucity of research related to the management and effectiveness of intervention and prevention programmes for SRGBV.

The aim of this study is to explore the management of SRGBV prevention and intervention programmes at secondary schools in Phoenix and to what extent are they effective in curbing it. The study was guided by two theories – the Bioecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (2005) which framed the exploration of the current state of SRGBV in secondary schools in Phoenix, and the Systems theory of von Bertalanffy (1968) which was applied to the management of the intervention and prevention strategies for SRGBV in the selected schools.

The study adopted qualitative approach and employed case study as the strategy of this research. Eight systematically selected secondary schools from Phoenix participated in the study. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted with three categories of participants – RCL-chairs (learners); Level 1 educators representatives of the Disciplinary Committee; and Principals (SMTs). The interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants and the recordings were transcribed. Member-checking was done to verify the transcripts. To enhance the validity and reliability of the study secondary data was collected through reviewing of schools' code of conduct, disciplinary policies, and records kept by the school related to SRGBV. Thematic analysis was applied to the collected data from the interviews and the documents were interpretively analysed.

The study found that SRGBV exists in Phoenix secondary schools; however, it is not perceived as rife by the stakeholders. Rather it is viewed as incidental and as occurring occasionally. The current codes of conduct and discipline policies used in the selected schools are GBV-blind and this phenomenon is not always identified correctly.

Recommendations were made both to the Department of Basic Education and to schools. Some of the recommendations deal with developing a comprehensive SRGBV-policy and providing training to educators in identifying and responding to SRGBV by the DBE. Appointing of guidance counsellors to schools and providing opportunities for rehabilitation of perpetrators would further improve the response to SRGBV. Schools would have to review their current policies and add a GBV-section. Identifying a specific channel for reporting dedicated solely to SRGBV and raising awareness of this phenomenon together with information on help available in this regard are some of the recommendations made to schools to enhance the strategies of management of SRGBV.

## DECLARATION

I, Maria Svetoslavova Guleva-Govender declare that:

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I hereby approve the final submission of the following thesis.

.....

Dr Rosaline Govender

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my husband, Donovan Govender, who took upon himself the duties and chores fulfilled usually by me, so I could give my undivided attention to this research: You stood by me, supported me, inspired me, cheered me on and gave me strength when my strength diminished; you are my best friend and my better half, I thank you!

To my two boys: Daniel and Ryan, may this work be an example to you to conquer any mountain with perseverance and trust in the Giver of Hope! Hold on to Him and you will walk victorious!

Most importantly, this thesis is dedicated to the Almighty, All-powerful, Omniscient and Omnipotent, the Beginning and the End: The Alfa and the Omega! To You I owe everything I have and everything I am!

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ADA	Adolescent Dating Abuse
AIDS	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease of 2019
CPF	Community Police Forum
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DC	Disciplinary Committee
DoE	Department of Education
DoH	Department of Health
DP	Deputy Principal
DSD	Department of Social Development
EBSS	Effective Behavioural Support System
EEA	Employment of Educators Act
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LO	Life Orientation
LSA	Learner Support Agent
MRC	Medical Research Council
NECT	National Education Collaboration Trust
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSSF	National School Safety Framework
NW	North West
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PPN	Post Provisioning Norms
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
QLTC	Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
SACE	South African Council for Educators

SAPS	South African Police Service
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SBV	School-based violence
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
SRGBV	School-related gender-based violence
SRO	School Resource Officer
SSP	SKILLZ Street Programme
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USA	United States of America
WC	Western Cape
WHO	World Health Organisation



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## **CHAPTER 1: GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Violence is something that has become disturbing reality in our daily lives - we hear about it, we witness it and we sometimes experience it. Violence has penetrated every sphere of human activity, and domains previously considered safe, are now plagued by different types of violence. One such area of life perceived to be safe is education. The disparity between our expectations and the reality of violence in schools is growing deeper every day.

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) is a form of school-based violence (SBV). It has been increasingly identified as a threat against the rights of children throughout the world. This violence infringes on the right of safety and security of children irrespective of culture, religion, geographic location, and socio-economic background (Duru and Balkis 2018).

It has been established that over 246 million children experience gender-based violence every year on their way to/from school or within their school (UNESCO 2017). This is a cause for serious concern especially because SRGBV impacts the physical, emotional, and psychological wellbeing of children; it affects their cognitive development and may have long-lasting consequences for the victims (Beyene, Chojenta, Loxton 2021).

### **1.2 Context of the study**

The Minister of Basic Education of South Africa, Angie Motshekga, acknowledged that South African schools are becoming more and more dangerous for learners and teachers. The Minister indicated that the high crime levels of the surrounding communities have been carried over into the school environment (Daniel 2018).

Statistics show that although other types of crime may be on decrease, gender-based violence is on the rise. South African girls and women are victims of some of the highest rates of sexual crime in the world. It is estimated that 138 women/girls per 100 000 have experienced this type of violence for the period 2015-2017 (Stats SA 2018).

On the 17 June 2020, in the state of the nation address, President Cyril Ramaphosa labelled the current state of GBV “the second pandemic”. This is recognition that apart from the COVID-19 pandemic, GBV is an extremely concerning issue, manifested through exponential growth in the number of reported cases. The crime statistics for South Africa indicate an increase in sexual offences from 52 420 (2018/19) to 53 293 (2019/20), with sexual offences being one of the forms of GBV plaguing this country (South African Police Service 2021).

Matadi and Calvino (2021: 9) note that while South Africa can boast of its “progressive Constitution and solid legislation”, the impact of GBV on the economy and society is overwhelming. According to Colpits (2019), these policies have introduced new views and attitudes and have become a threat for the patriarchal traditions which continue to dominate communities. The researcher laments the delay in translating of these policies over from the public domain to the private sphere, and the absence of political leadership to model these views which practically disempowers the legislation and provides opening for conservative, traditional, patriarchal order. This is also supported by Meyiwa et al. (2017), who claim that there seems to be a gap between policy development and policy implementation.

KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) is one of the 9 provinces of South Africa with an estimated population of 11,5 million, second in size to Gauteng, which has 15,5 million (South Africa, Department: Statistics South Africa 2020). The province is also in second place regarding GBV, with 8 017 cases of rape (2019/20) (South African Police Service 2021). The township of Umlazi, KZN, has 85 reported cases of rape for the last quarter of 2021 (Ferreira and Koko 2022).

This study is located in Phoenix, a township situated northwest of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The city of Durban, KZN, is the largest city of the province, and 51% of its population is Black African. Almost 25% of the population is Indian (Asian), White people are 15,3% while the Coloured are 8,6%. The Zulu ethnic group dominates in number. 68% of the city’s residents are under 19 years old (World Population Review 2022). The township of Phoenix has a predominantly (85%) Indian population, 12,1% Black African, 1,8% Coloured and 0,2 % White. The socio-economic characteristics

of the population of Phoenix are of middle- and low-income households. The urban location, the socio-economic background, high volume of crime and discordant parent vital status, contribute to increasing the risks of gender-based violence experiences at school (Naidoo et al. 2017; Artz et al. 2016).

### **1.3 Research problem and aim of the study**

The South African Schools Act (1996) builds on the rights of the learners in accordance with the Constitution of South Africa. The right to respect of their human dignity as well as the right to “nonviolence and security of the person”, and the right to safe environment with “absence of harassment” are amongst the first rights there. The significance of safety in the school environment underpins the National School Safety Framework (NSSF) and serves as a cornerstone to the National Development Plan of the South African’s Government vision 2030.

The violation of the children’s rights to safety and human dignity in the school environment, an undesirable and disturbing fact, happens on a daily basis and characterises the lived experiences of many learners in South Africa. The press, the social media, and reports of government officials continuously inform us of the escalation of cases of school-based violence.

The consequences of school-based violence are serious and affect the enrolment rates, achievement levels, retention, and the overall quality of education. The experiences of victimisation of learners cause low motivation for resilience to involvement in delinquent behaviour and criminal activities (National School Safety Framework 2016).

The focus of this study is the school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), which is a form of school-based violence. This type of violence includes, amongst others, sexual harassment, rape, homophobia, corporal punishment, and bullying.

In its efforts to ensure a positive environment for academic achievement, the Department of Basic Education has developed various policies and programmes in order to address SRGBV.



Previous inquiries have identified SRGBV as a prevalent form of violence in schools (Heslop et al. 2019; Naidoo et al. 2017; UNESCO 2016). The nature and causes of SRGBV have been studied and intervention and prevention programmes were developed. However, there is a paucity of research related to the management and the effectiveness of these policies and programmes in curbing SRGBV.

### **Aim of the study**

The aim of this study is to explore the management of gender-based violence prevention and intervention programmes at secondary schools in Phoenix and to what extent are they effective in curbing gender-based violence at these schools.

The aim of the study was achieved through the following objectives:

### **Objectives**

1. To determine the types of gender-based violence prevalent at secondary schools in the Durban area.
2. To explore what gender-based violence prevention and intervention programmes are currently in place in secondary schools in the Phoenix area.
3. To assess the management of these programmes and their effectiveness in preventing and curbing SRGBV at selected secondary schools in the Phoenix area.

### **1.4 Rationale for the study**

The full extent to which SRGBV affects the lives of South African learners is not yet established due to the paucity of research in this area. This is further exacerbated by the underreporting caused by the victims' fear from stigma, misunderstanding, isolation, retribution and economic consequences (Parkes et al. 2017).

This study will contribute to the existing knowledge through establishing what are the current structures and programmes utilised to prevent and curb SRGBV at secondary schools in Phoenix. This study also offers an evaluation of the management of such programmes. Simultaneously, although in a small scale, the inquiry will contribute to keeping relevant the accumulated information through providing a current view; it makes recommendations to policy makers and implementers on the management of SRGBV at schools. In this regard, Mancini (2017) recommends regular updates of policy and procedures as pre-requisite to the creation of positive learning environment.

### **1.5 Literature review**

End Violence Against Children (2021) reports that more than a billion children are experiencing different types of violence every year – physical, emotional, and sexual, in school, on their way to school or at home. This is also confirmed by Spear (2019), who relays the findings of UNICEF’s 2017 global report of violence against children.

UNESCO (2020: 1) defines school violence as “all forms of violence that takes place in and around schools and is experienced by students and perpetrated by other students, teachers and other school staff”. The prevalent types of school violence include physical, psychological, sexual, bullying, and cyber-bullying.

School-related gender-based violence is described as “acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, perpetrated because of gender norms and stereotypes, and enforced by unequal power dynamics” (UNESCO 2021:1).

According to UNESCO (2019), particular groups are more vulnerable to violence. It has been established that race, social class, gender, cultural and geographic location determine the vulnerability of children. It was found that boys are more likely to experience physical bullying, while girls suffer more often psychological violence. The types of violence also depend on the age of the children with younger victims reporting predominantly physical and emotional bullying whereas adolescents are at a higher risk for cyberbullying and sexual violence. Children from underprivileged background, migrant children, differently abled and those not conforming to gender norms have been found to be more vulnerable to bullying (UNESCO 2019).

GBV is present in all learning spaces and each individual can be considered either implicated or injured by the gender systems at play (Lange and Young 2019). The African schools’ context reflects the gender roles and social norms of dominant males and subordinate females as embedded in the societies (Madyirapanze 2020). These accepted norms are reinforced in schools through language, assigning roles to boys and girls, learning materials and teaching methodologies. Therefore, schools’ environments support the drivers of SRGBV, which can be perpetrated by learners or

persons of authority such as prefects, teachers, members of school staff, school administrators, school management, or community members (Madyirapanze 2020).

The Optimus Study done by Artz et al. (2016) which is the first of its kind and a nationally representative study, indicates that 35,4% school-going adolescents (15-17 years old) have experienced some form of sexual abuse in their lifetime. The household survey disclosed that 26,3% of youngsters of this age group have undergone some kind of sexual abuse. This is translated to approximately 784 967 young people who have suffered sexual abuse by the age of 17.

The South African government has drawn up progressive policies regarding GBV which address gender equity, equality, and freedom of discrimination (Colpitts 2019). These policies can be viewed as a threat to the patriarchal traditions which continue to dominate post-apartheid communities. Colpitts (2019) denotes the delay in translation of these policies from the public domain to the private sphere and the complete absence of political leadership to model these views. An earlier study by de Lange, Mitchel and Bhana (2012) reveals that the democratic right of every person to practise their own culture and beliefs has provided comfortable justification for keeping the status quo and male dominance especially in the rural communities. In addition to that Thomas, Masinjila and Bere (2013: 521) claim that GBV is “distinguishing feature of patriarchal systems of rule” and therefore that political, social, and economic circumstances are not the cause of it but rather its support system.

Understanding the causes and the forms of SBV directs the policy and informs the intervention strategies. A report by UNESCO (2014) specifies that although there is a notable growth in policymaking in the area of SRGBV school initiatives which address that violence are not that common. Parkes (2016) confirms UNESCO’s (2014) findings that the impressive policy framework underpinned by the Constitution (1996) and various programmes are meeting criticism on the level of policy enactment at provincial and school level.

UNESCO (2015) appeals for creating more robust data on the nature and causes of SRGBV worldwide. This study sheds more light on the present state of GBV at

secondary schools in the particular region of Phoenix, Durban area, and highlights the extent to which SRGBV– interventions and preventions at selected secondary schools are successful.

### **1.6 Theoretical framework**

Two theories underpin the theoretical framework of this study. The first theory provides for understanding the causes and the forms of SRGBV prevalent in Phoenix secondary schools and the second theory allows holistic overview on the management of intervention and prevention programmes for SRGBV in the secondary schools participating in the study.

The Bioecological Theory of Bronfenbrenner (2005) has been used widely in the studies of human development. This model explains well the causal factors and the consequences of GBV. Important aspect unaccounted in other theories is time. SRGBV has short term and long-term consequences which depend on the length of exposure to the violence and at what stage of his/her personal development the child was victimised. The theory considers the complexity of the contextual factors and the processes involved in the interplay between the various systems in the individual's development. Bronfenbrenner's theory relates the idea of the multiple micro-systems in which individual is embedded and highlights their bi-directional nature.

The main focus of this inquiry is the management of prevention and intervention programmes for SRGBV in secondary schools in Phoenix and therefore a second theory underpinning this study is the systems theory. Systems theory is used to study the nature of problems within organisations, diagnose such problems and suggest possible solutions. This is done through consideration of all aspects like structure, context, processes, and the environment containing the problem. Researchers acknowledge that communication is the key to successful functioning of an organisation and it leads to stability within system of systems. Communication allows for exchange of information but also facilitates adaptation and improvement in response to internal and external feedback and thus leads to growth of the organisation. The feedback mechanisms are there to ensure that the organisation reaches the state of equilibrium. In the sphere of education, teachers should be cognisant of the background and the environment their learners come from to the school, because this

directly influences their behaviour and academic growth. Good communication between teachers and learners paired with efficient feedback system will lead to improved teaching/ learning experience. However, if there is a breakdown of communication in the classroom, the outcomes of the system would be poor (Lai and Lin 2017).

### **1.7 Research methodology**

The research paradigm of this study is constructivism. Creswell (2013) purports that social (interpretive) constructivism is rooted in the belief that different individuals form their own meaning of the world they live in. These meanings are usually forged through interactions with other individuals and strongly influenced by “cultural and historical norms” and therefore they are constructed (Creswell 2013: 25). A qualitative approach was selected because of its exploratory nature. Denzin and Lincoln (2013) describe qualitative research as an approach that places the focus on the processes and socially constructed meanings as opposed to quantitative approach, which emphasizes the causal variables and their relationships. Butler-Kisber (2018) identifies qualitative approach as in-depth study of the current conditions. The management of prevention and intervention programmes for SRGBV deals with human behaviour, motivation, and attitudes. The adoption of qualitative approach led to rich descriptive data of the procedures for dealing with SRGBV in secondary schools and it allowed for exploring the participants’ perspectives regarding their effectiveness.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommend case studies when the researcher has to explore a programme, process, activity, event and even individuals within determined period of time. Yin (2018) concurs with Creswell and Creswell (2018) and highlights the advantage case study has in uncovering how and why certain programs work. Case study is particularly instrumental for programmes evaluation “when there is a need to obtain an in-depth appreciation of an issue, event or phenomenon of interest, in its natural real-life context” (Crowe et al. 2011). Hence a case study was selected as the strategy for this research.

### **1.7.1 Target Population and Sampling method**

Kim, Sinatra and Seyranian (2018) suggest that adolescence is the most important time of identity development. During that time, young people become more self-aware and gain experience in social relationships, they know their rights and are able to communicate fluently their needs. On this premise, the source for data collection was chosen to be secondary schools. There are currently 21 secondary schools in Phoenix. Systematic selection of 10 schools was done by listing the schools in alphabetic order and selecting every other secondary school (Crow et al. 2014). They were approached via email and telephonically with request to become participants in the study. The purpose of the study and the procedures were explained and supporting documentation was made available. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, five of the selected schools refused participation and the researcher approached additional schools which were not initially selected. The final number of participating secondary schools was eight.

A fragment of the participants of the study were high-school learners who hold the RCL-chair positions at their schools. Taking in consideration the national state of disaster due to COVID-19 and witnessing the apprehension schools expressed to allow outsider in their premises the researcher decided to limit the number of learner-participants to just the RCL-chair. This decision stemmed from understanding that the position allows the learner to sit at School Governing Body (SGB)-meetings and be aware of disciplinary hearings as well as other issues regarding SRGBV. Such learners are assumed to be aware of SRGBV at the school and knowledgeable of prevention and intervention programmes at their school and therefore would be able to provide the learner perspective for the inquiry.

In order to address objective 2 and 3 of this research, the members of the discipline committee were represented by one appointee in regard to limiting of contact during the COVID-19 pandemic. As member of staff and member of this committee such individual provided the perspective of implementer. The chair of the committee was approached to identify such representative. Regarding the School Management Team (SMT), once again with COVID-19 safety in mind, the principal of the school, being in the position of manager responsible for the implementation of policies and regulations into the context of their school, was the most suitable SMT-member to

provide the perspective of a manager. In the cases when the principal was not available, the Deputy Principal fulfilled that role. All the interviews were conducted during school time on the school premises. The researcher had planned to use the library, which is a neutral venue where participants may feel free to share and not be intimidated. However, the restrictions imposed by the pandemic permitted the venue to be situated in the administrative block. The duration of the interviews was limited to maximum of 1 hour per individual. The total number of recruited participants was  $n=23$ . There was one participant for each of the three categories, for each of the eight schools; only one SMT declined to participate.

This study used the following data collection methods: interviews of RCL-chairs in the participating schools; interviews with disciplinary committee representatives and interviews with principals of those schools, in order to probe the management of SRGBV. In addition to the interviews, a review of the following documents was done: school policies, guidelines and records kept by the school related to SRGBV, schools' code of conduct, minutes of disciplinary hearings (2016-2020), an incident book or file where records are kept of offences committed by learners (2016-2020), official memos/ letters/ circulars issued to learners, staff members, and parents on violence or GBV (2016-2020), school policy/ guidelines on GBV. A copy of the data extraction instrument for the records and documents is attached as Appendices 9 and 10.

Butler-Kisber (2018: 35) defines interviews as a way for the participants to “organise their experiences” and collecting “primary data”. The review of records kept by schools provides “secondary data” (Butler-Kisber 2018: 25). Milovanovitch (2018: 7) refers to policy analysis as “investigation of the implementation and impact of existing policy” which aims ultimately at advancement and refinement of strategies.

Lopez and Whitehead (2013) clarify that contrary to quantitative research the qualitative method does not pre-determine sample size because the focus is on richness of data. The sample size should be big enough to lead to data saturation and to be such that it allows for meaningful analysis. Data collection continues until the data becomes repetitive, in the sense that no new themes emerge. According to Lopez and Whitehead (2013), saturation is achieved when “redundancy” of data is reached. Therefore, the

saturation is based on the richness of data and not on its quantity. Upon reasonable satisfaction of the researcher's expectation of data saturation the collection can stop.

### **1.7.2 Data Collection Instrument**

The collection of data for the individual interviews was done through open-ended questions. O'Reilly and Dogra (2017) recommend the open-ended questions because they allow the interviewees to formulate own answers which carry much information and may bring into focus new questions. In order to ensure that the questions are up to standard, two high school English teachers reviewed them.

Butler-Kisber (2018) recommends audio recording as means for collecting data. Motivating factor for this is the possibility to revisit the interview and it allows the researcher undivided attention while there. A voice-recorder application was used to record the deliberations of the participants and verbatim transcriptions of the recordings were done.

The secondary data was collected from the documents and records kept by the schools pertaining to SRGBV. Tumwine (2014) recommends this type of data collection as a way of triangulating the research data based on the interviews. The author claims that documents provide information from distant and recent past. This allows the researcher to track any changes over period of time in the implementation of prevention and intervention programmes regarding SRGBV.

### **1.7.3 Data Analysis**

A thematic analysis was applied to the collected data. The interviews provided the perspectives of learners, level one educators and SMTs, known as primary data. The process of qualitative thematic analysis according to Nowell et al. (2017: 4), is "iterative and reflective process" which may be described by a linear 6-phase method and required continuous revisiting of the collected data. This process included "familiarising...with [the] data...generating initial codes...searching for themes...reviewing themes...defining and naming themes...and producing the report" (Nowell et al. 2017: 4). The documents, our secondary data, were interpretively analysed and conclusions drawn based on the prevalent themes, as described in Milovanovitch (2018). All the findings were integrated in a report which indicated the



nature and prevalent forms of SRGBV in secondary schools in Phoenix, as well as what interventions are currently being implemented and what challenges are being experienced.

#### **1.7.4 Pretesting**

In order to avoid ambiguity, the interview schedule was pretested. The pretesting was done once ethical clearance was obtained and permission from the Department of Education was granted. The interview questions as well as the data extraction tool for the document analysis were pretested with two secondary schools which were not included in the study. O'Reilly and Dogra (2017) note that pretesting the interview schedules improves the inquiry by refining the questions and identifying any challenges that might arise.

#### **1.7.5 Delimitations**

The scope of the study is limited to eight secondary schools in Phoenix, Durban area. Learners and educators were the two categories of people the study was conducted with. This inquiry looks particularly at secondary schools at the location of Phoenix and it is possible that secondary schools at other locations may provide different responses. Furthermore, the state of national disaster due to the COVID-19 pandemic created barriers to accessing participants for interviews and due to safety considerations, the number of participants had to be minimised. It is plausible that under normal circumstances, the study would have reached different findings.

#### **1.7.6 Limitations**

The findings of this study cannot be generalised because it was extended to eight selected schools out of 21 in Phoenix Circuit.

#### **1.7.7 Trustworthiness**

It is very important that the collected data is accurate. Nowell et al. (2017: 3) assert that for qualitative research trustworthiness is ensured through the following criteria: “credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability”. Credibility is the recognition that the researcher’s representations reflect the participants’ views. Transferability refers to generalisability of the study, which is assisted by the thick descriptions written by the researcher. Based on them, others who are seeking to transfer the findings of the study can exercise their judgement on what is applicable to

their context. Dependability is achieved through the clear, logical, and traceable documentation which allows the reader to examine the research process. Confirmability is established through demonstrating that the findings are acquired from the data by demonstrating how the researcher has arrived at the conclusions and interpretations. The authors recommend that the researchers indicate why and how the theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices were made throughout the study (Nowell et al. 2017). The responses of the participants were audio recorded after permission was obtained from them. Verbatim transcriptions were made from the audio-recordings. The findings based on the analysis of the transcribed records went through member checking to verify with the participants that all information was recorded and interpreted correctly.

### **1.7.8 Confidentiality**

One of the categories of the participants represented vulnerable population and as such, confidentiality was crucial during the whole process of the inquiry. The participants and all stakeholders were informed that the collected data will be used solely for the purpose of study and stored in a secure environment. The participants were assigned with letters to protect confidentiality. Furthermore, they were informed prior to the interview that their participation is entirely voluntary, and should they feel uncomfortable they have the right to discontinue their participation at any stage.

### **1.7.9 Ethical considerations**

Ramrathan, le Grange and Shawa (2017) clarify that ethics are involving the moral issues and consideration of the human rights when doing research with humans. Informed consent holds key position in ethical educational research, as argued by Ramrathan, le Grange and Shawa (2017). It entails voluntary consent to participate in the research, and the researcher's responsibility is explaining to the participants clearly how the process of research will be conducted, why their participation is necessary, who will use the findings and how the findings will be reported. It also must be made clear to the participants that they have the right to withdraw from participating at any time, without providing reasons and without any consequences for them. The authors specify that for research conducted in public schools, permission should be sought

from the Provincial Department of Education, and parents/ guardians' consent is acquired when working with minors.

Abed (2015) outlines the informed consent and the ability to discontinue participation at any time as expression of the respect for persons and refers to the Belmont's Report (1978), with focus on the three main principles of ethical research involving children: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. The beneficence is the minimising of the negative effects on the participants while maximising the benefits from the study. In our study the vulnerable participants are the learners. The researcher has selected to interview only RCL-chairs with consideration of the health protocols for minimal contact and taking in account that usually such learners are seniors who possess enough maturity to grasp the reasons for the research and express their views. The strict confidentiality measures to protect the identity of the participant also contributed to protection of the rights and dignity of the participants. The beneficence is related to the principle of justice which points at the learners as beneficiaries of the research, because the findings and recommendations of this enquiry would lead to improving the practices related to GBV at school.

A request for permission to do the study in the selected secondary schools in Phoenix, containing copy of the interview schedule for the learners and an interview schedule for the individual interviews with educators and SMT members, was sent to the Provincial Department of Education and the local circuit. Upon receiving their approval, the permission of the principals of the schools was obtained. During an initial meeting a letter of information was provided and the purpose of the study and all procedures were explained to the management of the school. The SMTs were approached to identify representative from the Disciplinary Committee and to address the learners. The RCL-Chairs were requested to sign assent forms and written consent from the parents was obtained prior the data collection. The educators and SMTs also were given consent forms to sign. A confidentiality agreement was signed by the researcher and the school to ensure non-disclosure of any sensitive information the researcher uncovers during the secondary data collection.

## **1.8 Overview/Structure of the thesis**

This study sought to explore what is the current state of SRGBV, what are the intervention and prevention strategies utilised by schools and how effective they are in curbing this type of violence in selected secondary schools in Phoenix, Durban area.

Chapter 1 offers a brief discussion of the context, problem statement, the research aim and objectives, a concise literature review pointing at the gap in the wealth of knowledge, touched on the theoretical framework which underpinned the research process. Furthermore, the research design, research methodology, data collection methods and data analysis approach are also defined.

Chapter 2 offers a more extensive outlook on the literature related to SRGBV. The main concepts are defined, the state, the types and the causes of SRGBV are described, and the impact of this phenomenon on learners and educators is discussed. Additionally, relevant policies and laws regarding SRGBV are highlighted, together with programmes to prevent and curb this violence developed and implemented in South Africa. A more detailed discussion on the guiding theories and their application in other studies, concludes the chapter.

Chapter 3 focuses on the research design and methodology, the data collection and data analysis processes applied in this study, together with description on some challenges experienced during data collection.

Chapter 4 integrates presentation on the collected data and analysis of the findings from the eight schools. The chapter is subdivided into two parts – the first part deals with the findings related to the prevalent types and the current state of SRGBV in the participating schools. The second part investigates the management strategies utilised by the schools to prevent and curb SRGBV and how successful they are. In addition, the participants offered suggestions that they thought would improve the response of schools to SRGBV.

Chapter 5 reflects on the research journey and consolidates the results in condensed form. Moreover, recommendations are made to the policy makers, to the Department

of Education and to the schools. Suggestions for further extension of this research are also made.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

In this chapter, a concise overview of the entire study was offered. The chapter began with discussion on the context and background of the study, highlighted the problem, and the research aim and objectives. It also briefly reviewed relevant literature and the two theories selected to guide the complete process, and a brief description of the research design and methodology together with data collection methods and data analysis, was included. Some ethical considerations linked to the fact that part of the participants constitute vulnerable group were noted. The chapter concluded with an overview of the thesis.

In the next chapter, I expound on the relevant literature to reveal what are the types and the causes of SRGBV, how they impact on the educational process, what policies and laws are available and what is the international and local experience in developing interventions and preventions for this phenomenon. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the two main theories selected to guide the study.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Schools have always been pictured as safe and nurturing environments where the children, the future of the planet, are encouraged, developed, and supported to reach their full potential. The reality, however, varies to different degrees from this idealistic picture and in many settings, schools have become spaces plagued by violence. The manifestations of violence are not limited to physical acts and include emotional and gender-based violence.

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) has captured the media's headlines in recent times. Scholars around the world have written volumes on the causes and nature of SRGBV, its expressions and consequences. Recommendations have been made on how to deal with the aftermath and what interventions and prevention programmes can be put in place. Although there is abundant literature devoted to this area, little is known about how and to what extent the developed resources and tools are being implemented in practice. This study's emphasis is on the management of intervention and prevention programmes for school-related gender-based violence in selected high schools in Durban area, KwaZulu-Natal.

In this chapter, I review the existing literature with focus on school-related, gender-based violence (SRGBV), deriving from school-based violence (SBV) and gender-based violence (GBV). The causes and the types of SRGBV are explored, followed by an overview of the existing intervention and prevention measures. The chapter concludes with the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

### **2.2 Definitions of main concepts**

The concept of school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) can be framed within the scope of the broader concepts of school-based violence (SBV) and gender-based violence (GBV).

Violence is defined by the Council of Europe (2022:1) as "...the threatened or actual use of physical force or power resulting in physical or psychological harm to others."

UNESCO (2020: 1) defines school violence as “all forms of violence that takes place in and around schools and is experienced by students and perpetrated by other students, teachers and other school staff”. The prevalent types of school violence include physical, psychological, sexual, bullying, and cyber-bullying. UNESCO’s definition does not account for the violence experienced by teachers and performed by learners, although that is also a type of school violence.

The conceptualisation of GBV includes acts, threats of acts, and coercion or subjective removal of freedom of individuals based on their gender, which lead to physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm (*National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence & Femicide 2020-2030*, 2020: 22).

Encapsulating the essence of these concepts school-related gender-based violence is described as “acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, perpetrated because of gender norms and stereotypes, and enforced by unequal power dynamics” (UNESCO 2021:1).

## **2.3 Current state of SBV and SRGBV around the world and in South Africa**

### **2.3.1 SBV**

End Violence Against Children (2021) reports that more than a billion children are experiencing different types of violence every year – physical, emotional and sexual, in school, on their way to school or at home. This is also confirmed by Spear (2019), who relays the findings of UNICEF’s 2017 global report of violence against children.

A serious concern highlighted by UNICEF (2017) is that children are exposed to violent discipline from a very young age irrespective of their socio-economic background. This intersects with the findings of *Know Violence in Childhood* (2017), that the most common perpetrators of violence against children are adults such as caregivers, parents or step-parents as well as peers.

An important observation noted by Hills et al. (2017) is the fact that children suffer violence both as victims and as witnesses. End Violence Against Children (2021) indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic has most likely increased these numbers because the lockdown periods applied by each country have led to victims being confined at home and exposed to perpetrators either living with them, or the children

have been victimised online. A myriad of scholars around the world agree that the staggering figures implore urgent, appropriate response to this global crisis to be designed and implemented (Ajdukovic et al. 2021; Spear 2019; Falconer 2018; Dube and Hlalele 2018; Bailey 2017; Ugboke 2017; Ngidi and Moletsane 2015; Masehela and Pillay 2014).

According to UNESCO (2019), particular groups are more vulnerable to violence. It has been established that race, social class, gender, cultural and geographic location determine the vulnerability of children. It was found that boys are more likely to experience physical bullying, while girls suffer more often psychological violence. The types of violence also depend on the age of the children, with younger victims reporting predominantly physical and emotional bullying, whereas adolescents are at a higher risk for cyberbullying and sexual violence. Children from underprivileged backgrounds, migrant children, the differently abled and those not conforming to gender norms have been found to be more vulnerable to bullying (UNESCO 2019).

Hesselink (2017: 14) describes school violence as “socio-cultural concern” affecting countries like Norway, Spain, Hungary, Israel, Australia, UK, Columbia, Philippines and South Africa. The same author relates the disturbing fact that the age of perpetrators of school violence is constantly dropping and younger children are getting involved in bullying, which indicates that children are becoming desensitised to violence.

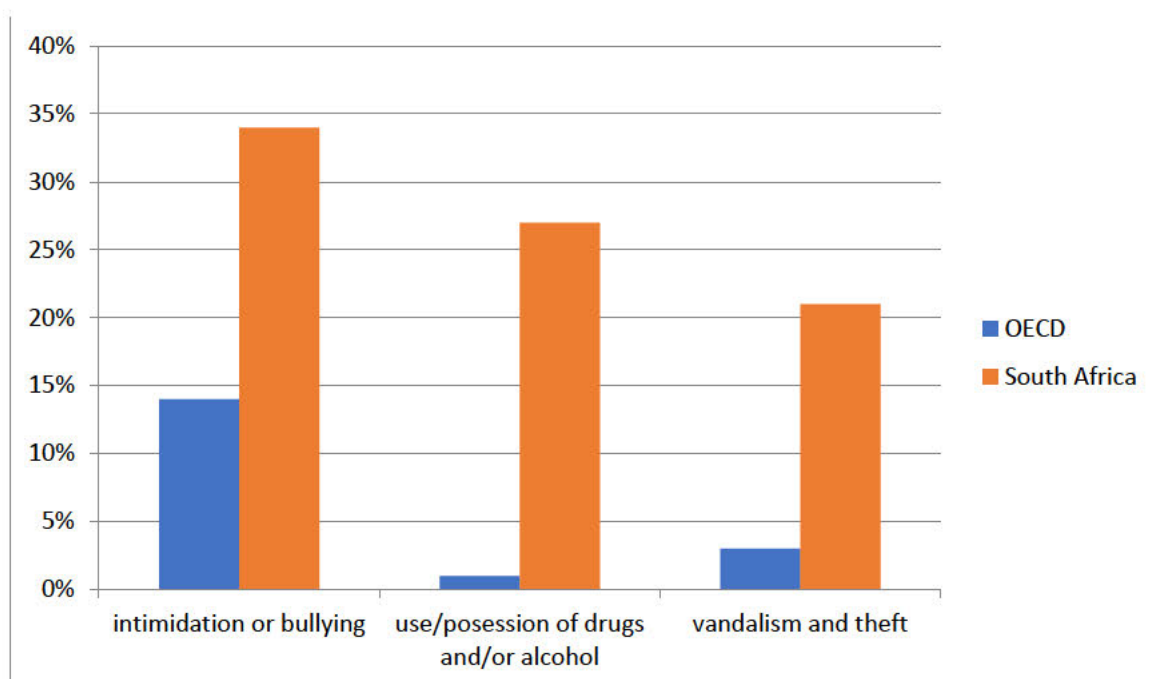
School violence is a complex phenomenon. With cyberbullying, known also as online bullying, becoming more prevalent each year, scholars are realising that violence is multi-layered and multidirectional all at the same time. Currently, multidisciplinary studies of cyberbullying are working to decipher the causes, patterns, nature and factors of this violence (Auriemma et al. 2020; Saladino et al. 2020; Chang 2020).

Know Violence in Childhood (2017) reveals that 75% of children worldwide, ages 2 to 17 years, experience annually some kind of violence, be it physical, sexual, or emotional. End Violence Against Children (2020) discloses that 150 million adolescents aged 13-15, who constitute approximately half of this age group of school-going children worldwide, experience peer-to-peer victimisation; one third of this age



group are students who are bullied and nearly one third have experienced physical fights. In addition to that, 720 million children of school-age reside in countries where corporal punishment is still practised within school environment (End Violence Against Children 2020).

Ugboke (2017) illustrates the deeply distressing picture of violence against children and its prevalence with examples of studies conducted in different parts of the world. In Cambodia, it was reported that in 2014, 52% of all females and 54% of all males experienced physical abuse before they turned 18, and both males and females were subjected to emotional abuse before the age of 18. In Nigeria, a national survey done in 2014 revealed that 25% of females and 11% of males experienced sexual violence, 50% females and 52% males endured physical violence. A survey conducted in Tanzania in 2009 found that 75% of children experience violence before the age of 18, perpetrated by a family member or authority figure. The overall figure of children suffering violence on the African continent disclosed by Falconer (2018) reached 64% in 2017. In South Africa, the numbers are also alarmingly high. The Optimus Study done by Artz et al. (2016) which is the first of its kind nationally, and a representative study, indicates that 35,4% school-going adolescents (15-17 years old) have experienced some form of sexual abuse in their lifetime. The household survey disclosed that 26,3% of youngsters of this age group have undergone some kind of sexual abuse. This translates to approximately 784 967 young people who have suffered sexual abuse by the age of 17. The general state of violence in South African schools is represented in the graph below.



**Figure 2.1: Comparison between school violence in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries and South Africa as reported by Gous (2019)**

The figure above reveals that South African learners experience much higher levels of violence at school in comparison to learners from OECD countries, which is a cause for great concern.

### 2.3.2 SRGBV

Lange and Young (2019: 301) refer to gender-based violence (GBV) as a “staggering but normalised global phenomenon” which impacts all spheres of life, including education. The lifestyles people have, are dictated by patriarchal power systems and even though everyone is affected, it is girls and women that are disproportionately harmed by this type of violence, and particularly women of colour, indigenous women, the differently abled and women from poor backgrounds (Lange and Young 2019).

The Dexis Consultation Group (2020: 6) views SRGBV as a “complex and global problem” stemming from unequal power relations reinforced by gender norms that provide advantages for certain groups and limits others, based on their gender identity,

sexuality or sex. Children are taught how to socialise in schools from a young age and that is where inequalities and violence are often normalised.

The phenomenon of SRGBV is not restricted by geographic, ethnic, cultural, economic or social boundaries (Chitsamatanga and Rembe 2020; World Bank 2019; Duru and Balkis 2018; Brehim and Boyle 2018; Pulizzi, Feddal and Quevedo Solares 2016). More than 246 million children worldwide are experiencing SRGBV every year. This defines a global crisis that needs urgent attention (Albrechtsen et al. 2018). Chitsamatanga and Rembe (2020) concur with Albrechtsen et al. (2018) on this view of SRGBV and believe it constitutes worldwide discrimination against children's rights, resulting in inequitable education opportunities which disproportionately affect girls.

Ajdukovic et al. (2021) report high prevalence of SRGBV in different European countries. In Finland, 47% of adolescent girls have experienced either physical or sexual violence from the age of 15 years, and 10% have been psychologically victimised by a relative or adult family member prior to turning 15 years old. In Croatia, 86% of adolescents involved in a romantic relationship report to have experienced some type of violence and 93% of the study group admitted to perpetrating violence within a romantic relationship. A recent 2019 study established that one quarter of the 14-year-olds in Finland have been either sexually harassed or have received some type of sexual proposal during the year prior to the study, with 14-17% of this harassment being done through cell phones or the internet (Ajdukovic et al. 2021).

GBV is present in all learning spaces and each individual can be considered either implicated or injured by the gender systems at play (Lange and Young 2019). The African schools' context reflects the gender roles and social norms of dominant males and subordinate females as embedded in our societies (Madyirapanze 2020). These accepted norms are reinforced in schools through language, assigning roles to boys and girls, learning materials and teaching methodologies. Therefore, school environments support the drivers of SRGBV, which can be perpetrated by learners or persons of authority such as prefects, teachers, members of school staff, school administrators, school management, or community members (Madyirapanze 2020).

Hunter and Morrell (2021) suggest that even though South Africa has one of the most advanced democratic constitutions in the world and has introduced the South African Education Act of 1996, which promotes human rights and equality, gender inequality and gender-based violence remain a serious concern for our education and country. On the 17 June 2020, in the state of the nation address, President Cyril Ramaphosa labelled the current state of GBV “the second pandemic”. This is recognition that apart of the COVID-19 pandemic, GBV is an extremely concerning issue, manifested through exponential growth in the number of reported cases. The crime statistics for South Africa indicate an increase in sexual offences from 52 420 (2018/19) to 53 293 (2019/20), with sexual offences being one of the forms of GBV plaguing this country (South African Police Service 2021).

KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) is one of the 9 provinces of South Africa with an estimated population of 11,5 million, second in size to Gauteng, which has 15,5 million (South Africa, Department: Statistics South Africa 2020). The province is also in a second place regarding GBV, with 8 017 cases of rape (2019/20) (South African Police Service 2021). The township of Umlazi, KZN, has 85 reported cases of rape for the last quarter of 2021 (Ferreira and Koko 2022).

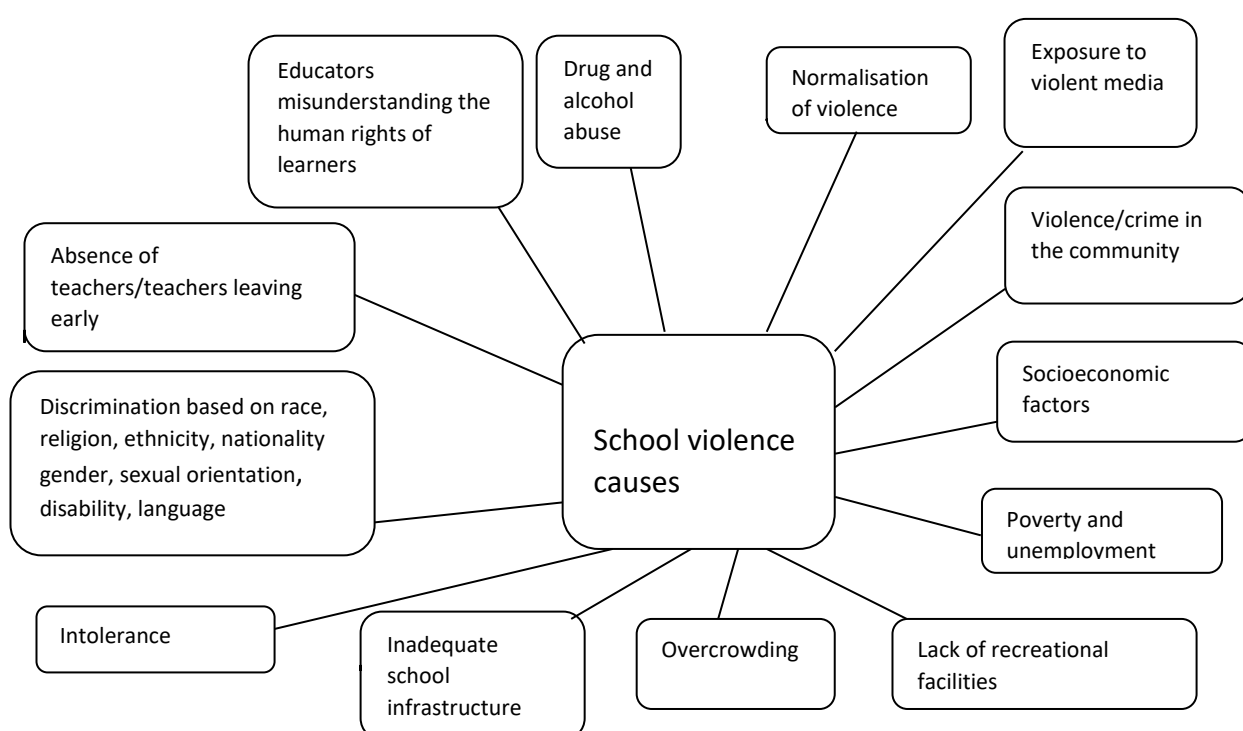
This study is located in Phoenix, a township situated northwest of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The city of Durban, KZN, is the largest city of the province and 51% of its population are Black African. Almost 25% of the population is Indian (Asian), White people are 15,3% while the Coloured are 8,6%. The Zulu ethnic group dominates in number. 68% of the city’s residents are under 19 years old (World Population Review 2022). The township of Phoenix has a predominantly (85%) Indian population, 12,1% Black African, 1,8% Coloured and 0,2 % White. The socio-economic characteristics of the population of Phoenix are of middle- and low-income households. The urban location, the socio-economic background, high volume of crime and discordant parent vital status, contribute to increasing the risks of gender-based violence experiences at school (Naidoo et al. 2017; Artz et al. 2016).

According to South African Police Service (2021), the Phoenix Police Station is number 26 of the top 30 Police Stations in the country regarding contact crimes under

which sexual offences are classified. The records reflect increase in this type of crime from 2 263 (2018/19) to 2 623 (2019/20) (South African Police Service 2021). Understanding the general background of Phoenix and considering the crime statistics for this township enables us to better understand the state of SRGBV in this area. There are 20 Primary schools and 21 secondary schools in Phoenix Circuit to serve the population of this township (Wikipedia 2022). It is estimated that there are approximately 38 564 children of a school-going age living here (Frith 2022).

## 2.4 Causes of SRGBV

SBV and SRGBV are closely related, with SRGBV being a form of SBV. Therefore, the causes for these two types of violence are very similar. Hesselink (2017) purports that what happens within the school environment is merely a reflection of the condition of the society. Often the perpetrators themselves have been victims or witnesses of violence at home, the neighbourhood, and the community. Causes of this could be substance abuse, poor discipline practices, poor role models, gangsterism. Collings (2016) established that alcohol abuse by male learners from impoverished background is linked to perpetration of school-based violence and substance use does not have significant association with female perpetration of SBV; however, it makes girls more vulnerable to victimisation. **Figure 2.2** reflects some of the diverse factors contributing to school violence.



**Figure 2.2: Factors contributing to violence in schools (Power 2017: 296)**

Taole (2016) draws on Bandura's Social Behaviour Theory to explain the influence of negative role models on children's development and attitudes. According to this theory, an existing relationship between a child and a significant adult who models certain types of violent behaviour increases the probability of the child adopting this behaviour. Therefore, when children observe parents or relatives modelling violence in given situations, they are very likely to imitate that and use violence in school.

Nhambura (2020) warns that often learners choose to fight with peers due to misunderstandings and the inability to resolve conflicts. Issues that do not warrant aggressiveness are escalated to physical fight instead of being settled amicably because of learners' lack of social and emotional skills. Furthermore, Nhambura (2020) argues that the conditions under which some learners were raised could be referred to as dysfunctional, where values and morals were not taught and there were no good role models.

Al-Eissa et al. (2020) found that children who have witnessed intimate partner violence (IPV) at home are more likely to become victims of violence themselves. Such children displayed high aggression levels and poor academic achievements and suffered low self-esteem. Yoon et al. (2018) follow through a large body of literature which establishes that childhood maltreatment leads to increased likelihood of peer-victimisation. They found that victimised children develop multiple internalised and externalised symptoms, which later on during adolescence cause lower peer popularity and as a result higher physical and sexual peer-victimisation.

Wight et al. (2022) assert that poor parent-child attachment, as well as harsh parenting and parental conflict witnessed by the children, are predictors for GBV within the family which will be carried over to the school environment. The lack of bonding between the parent and the child, which is often connected to harsh parenting, results in emotionally unstable and struggling to resolve problems children with low self-confidence. The witnessing of parental conflicts is very traumatic to children and has lasting consequences for their emotional well-being. When growing into adolescence,

such boys are very likely to perpetrate GBV and girls are much more vulnerable to violence (Wight et al. 2022).

Mulawa, Kajula and Maman (2018) note that when individuals are surrounded with peers who practise and approve of IPV, they internalise it as acceptable and are likely to practise it. Furthermore, individuals may feel pressured by their peers to comply with the norms accepted by their peer circle even if they do not approve of them. Adolescent boys may be pressured by their peers to prove their masculinity and demonstrate GBV-attitudes.

Deviant peer affiliation is one of the factors for adolescent victimisation identified by Yoon et al. (2020). They submit that children who suffered maltreatment in its different forms such as physical, emotional, and sexual, have poor social skills and eventually join antisocial peer groups, which in turn leads to further victimisation as adolescents. Furthermore, Yoon et al. (2020) report a clear link between deviant peer affiliation and substance abuse observed in adolescents who were victimised emotionally as young children.

Hesselink (2017) studied existing criminological research and media reports which identified the reasons for bullying behaviour and SBV, such as lack of respect for fellow learners and teachers; being desensitised to violence; the perpetrator's inability to cope with their own trauma, or anger and frustrations; the influence of social media in normalising violence and its link to cyberbullying.

Power (2017) explains some of the external factors that contribute to violence. A major effect is attributed to the socio-economic factors of unemployment and poverty which create a sense of powerlessness and frustration in people. Due to these circumstances, some people resort to violence to help them regain control and their sense of power. This clarifies to some extent why low-income communities experience more violence in South Africa. In addition, continuous exposure to violence at home or through the media, video games and television programmes, serves as a medium to normalising violence.

In their study of a large primary school situated in impoverished community in the Durban area, Mayeza and Bhana (2017) acknowledge that poverty is often a driver of

bullying for food. The learners there belonged to families affected by the HIV-pandemic and were largely raised by a single parent either employed in a menial job or unemployed or lived in the care of a grandparent who depends on the government old age grant. The current unemployment rate for South Africa is 35,3% (Stats SA 2022) and this leads to more and more families living below the poverty line. The Children's Institute in the University of Cape Town has found that the province of KwaZulu-Natal is one of the highest child hunger provinces with 18% of children affected (Hall and Sambu 2022). This indicates that a significant number of children go without food because there is not enough food in the household. In the context of food insecurity and poverty which is the background of many learners, school violence flourishes in the form of bullying for lunch or money to buy food from the school tuck shop (Mayeza and Bhana 2020).

In addition to the economic roots of school violence, a major role is played by the reproducing of hegemonic masculinities within the school environment. Graaf and Heineken (2017: 623) associate hegemonic masculinities with the most "aspired-to" form of masculinity in a given context and time. As a result, unequal power relations are established between male and female learners. These inequalities are further exacerbated by the normalisation of such relations within the community and society at large. Mayeza, Bhana and Mulqueeny (2022) claim that the interaction of factors such as social class, race, gender, and sex in society directly influence the behaviour of learners at school. Furthermore, these scholars argue that all school violence is gendered. Boys and girls are perpetrating violence against the vulnerable learners and whether consciously or not, they are guided by the patriarchal masculinities operating in school and within society.

Modiba (2018) believes that patriarchy is at the core of the segregation of African schools where girls are socialised to be second to boys. The social bias towards girls leads them to accept the leadership of males and submit to it. Their prescribed roles are related to household chores, nurturing and being supportive to males. On the other hand, boys are encouraged to take the lead and are seen as decision-makers, creative and intelligent, and physically strong.



Mlamla, Dlamini and Shumba (2021) claim that religion is a factor that contributes to establishing of gender inequality and skewed power positions leading to GBV. Over the centuries, religion has been endorsing male domination and unconditional female submission. Misinterpretations of the Holy Scriptures have led to harmful and even toxic teachings, encouraging women to accept and suffer through abusive marriages while enduring and praying for their husbands. Furthermore, the same authors extend the list of causes of GBV with cultural norms, because socially accepted and culture-appropriate behaviours elevate male power and control over females. Toxic masculinities are modelled by older men and shape the beliefs and behaviour of younger men. An important aspect of the influence of culture on the social status of males and females is that culture has a dynamic nature and changes over time. Therefore, preventative measures can be focused on creating new attitudes which realign power imbalances and produce equality (Mlamla, Dlamini and Shumba, 2021).

Not conforming to the established gender norms is another factor identified by UNESCO (2019) as contributing to SRGBV. Students that are perceived by their peers to behave differently from the norm are usually bullied. A study conducted in Australia found that 60-70% of LGBT youngsters experienced bullying and physical fights due to their sexual orientation or sexual identity (UNESCO 2019). Thornberg (2018) reports that “misfitting” into the peer landscape constitutes becoming a victim of bullying. He found that the perpetrators of bullying constructed their target as strange and different and often used dehumanising labels for their victims. Mayeza and Bhana (2017) concur that boys who do not conform to the behavioural masculine norm are victimised by older peers. Such boys are labelled with homophobic names and bullied as a form of “policing” and correcting the transgressing youngsters.

In addition to not conforming to the accepted gender norms, UNESCO (2017) states that children that are differently abled, belonging to minority groups, who have cultural, linguistic, or ethnical differences with the majority, or who just look different in some way, are more likely to be victimised.

Various scholars designate the historical heritage of apartheid as a major influence on the cultural attitudes underpinning the patriarchal order of male dominance and female subordination as well as forming a culture of violence (Mlamla, Dlamini and Shumba 2021; Lange and Young 2019; Mayeza and Bhana 2017). Graaff and Heinecken (2017) discuss the processes through which apartheid enforced hierarchy of races. They describe how violence and brutality became the norm during that time and how violence was adopted as a way of achieving masculinity. This view of apartheid as a cause of increased levels of violence in contemporary South African society provides only partial explanation to this phenomenon. However, the cumulative effects of apartheid, income inequalities, militarisation and hyper masculinities have laid a strong foundation for gender inequalities in South Africa. The term 'hyper masculinities' was first proposed by Mosher and Sirkin in 1984, and it is characterised by belief that (1) violence is acceptable way of achieving dominance; (2) danger is exciting, and (3) it is acceptable to disregard women's rights and to have self-centred sexual attitudes (Graaf and Heinecken 2017).

Elboj-Saso et al. (2022) claim that hyper masculinities are strongly connected to the socialisation of boys and girls as well as to the socially accepted norms. When affection and love are equated with violence, and males are expected to be aggressive and dominant, the likelihood of boys perpetrating gender violence increases by 52,3%, and the chances of girls becoming a victim of gender violence grow by 36,8% (Rios-González et al. 2018).

These examples make it evident that SRGBV is a complex phenomenon with multiple interconnected causes. Any intervention and prevention programme that would be developed in addressing this problem will have to consider the level at which a cause works.

## **2.5 Types of SRGBV**

In their systematic review of systematic reviews on school violence, Lester, Lawrence and Ward (2017) identify four types of such violence: peer violence; learner-on-teacher; corporal punishment and teacher-on-learner. This differs to an extent from the types specified by the Department of Education (2015) and SACE (2011), where

corporal punishment is included in the teacher-on-learner violence. The South African Council of Educators (SACE 2011) clarifies that each type includes verbal, physical and sexual violence perpetrated against the victim. This classification is also subscribed to by the Department of Basic Education (2019).

Ajdukovic et al. (2021) describe SRGBV as a consequence of gender stereotypes and norms, and classify it as psychological, physical and sexual. The psychological type is often expressed through verbal aggression, humiliation or threats and insults. The physical type can include pushing, pulling, pinching, slapping, shoving and kicking.

UNESCO (2017) notes that the sexual SRGBV varies from sexual gestures, unwanted touches, intimidation, sexual utterances, to sexual harassment, assault, coercion and rape. UNESCO (2019) states that both boys and girls may experience sexual violence. The perpetrators are more likely to be peers of the learners than authority figures, including teachers.

A study done with 2 383 adolescents from grade 8 in 26 schools at three townships from South Africa, Soweto and Tembisa (Gauteng) and Khayelitsha (Western Cape), established that the most prevalent type of SRGBV is “physical (35,7%), followed by psychological (21,8%), sexual (13,1%) ...cyberbullying (7,9%) corporal punishment (6,5%) and economic abuse (4,8%)” (Kutywayo et al. 2021: 4).

### **2.5.1 Peer (learner-on-learner) violence**

The peer violence manifests in the following sub-types of bullying: verbal, physical, psychological, cyber-bullying, and sexual bullying.

- **Bullying**

UNESCO (2019) shares its findings that approximately one in three children experience bullying worldwide, with the highest prevalence of this type of violence in the sub-Saharan region at 48,2%. This is followed by the region of North Africa with 42,7% and the Middle East with 41,1%. The lowest records are for Europe (25%), the Caribbean (25%) and Central America (22,8%). The sub-Saharan region also holds the leading position in the highest frequency in bullying. It was reported that 11,3% of the learners here were bullied on six or more days in the month prior to the study.

Thornberg and Delby (2019: 142) define bullying as a “repeated aggression or harmful actions directed at target individuals who are disadvantaged or less powerful in their interactions with the perpetrators”. Often bullying is done in the pursuit of social status or resources. Auriemma et al. (2020) denote that bullying capitalises on different factors such as family, culture, schooling, social networking and individual characteristics. Bullying can be **verbal** – through the use of offensive words, threats or teasing; it can be **physical** - when force and direct contact is used, and it also can be **psychological** - when emotional pain is inflicted through social exclusion from a group or talking badly about the victim to others (Auriemma et al. 2020).

The prevalence of different types of bullying is connected to the geographical position. According to UNESCO (2019: 14), the most common types around the world are physical and sexual bullying. The physical forms are being “hit...kicked, pushed, shoved around or locked indoors”. The regions with highest prevalence of physical bullying are the Pacific and sub-Saharan Africa. **Sexual bullying** is done by making fun of the victim with sexual jokes, gestures or comments. Sexual bullying is the second most frequent type in Central America, Middle East and North Africa. Psychological bullying is less frequent than the other types, with 28,4% pupils being purposely left out from activities or ignored in North America and 15% having this experience in Europe. The next form of bullying in order of prevalence is **cyber bullying**. One in ten pupils have experienced this form of violence. Cyber bullying is predominantly reported in Europe and North America. 35% of learners ages 9-17 in Serbia state being a victim of hurtful online behaviour, 29% in the Philippines and 20% in South Africa; 77% of Argentina’s 13-17-year-olds have suffered this type of bullying (UNESCO 2019).

Auriemma et al. (2020) describe cyber bullying as a form of peer aggression done through any means connected to the web-cell phones, emails, social media platforms, chats, blogs, etc. Irrespective of the means utilised to bully, it usually is done within a school class or other traditional groups. However, the internet provides access to people who do not know the perpetrator, like celebrities, teachers, professional groups, and others. The results can be very devastating for the victims, and they endure emotional pain and suffering similar to those from other types of bullying. Often cyber

bullies choose to be anonymous, but according to the literature, in nearly half of the incidents the offender is known to the victim (Auriemma et al. (2020).

### **2.5.2 Learner-on-teacher violence**

Geldenhuis (2018: 33) states that learners bullying their teachers is “shockingly widespread occurrence” and it is not specific only to secondary schools but happens at a primary level as well. He describes multiple South African cases of physical abuse on teachers including throwing objects like chairs, hitting, slapping across the face, kicking, using objects to hit such as books and brooms, spitting, punching and pushing desks on them, or pushing the teacher.

Mahome (2019) agrees with these findings and posits that **verbal abuse** is one of the most common forms used by learners. Intimidation, disrespect and harassment are frequent and widespread. **Emotional abuse** is applied when teacher is threatened, cursed and disrespected in front of the class. Geldenhuis (2018) informs that the teacher is also emotionally victimised through **sexual harassment** by a learner or when he/she is falsely accused of sexual misconduct by a learner. The outcome of such accusations is quite often the teacher losing his/her job. Both Geldenhuis (2018) and Mahome (2019) have found that very seldom does the traumatised teachers receive suitable support by the Department of Education; they therefore choose to resign because they are not able to remain in the same environment with the perpetrator or they are taunted by other learners following the initial incident. Furthermore, after parents are informed of the discipline problems of their children, very seldom there is change in the learner’s behaviour. The reason for that is that the parents share the same attitudes as their child and model disrespect to teachers or are unable to discipline the child at home and the problems are carried over to school (Geldenhuis 2018; Mahome 2019).

### **2.5.3 Teacher-on-learner violence**

The different forms of teacher-on-learner violence include corporal punishment, physical punishment, emotional and sexual violence.

#### **Corporal punishment**

An existing large body of literature regarding the physical punishment of children, which continues to expand, indicates the negative influence such treatment has on the overall development of children. Bassam et al. (2018) call out some of the established results of other scholars to illustrate how devastating corporal punishment can be. According to the said authors, physical punishment increases the risk of asthma, cardiovascular disease, obesity, arthritis and many other conditions which lead to frequent hospitalisation of children. The long-term effects of corporal punishment can be traced in multiple chronic diseases, behavioural and psychological issues such as depression, antisocial behaviour, delinquency, substance abuse, personality disorders and many others. In addition, the physical punishment of children slows down their cognitive development and so directly affects their academic achievements (Bassam et al. 2018).

Hunter and Morrell (2021: 344) affirm that corporal punishment is a type of GBV because it results in “aggressive male behaviour normalised and perpetuated in adulthood”. In addition to this, corporal punishment is more often applied to boys than girls. Even though corporal punishment is prohibited by law in South Africa, it is practised in many schools although less frequently and not as severe as in the past.

Mahlangu et al. (2021) reports the results of South African study done in 24 selected public schools with 3 743 grade 8 learners from Gauteng province (2118 girls and 1625 boys). It was established that 52% of the learners have experienced corporal punishment in the 6 months prior to the study. The boys had more likelihood to report such victimisation than girls and the low-income status was also a factor contributing to the prevalence of corporal punishment. The authors claim that even though corporal punishment is prohibited by law, many public schools continue using it as a means to maintain discipline. Whether it is for something minor, like not doing his/her homework and being unable to answer the question asked by the teacher, or more serious issues like regular late-coming, disrespectful behaviour and disrupting the lesson, corporal punishment is believed by many teachers to be the solution to the problem.

Even though educators are aware that the Department of Basic Education strongly condemns the use of this practice because it infringes on the rights of learners as prescribed by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (the Constitution) and the African Charter of the Rights and the Welfare of the Child (South Africa, Department of Basic Education 2017), teachers feel powerless and not equipped to maintain the safe and conducive to learning environment as expected by all stakeholders. Insufficient training on alternative methods, overcrowded classrooms and work overload contribute to the use of corporal punishment irrespective of its prohibition (Mahlangu et al. 2021).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2019) reminds that practices used by educators are usually linked to their personal beliefs and value system. Therefore, raising awareness and providing specialised training on positive discipline and trauma-informed approaches could address the current state of unsafe and non-conducive to learning environment in many schools. Corporal punishment statistics determine that the Free State is the province with the highest prevalence (12,1%); Eastern Cape (11,5%); Northwest Province (8,2%) and KwaZulu-Natal (7, 2%). eThekweni is the most prevalent metropolitan area with 6,1% reported cases, followed by Mangaung (5,7%), and Nelson Mandela Bay (4,6%). Least common was Buffalo City (1, 4%) and Ekurhuleni (0,4%), (Statistics South Africa 2018).

### **Physical violence**

Devries and Naker (2021) cite data confirming that educators are using physical, emotional and sexual violence on their learners throughout different parts of the world. The margins of primary school learners being physically victimised by teachers are very broad, varying from 7% in the state of Mississippi, USA, to an overwhelming 90% in Uganda and exceeding 90% in Jamaica.

De Wet (2020: 172) describes the use of physical force by teachers to “thrash” learners in certain South African settings. This was identified as a separate practice from corporal punishment because the alleged motivation for such behaviour of the teacher was different from punishing misbehaviour. Cases of teachers stamping on learners’ feet, throwing them onto the floor, across or out of the classroom, and even stabbing

of learners are used to substantiate the claims of physical abuse by teachers. Sexual violence

De Wet (2020) also reports teachers being guilty of sexually violating learners – through rape, molestation, having sexual relationships, taking naked pictures of themselves and sending to learners, or taking pictures of private parts of learners and publishing them on social media. The author claims that some South African educators are abusing their learners emotionally through calling them derogatory or belittling names, criticising and having extreme demands of their learners as well as threatening them with physical acts intended to harm. SACE (2019) indicates that for the period 2015-2019, there were 93 cases of sexual misconduct reported against teachers. The true extent of sexual violence by teachers is not established due to under-reporting of such cases. Learners who are sexually abused by a teacher withhold reporting due to cultural taboos, socio-economic factors, fear, confusion, uncertainty, and shame.

## **2.6 Effects of SRGBV on learners, teachers, and educational outcomes**

Duru and Balkis (2018) follow through the effects of exposure to SBV on the victimised learners and what support systems are needed to assist adolescents. They have found that such victims display psychosomatic symptoms like headaches and backaches, and very often the experience is internalised and results in depression and anxiety. The study suggests that girls suffer predominantly from internalising symptoms whereas boys' response to victimisation leads to externalising symptoms. This is supported by Uzoezie (2018), who suggests that violence experienced or witnessed at a young age may result in mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, suicidal behaviour and conduct disorders. The findings of this author show that girls are more susceptible to these conditions in comparison to boys. Overall, exposure to violence at a young age predisposes adolescents to anti-social, violent behaviour and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Ugboke (2017) concurs with this and reveals that learners who have suffered one or more forms of violence struggle with focus, find it difficult to gain new knowledge or learn new skills and to socialise in school environment. Learners who are victims of violence have low test scores, poor literacy, and numeracy skills. Abused children have a greater need of remedial lessons and sometimes have to repeat a grade or eventually dropout from school.



Menesinni and Salmivalli (2017) report that victimisation results in difficulties within interpersonal relations such as making friends and understanding social cues, which leads to low acceptance by peers, having few if any friends, and negative quality of friendships. Moreover, the South African Council for Educators (2020) states that experiences of school violence affect not only the victim but the peers who happen to be witnessing it. Such bystanders endure fear and anxiety, and struggle to focus and learn.

In order to alleviate the negative effects on victims, Duru and Balkis (2018) suggest that social support is key in protecting adolescents' mental and physical health. Support from family, friends and teachers allows learners to deal with their experiences more effectively. This underscores the need for improving parent-child, parent-teacher, and parent-friend relationships. It was observed that when one of those micro systems does not function as a support structure, another micro system compensates for it. For example, if the learner is not supported by his/her parents or family, the micro system of friend-relationships will create strong support, and this will help the adolescent to cope and process the experience more positively. Therefore, in developing programmes addressing SRGBV, one of the main aspects must lead to improving in communication between parents-children, parents-teachers, and parents-friends (Duru and Balkis 2018).

Geldenuys (2018) reports that teachers experience serious psychological trauma after being bullied by learners. They suffer PTSD. Often, victimised teachers suffer insomnia, very high levels of stress, stress-related ailments, depression and apathy. Additionally, teachers' self-esteem is damaged which affects their mental and physical wellbeing. This has a direct impact on their motivation for work and the quality of their teaching. SACE (2020) further states that victimised educators become more often absent, they may resign or retire early, and some develop a very negative outlook on the profession, to the extent of hating it. Mahome (2019) cautions that educators who have been victimised by learners do not report or talk about this to colleagues probably due to the fear of stigma that they cannot handle successfully discipline issues. Thus, the true dimensions of this issue cannot be determined.

## **2.7 Strategies in preventing and intervening in SRGBV**

The World Health Organisation (2019) indicates that responding to and preventing school-related violence impacts on the educational outcomes of schools. By dealing with challenges that are streaming from SRGBV, school management creates a safer positive learning and teaching environment which will support the development and achievements of all learners. Therefore, a substantial effort was made in designing, implementing and evaluating the effectiveness of different strategies for intervention and prevention of SRGBV (Psaki, Mensch and Soler-Hampejsek 2017).

### **2.7.1 International experience**

Bailey (2017) identifies the interventions and strategies adopted by the government of Ontario to address the problem with violence in schools. After the school shootings in the 1990s and noted rise in school violence in the early 2000s, the government adopted a “Zero tolerance” approach to ensure safety within schools. The results, however, were disproportionate referrals of youths from African American and Hispanic backgrounds to juvenile justice system due to disrespectful behaviour, violence, possession of drugs or drug dealing. This revealed the discriminatory nature of the approach as it focused on individual behaviour and missed the structural and institutional changes that needed to be made.

Another shortfall of “Zero tolerance” is that it failed to take into account the root causes of the violence but limited itself to “firm treatment of youth, usually within the school setting”, which also acted as a deterrent of student reporting (Bailey 2017: 152). This brought about a move towards social change instead of individual punishment. Involvement of the surrounding community was required in order to address bullying and violence through promotion of respect, tolerance and empathy. Interventions for bullies included empathy training, instruction on positive ways to use their power, and training on friendship development. The recommendations for victims of bullying were for development of support agency.

Ontario introduced school “climate surveys” and school safety audits, “developed an online registry of bullying prevention resources, distributed...bullying prevention pamphlets”, and established a 24/7 Kids Help Phone counselling service for youth and

mandated every school to have a bullying prevention program (Bailey 2017: 161). Teachers were trained for bullying prevention skills and a “Safe Schools Implementation Coordinator” was introduced to facilitate sharing of best practices between schools.

Ugboke (2017) claims that it is costlier to address violence against children post-factum than preventing it. The researcher considers the results of the Chicago Child-Parent Programmes which were developed to assist low-income households in order to provide financial, educational and advisory support to improve parenting skills during the pre-school years of their children, thus preventing to great extent child abuse. Specially formulated child-focused activities participated by the families were focused on optimal cognitive and psychological development of the child. The outcomes were less maltreatment of children, improved high-school completion, lesser delinquencies, and depression, and improved academic achievements.

According to Ugboke (2017) culture has a significant role in prevention strategies. Often harsh discipline is normalised in the community and therefore a need for training parents and educators on appropriate parenting and teaching techniques arises. The author suggests Parent-Teacher workshops and conferences as a platform for building capacity by exchanging best practices and ideas in training the children and so making school and home safer places. Awareness campaigns proposed by the same author through the involvement of media via advertisements, talk shows and interviews on television, radio or online, where proper parenting and educational techniques would be shared for the benefit of the well-being of the children and communities can be sensitised about the effects of punitive measures on children.

Devries and Naker (2021) share an example of successful strategy in curbing teacher-on-learner violence. The Irie Classroom Toolbox (Jamaica) is a programme adapted and refined over 10 years from Incredible Years intervention (USA). It aims to empower pre-primary schoolteachers to apply positive discipline instead of physical punishment. This intervention has been found successful and is very easy to implement in under-resourced areas and does not require any special skills or knowledge from the teachers. The value of this intervention is found in the prevention of violence towards

children (3-6 years old) which sets the ground for healthier relationships between teachers and learners in the next phases of schooling (Devries and Naker 2021).

### **2.7.2 South African strategies**

Moolman, Essop and Tolla (2020) submit that adolescence is a vital stage of life during which young people try out new ways of behaving and thinking, and the differences between the gender roles deepen. It is also the time when interventions introducing appropriate behaviour should be done. Therefore, more programmes aimed at developing attitudes, knowledge and behaviours which promote equitable relationships need to be implemented. Moolman, Essop and Tolla (2020) inform of the Grassroot Soccer programme for adolescent girls called SKILLZ Street which empowers young females through soccer activities and life skills teaching on HIV-prevention, reproductive health, and community services.

The combination of sport and life skills activities has been found to be very beneficial to adolescent girls. SKILLZ Soccer Programme (SSP) is a programme started in Soweto in 2006 and later on used in Alexandra (township in Gauteng) and Khayelitsha, a township near Cape Town. The SSP programme was found to be very effective in providing support and mentorship to young females from low-income background, particularly in promoting gender equality in their relationships. The focus of the programme is on shifting patriarchal norms towards more equitable attitudes. It teaches the girls goal setting, positive self-image and self-esteem, decision-making; it provides structural empowerment through tackling topics on education and career and informs them of important topics such as care of self, negotiating safe sex, prevention of unwanted pregnancies, STIs, HIV and AIDS. Moolman, Essop and Tolla (2020) conclude that this evidence-based programme can be further developed and used throughout South Africa.

Nkosi-Malobane (2019) highlights the initiative of the Gauteng Department of Community Safety for utilising sports as means for improvement of academic achievement for all learners, not only those with behavioural issues. This extracurricular activity has the potential to improve the self-discipline and focus, enhances the self-perception and confidence of learners and thus boosts the overall

results of learning. The author states that “prevention and early intervention are the most reliable and cost-effective ways to support schools” so they can produce the expected results of teaching and learning in safe environment (Nkosi-Malobane 2019: 3). However, it is of paramount importance that all stakeholders are brought on board to curb the violence in schools. These include the Representative Council of Learners, educators, School Governing Bodies (SGBs), school security personnel as well as South African Police Service, Metropolitan Police, local word councillors, social workers, and Community Police Forums (CPFs). The involvement of the CPFs is envisioned to enable the sharing and use of information on drug suppliers and drug peddlers for the purpose of safety in schools and will also promote the sense of ownership in the community.

Botha and Zwane (2021) divulge three strategies that could be applied in the South African schools in order to address the serious issues with SBV and SRGBV. The first one involves surveillance programmes which are operational in OECD-countries and require a school resource officer (SRO) to liaise with police and ensure identification of potential perpetrators of SBV or SRGBV. SROs observe the interactions within school settings during school intervals, during lunch breaks, and also do classroom visits. By careful identification of potential perpetrators and suggesting suitable response, the SROs deescalate any aggression before it reaches substantial proportion.

The second strategy works through deterrence programmes based on the discouraging of offences by regulations which stipulate the consequences for breaking the rules. The modelled punishment of perpetrators implies to the others who are not transgressing what happens in such situations. The authors claim that even though the principle of this idea seems understandable, its application invokes further violence instead of curbing it.

The third intervention is based on the use of Expert Behavioural Consultancy System (EBC) of psychiatrists and school psychologists to reduce behavioural issues and violence directed at teachers. Furthermore, Effective Behavioural Support System (EBS) communicates to learners’ responsible behaviour within their school environment and reduces their poor academic performance. This strategy embraces

adoption of seating plans that cater for disruptive learners to be closer to teachers and away from doors, windows and other disruptive learners. By curbing distractions, a better learner involvement is achieved which eventually leads to improvement in academic results and further strengthens learner engagement. The final outcome is lesser discipline issues in the school.

According to Botha and Zwane (2021), preventative measures should promote human rights and responsibilities. Learners are familiarised with their rights; however, often the responsibilities that go together with the rights are not emphasised. There is a need for creating awareness that the individual rights cannot supersede the rights of others. In addition to the rights and responsibilities approach, the authors describe the preventative strategy of collaborative collegial support through which female educators who are victimised by male learners can seek the assistance of male educator on the staff to discourage further intimidation. It is a fact that learners show more respect to male teachers and would be hesitant to confront them.

The sphere of education requires engagement of all stakeholders to ensure successful outcomes. Parental and community involvement is needed to build safe environment and instil self-discipline in learners. The same model of correction should be emphasised at school and at home to promote accountability in the adolescents. The lesser time educators spend in disciplining learners, the more focus on meaningful learning experience is achieved. Botha and Zwane (2021) conclude that united efforts by all stakeholders must be made in creating healthy positive relationships between learners and educators in order to curb discipline problems and improve academic results.

In a briefing held on the 10 September 2019, initiated by the DBE dedicated to Safety and Security in Schools, the Minister of DBE Angie Motshekga emphasised that the National School Safety Framework (NSSF) remains the “main strategic response” and the INSPIRE framework will continue working together with NSSF (Department of Basic Education 2019: 13). The INSPIRE framework incorporates:

- 2    **Implementation and law enforcement;**
- 3    **Norms and values;**

- 4    **Safe environments;**
- 5    **Parent and caregiver support;**
- 6    **Income and economic strengthening;**
- 7    **Response and support services, and**
- 8    **Education and Life Skills.**

The **implementation and law enforcement** plan encompass legislation which is rights based and affirms the ban of corporal punishment, criminalises the sexual abuse and exploitation of children, and places restrictions on firearms and misuse of alcohol. Two protocols were introduced in 2018, Management of corporal punishment and Management of sexual abuse and harassment. In addition, Collective Agreement (3 of 2018) allows for simpler procedures and faster prosecution of teachers accused of sexually abusing learners. Furthermore, a National School Safety Steering Committee was established to coordinate the safety interventions.

In the area of **norms and values** the DBE relies on the following programmes which address harmful gender and social norms: Keeping Girls in School, Dove Self-Esteem Programme, Programmes for Boys, and the Homophobic Bullying Prevention Campaign. To ensure community involvement and mobilisation to protect schools and promote non-violence, there are two campaigns: The Values Campaign (WC) and Moral Regeneration Campaign (NW). The DBE projects opportunity for greater involvement of faith-based organisations and will introduce bystander interventions and national bullying prevention programmes.

Regarding the **safe environments**, the DBE will prioritise better planning of school buildings and infrastructure with safety of learners at heart. In partnership with SAPS, the DBE is to pursue closure of taverns which operate in close proximity to schools. Furthermore, schools at risk will be allocated with security guards.

**Parent and care-giver support** will be realised through comprehensive programmes in partnership with DSD, DoH, MRC and the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT). DBE will encourage the community through continuous dialogue to support and supervise boys.

**Income and economic strengthening** will be implemented through involving the private sector for different projects- breakfast alliances, school gardens, school health and hygiene. Moreover, a pro-poor education provisioning will be implemented, for example learner transport, Norms and Standards Funding. DBE is planning on creating more opportunities for employment of administrative assistants, coaches and artists, which will improve the quality of education.

**Response and support services** will be achieved through establishment of District Based Support Teams, on a school level, School Safety Committee as a sub-committee of SGB which are to liaise with local police stations, hotspot schools will be provided with Learner Support Agents (LSAs). Victims and perpetrators of violence will be provided with counselling services and school social workers will be made available through collaboration with DSD and universities. Furthermore, DBE is emphasising improving of referral systems through securing partnerships with local clinics and police stations and better incorporation of ICT. Attention would be given to extra mural activities in safe hubs for after-care, accessibility to sports, creative arts and culture.

**Education and Life Skills** are being prioritised by the DBE through improvement of teacher training on classroom management with a focus on positive discipline. The subject of Life Orientation will be enriched with social skills training, further emphasis on CSE and adolescent violence prevention.

All these measures have to be underpinned by an evidence-based approach, context specific interventions, multi-sectoral involvement, appropriate training for teachers and principals and suitable monitoring and evaluation systems to inform of progress (Department of Basic Education 2019: 23).

Njobe (2021) informs on the developments regarding the implementation of School Safety framework. The following were achieved: NSSF training is made available online; e-Safety Guidelines on prevention cyber bullying were provided to all schools; partnership with Google to continue raising awareness through curriculum delivery; ending homophobic bullying guidelines were developed and shared; road shows and campaign on prevention of bullying were approved for the 2021-22 (Njobe 2021). This



indicates that the DBE is working on implementing and monitoring the implementation of the School Safety framework and steady change can be expected.

Another initiative between Vodacom and DBE was established in order to bring twenty psycho-social specialists into Schools of Excellence (identified by DBE) across the country. This programme is part of the fight against gender-based violence by Vodacom and targets reducing school violence through prevention, intervention and support to victims and perpetrators, and unites the efforts of government, private sector and civil society organisations. This initiative is set to address bullying and peer-bystanders by promoting mutual respect and social cohesion between learners, and learners and educators. The psycho-social specialists were trained at Stellenbosch University and will serve to promote positive school climate and support to educators and learners at the schools of excellence as well as assist some of the schools of the district where they are placed (Anon 2021).

### **2.7.3 Legislation relevant to school-related gender-based violence**

Understanding the causes, the nature, and the forms of SBV directs the policy and informs the intervention strategies. Matadi and Calvino (2021: 9) note that while South Africa can boast with “progressive Constitution and solid legislation,” the impact of GBV on the economy and the society is overwhelming. They contribute this fact to cultural beliefs and practices, which reinforce patriarchal norms, together with economic dependence of victims on the perpetrator, lack of inter-sectoral support to victims, a statistics system that does not differentiate between categories of crime against women and girls, and further traumatising of victims by courts, among other factors.

A report by UNESCO (2014) specifies that although there is a notable growth in policy making in the area of SRGBV school initiatives which address the view that violence is not that common. Parkes (2016) confirms UNESCO’s (2014) findings that the impressive policy framework underpinned by the Constitution (1996) and various programmes are meeting criticism on the level of policy enactment at provincial and school level.

International law represented by The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which was signed by South Africa on the 16 June 1995, declares that the state is obligated to use all “appropriate... measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.” (CRC 1990: 2).

The Constitution of Republic of South Africa (1996) provides for the basic human rights in Section 9: the right to equality; Section 10: the right to human dignity, and Section 12: the right to freedom and security of the person. Section 28 specifies the rights of the child:

- “To be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse and degradation;
- That in every matter concerning the child their best interest is of paramount importance;”

The National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 (NEPA) seeks to “uphold all fundamental rights” of children (South Africa, Department of Basic Education 1996a: 4). The Act speaks of the mandatory obligation of educators to report any abuse such as physical, sexual or neglect observed in their learners. Failure to do so is a criminal offence. Furthermore, educators have been granted *in loco parentis* status, which implies that they should act in place of parents while at school. “If a child is under the care and control of the school, the teachers of that school owe the child ... a legal duty to prevent physical harm” (South Africa, Department of Education 1996a). This means that educators are required by law to protect learners from any form of violence. The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 prohibits corporal punishment and initiation practices in schools (South Africa, Department of Education 1996b).

In consideration of the forms of SRV and SRGBV, we realise that some of them are directly caused by teachers, namely corporal punishment, sexual assault and sexual harassment as well as discrimination. The Employment of Educators Act of 1998 (EEA) stipulates misconduct of educators and includes amongst others discrimination against learner “...on the basis of race, gender, disability, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic and social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion,

conscience, belief, culture, language, birth, family responsibility, HIV status, political opinion or other grounds prohibited by the Constitution” (South Africa, Department of Education 2011: 9). EEA considers as a serious misconduct acts ranging from physical assault with intention of grievous bodily harm to a learner or other employee, to getting involved in a sexual relationship with a learner who attends the school where the educator is employed, sexually assaulting a learner or school employee, as well as acts of corruption including bribery, fraud, and theft.

The South African Council of Educators Code of Professional Ethics requires educators to “refrain from improper physical contact with learners; refrain from any form of sexual harassment (physical or otherwise) of learners; refrain from any form of sexual relationship with learners at any school; not use language or behaviour that is inappropriate in his or her interaction with the learners (South African Council of Educators 2000: 17). The consequences for breaching of the Code depending on the severity could be disciplinary hearings; discharge of educator if found guilty of misconduct and dismissal of educator if found guilty of serious misconduct.

The examples of legal framework developed and appointed to hold responsible any person who may infringe upon the rights of another illustrate the will of the South African Government to ensure stability and safety within the state. However, it is imperative that the translation of the laws into practice has to be worked on in order for change to take place.

## **2.8 Theories connected to violence in schools and SRGBV**

Collins and Stockton (2018) claim that “theory-free research” does not exist. According to them, theory is the lens through which literature and data in the study can be scrutinised. In simple terms they define theory as explanation of the way things work. The theory not only explains but also serves to organise ideas, to channel data coding and interpretation. In addition to that, the values of the researcher are conveyed by the theoretical framework. Thus, theory is an important instrument for the integrity and depth of the enquiry. Zita (1998) purports that theories emerge from the lived experiences of researchers. In agreement with that, Georges (2005) suggests that theories should provide opportunities for researchers to form their own opinions,

together with resources for construction of theories, which provide freedom of thought rather than confining it. The researcher should draw on the theory for setting the goals, fashioning of the research questions, choosing methodology, diagnosing possible threats to validity and for demonstrating the research's relevance (Maxwell 2013).

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) propose that in the process of selecting theoretical framework firstly the disciplinary orientation of the study should be considered and then the literature review should direct on a suitable theoretical framework. Grant and Osanloo (2014) advise that the selection of theoretical framework can go through: the researcher reflecting and identifying their own beliefs; consideration of the concepts of the study and which theories intersect with them; assessing why each theory is important to the researcher based on the working knowledge of each theory; performing a brief literature review to establish support for the theories; conferring with other theses/ dissertations in how they applied the theories to their study; considering of any divergent arguments to the theories and researcher's beliefs; enquiring how the theory/theories converge to the problem, study purpose, significance and design; and finally, selecting the theory that will ensure a coherent study for the reader.

In accordance with the described steps, the researcher here has considered a few theories that fit to some extent with the current study. Some of the theories have been applied by other scholars to school violence in general and some were closer linked to SRGBV.

### **2.8.1 Routine Activities Theory**

One such theory is the **Routine Activities Theory** (Cohen and Felson, 1979). It suggests that the behaviour patterns of students determine whether they become victims of school violence. In order for school victimisation to occur there need to be three intersecting elements: (i) the presence of motivated offender; (ii) the presence of suitable target, and (iii) the absence of capable guardian. The prevalent daily activities individuals are engaged in influence the convergence of the elements. School-based extramural activities are an example of such routine in which students often get involved. Peguero and Popp (2012) observed that in American schools, race, gender,

and ethnicity actually contribute to the choice of extramural activities of students. Female students tend to select academic activities like school newspaper, school governance, the yearbook, band and the like. Male students choose more often to get involved in sports. The experiences of school violence also are determined by gender- girls are more likely to be bullied or subjected to sexual assault or harassment, whereas boys are mostly victimised at the school grounds. Belonging to a racial or ethnic minority group carries a greater probability of victimization at school. These findings carry important implications because if they are considered during the process of programming this will impact the vulnerabilities of youth and can be used to protect students through new policies and practices (Peguero and Popp 2012).

Van Ouytsel, Ponnet and Walrave (2016) investigate cyber dating violence from the perspective of the lifestyle-routine activities theory. They looked at the controlling behaviour of one's romantic partner through digital media observed in secondary school students in Belgium. The theory allowed understanding of the factors which contribute to cyber dating victimisation and the researchers made recommendations that secondary school students can follow for protection from this type of cyber violence. Based on the theory, educational evidence-based interventions and practices were developed to create awareness and prevention of this violence (Van Ouytsel, Ponnet and Walrave 2016).

### **2.8.2 Butler's Theory of Performativity**

Lunneblad and Johansson (2019) frame their study on **Butler's Theory of Performativity** which focuses on gender construction in different micro-situations. Masculinities and femininities are established through many cultural and social processes. The notion of "Boys will be boys" and "Testosterone-filled boys" prescribes to boys their position and implies connection between masculinity and violence. Likewise, the stereotype of the "good and ambitious girl" endorses the idea that girls should be "passive and achievement-driven". Boys who take their studies more seriously are seen as "feminine" and are more likely to be subjected to violence. As a result, boys perform more "visible" acts of violence in order to "mark their status" among their peers. Girls, on the other hand, select subtler forms of violence that do not

involve physical injury. Slander and cyber-bullying, and emotional violence are usually their “weapon of choice”. Butler’s Theory of Performativity explains the normalisation of violent behaviour and is why, often, violence is overlooked at school settings.

### **2.8.3 Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1979)**

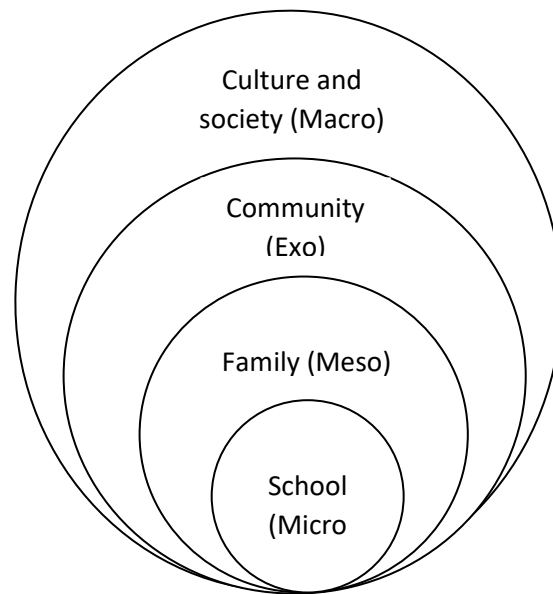
A theoretical framework applied widely in the educational field is **Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1979)**. This framework views the individual’s development in connection to the environment which is subdivided into interrelated systems that influence the behaviour of the person. These systems include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Guy-Evans (2020) clarifies that the microsystem is the direct environment in which we live. It includes our parents, siblings, family members, friends, classmates, teachers, neighbours, and other people with whom we have direct social contact. The interactions within this system influence us and we contribute to the construction of the environment itself. The mesosystem relates to the interactions between the microsystems of our lives. For example, the communications between the child’s siblings and classmates, or between his parents and his teachers, signify the interrelationship between the microsystems. If a child has not received affection in his family, he may not develop favourable attitudes towards his teachers and may also find it difficult to make friends.

The exosystem is the setting that does not include directly the child but has a direct influence on him through other formal or informal structures, such as the neighbourhood, parents’ workplace, or parents’ friends. An example of this influence is when a child is attached to the father, and he has to leave for a period of time due to work engagements. During the absence of the father, the child may become closer with the mother or may experience a conflict with the mother and their relationship becomes even more constrained. The macrosystem is the cultural and social settings in which a person is raised. This includes the socio-economic status of the individual and his/her family, his/her ethnicity, and race. Being born in developing or third world country makes a person work harder daily. The chronosystem incorporates the transitions in

one's life span. It also involves the socio-historic context that may influence the individual's life. An illustration of this system is how divorce impacts the lives of the members of the family. Parents will be directly impacted but children also suffer the consequences of a divorce. The first year of the divorce is the most difficult for parents and children. In time their relationships stabilise and settle to a new norm. This theory has served as a lens to many psychologists regarding the manner of analysing an individual and the effects of environmental systems that he experiences (Guy-Evans, 2020).

De Lange, Mitchell and Bhana (2012) reflect on the female teachers' perception of GBV through the same model which acknowledges the "complexity and interlinked nature of gender inequality". The relationships and dialogues between home, school, work, and community are the reason for this intricacy. Each system influences and interacts with the rest. The female teachers voiced out their understanding that the belief of the community that women are less capable and inferior to men, deprives them of the freedom to take up leadership position at work because the community will be displeased and judge them. The very beginning of this inequality is the home, and it stretches through every next sphere-school, work, and community (De Lange, Mitchell and Bhana 2012).

Garner (2014) also utilises the ecosystemic model of Bronfenbrenner; however, he places the school at the very centre of the nested systems as opposed to the original model where the individual is central.



**Figure 2.3: Ecosystemic model of school violence adapted from Bronfenbrenner (Garner 2014: 486)**

Garner (2014) employs this approach on the premise that schools are at the centre of the framework for remediation and insulation of children from violence. The author proposes creation of positive environments which eventually should lead to the diminishing of violence. The levels of the ecosystem surrounding children provide opportunities for support, intervention, and measurement of outcomes. On the macro-level, Garner (2014) identifies the causal factors of SBV such as socio-economic disadvantage, culture and customs, legislature, ideological shift. The author specifies that schools as an operation of society are impacted by it and impact society in turn. Therefore, the SBV will have an effect on the larger society as well. The exo-level includes the neighbourhoods in which schools exist. Often gang-related activities impact schools and affect the children that study there. Interventions that would be developed have to address discrepancies in different neighbourhoods within the country regarding the poverty, lack of amenities and housing.

Schools rely on their relationship with the families of their pupils for the enhancement of academic development and success of the children. Stressors that may occur within the family could be a cause for violence against children. Placing the school at the



centre of the ecosystemic model, according to Garner (2014), provides opportunity for the school to become a positive environment in protection and insulation of the children from that violence. The complex causal factors outside the school provide the context in which it exists. The internal factors of the micro-system of the school such as school organisation, curriculum engagement of pupils, interactions between teachers and pupils, pupils and their peers, levels of professional development of the educators, all these need to be considered when interventions are to be drawn up. Overall, Garner (2014) affirms that each level of the model has the potential for support and insulation of children from violence.

Research done by Falconer (2018) depicts also the social ecological framework of Bronfenbrenner (1979), as it explains the interplay between the violence factors and the different societal levels – individuals, families, community and beliefs, norms, and values. Some of the factors that contribute to SBV on the individual level are age, sex, level of education, mental health, and impulse control (Know Violence in Childhood 2017; World Health Organisation 2016). A South African study has established that older children and girls are more vulnerable to sexual and emotional abuse and younger children predominantly experience physical violence (Meinck et al. 2016). On the family level, the factors identified to contribute to GBV are socio-economic status such as low income; poor parenting skills; weak parent-child relationship; witnessing domestic violence and early marriage. All these are attributed to “home cultures of violence” (World Health Organisation 2016). Children from single-parented households were recognised as more likely to experience GBV than homes with two parents (Meinck et al. 2015).

On the next level, community, poverty as a socio-economic factor, as well as areas known to be crime hot spots and areas with high population density, contribute to violence (World Health Organisation 2016). Leoschut and Kafaar (2017) indicate that South African urban children are 2,5 times more vulnerable to victimisation than children from rural areas. The last level, society, is characterised by the policies that maintain social and economic inequalities and gender disparities, social vulnerabilities due to disasters, insufficient or absent social support and protections, poor governance, deficient law enforcement, and corruption. These are the factors that create risk for

violence against children. Overall, the tolerance to exploitation and abuse, and their normalisation, as well as acceptance of gender and power inequalities are the reasons for violence to root itself in a culture (Know Violence in Childhood 2017; Meinck et al. 2017; World Health Organisation 2016).

#### **2.8.4 Social Learning Theory**

Although the ecosystemic model of Bronfenbrenner accounts for the mutual influence the person's relationships have on his behaviour within the microsystem and on the next level of the mesosystem, another theory caters for observation of the influence of family and society on the individual's behaviour. That is the **Social Learning Theory**.

The Social Learning Theory is based on the premise that individuals acquire information from different sources through their exposure to the reactions and behaviours of others, first within the family itself, later at school, by being disciplined and taught the accepted norms of behaviour (Ali and Nylor 2013). The Social Learning Theory frames the study conducted by Krishnalal (2012) who notes that when children are continuously exposed to violence at home and the community, whether they witness or are subjected to it, they start internalising it as acceptable and normal behaviour. When violence is the means to conflict resolution in the environment where children are brought up, they will resolve to use violence to acquire the desired outcome.

Bhana (2009) and Morojele (2009) describe the interesting phenomenon of African girls from working class background who resort to GBV as means to protect their limited physical and social resources. The authors called this type of conduct "oppressed group behaviour". The cultural upbringing which starts at home encourages patriarchal views and promotes male dominance and aggression against women. The common world-wide stereotypes emphasise that girls and women are subordinates to men (Modiba 2018). The gender stereotypes entrenched at home are further duplicated in schools where inequalities are reinforced through attitudes and assigning of duties – boys are expected to ring the bell, girls are instructed to sweep the class, splitting the prefect duties according to their gender, etc. Teachers tend to exacerbate this discrimination through showing preferences to boys over girls, because

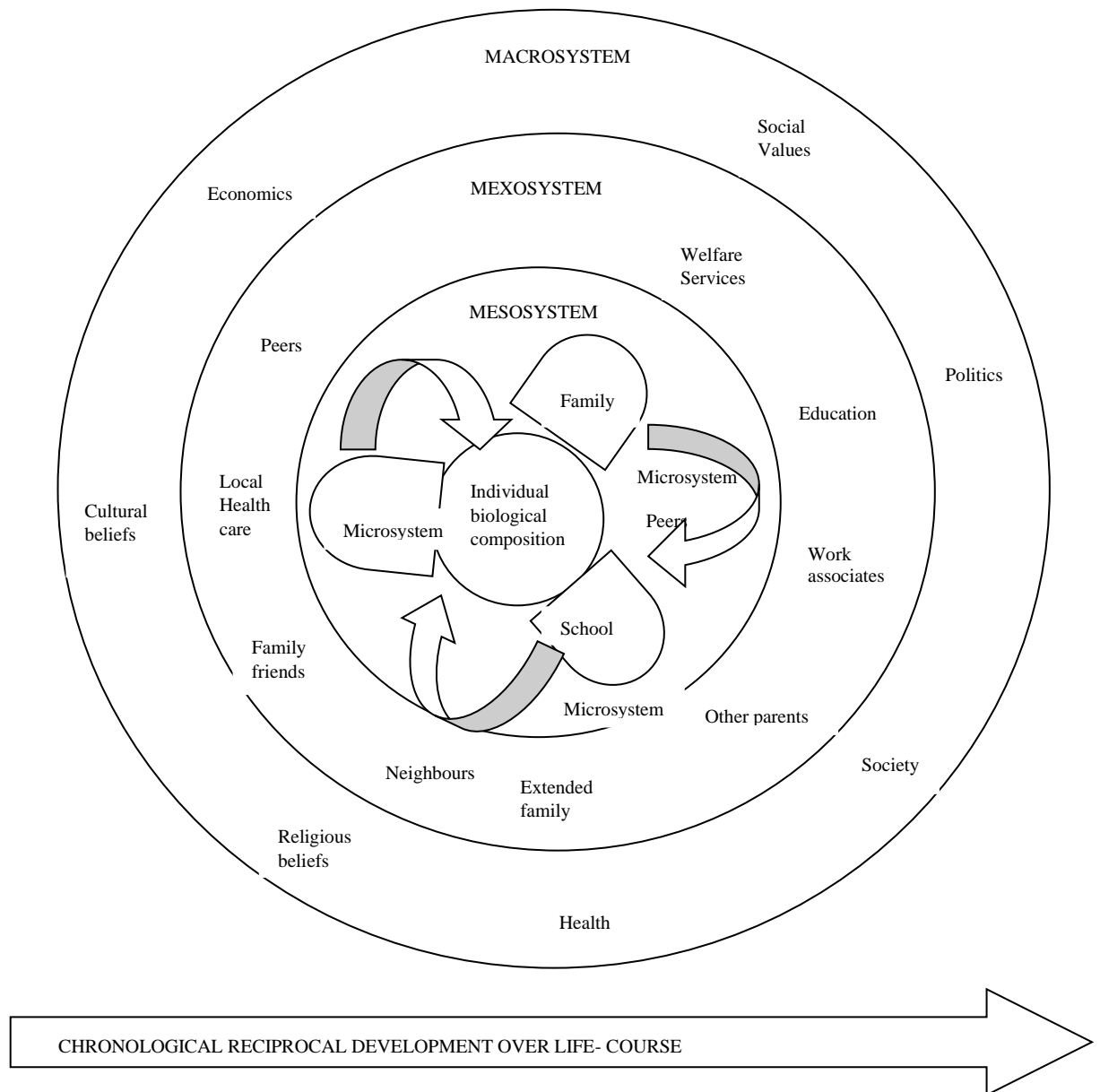
of greater involvement in classroom activities and thus create a sense of sadness and hopelessness in girls. This can further affect the progress of girls by de-motivating them (Dunne, Humphreys and Leach 2004).

When studying social organisations like schools our theoretical thinking is guided by the theory of the biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968), who is credited with developing the Systems Theory which has later been applied to sociology and other fields connected to human behaviour.

**2.8.5 The Bioecological Theory of Bronfenbrenner (2005)** – The psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner adapted von Bertalanffy's theory as he studied human biological systems within an ecological environment. Grounded in von Bertalanffy's Systems theory and Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological theory, we are able to analyse the complicated nature of peoples' interactions in a social environment.

**The Bioecological Theory of Bronfenbrenner (2005)** has been used widely in the studies of human development. This model explains well the causal factors and the consequences of GBV. Important aspect unaccounted in other theories is time. SRGBV has short-term and long-term consequences which depend on the length of exposure to the violence and at what stage of his/her personal development the child was victimised. The Bioecological Theory tackles a noteworthy feature in the micro-system of the child-parent relationship when the necessary interaction is not enacted the child struggles to explore other parts of the meso-system. Children need the affirmation and attention from the parent or caregiver, and when this need is not met, they pursue unhealthy relationships elsewhere. Anti-social behaviour, lack of self-discipline, and inability to provide self-direction at school are all the results of this deficiency.

The theory considers the complexity of the contextual factors and the processes involved in the interplay between the various systems in the individual's development. This revised model of Bronfenbrenner relates the idea of the multiple micro-systems in which individual is embedded and their bi-directional nature. The figure below represents the Bioecological Model accepted as a theoretical framework of this study.



**Figure 2.4: Bioecosystemic Model (SACE 2011: 24)**

The Bioecological theoretical model of Bronfenbrenner (2005) reflects the reality of many micro-systems which a child belongs to at the same time. Each micro-system is characterised by the relationships and the experiences the child gains and it will influence the other micro-systems around it. For example, the parent-child micro-system will be represented by the quality of the relationship, and it will influence the micro-system of the school performance of the child (Ashiabi and O’Neal 2015). The lack of parental involvement in a child’s life leads to weak academic outcomes and the likelihood for the child to be victimised increases. The meso-system level includes the

processes within and between the micro-systems the child is embedded in. A positive relationship between the parent and the teacher will create better conditions of support for the child both academically and emotionally. A fight with a friend may disturb and destruct the child during teaching time and affect the outcomes.

The meso-system level involves the micro-systems the child does not belong to directly, but they still influence his/her development. Example for that could be the parent-work associates micro-system. When the parent is under pressure at work dealing with problems and meeting deadlines their frustration could be carried over at home or the least much lesser quality time would be spent together and that would create dissatisfaction and sadness in the child. Over time, this can grow into anger and express itself in anti-social behaviour at school. The macro-system is the outermost layer which encloses the rest and filters down in all other systems because it carries the cultural and religious beliefs, stereotypes, norms and values, and provides a point of view through which the individuals interpret their experiences.

Ettekal and Mahoney (2017: 5) clarify that Bronfenbrenner hypothesised development as “a joint product of four defining properties: (1) person, (2) context, (3) process, and (4) time”. The personal factors comprise of gender, age, race, ethnicity, and competency. The context factors involve the four systems from the ecological theory. The main mechanisms of development are the proximal processes which integrate the “complex reciprocal exchanges” between the immediate environment and the “active, evolving human organism”. The proximal processes have to be considered within the frame of time (Ettekal and Mahoney 2017: 5).

The South African Council for Educators (2011) has also adopted the theoretical framework leans of the Bioecological Systemic Model of Bronfenbrenner (2005) in their SBV Report. The individual’s biology is accepted as an environment for the development of the person. This approach is applied to SBV in relation to the following factors: “Individual factors (Microsystem); Relationship factors (Mesosystem); Community factors (Mexosystem) and Social factors (Macrosystem)” (South African Council for Educators 2011: 23). The theory recognizes the individual as independent unit from the environment however both the environment and the

individual influence and interact dynamically with each other. The individual is placed at the centre of the system and the mesosystem surrounds the individual. Parts of the mesosystem are family, peers, and school. Dynamic interaction propels the system to develop. Outside the mesosystem is the mexosystem which includes other parents, education, work associates, welfare services, peers, extended family, neighbours, family friends, local health care. The last system that frames the whole is macrosystem which is the society with its parts: social values, politics, health, and economics. The activities and internal relationships within the family and the roles taken up by the individual influence his/her development at the core of this model (South African Council for Educators 2011).

The Bioecological Theory of Bronfenbrenner (2005) is selected as a theory to guide the exploration of the nature and current status of SRGBV in selected secondary schools in Phoenix, answering the first objective of this study. It is also suitable in tracking how the factors contributing to SRGBV are accounted for in the intervention and prevention strategies used in these schools, which is reflected in objective two.

**2.8.6 The Systems theory Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968)** – Apart from Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological theory, a second theory, with a more holistic approach, is set to guide this inquiry. **The Systems theory** is well known and used in many different disciplines due to its nature and it has well established grounds in the management field. The Systems theory views schools and organisations as systems with the purpose of evaluation of the correlation between the school and the environment (Mele, Pels and Polese 2010). This theory has been formulated by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968) and draws on rich historical background from the pre-Socratic days till recent times. A system is described as an entity with internal and external elements determined by the boundary which is understood to be around the system, and input and output pertain to the functioning of the system. This theory analyses phenomenon as a 'whole' and not as a sum of its parts (Mele, Pels and Polese 2010).

Lai and Lin (2017) clarify that a system is founded on the structure and patterns of relationships rooted in the interactions between components. According to them, the

systems theory focuses on three aspects: “the environment, the social organisation as a system, and human participants within the organisation” (Lai and Lin 2017: 3). The authors specify that the components of each system have hierarchical ordering and are interdependent on each other. This is also true for organisations in the same environment, as they are also interdependent on each other. Organisations have permeable boundaries. Friedman and Allen (2014) specify that for social organisations, the boundaries are often determined by cultural customs and norms. For example, the boundaries of social groups are defined by group membership; some groups are defined through their geographic or ethnic specifics. The boundaries of social organisations lay the conditions under which an individual enters or leaves the organisation.

According to Lai and Lin (2017), organisations function through the input-throughput-output processes and self-maintain based on the feedback they receive. The input is connected to allowing materials and information to pass through the permeable boundaries, the throughput is including all the changes that happen to the materials and information, and the output is the result or the finished product that leaves the system. Lai and Lin (2017) identify two types of feedback which are received while the throughput processes are going on: negative feedback, which intends to correct any occurring errors in order to preserve the existing state, and positive feedback, which leads to development and growth of the organisational system. The interplay between the components of a system brings about properties and structure of the system, which are not observed in the individual components. This is known as emergence. The interconnectedness of the components allows final state of the system to be reached through different paths and conditions. This is termed equifinality.

Ogilvy (2013) claims that education, just like healthcare and the economy, is a system with multiple moving parts. The foundational premise of systems theory of interconnectedness postulates that change in one aspect/area of the system will inevitably lead to change in the rest of the system. If lasting success is sought in education, a systemic approach, which delves in the complex nature of public education and its every part, would be necessary. If a change is implemented only to certain parts of the system and not to all, then the system will push every part to go to

its previous condition. Ogilvy (2013) advises that when anticipated change is planned for a system, alternative scenarios are important to consider because many factors cannot be predicted and therefore their effect on the system cannot be forecasted.

Kumanyika, Parker and Sim (2010) claim that the systems approach takes in consideration the specific conditions, the context and the circumstances under which an action is taken and therefore is able to evaluate its impact. An advantage of the systems approach is that when points of power are identified it can be explained how small change in one part may cause big change in other parts of the system. Kumanyika, Parker and Sim (2010) also recognise that each system exists in hierarchy of nested systems. Jackson et al. (2010) support the same understanding of hierarchical organisation of systems and clarifies that when a system interacts with sibling systems they altogether constitute a system of systems. For the purposes of this study, the system of systems is educative. Potts and Hagan (2000) identify the system of systems as the suprasystem. The schools then are the systems we are scrutinising through the lens of SRGBV, and the separate classes within the schools are the subsystems. Chikere and Nwoka (2015) specify that the interrelatedness of the parts of a system is always working towards the survival and success of the whole system.

Bourne et al. (2018) concur in this view with Kumanyika, Parker and Sim (2010), Jackson et al. (2010) and Potts and Hagan (2000). The approach to management taken by Bourne et al. (2018) could be applied to the education system and analyse it as a system of systems, characterised by autonomy, connectivity, diversity and emergence. Every constituent part of the system of systems is a system. Autonomy is expressed through the fact that there is no need for external control in order to function. The connectivity is related to the relationships between the constituent parts, which are “dynamically formed” (Bourne et al. 2018: 2791). The heterogeneity of constituent parts within the system of systems determines its diversity. The interactions between the systems within the system of systems lead to emergence – the new properties and functions that are not resembled by the constituent parts (Bourne et al. 2018).

According to Chikere and Nwoka (2015), von Bertalanffy believed that organisations are open systems in contrast with Max Weber, and Taylor and Fayol, who viewed



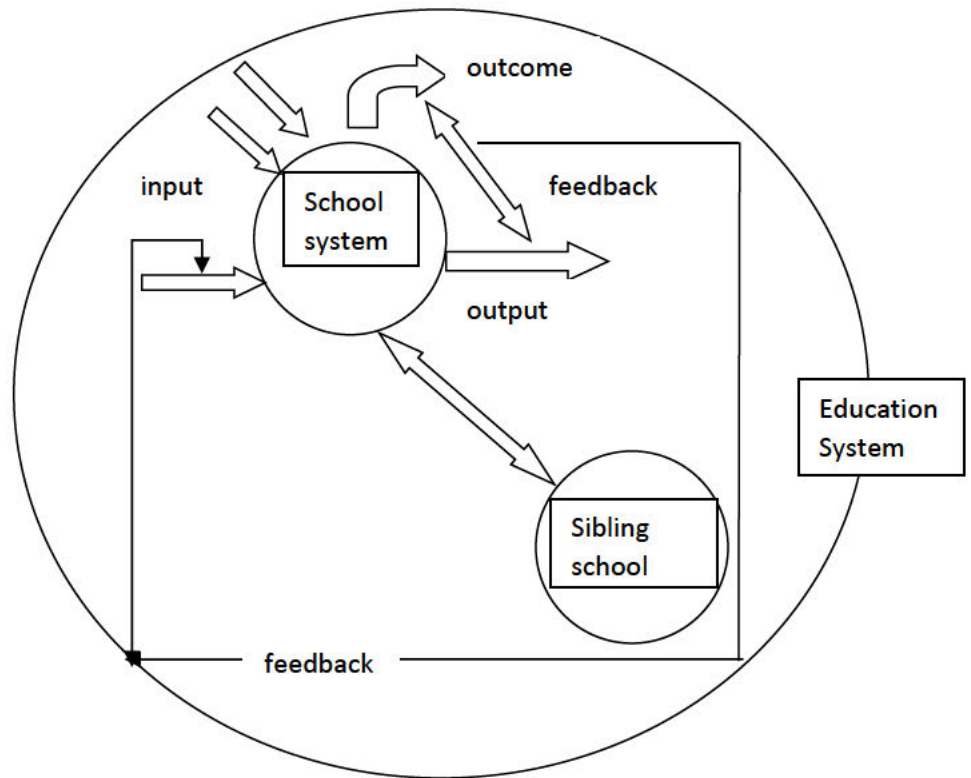
organisations as closed systems. Von Bertalanffy was convinced that in order to survive within the changing social and economic conditions and constantly evolving technology organisations have to be open systems and react with the surrounding environment. Therefore, management of organisations is bound to be open-ended process. Chikere and Nwoka (2015) describe the four main differences between open and closed system as follows: (1) relations with the surrounding environment – open systems are constantly involved in interchange with the outside world and the behaviour of the living things is a response to the availability of resources or existing threats; (2) variables considered – closed systems have few variables whereas open systems deal with “complex set of interrelationships”; (3) form of regulation or control – closed systems use error-controlled regulation “(after-the-fact)”, and open systems apply anticipatory control by taking corrective measures before the occurrence of error, and (4) purpose of regulation – open systems strive to constantly improve which is a “dynamic path” and work towards reaching of “dynamic equilibrium”. Closed systems seek rather a stable state (Chikere and Nwoka 2015: 4).

Panchal (1978) echoes the understanding of Katz and Kahn that organisations are special type of open systems. They receive energy from the outside world, transform this energy into a product and that product gets exported into the environment. Finally, the system replenishes its energy and resources. This is an illustration of the repeated cycles of input-throughput-output within the open systems. Open systems are characterised by negative entropy, feedback, homeostasis, differentiation and equifinality. The feedback is informational input which indicates to the system what are the surrounding conditions and how it should function in accordance with them. Feedback is a mechanism critical to survival of the system. Social organisations are contrived systems, and they differ from physical systems. Although they have structure, it is not physical. Rather it is linked to the functions of the system and therefore the emphasis falls on the maintenance inputs and not solely on the product inputs, because they sustain the organisation. According to their functions, the open systems have been categorised by Katz and Khan into four groups and schools belong to the maintenance organisations which serve the purpose of preparing individuals for their roles in society (Panchal 1978: 4-20).

Lai and Lin (2017) claim that a new perspective has been developed through applying systems theory to social organizations. Social systems are envisioned as open systems where information and resources are exchanged with the environment and active feedback from the environment is received. The organisational application of systems theory provides opportunities for study of the communication within the organisation and with other organisations, the organisational behaviour and how the organisation develops as result of the communication received from the environment.

Systems theory is used to study the nature of problems within organisations, diagnose such problems and suggest possible solutions. This is done through consideration of all aspects like structure, context, processes, and the environment containing the problem. Researchers acknowledge that communication is the key to successful functioning of an organisation, and it leads to stability within system of systems. Communication allows for exchange of information but also facilitates adaptation and improvement in response to internal and external feedback and thus leads to growth of the organisation. The feedback mechanisms are there to ensure that the organisation reaches the state of equilibrium.

In the sphere of education, teachers should be cognisant of the background and the environment their learners come from to the school, because this directly influences their behaviour and academic growth. Good communication between teachers and learners paired with efficient feedback system will lead to improved teaching/ learning experience. However, if there is a breakdown of communication in the classroom, the outcomes of the system would be poor (Lai and Lin 2017). Such breakdown could be expressed in different forms of SRGBV and often the results are unsettling and non-conducive climate within the class and that transfers to the school as a system.



**Figure 2.5: Education as a system of systems. Adapted from Friedman and Allen (2014: 5)**

Friedman and Allen (2014) state that the more permeable boundary a system has, the more interactions with the environment take place and therefore the system has greater openness. This is vital for every system because it determines the growth, the quality of functions and processes within it, and ultimately – the survival of the system. In certain instances, the system may close itself in order to protect the system. This will lead to more output and less input which will bring the system to state of entropy, if the opposite state is observed, characterised by more input than output, this is recognised as negative entropy or negentropy, and the system will experience growth. The mechanism that regulates the system is the feedback. The system evaluates the output it has produced within the outlines of the outcomes (the goals) that were set. This is acknowledged as internal feedback. This mechanism is doubled by the external feedback which considers “responses from the external environment” and adjusts the

inputs to the system. This is an ongoing process of regulation and forms a “continual feedback loop” (Friedman and Allen 2014: 8).

Friedman and Allen (2014) advise that systems theory is a metatheory which serves as an organising conceptual framework rather than theory that explains phenomena. The systems theory capacitates us in understanding the dynamics within a system so to interpret existing problems and develop suitable intervention. This is supported by Chikere and Nwoka (2015), who suggest that the concept of systems used in organisations allows tracking their inner and exterior world and how the parts are connecting and working within a system. The behaviour of people and their effectiveness within organisation can be explained through observations of “individuals, groups, structures and processes of organisation” and establishing what typical and unusual themes emerge (Chikere and Nwoka 2015: 4). When the identified themes are measured against the goals of the organisation the effectiveness of taken measures, certain individuals, group, or the whole organisation would become evident.

Systems theory provides tools for the management teams to “predict and design appropriate structures and responses” (Harney 2019: 120), which applied to SRGBV, allows for development of intervention and prevention programs aimed at curbing this phenomenon and their evaluation. Systems analysis has the advantage of connecting different levels of analysis, it harmonises the social and structural perspectives, and acknowledges various perceptions of theoretical viewpoints (Harney 2019).

## **2.9 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have reviewed the existing literature relevant to the topic of SRGBV. Researchers throughout the world are united in their view that SBV and SRGBV are very serious concerns and constitute a global problem that requires immediate intervention. Although the different countries have undertaken to develop necessary measures to resolve this issue, the need remains great for more research in this field. The literature confirms that the roots of GBV and specifically SRGBV are deeply integrated into the cultural fabric of every society and any resolution should tackle social norms and stereotypes in addition to addressing socio-economic inequalities and community ills that contribute to the problem. Zooming into the local South African

context, it becomes evident that GBV and SRGBV are rife throughout the layers of the society. Many scholars seeking an explanation of the current state of SRGBV point at our recent past marred by apartheid, which tore apart families and used violence as the means of enforcing the order of the day. The consequences of this are the normalisation of gender inequalities and violence as a form of conflict resolution which in turn perpetuates the GBV in all its forms. Previous inquiries have collected evidence of the variety of policies and resources developed by the Department of Basic Education as well as valuable information on existing interventions and prevention programmes in the field of GBV when dealing with youths.

A review of theories used in other studies connected to GBV was done and a suitable theoretical framework was selected. The adopted framework here is based on the Bioecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (2005), which provides lenses for the understanding of behavioural patterns and in this instance, GBV and SRGBV, and the holistic Systems theory of Ludwig von Bertalanffy, which is widely applied in management amongst many other fields and provides tools for evaluation of effectiveness.

The next chapter focuses on the research methodology selected for this study. The researcher clarifies the decision-making process which led to the choice of paradigm, research approach and the methodological steps of the research process.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In Chapter 2, a review of relevant literature was conducted and theoretical framework was identified. In this chapter I discuss the steps of the research design and the selected methodology for the present study.

Creswell (2013) defines the research design as the entire sequence of steps taken from the moment the research problem is determined, followed by writing the research questions, data collection, analysis, interpretation of results and writing of report for the inquiry. Every single step of this process is underpinned by the personal beliefs and convictions of the researcher. In order to position the study in the spectrum of possible research designs, the research paradigm has to be established first. I begin with a discussion on the concepts connected to the research paradigm and the different paradigms, after which I justify the choice of paradigm for this study.

### **3.2 Research paradigm**

Khatri (2020: 1435) refers to a research paradigm as the “research philosophy” which provides the ground for the research work. He describes it as “basic and comprehensive belief system to view the research phenomenon” (Khatri 2020: 1436). Other scholars, such as Creswell and Creswell (2018) prefer using the term worldview instead of paradigm. Matta (2021) denotes that the paradigmatic beliefs are guide the selection of research methods. Furthermore, drawing on the early work of Denzin and Lincoln (2000), it can be concluded that the background of the researcher connected to his/her philosophical beliefs impacts every decision regarding the research process, including methodology and methods.

Creswell and Poth (2018) indicate that paradigm embraces four elements: epistemology, ontology, methodology and axiology. Cooksey and McDonald (2011) state that epistemology comes from the Greek word episteme which means knowledge. Epistemology scrutinises how we collect knowledge and how we can communicate knowledge to others. Brundett and Rhodes (2013) extend that definition of epistemology noting that it is that part of philosophy that studies knowledge, its nature, limits, construction and what distinguishes between the different types of knowledge.

There are two epistemological views, which are fairly oppositional. The first one states that knowledge is real, tangible and can be transferred – this view is labelled objective or positivist. The second one claims that knowledge is subjective and depends on the experience and insight of the observer – this view is called subjective or interpretive. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) maintain that there are four sources of knowledge: intuitive, connected to the beliefs, faith and intuition; authoritative, comprising information collected from leaders in organisation, people in the know, and books; logical, focusing on reason as a way of building knowledge, and empirical, knowledge constructed from the experiences of the senses and verifiable objective facts.

The ontology of a paradigm is the study of the nature of reality and what can be known about reality. It relates to the assumptions the researcher supposes in order to accept something as real and it makes sense. Ontology directs the researcher's thinking through the research problem, its significance and the options of approaches to resolving it.

The methodology of a paradigm is linked to the research design, the methods, approaches and procedures. Methodology ensures the coherent flow of the processes embedded in the research in order to gain knowledge regarding the research problem. Any encountered limitations and the ways to overcome them are also integrated into the methodology (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017).

Axiology refers to ethical matters that have to be taken into account when designing a research project. It deals with the researcher's consideration of the human values of every person that will be involved in the study, as well as any psychological, physical, economical, legal or other consequences that may arise for the participants. There are four criteria for ethical conduct: teleology, deontology, morality and fairness. Teleology is the theory of morality which endorses fundamentally good choices in every human endeavour. It pursues the attempts for the meaningful results of a study to serve for the benefit of as many people as possible. Scheffer (1982) asserts that deontology is encapsulated by the view that every decision made in the process of the research and the actions thereof should be useful to the researcher, the participants, the community of scholars, or the public in general. The morality criterion relates to the

“intrinsic moral values” that will be maintained throughout the research (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017: 28). The fairness criterion postulates that the researcher ought to be fair to all participants and their rights must be protected.

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) maintain that ethical considerations are applied with focus on four principles: privacy, accuracy, property, and accessibility. Privacy is connected to the way data will be collected, analysed and protected. When planning an inquiry, it is very important to consider what information the participants will be expected to share about themselves, and their associations or organisations. The accuracy reflects who carries the responsibility for the genuineness and accuracy of information. The researcher has to be transparent with the participants in how the data will be cross-checked to ensure accurate records. The property criterion is connected to who is going to own the data, also it should be indicated if payment will be made in exchange for the data. The accessibility criterion clarifies who will have access to the collected data, how its safe storage will be ensured, what conditions would be placed for access to the data by the researcher or the participants and how access to data will be achieved (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017).

Scholars have identified the dominant paradigms in educational research as: positivist, post positivist, interpretivist, critical, (Candy 1989) and pragmatic (Tashakkori and Teddle 2003). The French philosopher Auguste Comte (1856) proposed the positivist paradigm as the scientific method of gaining experience and knowledge of human behaviour through observation and reason. Research confined within the positivist paradigm rests on inventing of hypotheses, testing them, proposition of “operational definitions”, calculations, extrapolations and drawing conclusions based on deductive logic (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017: 30). The positivist paradigm determines that quantitative research is the foundation to producing explanations or predictions through measurable outcomes. It is accepted that in the positivist paradigm “the epistemology is objectivist, the ontology is naive realism, the methodology is experimental, and the axiology is beneficence” (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017: 31).

The postpositivist paradigm assumes that the reality is imperfect. It can never be completely understood. The truth is not absolute. This paradigm does not render it



utterly necessary to have hypotheses and experimentation but accepts that observations are foundational. The epistemology is also objectivist. Ontology is critical realism (Annells 1996). The methodology here is reflexive (Henderson 2011) and the axiology views multiplicity and complexity as characteristics of humanity (Ryan 2006).

Cresswell (2013) purports that social (interpretive) constructivism is rooted in the belief that different individuals form their own meaning of the world they live in. These meanings are usually forged through interactions with other individuals and strongly influenced by “cultural and historical norms” and therefore they are constructed (Creswell 2013: 25). Typical constructivist inquiry will have open-ended questions to allow the subjects to formulate their meanings which is often done while interacting with other people. The researchers focus on the way the interactions flow, they take interest in the context and the environment in which the participants are embedded in order to understand the particular cultural and social factors that contribute to the interactions and the world views. The beliefs and cultural norms of the researcher shape the interpretations he/she will have of the meanings constructed by the participants; this is why this paradigm is also acknowledged as interpretive.

The pragmatic paradigm is described by Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) as bridging the gap between positivism and interpretivism as opposing paradigms. This paradigm is characterised by “relational epistemology...a non-singular reality ontology...a mixed methods methodology...and value-laden axiology” (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017: 35). Creswell (2013) suggests that the focus of the pragmatic paradigm is on the application of the findings of the research towards the solution of the problem. Therefore, the researcher has the freedom to select methods and strategies for the inquiry that best fit the purposes.

Within the frame of this study, we can identify few layers of perceiving reality. The researcher brings to this inquiry personal understanding on acceptable and unacceptable behaviour assigned to the different genders instilled through upbringing and socialising. The interest of the researcher in the sphere of SRGBV and the intervention and preventative measures stems from her being educator in a primary school. Secondly, the participants in the inquiry contribute their personal views and

experiences regarding the topic of gender-based violence in secondary schools. Thirdly, during the process of analysis the researcher interprets the collected data through the lenses of her personal experiences and beliefs. This multi-layered perception of reality falls in the sphere of constructivism. Therefore, the research study is located in the constructivist paradigm.

### **3.3 Research Methodology**

A qualitative approach was selected for this study because of its exploratory nature. Denzin and Lincoln (2013) describe qualitative research as an approach that places the focus on the processes and socially constructed meanings as opposed to quantitative approach, which emphasises the causal variables and their relationships. Butler-Kisber (2018: 9) identifies qualitative approach as in-depth study of the current conditions and calls it a “way of being in the research” and a “holistic inquiry”.

Creswell (2013: 45) suggests that the qualitative approach involves: (1) conducting the research in “natural settings” – the very context of the studied phenomenon; (2) “the researcher is the key instrument of research”, meaning that the researcher collects the data personally and uses collection instrument developed by him/herself, not other researchers; (3) multiple ways of collecting data are utilised, like observations, interviews, document analysis, opposed by single source in quantitative studies; (4) “complex reasoning” involving “inductive and deductive processes” comprise the analysis of collected data; (5) emergent and evolving design characterises the entire process of inquiry, and (6) a “holistic account” of the problem under study, which reflects “the complex interaction of factors”, which is provided to the reader (Creswell 2013: 47).

According to Creswell (2013), by keeping in mind the ontological issues, the qualitative approach embraces multiple realities; this supposes that the researcher has his/her own perception of reality, the participants may have their understanding of reality differing of the researcher’s one, and the readers of the study may have their own view. This is reflected by the different themes that emerge as the data analysis unfolds. Regarding epistemology, qualitative studies are characterised by “minimizing the distance” between the inquirer and the subjects in order the experiences of the

individuals to paint the picture of the studied phenomenon (Creswell 2013: 20). The axiological applications to qualitative study led the researcher to acknowledge his/her values and biases that cause him/her to be positioned in the inquiry in a certain way.

This study seeks to establish what is the current state of SRGBV, what preventions and interventions are in place in selected secondary schools in Durban area, and how efficient they are. According to Piekari & Weich (2018), one very popular qualitative strategy is the case study. Thomas & Myers (2015: 7) define case studies as analyses of a programme, process, activity, event and even individuals within the frame of determined period of time, which are investigated holistically “by one or more methods”. Mills, Durepos and Wiebe (2010) indicate that case study can be utilised to assess or monitor policy or intervention. Hence a case study was selected as a strategy for this research. Leaning on the renowned methodological authority of Yin and Eisenhardt, Piekari & Weich (2018) suggest that case study has scientific worth grounded in the systemic rigour through triangulation, chain of evidence and audit trail.

Thomas and Myers (2015) provide a typology of the case studies based on the focus of interest for study. When the focus is solely on one person, phenomenon, or a single event, the research is done through a single case study also known as “classic” case study. It can take on three formats: retrospective, diachronic and a snapshot. Multiple case studies deal with more than one element of the subject and compare the individual elements. The straightforward comparison of the elements is framed within a simple comparative study. There the focus will be on the nature of the difference between the elements. Another comparison study can be done within a broader case with nested elements. These elements gain their integrity from the broader case. Regarding the time frame of the subject the multiple cases can be parallel or sequential. The parallel cases are happening at the same time and are investigated in parallel with each other, whereas the sequential cases follow the subject, as it happens in cases that unfold consecutively (Thomas and Myers 2015: 124).

Crossman (2020) concurs with the typology described by Thomas and Myers (2015) which in addition identifies three types of case study: key cases – the researcher’s

primary focus is on the phenomenon or the context; outlier cases – the particular event or phenomenon stands out of the norm, and local knowledge case studies – there has been plenty of information accumulated on the topic and the researcher is “well-poised” to do a study of it. Within these three types, there are four different forms of case studies referred to by Crossman (2020): illustrative, which is a case study which describes the nature, the context or the relationships and processes that are taking place; exploratory, which is often referred to as pilot study, because it serves in identifying the research questions, methods and procedures for a more complex study; cumulative, which it utilises studies completed on the given topic in order to reach to generalisation, and critical instance case study, where the researcher follows the development of a unique event and sometimes it can be used to challenge assumptions that may be proven wrongful because they are rooted in a lack of critical understanding.

Balbach (1999) states that case studies reveal details about given process, explore interrelations and outcomes and are very useful in programme evaluating because they provide the full picture of what occurred. Evaluative case study should be utilised when the program is unique, when the existing program is applied to new settings or when unique outcome requires investigation.

Stemming from objectives 1 and 2 of this study, which seek to explore the current state of SRGBV and any prevention and intervention programs related to that in selected secondary schools in Phoenix, this case study incorporates features of exploratory case study. However, objective 3 requires assessment of the management of such strategies and evaluation of how successful the strategies in curbing SRGBV are. For this reason, some elements of evaluative case studies are also present.

### **3.4 Sampling strategy and selection of participants**

Saunders & Townsend (2018) suggest that in qualitative research participants are chosen rather than a sample being selected. This choice of the researcher is guided by the characteristics of the participants, which should enable the answering of the research questions. In order for this to happen, the qualitative researchers utilise non-probability (non-random) sampling techniques. One such technique widely used in

qualitative inquiries is purposive sampling, which is based on the researcher's judgement to identify participants who can assist with answering the study questions (Saunders & Townsend 2018: 486).

SRGBV is a phenomenon observed in all types of schools and all domains of education. However, Kim, Sinatra and Seyranian (2018) claim that adolescence is the most important time of identity development. During that time, young people become more self-aware and gain experience in social relationships, they know their rights and are able to communicate fluently their needs. This was the underpinning idea for selecting secondary schools as a source for data collection. Currently, there are 21 secondary schools in Phoenix, Durban area. Systemic selection was done through listing the schools in alphabetic order and selecting every other secondary school (Crow et al. 2014). A list of ten schools was then submitted to the provincial Department of Education for approval and upon obtaining the letter from the gatekeeper, the circuit manager was informed. The schools were contacted via email with all the necessary information, and appointments for initial visits were made telephonically.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher identified three categories of participants to constitute the sample. The first category of participants was high school learners who hold the RCL-chair positions at their schools. In consideration of the COVID-19 pandemic which unfolded from 2020 throughout the world and remained a current factor during data collection done during the course of 2021, the researcher resolved to limit the number of participants to the minimum in compliance with COVID-19 regulations. Learner-participants were represented by the RCL-chairs. This position permits such learners to sit in SGB-meetings when required and carries an expectation of the holder to be aware of any discipline hearings and other issues connected to SRGBV. RCL-chairs have to be knowledgeable of prevention and intervention programmes that are utilised by the school regarding SRGBV and therefore can provide the learners' perspective on this matter. This perspective is connected to objective 1 of the inquiry. Similarly, the perspectives of educators and managers (category 2 and category 3 participants respectively) were considered in order to satisfy this objective as well as objectives 2 and 3. The members of the Disciplinary

Committee are well aware of issues within the school. Their views were voiced through one representative, the chair of the committee. As a member of the staff and also part of this committee, such an individual provides the perspective of implementer. Whenever the chair was not available, a request to him/her to identify suitable representative was made. The principal of a school carries the responsibility for the implementation of all departmental policies and programmes within the context of the school. The principal was the SMT who provided the perspective of a manager. Below is a table with demographic information of the participating schools in 2021. The participant profiles follow in Table 3.2.

Table 3.1: Demographic information of schools participating in the study, 2021

School	Enrolment	School population groups, (%)		
		Indian	Black	Coloured
A	890	80	17	3
B	723	14,5	85	0,5
C	400	35	65	-
D	650	50	50	-
E	1093	93	6	0,1
F	698	45	54	1
G	920	27	73	-
H	700	60	39	0,5

Table 3.2: Participant Profiles

SCHOOL		PORTFOLIO	No. years in the school	Age	Gender
A	Learner A	RCL-chair	5	17	F
	Educator A	Member of DC	10	35	F
	SMT A	DP	4	36	M
B	Learner B	Learner	2	14	F
	Educator B	Member of DC	12	58	F

	SMT B	DP	16	60	F
C	Learner C	RCL-member	5	18	F
	Educator C	Member of DC	13	36	F
	SMT C	Principal	26	54	M
D	Learner D	RCL-chair	5	17	F
	Educator D	Chair of DC	30	56	M
	SMT D	Principal	7	59	M
E	Learner E	RCL-chair	5	18	M
	Educator E	Member of DC	16	41	M
	SMT E	DP	22	61	F
F	Learner F	Learner	3	15	F
	Educator F	Member of DC	6	37	F
	SMT F	DP	15	56	M
G	Learner G	RCL-chair	5	17	F
	Educator G	Member of DC	30	51	M
	SMT G	HOD	30	57	F
H	Learner H	RCL-chair	5	17	M
	Educator H	Member of DC	15	50	M
	SMT H	Deputy Principal	40	62	F

The primary data for this inquiry was collected through individual interviews. All interviews were conducted during school hours and on the school premises. The venue where participants and the researcher met for face-to-face interview was usually an office in the administration block. This was done in compliance with the requirement of the Department of Education during the COVID-19 pandemic for limiting the access of outsiders in a school. The duration of each interview was limited to one hour maximum.

During the planning of the inquiry, the envisioned total minimum number of participants was  $n=30$ , based on the fact that there is one representative per each of the three categories (learners/ educators/ SMTs), and the total number of schools was ten.

This was the minimum participants until data saturation is reached. However, data saturation was achieved when the collection process was completed within eight schools.

Lopez and Whitehead (2013) clarify that contrary to quantitative research, qualitative methods do not pre-determine sample size because the focus is on the richness of data. The sample size should be big enough to lead to data saturation and to allow meaningful analysis. Data collection continues until data becomes repetitive, in the sense that no new themes emerge. Therefore, the saturation of data is based on the richness and not the quantity of data. Upon reasonable satisfaction of the researcher's expectation of data saturation, the collection can stop (Lopez and Whitehead 2013).

### **3.5 Data collection**

Brundett and Rhodes (2013: 14) remind us that the interpretive paradigm, where this study is located, is "people-centred" and integrates the research with the environment of the observed phenomenon. The researcher "immerses" in the studied environment and "explores the meanings" assigned to events and phenomena by the participants and captures their perspectives. This yields rich and deep description of the context. In addition, Hurst et al. (2015) maintain that qualitative research aims to encapsulate the essence and depth of the participants' beliefs, feelings, thoughts and experiences.

Interviews are one of the most common qualitative data collection methods. Butler-Kisber (2018) defines interview as a way for the participants to "organise their experiences" and a way of collecting "primary data". Busetto et al. (2020: 3) state that the interviews are means for accessing the personal insights, experiences, motivations and opinions. This method can be compared to "conversation with a goal" (Hijmans & Kuyper in Busetto et al. 2020). According to the degree to which interviews are structured, they vary from being fully structured (questionnaires), open (free conversation) and semi-structured. The semi-structured interviews comprise of open-ended questions and are guided by a topic list or interview schedule. O'Reilly and Dogra (2017) recommend the open-ended questions because they allow the interviewees to formulate own answers which carry plenty information and may bring into focus new questions. Similarly, Roberts et al. (2019) suggest that the purpose of



the semi-structured interviews is to understand the studied phenomenon through the meanings assigned to it by the people. In order to ensure that the questions for this inquiry were up to standard, two high school English teachers reviewed them.

The list or schedule for the interviews contains the broad areas of interest and may also include sub-topics. As the researcher becomes more familiar with the field at the initial stages of data collection, the interview schedule is often improved. The interviews are audio- or video-recorded, although in some instances notes can be taken instead (Busetto et al. 2020). Butler-Kisber (2018) recommends audio recording as means for collecting data. Motivating factor for this is the possibility to revisit the interview and it allows the researcher undivided attention while there. A voice-recorder was used to record the deliberations of the participants and transcripts of the recordings were done.

The study uses two data sources: interviews and document analysis. The secondary data is collected through review of school policies, guidelines, code of conduct, records of disciplinary hearings and any written communications to learners and/or parents regarding SRGBV official memos, letters, circulars, issued to learners, staff members and parents, for the period 2016-2020. Data extraction tool was developed specifically for the data collection purposes of this study. A copy of the tools can be found in Appendices 9 and 10.

Milovanovitch (2018: 7) states that policy analysis is “investigation of the implementation and impact of existing policy” which aims ultimately at advancement and refinement of strategies. Tumwine (2014) recommends document analysis as a way of triangulating the research data based on the interviews. Documents provide information from distant and recent past (Tumwine 2014). Document analysis enable the researcher of this study to track changes over period of time in the implementation of prevention and intervention programmes regarding SRGBV and make recommendations.

Rashid et al. (2019: 6) concurs with Tumwine (2014) that multiple sources of empirical data allow triangulation which strengthens rigor, complexity, depth and richness of inquiry. The initial planning of the research design here included focus group interviews to be conducted with learners and educators. Unfortunately, the COVID-19

pandemic enforced many restrictions on forms of interaction and made access to the field of inquiry much more difficult. The researcher reconsidered the use of focus group discussions. Instead, personal interviews with a representative per category were done. Document analysis was used to compare findings and strengthen rigor and depth of the study.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that qualitative analysis is done inductively through observing patterns, forming categories, and identifying themes. Data is organised through “increasingly more” abstract pieces of information. The inductive process involves constant movement back and forth between concepts and raw information until “comprehensive set of themes” is established (Creswell and Creswell 2018: 257). As the process of analysis advances, researchers seek to understand if more evidence needs to be collected as they refer to the collected data and the themes. This is a deductive practice and therefore qualitative analysis is a very complex process overall (Creswell and Creswell 2018).

Data analysis in qualitative research is done simultaneously with data collection. Herzog et al. (2019: 1) claim that thematic analysis is “a corner stone of qualitative data analysis” and it is “cost-effective and flexible tool for exploratory research”. Furthermore, Herzog et al. (2019) suggest that thematic analysis constitute the very beginning of all qualitative analysis. Similarly to Creswell and Creswell (2018), Herzog et al. (2019: 2) consider thematic analysis both inductive and deductive process and deem it “particularly suitable” to explore perceptions, understandings and experiences.

The process of qualitative thematic analysis, according to Nowell et al. (2017:4), is “iterative and reflective” which may be described by a linear 6-phase method and requires continuous revisiting of the collected data. This process includes familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

Xu and Zammit (2020) concur with Nowell et al. (2017) on the six phases of thematic analysis. They associate theme with pattern that captures critical information which

characterises the data in regard to the research questions. According to them, thematic code encapsulates the participants' views and displays the richness of the studied phenomenon.

The first phase of the process, familiarising oneself with the data, requires the researcher to engage with a set of data taken from the corpus of data and searching for patterns of meaning. Herzog et al. (2019) state that this process starts during the interview when the researcher is taking notes and linking statements as the data collection proceeds. Transcribing of the interviews is also part of this phase.

Xu and Zammit (2020) clarify that during phase 2 the initial codes are derived from the data. Herzog et al. (2019: 8) defines codes as "labels applied to segments of data". Xu and Zammit (2020) suggest that assigning single word or short phrase to a passage, known as descriptive coding, is an example of the inductive nature of the analysis. The next phase in the process is searching for themes. When the researcher identifies broader pattern that spans across the data set, this represents a theme. In order to correctly represent the collected data, the identified themes have to unite together in a "coherent analytic story". Any themes and codes that do not fit in the coherent picture are discarded (Xu and Zammit 2020: 3).

Roberts et al. (2019) describe the next step in the analysis in which the preliminary themes continue to be reviewed against the raw data until it is evident that they completely represent the data. According to them, the preliminary codes identified within a set that was taken from the corpus of the collected data are now applied to the larger data and compared to the raw data in iterative manor. When no new codes emerge any further, it is accepted that the codes are representative of the data. At this point, the data can be transferred to NVivo software program. Here, systematic coding is applied using the identified codes, now entered as nodes. The coded text is matched to the nodes (Roberts et al. 2019: 5). The NVivo program sorts, clusters, and compares codes within and between subgroups.

Thematic analysis was applied to the collected data. The interviews provided the perspectives of learners, educators, and SMTs, known as primary data. The audio-recordings were transcribed, and the researcher read carefully through a set of data.

The initial codes assigned in this preliminary process were recorded in a code list and applied to the next sets of data, which Saldana (2013: 9) describes as “codifying”. Emergent categories were identified while continuously reflecting and referring to the data. The codes were fine-tuned and in the second cycle of analysis the themes and sub-themes were developed and finalised.

Bowen (2009) suggests that document analysis is a form of qualitative research through which the researcher interprets records and formulates themes. This type of analysis has many advantages such as being efficient and available; it is cost-effective; there is a lack of obtrusiveness; it is stable and exact, and offers broad coverage. Some of the potential obstacles to document analysis described by Bowen (2009) include its insufficient detail, low retrievability and biased selectivity.

Gross (2018) agrees with the definition of document analysis by Bowen (2009). She advises researchers to keep records of all decisions made regarding document selection, the methods that were used for analysis and the results derived from it. Doing so provides a clear audit trail to be used by other researchers. Furthermore, Gross (2018) suggests that specifying the criteria for inclusion/exclusion of documents ensures authenticity. The two main criteria used for inclusion of documents in this inquiry were the types of documents (school policy, code of conduct, records of disciplinary hearings and any written communications to learners and/or parents regarding SRGBV official memos, letters, circulars, issued to learners, staff members and parents), and the time frame (2016-2020).

The steps taken in the document analysis included coding, categorising, interpreting and analysing thematically. These are discussed next.

- Coding and categorising

The document analysis in this inquiry takes on a supportive role. It constitutes the secondary data source which is used for triangulation with data from the face-to-face interviews. This role allows the researcher to use initial codes developed from the key words in the primary data analysis. The predetermined categories become a base for analysing the document sample deductively. The codes then are organised into categories and sub-categories (Gross 2018). The data extraction tool used during data

collection facilitates focused coding and thereafter systematic analysis. It saves time and permits inductive emergence of new codes while the existing codes are compared to the data.

- Interpretation

The sample of documents consists of different types, developed for different purposes and addressed to different audiences. This is why interpretation has to be engaged by the researcher in order to code and categorise (Gross 2018).

- Thematic analysis

Gross (2018: 6) suggests that during the thematic analysis of documents, the researcher searches for patterns of meanings that occur throughout the entire data and whether there are links between categories. These links or recurring ideas are themes which describe the studied phenomenon and usually, they answer the question “how?”

The documents were interpretively analysed and conclusions drawn based on the prevalent themes (Milovanovitch, 2018). All the findings were integrated in a report which indicates the nature and prevalent forms of SRGBV in secondary schools in the Phoenix area, as well as what interventions are currently being implemented and what challenges are being experienced.

### **3.7 Pretesting**

Hurst et al (2015: 56) claim that the pretesting is a very “effective technique” which leads to enhancing validity of the procedures for collecting qualitative data and improves the interpretation of findings. Since the nature of qualitative research is iterative rather than linear, the pretesting aims at self-correcting between design and implementation and provides opportunity “for attaining reliability and rigor” (Hurst et al. 2015: 56). In essence, pretesting is replicating on a small scale the collection of formal data and can indicate problems with the data collection instruments, the procedures and the methodology that may occur.

Hurst et al (2015) maintain that the validity of qualitative data depends on the skill of the interviewer to focus the answers on the topic of interest within the discussion time. Pretesting leads to assessing the language competency and content validity of the data

collection instruments. It indicates whether the participants assign the same meaning to the questions as it was intended by the researcher and whether the phrases used are culturally sensitive. Pretesting provides an opportunity for consideration of the posed questions when the received answers vary in a wide range and do not carry conceptual uniformity.

Through running out the processes and procedures during a pretest, the investigators can estimate the length of the formal contact sessions and can establish the best order of administering the data collection tools. Researchers are advised to look for any unexpected but valuable information that may come into light in the early parts of the session which may be connected to midway questions or towards the end of the interview. Interviewers can avoid repetition by probing further and collecting more details. The pretest also indicates what themes can be expected to emerge during the formal sessions and creates opportunity for developing and improving methodological and data collection skills in the interviewer (Hurst et al. 2015).

Babonea and Voicu (2011) add to the value of pretesting the fact that it can indicate what are the strengths and weaknesses of the data collection instrument-in the wording, the order of questions, if questions are interpreted in the same way by all participants and if there are any questions which participants are unable or unwilling to answer. Babonea and Voicu (2011) recommend that pretesting is done by experienced researchers because they easily can recognise any problematic areas. The authors describe two forms of pretesting: (1) participating (declared), during which the participants are aware of the purpose and actively work in identifying errors, and (2) undeclared pretesting carried out as the actual sessions in order to get the sense of how the interview flows. Both these pretest forms are valuable and whenever possible both should be done. Some newly developed types of pretesting include: cognitive interviews (used in questionnaires); response latency; expert panel; behaviour coding; vignette analysis; experiments; formal respondent debriefings; statistical modelling; re-interview and reconciliation method; three-step test-interview (used in self-administered questionnaires), and focus group – applicable to the first phase of question formulation.

Marcial and Launer (2021: 4370) concur with Hurst et al. (2015) and Babonea and Voicu (2011) on the importance of pretesting, and state that pretesting is the only way to ensure “valid measurement of phenomena”. Marcial and Launer (2021) claim that pretesting leads to reducing the sampling error and improves the response rates in surveys. Overall, pretesting examines the reliability and the validity of the questions. The authors suggest two most frequently used methods of pretesting – test-retest and internal consistency. The test-retest is a statistical method applied to interviews where the findings of two trial runs are compared to establish the size of the measurement error. Statistical reliability is “the consistency or repeatability of the measures” (Marcial and Launer 2021: 4370). It is very useful in situations where there is little variability in the observations done on the same participant over a period of time. At the same time, the internal consistency method of estimating reliability is administered once and it signifies to what extent the test scores will differ if there were slightly different items used.

In the context of this study, the data collection instruments were pretested by conducting interviews in two secondary schools in Phoenix which were not included in the target population of 10 selected secondary schools in Phoenix Circuit. The interviews were done with the RCL chair, an educator who is a member of the Disciplinary Committee or the chair of that committee, and an SMT-representative. The sessions were voice-recorded with the permission of the participants and later transcribed. In the course of pretesting, the researcher received clarity on how participants interpreted the questions and what potential themes can be expected to emerge during the formal sessions. The length of the interviews varied between 35-55 minutes and depended on the level of preparedness by the participants. Those who had read the questions in advance and thought about their answers took less time to formulate their answers during the interviews. A few new questions were added to the interview schedule in order to cover aspects of the study that were not fully explored in the initial schedule.

### **3.8 Delimitations**

The COVID-19 pandemic which ensued since 2020 brought a number of constraints to this study. The safety regulations enforced by the government had impact on the

study regarding the number of participants, the data collection strategy, and the number of schools included in the sample. The individual interviews with the three categories of participants had to be conducted with just one representative per category.

### **3.9 Limitations**

The limited number of participants inevitably had an effect on the robustness and depth of data. Under the constant threat for infections within the school environment, many schools turned down the request to be part of this study. This brought the total number of schools covered by this inquiry to 8 from the intended 10. The number of secondary schools in Phoenix is 21. This indicates that the results derived from the data for 8 out of 21 schools are not representative of Phoenix and therefore cannot be generalised.

### **3.10 Trustworthiness of the study**

It is very important that the collected data is accurate. Nowell et al. (2017) assert that for qualitative research trustworthiness is ensured through the following criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility is the recognition that the researcher's representations "fit" the participants' views. Transferability refers to generalisability of the study, which is assisted by the "thick descriptions" written by the researcher. Based on these, others seeking to transfer the findings of the study can exercise their judgment on what is applicable to their context. Dependability reflects the clear, logical and traceable documentation which allows the reader to examine the research process. Confirmability is establishing that the findings are acquired from the data by demonstrating how the researcher has arrived at the conclusions and interpretations.

It is recommended that researchers use marker for the theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices made throughout the study. Therefore, the process of decision-making has to be made clear and traceable (Nowell et al. 2017). With the permission of the participants, their responses were recorded. The findings, based on the analysis of the transcribed records, underwent member checking to verify with the participants that all is recorded and interpreted correctly. To strengthen rigor, an audit trail was used as it permits retroactive assessment in the conduct of the study. A detailed record-keeping of the raw data, field notes, transcripts and a reflexive journal contributed to



organising, cross referencing data, and reporting of the research method, which create a clear audit trail (Nowell et al. 2017).

### **3.11 Ethical considerations**

Ramrathan, le Grange and Shawa (2017) clarify that ethics are involving the moral issues and consideration of the human rights when doing research with humans. The informed consent obtained holds a key position in ethical educational research, as argued by Ramrathan, le Grange and Shawa (2017). It entails voluntary consent to participate in the research, and the researcher's responsibility is explaining to the participants clearly how the process of research will be conducted, why their participation is necessary, who will use the findings and how the findings will be reported. It also must be made clear to the participants that they have the right to withdraw from participating at any time, without providing reasons and without any consequences for them. The authors specify that for research conducted in public schools, permission should be sought from the Provincial Department of Education, and parents/ guardians' consent is acquired when working with minors.

Abed (2015) outlines the informed consent and the ability to discontinue participation at any time as expression of the respect for persons and refers to the Belmont's Report (1978), with focus on the three main principles of ethical research involving children: respect for persons, beneficence and justice. Beneficence is the minimising of the negative effects on the participants while maximising the benefits from the study.

In this study, the vulnerable participants are the learners. The researcher has selected to interview only RCL chairs with consideration of the health protocols for minimal contact during the COVID-pandemic. In addition, it was taken into account that usually such learners are seniors who possess enough maturity to grasp the reasons for the research and express their views. Strict confidentiality measures to protect the identity of the participant also contribute to protection of the rights and dignity of participants. Beneficence is related to the principle of justice which points at the learners as beneficiaries of the research, because the findings and recommendations of this enquiry would lead to improving the practices related to GBV at school.

A request for permission to do the study in the ten selected secondary schools in Phoenix, containing copy of the interview schedule for the learners and an interview schedule for the individual interviews with educators and SMT members, was addressed to the Provincial Department of Education and the local circuit. Upon receiving the approval from the Provincial Department of Education, the permission of the principals of the schools was obtained. The RCL chairs were requested to sign assent forms and written permission from the parents was obtained prior the data collection. The educators and SMTs were given consent forms.

The document analysis of records kept by schools carries its own ethical considerations. Bowen (2009) cautions researchers of possible bias in selection of documents and bias in analysing the records. Furthermore, transparency is required to accompany every step in the analysis starting with the development of data collection instrument. Due to the fact that the records selected to be reviewed for the purpose of this study have very sensitive nature, dealing with discipline and its management, the researcher signed a confidentiality agreement with each school.

### **3.12 Confidentiality**

Part of the chosen participants represents a vulnerable population and as such, confidentiality was crucial during the whole process of the inquiry. Therefore, participants and all stakeholders were informed that the collected data is used solely for the purpose of study and stored in a secure environment. The participants were assigned with random alphabet identity. Also, they were informed prior to the interview that their participation was entirely voluntary, and should they feel uncomfortable, they had the right to discontinue their participation at any stage.

### **3.13 Challenges during data collection**

The data collection process was conducted over 7 months (May-November 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic constituted serious challenges regarding the accessibility of schools and the number of participants that could be interviewed. During the pandemic, in the course of 2020-2021 the schools operated on alternative timetable, which meant that each grade was allocated a day in the week to attend, except for grade 12, which were daily and grade 11 which were going to school twice a week. This

created immense pressure on educators for content coverage within very short time frame, and school management declined the request of researcher to engage with learners during the course of the school day. However, an agreement was reached for arrangements to be made with transport, fetching learners, and parents in order for the interviews to be conducted immediately after the last period for the day. In cases where such agreement was not reached, the researcher conducted online interviews which were audio-recorded and transcribed. During every interview, done face-to-face, strict COVID protocols were observed: social distancing, wearing of mask by all present individuals, sanitising of hands and temperature screening prior to the meeting. Although the best venue for the interviews was identified as the school library, the principals suggested that an office in the administration block be used instead due to restricted access for outsiders in keeping with the instructions by the Department of Education for the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. To facilitate interviews within limited time frames, the researcher recommended that participants acquaint themselves with the interview schedule. This suggestion, however, was not always adhered to: for this reason, a few of the interviews took longer than others although they remained within the time frame of 1 hour.

Second serious obstacle experienced by the researcher was the end of the three-year cycle for Post Provisioning Norms (PPN), which coincided with the end of 2020. Due to the process, many schools were understaffed and refused to participate in the study because there was a larger teaching load and more stress for educators to carry. Some schools that were part of the list of secondary schools in Phoenix, selected for the inquiry, cited 8 educators short on their staff. For these reasons, the researcher had to leave out those schools that turned down the request for participation in the research. In another instance, a particular secondary school had 5 management and senior members of staff retiring. Consequently, the school underwent protest action from the students who felt that some issues of race equity in the management of the school had to be addressed. This school did not respond to the researcher's request to conduct the study.

Cases of COVID-19 infected learners or educators occurring constantly throughout the data collection period also prevented schools from being part of the inquiry. Principals

cited the apprehension of staff to meet any outsiders even though safety measures were in place. Whenever the health safety concern was the major barrier for access, the researcher replaced the face-to-face interviews with online or cell phone interviews. They were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants.

The data collection for this study was done amidst second and third COVID-19 wave and the July looting riots, prompted by the arrest of the former President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma. Phoenix was seriously affected by this time of unrest, with clashes between groups captured on all media platforms.

Accessing the documents for analysis presented a further challenge. In order to track how SRGBV issues were handled at secondary schools, the researcher selected a period of time of five years (2016-2020). Some schools did not keep the records from the past 5 years regarding disciplinary issues. They could provide such records for the past three years instead. That meant that the records extended between 2019- 2021. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the DoE (KZN) adopted alternative timetables to accommodate the health requirements for social distancing and therefore a maximum of 50% of learners were present on any given school day. This led to significantly improving of discipline and practically very few records of misdemeanours were available for analysis. In other instances, the Disciplinary Committee-records were misplaced or not available because the person in charge had just retired or in other cases has been promoted and left the school.

Even though these challenges had to be overcome, the very experience of going through this process enriched the personal experience of the researcher and served as a platform for growth.

### **3.14 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I espoused the steps of research design and justified the selected methodology. The research paradigm was identified as (interpretive) constructivism. The qualitative approach was found suitable due to the exploratory nature of this study. Case study was selected as the strategy of the inquiry. The sample to be studied was selected within secondary schools and included three categories of participants, namely, RCL chairs, educator representatives from Disciplinary Committees (DC),

and SMT members (a deputy principal or principal). This ensured viewpoints illuminating different angles of the object of study. Individual semi-structured interviews were chosen as a data collection method, and were audio-recorded after obtaining the permission of the interviewees. To strengthen the trustworthiness of the study, the primary data was triangulated through secondary data collection by a review of school policies, codes of conduct, official communications regarding SRGBV to learners and parents issued in letters, memos or circulars, and records of misdemeanours. Thematic analysis was deemed most appropriate and the steps through which the process unfolded were described. Furthermore, the limitations, delimitations and trustworthiness of the study were considered, and ethical considerations were addressed. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the challenges that were encountered during the data collection and how they were overcome.

In the next chapter, I present and discuss the findings of this study.

## **CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

The previous chapter provided a detailed discussion on the research methodology. In this chapter, I present and analyse the collected data from the individual semi-structured interviews conducted with each of the three categories of people in every school: the RCL chairperson (learner); an educator representative from the Disciplinary Committee, and an SMT member, Deputy Principal or Principal. I analyse what the data reveals in relation to the three objectives of the study as follows:

- To determine the types of school-related gender-based violence prevalent at secondary schools in the Durban area.
- To explore what gender-based violence prevention and intervention programmes are currently in place in secondary schools in the Phoenix area.
- To assess the management of these programmes and their effectiveness in preventing and curbing SRGBV at selected secondary schools in the Phoenix area.

Verbatim quotations are used in the data presentation to ensure that the proper context of the responses is sustained.

This chapter is divided into two sections: Findings on the causes and prevalent types of SRGBV in selected secondary schools, and Management of intervention and prevention programmes for SRGBV in the selected secondary schools in Phoenix. The first section highlights what is the current state of SRGBV in secondary schools in Phoenix and more particularly, what types are prevalent, and what the causes of this phenomenon are locally. The second section deals with the management of the intervention and prevention strategies for SRGBV applied by secondary schools in Phoenix and more specifically, what procedures are followed and what channels are used when reporting cases, how monitoring is fulfilled, what policies direct the schools' response, what interventions and preventative measures are put in place, and what challenges are encountered by the schools regarding SRGBV. Finally, insights gained from the suggestions of participants on ways to improve the schools' responses, conclude the chapter.

#### **4.1 Section 1: Findings on the causes and prevalent types of SRGBV in selected secondary schools in Phoenix**

As discussed in Chapter 2, in order to obtain a holistic understanding of the root causes of SRGBV and its prevalent types at this particular location and context, I used the Bioecological theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner (2005). This particular theory takes into consideration the interactions and relationships between individuals, their immediate family, relationships with classmates and teachers, parent-teachers' interactions, and the influence of the neighbourhood and the larger society with its social and cultural norms. It also follows through how they shape and mould the attitudes and behaviour of the person.

As previously stated in Chapter 3, data was collected through individual interviews with three categories of people from each secondary school. The first category was RCL chair, the second category a representative from the Disciplinary Committee, and the third category was an SMT member, a Deputy Principal or Principal.

##### **4.1.1 Participants' definitions of GBV**

Each interview was initiated through introductory questions on the general understanding of the participant of what GBV constitutes and what types he/she is aware of. This was necessary to allow the individual to become immersed in the topic and to establish a beginning point for the discussion. A selection of words and phrases is used below to illustrate the participants' understanding of GBV.

The RCL chairs (learners) defined GBV as:

*"...form of violence or abuse towards a specific gender..."* (Learner A)

*"...violation...being criticized...mocked based on their gender..."* (Learner C)

*"...harassment..."* (Learner D)

*"...humiliation..."* (Learner F)

*"...discrimination..."* (Learner G)

All learners had a fairly good understanding on what constitutes GBV and provided an open definition which does not necessarily prescribe male violence against female. This could be so because the topic of gender-based violence has been tracked through

most of the grades of the schooling carrier through the subject of Life Skills (Intermediate Phase) or Life Orientation (Senior – General Education Training Phase) and learners are familiar with the content (South Africa, Department of Education 2021).

The Level 1 educators had similar views to the learners. GBV was described as:

*“...act of violence against a person, not necessarily female, but based on their sexuality or gender.”* (Educator A)

Most of the definitions included common words such as “*violence*”, “*perpetration*”, “*abuse*” and “*domination*”.

Educator G acknowledged that it also can be observed within the same gender, when two individuals are “*fighting over something*”.

Educator G: “*Ok, we are looking at violence by one gender onto the other. Generally, it is male-on-female. Sometimes we do get female learners on male learners as well, and we get... two persons of the same gender actually fighting over something as well.*”

The definitions provided by the SMTs concurred with those of learners and educators. Their descriptions included words such as “*violence*”, “*aggression*” and “*abuse*”.

Overall, the three categories of participants provided very good definitions of GBV which indicate existing understanding on the topic of interest. All the learners stated that GBV can be directed to any gender; educators and SMTs were similar in their opinions. The predominant perception of educators was that GBV could be directed to either male or female and one third of them associated the term with male being abusive towards female. Likewise, the majority of SMTs responded that GBV could work in either direction, and a small group linked GBV to male dominance over female. The association of GBV with male abuse against female could be tracked back to the regular reports by the media of women slain by their intimate partners or violated by other individuals.

The main reason for this view is clarified by Dartnall and Channon (2022: para. 1 line 1). They state that GBV is a “profound and wide-spread problem in South Africa,



impacting on almost every aspect of life. GBV (which disproportionately affects women and girls) is systemic, and deeply entrenched in institutions, cultures, and traditions in South Africa.”

Even though men are also victims of GBV, Ali (2018) in Oparinde & Matsha (2021: 2) claims that “the frequency, severity, and intensity of such violence is much greater for women than men”. This leads to a conclusion that GBV is a manifestation of enormous inequality between the genders in which girls and women are vulnerable and predominant targets.

#### **4.1.2 The current state of SRGBV at the selected secondary schools in Phoenix**

Objective 1 of this study aims to establish what the current state of SRGBV is in Phoenix secondary schools. Scrutinising the condition of SRGBV is a starting point in making an assessment on whether the measures applied by the schools are sufficient or not. Therefore, after the participants described what is SRGBV, they were asked to share their view on the current state of this phenomenon at their respective school.

All participants expressed their perceptions of the situation in their school through phrases such as “*low key*”, “*nearly non-existent*” and “*not really a problem*”.

Learners characterised the situation in their school regarding GBV as:

Learner A: “*not a very big problem*”

Learner B: “*not that serious*”

Learner C: “*...the situation in my school is not bad at all... Just the normal quarrelling between friends.*”

Learner D: “*...an average level, it is not hectic, **neither it is absent.***”

Learner E: “*I won’t say that there is no gender-based violence, but there is some to a very minor extent. It is not something that you see every day, but it does happen once in a while.*”

Learner F: “*As far as I am concerned nobody is part of this gender-based violence [in my school]*”

Learner G: *“The situation in my school, ...Maybe **on a scale of 1 to 10 let’s say it’s a two.**”*

Educators’ general response about the situation in their school can be outlined as being *“under control”* and having *“very few cases”*.

Educator H: *“We have isolated incidents. ...to be honest **very isolated, very isolated, not common**”*.

This comment echoes the responses of all educators.

Similarly, SMTs concurred with learners and Level 1 educators in their view that SRGBV in their school is not an issue.

SMT F: *“...we are in a very fortunate position, that we do not have violence in general, let alone gender violence. And if there is, it is **very undercurrent**, which **we don’t even notice it or pick it up, and it is not reported** – if there is. But we know our learners and there isn’t any gender-based violence and we do encourage learners to report any violence should it be inflicted upon them.”*

As educator H and SMT F describe, the cases are *“very isolated, not common”* and *“very undercurrent, which we don’t even notice or pick it up, and it is not reported”*, Palermo et al. (2014) suggest that globally there is a very high rate of under-reporting of GBV. The most common reasons people have for that include embarrassment, the belief that reporting will not make any difference and nothing will change, and also normalisation of GBV and acceptance that this is part of the life for women, and they should bear it.

SMT C: *“...I’ve been here for 30 years. To my knowledge it’s **non-existent**, but we do have our incidents where you get minor conflicts between learners. But in terms of being violent, we get **verbal abuse**, but it’s not prolonged thing, it’s once in a while, where a learner has taken something from someone, that kind of thing. But it’s not what I would consider a GBV, it’s just **minor conflicts** between a male and female.”*

SMT C depicts a very important point: the minor conflicts are not associated with GBV, they are perceived as interpersonal issues caused by miscommunication or misunderstanding.

There was also an acknowledgement by certain SMTs that indeed there are cases of SRGBV which they are aware of.

SMT G: *“Well, there were occasional reports of boys touching girls, you know, inappropriately, the girls don’t like it, they report it, but it is **very occasional thing**.”*

The school of SMT G has predominantly black learners coming from nearby informal settlement characterized by poverty, unemployment, very high levels of crime and violence. As discussed by Graaff and Heineken (2017), these factors together with cultural norms and expectations create pressure on boys to prove their masculinity and to assert their dominance over females.

None of the participants denied the reality of GBV in their schools. Rather they saw it as rare and an incidental phenomenon. During the course of the interview, participants made mention of an incident which took place at their school which completely fits the gender-based violence domain. One such example was articulated by Educator H, who referred to a 2020 case. It involved a couple of grade 12 learners whose romantic relationship started in the lower grades and continued all the way to their matric year. The school community witnessed many occasions on which the boy insulted and humiliated his girlfriend. The insults were done publicly, and teachers spoke to the girl and advised her to end the relationship. However, according to the participant, her low self-esteem kept her in the cycle of violence which escalated from verbal through psychological to physical. As she internalised the boy’s attitude as a normal way a person treats his partner, this further prevented the victim from seeking help. The continuous support and care shown by the teachers eventually led to the girl stopping the cycle of abuse by ending the relationship and successfully completing her studies. Alvarez-Lezotte et al. (2020) confirm that the emotional support by teachers has a positive effect on adolescents who are experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV). When educators reach out to learners in this situation and encourage them, they create an environment of acceptance where adolescents feel that they belong and therefore

they are able to achieve academically and surpass their challenges (Alvarez-Lezotte et al. 2020).

Although all the participants emphasized that GBV at their respective school was not serious and “*well under control*”, educators and SMTs raised the point that many learners are affected by GBV in the community or at home. Multiple educators from different schools stated that their school had learners falling pregnant and seeking help after the lockdown in 2020 and the months that followed it. Even though this type of GBV occurred beyond the school boundaries and is not the focus of the current study, it is important to assert its reality and the influence it has on the learner’s ability to attend classes, to perform academically and to cope with school activities.

Educator H: “...*we did have incidents, not in school, but three incidents – teenagers grade 10, were raped... and there were three learners that were pregnant.*”

SMT E: “*We’ve had more sexual abuse but that has happened more at home – the mum’s intimate partner has perpetrated against learners from our school, especially younger girls on the threshold of womanhood. So when we had the lockdown, I think they were confined in the home environment with the perpetrator, and then they brought it to school, and there was nobody else they could speak to during the period of COVID-lockdown, so that was the time, rather say last year [2020], especially in the August period, they had the largest number of cases of violence and it was mostly sexual violence.*”

Apart from the sexual violence, some learners have been enduring physical violence which also occurred out of school. Educator C describes her observations as follows:

Educator C: “*Well, with kids we notice maybe bruises on themselves, they are withdrawn. Those kids are quiet in class; they keep only to themselves because they don’t want to associate with other kids. Those are the things we noticed of those kids. They come with marks on their body...*”

School C has a majority of African learners attending. They travel with school bus or taxis because they reside at the outskirts of Phoenix, in the near-by informal settlements. Many of them stay with a relative or guardian who is not a family, and

some live in a home with single parent, usually the mother. This is a factor that increases their vulnerability because of the lack of parental supervision and exposes them to different types of violence (Kidman and Palermo 2016). In the cases where educators become aware of bruises or marks on the body of learners, according to Section 110 (1) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, they are obligated to report to the Departmental Head and it is escalated to the principal who will further engage social workers to investigate the matter (South Africa, Department: Social Development 2005).

SMT B: *"... So we do have those instances that we had it over to social workers where learners have been exposed to rape... it does impact on results, attitude, absenteeism etc."*

The educators and SMTs alike expressed genuine concern about these cases because they are aware of the living conditions and some of the challenges the learners experience. The link between victimisation and poor attendance, lack of motivation for work, apathy, and low grades is known to educators (Chitsamatanga and Rembe 2020).

Educator C illuminates another valuable point – some types of GBV are not easy to detect. Not always learners bear marks or bruises on their bodies as evidence of violence. It is their behaviour that indicates a problem which learners tend to hide (Yoon et al. 2018). Educator C speaks of *"quiet"* and *"withdrawn"* learners who *"keep to themselves"*. This maybe the aftermath of emotional and economical violence through which the victims are kept financially dependent on the perpetrator and feeling depressed because of the sense of hopelessness for ending their suffering.

As discussed in Chapter 2, research indicates that being victimised as children increases the probability for further victimisation later in life (Martin et al. 2021; Wight et al. 2022; Yoon et al. 2018). Therefore, dealing with victimisation and creating conditions for preventing it will have a positive impact on the overall performance of the individual learners and the school as an institution (Modiba2018).

The impression of the participants that SRGBV is not an issue in their school, and it is “rare” and “isolated” could be interpreted in the light of the fact that only serious issues are reported and taken to the attention of educators and management. Learners often choose not to report matters that they think are minor. If it is something more serious, they may not report either for fear of further victimisation or if they think that management would not do much about it (Chitsamatanga and Rembe 2020). The normalisation of GBV and accepting it as way of life creates a blindfold in the judgement of the real state of SRGBV. Therefore, one of the recommendations that are made in this study is for sensitising and creating greater awareness in learners, teachers, and management regarding recognition of SRGBV.

#### **4.1.3 Prevalent types of SRGBV in the selected secondary schools in Phoenix**

Participants in the study were asked to list the types of GBV they know of and each one demonstrated a sufficiently good knowledge on that matter. After that they described what were their observations regarding the particular types prevalent in their school over the period of interest (2016-2020). It was evident that the SRGBV in the selected secondary schools in Phoenix has an interpersonal nature. Mercy et al. (2017: 73) describe interpersonal violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power against other persons by an individual or small group of individuals. Interpersonal violence may be physical, sexual, or psychological, and it may involve deprivation and neglect”.

Learners described the prevalent types as mostly verbal, physical, emotional, bullying, and cyber bullying. GBV within romantic relationships was also observed by the learners. The most common types of GBV as witnessed by learners are verbal and physical, with verbal dominating strongly any other type. Physical violence was placed just after verbal violence. The emotional violence constituted a third compared to the physical type. Bullying, cyber bullying and GBV within romantic relationships were noted to have much lesser prevalence in comparison to verbal and physical violence.

The impressions of educators on the common types of SRGBV are very close to the learners. However, the reports on the physical type GBV are much lesser than the observations of learners. This can be seen in the light of the fact that physical

altercations transpire mainly within the time when a teacher is not present, like change of period, for example, or the place where it happens is a secluded spot away from the eyes of the teacher on duty. Therefore, physical GBV would be noted and reported only if it was serious or happened when a teacher was a witness.

Educator A noted a type of bullying connected to the sexual orientation of learners in her school. In her opinion, this type is rare.

Educator A:” ... *I just feel like we do have 1 or 2 learners, obviously they like to express their sexual orientation, for example a boy – if he wants to express his sexual orientation where he is **a bit feminine**, he’ll get bullied for it, you know children will tease him and things like that, but generally as I said they could threaten him.*”

Educator A identifies homophobic bullying in her school, which according to Menesinni and Salmivalli (2017), can affect as many as 80% of the LGBT adolescents in the school population. The researchers inform that homophobic teasing and harassment are the most prevalent types experienced by such minority groups of adolescents.

Educator A: “*Sometimes maybe a boy likes a girl, and the girl doesn’t like him. The boy generally will take offence to it and would pass remarks at her using derogatory words, sometimes it may affect them negatively.*”

We can conclude that this type of sexual bullying is not taking serious forms. It remains within the frames of teasing or threatening verbally but rarely escalate to physical fights. Moolman, Essop and Tolla (2020: 548) discuss their findings of aggressive sexual behaviour experienced by adolescent females which is fostered by “patriarchal sexualised culture” and views man as “holding disciplinary authority over women”. In this context, a refusal to relationship on the side of the girl is perceived as disrespectful act and therefore invokes verbal abuse by the boy.

Another educator communicated his concern about the online bullying also known as cyber bullying. According to Educator G, the physical altercations between males and females are minor in their nature; however, even though cyber bullying is more seldom, it goes to much more serious proportions.

Educator G: “Ok, we do have **altercations** between the learners, in terms of the different genders but we haven’t had major issues. Not in terms of physical violence, but we did look into some cases where learners have complained about bullying...it was not physical violence; it was a case where learners on social media started to talk about something... [it was] **cyber bullying**, and then, when it was brought to our attention, we investigated the matter and we dealt with it according to the Code of Conduct. That was more serious and most resent one, and unfortunately, involved matric learners, all of them in one class; it was becoming a situation where learners were uncomfortable...”

Auriemma et al. (2020) informs that cyber bullying very often happens within a social group like a school class, because it is a type of peer aggression. This form of bullying is driven by the internet access and widespread use of smart phones. Furthermore, the development of sites where digital files such as videos can be accessed or shared creates opportunities for cyber bullying. Auriemma (2020) indicates that the psychological impact of this type of bullying is very similar to the one from physical bullying and the repercussions on the individual’s life are long-lasting and serious.

The Level 1 educators characterised the verbal violence as most prevalent type. Physical violence was placed second. The educators’ responses indicated that they are more aware of these types of SRGBV than the learners. Similarly, emotional, cyber bullying and violence within romantic relationship followed with educators having higher awareness of these types comparing to the learners. This may be understood in terms of educators being adults with life experience and heightened recognition of emotional violence than learners.

The description of the prevalent types of GBV as perceived by the SMTs follows the pattern of the previous two groups of participants. They felt that learners engage in verbal abuse which can also take a written and online form. It was acknowledged that altercations and arguments sometimes escalate to physical fights but remain manageable. The SMTs descriptions of prevalent types of SRGBV revolved around:

*“minor disagreement infringements, the calling of names, writing messages on cell phones” (SMT C)*



*“verbal...and bullying for money” (SMT F)*

*“physical fight or arguments with the opposite gender...The most serious we had was basically a male hitting a female or female hitting a male” (SMT B).*

The evaluation of the common types of SRGBV done by the SMTs discloses that physical GBV even though not in serious forms, is most prevalent; next is verbal and romantic relationship related GBV. Sexual GBV, expressed as utterances/gestures/inappropriate touching was placed before emotional violence, bullying, and cyber-bullying.

The slight difference in the order SMTs classified the common types of SRGBV in comparison to the other two categories of participants could be due to the type of information that was cascaded to management. If the office had to deal mostly with physical cases, they would assume this as the most common type. As previously mentioned, verbal violence is rarely reported to management and usually is dealt with on a class level.

Overall, from the responses of the three categories of participants, the verbal GBV is the most prevalent type of violence in the recent five years, and it is expressed through name-calling, defaming learners, and humiliating them publicly. The physical type of GBV which is second in prevalence is reported to be expressed in forms like pushing, shoving, kicking, punching, pulling of hair. The emotional type of GBV is connected to romantic relationships of learners and it may develop into other types of violence, like economic, physical, and sexual. Bullying in all its forms – physical, verbal, emotional, cyber – is also quite often referred to as one of the forms of SRGBV in secondary schools in Phoenix. Specifically, cyber bullying appears to have become more problematic for certain schools, especially in the period 2020-2021 when learners turned to social media platforms as a major way of communication with school and friends.

We need to be cognisant of the fact that majority of cases go unnoticed by educators and management because the perpetrators choose to attack their victim in a time and place where they will not be interrupted and there would be minimal consequences for

their actions (Ngidi and Moletsane 2018). The perspective of the learners provides more realistic picture of the situation on the ground in comparison to educators and managers. At the same time, the true condition of SRGBV in each school cannot be judged based on the personal experiences of the RCL chairperson (RCL chair) only. A further and more in-depth study is necessary to determine the parameters of SRGBV in Phoenix secondary schools.

#### **4.1.4 Effects of COVID-19 pandemic on SRGBV in selected secondary schools in Phoenix**

The impression of “low key” GBV in selected Phoenix secondary schools could be emerging through the influence of the two years of COVID-19 pandemic, during which school life changed dramatically. Learners had to comply with all the requirements for COVID-19 safety, including social distancing of minimum 1,5m, wearing a mask, and sanitising. In order for safety regulations like social distancing to be observed in the classroom environment, schools had to adopt an alternative timetable. These alternative timetables facilitated the rotation of different grades on different days of the week for the secondary schools. Thus, the number of learners attending on any given day did not exceed the half of the total roll of the school. With the decrease in numbers of learners, discipline issues substantially declined, as it was the experience of the two participants below.

Learner E: “...*Considering the number of fights in schools in general, ok, our school in fact, prior to COVID and after COVID, would have reduced drastically, not only because of the intervention of teachers, but also the fear of COVID-19 has done that-[it] has reduced the number of learners who want to fight, because they are afraid to get physical with someone.*”

Educator H: “...*There is a massive change because discipline problems now...since COVID started...in general, the level of violence has stopped, because there is sometimes only 40% of the school comes. 40% and the number of teachers suddenly becomes larger, in a 100% the teachers' number looks smaller...so we have a better control of everything. And that has made it much more...there is no discipline issues as such, the worst discipline issue is basically, uniform.*”

The COVID-19 pandemic seems to have altered the more detectable side of SRGBV like physical and sexual GBV. However, it did not eliminate it; rather it was channelled via subtler forms of GBV. This was supported by the statements of some SMTs.

SMT D: *“...a serious problem...in this COVID period...on social media the schools are interacting with them [learners] via WhatsApp’s and online classes. You find that there are more boy/girl relationships. ...You find that they openly are dating boys/girls and their parents are aware of it. And when that picture goes onto social media, then only the parents come to react into the school but when you do your investigation you find that the mother is aware of the particular incident...”*

SMT D depicts a very pertinent issue, that of parental control and parental involvement. In most of the schools, this was a theme that continued emerging in every interview. Parents of secondary school learners seem to take on the role of bystanders instead of being actively involved in guiding their children during the time they most need the support. Instead of correcting or questioning their children’s behaviour, the parents simply do not get involved. Often this has serious consequences as we learnt from SMT D and SMT E, attests to a case below:

SMT E: *“...and we had one case of pornography. The boy was in a relationship and moved onto another, and each one wanted to reveal photographs of personal nature, and they are young, 14 years, even though they have deleted it – it is not good enough, because they already have forwarded the pictures to somebody else and I have also learnt that it was for revenge and jealousy; they react impulsively because they are young, they are emotionally immature and they don’t make sensible decisions at that time. To overcome their hurt, they want to prove that they are right.”*

An emerging trend is the popularisation of cyber bullying among learners used as a way of publicly disgracing and destroying the image of a person. Participants describe this type of bullying as a way of getting revenge on the other individual after breaking up a relationship, or because of jealousy, and sometimes it can even be used to dishonour a teacher for personal reasons like anger, dislike, getting back at him/her for unfair treatment. The cyber space extends far beyond the circle of school’s stakeholders and such violence has much greater impact reaching the victim. SMT E

explains that the immaturity of the adolescents who get involved in this kind of violence and their inability to make sound decisions due to the lack of life experience drive the perpetrators to devastating acts such as publishing online items of personal nature. This indicates a great need for intervention in this aspect, through creating awareness of the consequences on perpetrator and victim, as well as conflict resolutions alternative to these choices to be illuminated for learners.

#### **4.1.5 Learner-on-teacher GBV**

Even though learner-on-teacher GBV cases are seldom reported, the participants in the interviews recalled examples of such incidents. Some of the cases were aimed at interrupting the lesson and the gender of the teacher was used against him/her. This was the experience of Educator G:

Educator G: *“I think maybe because I am male the girls think they can take advantage of the situation. And they disrupt and see how far they can take it.”*

In other instances, the male learner felt disrespected by a female teacher and reacted to it. SMT C related an incident of a male African learner who felt that the female teacher is making fun of him not being able to read and responded with verbal violence. The principal intervened and it was established that the learner misunderstood the words of the educator and over-reacted. A similar case was communicated by Educator G, in whose school a female teacher reported the unruly behaviour of an African male learner. His reaction was threat for physical harm to the teacher. Educator G described how distressed the whole staff felt, because all knew that this boy was capable of fulfilling his threats.

Educator G: *“... That was one incident that I remember that we all were worried about because he was threatening to actually physically attack the teacher. Fortunately, the principal acted quickly.”*

Even though the female teachers in the examples above were just doing their job by maintaining discipline and focusing on producing academic results, the male learners felt disrespected simply because they were corrected by a female. They failed to understand that this was not aimed at them as individual, but was plainly facilitating

teaching/learning in the classroom. The male learners reacted to the correction based on their personal perceptions and feelings of being disregarded or isolated from the rest of the learners through a comment of the female teacher.

A case of learners cyberbullying teachers clearly linked to GBV was enacted in school H.

Learner H: *“...There was one [case] last year [2020] as well just before COVID and they were picking on teachers as well. It’s not the whole concept of an adult and child, it’s ‘because you’re a male, because you’re a female’, you know? ...Sometimes you get these students that pick on teachers and then go on social media and embarrass these teachers with hashtags. And when you get a hashtag, you are mentioned and your name or an initial is mentioned, and many have been mentioned with their initials and it is known to the people in the school because that person is referred to with those initials.”*

Cases of this sort are not common and do transpire seldom. However, they do exist and cannot be overlooked. The first objective of this study is aiming at a presentation of the current state of SRGBV in Phoenix secondary schools and teachers constitute an important part of that. Hence, these examples contribute to a better understanding of the condition of SRGBV in this particular location.

#### **4.1.6 Misconceptions and limitations in participants’ understanding of SRGBV**

A misleading perception surfaced during the interviews. Many participants believed that GBV has to be stretching over extended periods of time and to be of repetitive nature. As a result, they would disqualify case of abuse from being GBV, if it is once off, and incidental in nature. Hence, the real state of GBV in their school would not be reflected correctly. We find evidence for this in the words of the interviewees below:

Educator H: *“...apart from isolated incidents over the years, we never had a serious case of a continued violence in our school.”*

SMT C: *“...I would think that GBV is a prolonged thing, it’s continuous. The incidents that we have at school are just minor conflicts, so I won’t associate them with GBV.”*

SMT B: “...*But for me, serious would be where it would be on an ongoing basis, so this is something that happens like once in 3 months.*”

Another notion, limiting the interviewees in acknowledging the full extent of SRGBV was that, according to them, GBV works only across the genders. If a particular case dealt with the same gender, it was not considered as a GBV.

Educator F: “*We never had an incident in school relating or regarding male and female that were involved in any violent issues. Normally, we have two males or two females...*”

Educator D: “...*we have general male on male, female on female. But not male-on-female*”

This limitation dominated majority of responses by educators and SMTs which indicates the necessity for training in better understanding and identifying cases of SRGBV.

#### **4.1.7 Conclusion**

The communicated “*very small scale*” of GBV, being a common perception of the interviewees, can be understood as GBV revealing itself in the form of incidents of verbal and emotional nature with minor physical altercations. The claim that the situation in the school is “*well under control*” and “*a two out of ten*” asserts that incidents occur quite seldom, and the majority cases are not serious. This also could be viewed as a “blindfold” which is common for Level 1 educators and management, created by misconceptions and limitations of their understanding which prevents them from identifying all cases of SRGBV. Thus, the current assessment of the condition of this phenomenon will not reflect the full spectre of cases.

#### **4.2 Section 1: The Bioecological Theory of Bronfenbrenner (2005) applied to the causes of school-related gender-based violence**

Presenting the prevalent types of SRGBV in the selected secondary schools in Phoenix and reflecting the perception of the interviewees of the overall situation in their schools is not sufficient for a complete description of the state of SRGBV. The underlying causes for this phenomenon have to be explored in order to have a comprehensive

picture of its current state. The causes listed below are suggested by the participants and correspond with the findings in the literature which was reviewed in Chapter 2.

The Bioecological Theory of Bronfenbrenner (2005) is applied here to analyse the underlying causes of SRGBV in the different ecosystems which impact the learners as individuals. The first group of causes manifests itself on microsystemic level and includes: physical strength; learnt behaviour; religion; “*sexual orientation*”; parental involvement; “*immaturity*” of learners; substance abuse; peer pressure; romantic relationships and victims becoming perpetrators.

#### **4.2.1 Microsystems**

Microsystems are the first level of the Bioecological Theory of Bronfenbrenner (2005). They reflect the individual’s relationships with immediate family, friends, and educators.

##### **4.2.1.1 Physical strength**

In their study, Mayeza and Bhana (2017: 413) claim that “hegemonic masculinities” are enforced through physical domination over younger and smaller boys and girls. Physical strength and violence are used to gain access to resources and money as well as to reproduce domination and subordination. This is also the belief of the learners, Level 1 educators, and SMTs participants in this study, as illustrated below:

Learner A: *“I feel that boys can be more dominating because they are more muscular compared to girls.”*

Educator B: *“...generally the boys because they are bigger built than the girls and the way they walk, they got this kind of freedom, and the girls are more feminine.”*

SMT B: *“...They [males] assume their size matters, the bigger the size they are, the harder it gets to get through to them because they think their size now feed into the bilateral. Sometimes it looks harder to handle them.”*

The factor of physical strength is often the main driver of the actions of the perpetrator. As Ngidi and Moletsane (2018) suggest, GBV is about power inequalities. Boys assert their domination over girls through their physical strength, sex and gender.

Educator C: *“The boys feel more power in them and exert it by telling them [the girls] things, rude things.”*

Educator F: *“Ok, so mostly we have gender-based violence with males against males, because they want to be all ‘macho’ and they want to be in charge and in control.”*

All these statements confirm the findings in the literature that the physical strength is one of the driving factors of GBV. Possessing strength due to being male or being older than the victims provides advantage to the perpetrators of GBV.

When we apply the Bioecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (2005) to this factor of SRGBV we can infer that the physical development connected to the biology of the individuals impacts the way they relate to others within the microsystems within their class. Boys are physically more muscular than girls and they use their strength to establish their superiority over weaker boys and girls. This can be implemented when developing intervention strategies to create a support system for the younger and weaker others instead of reinforcing boys’ dominating role.

#### **4.2.1.2 GBV is learnt behaviour**

All the three categories of participants agree that one of the reasons for SRGBV is children observing the behaviour of adults at home or in the neighbourhood and adopting similar attitude.

Learner A: *“... they [boys] have been watching other men taking advantage of women and they feel they can do the same. This could have been their parents they observed – when the father was abusing the mother and the boy grew up watching that.”*

Educator G: *“...lots of our learners are from very poor communities and I think that the first resort that they see happening in their community is violence. And I think they do what they see, which is very hard for us to take them out of.”*

SMT B: *“You know, when the mother back-answers at home, the father whacks the mother. So, they think about the school situation – if girl questions my manhood, I therefore can respond in a physical way.”*



From a young age, boys and girls observe problems being resolved through violence in the family and in the surrounding community and they adopt this behaviour as a way of living and as a natural conflict resolution.

Modiba (2018) reports GBV as a learnt behaviour which was observed in the surrounding environment – home and community. As a result, boys grow up with entitlement to power and exercise it to suppress female initiative.

The theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner explains the importance of parent-child relationship as being closest to the individual. Naturally, children observe their parents' behaviour and internalise it as correct. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006: 815) suggest that children “begin to develop a definition of self that mirrors the form and content conveyed through the evolving patterns of interchange between mother and child” as a result of the constants interactions they have with each other. When the same behaviour is also observed in the surrounding mesosystem of the community interactions, it is reinforced and normalised. Therefore, the interventions for SRGBV have to also tackle these behavioural patterns within the family and the community.

#### **4.2.1.3 Religion**

Mlamla, Dlamini and Shumba (2021) argue that often skewed interpretations of the Holy Scriptures are reinforcing the patriarchal order and therefore GBV. They call these misinterpretations “harmful and toxic religious teachings” which are used to manipulate women into unconditional subordination.

Learner H: *“...Because our religion, you know for example Hinduism, right, I am a Hindu, and in Hinduism the man is supposed to work...and the female component supposed to be at home, looking after the children, cooking, cleaning, you know, household chores, always in the kitchen. Now, even in Islam, Christianity, well you could say the concept of Adam and Eve – that’s where it stemmed from.”*

Educator H: *“And with cultural values and religious values and all the liberties, in fact in some religions they don’t have the liberty, because the husband is always taken as the head. So, it’s basically a normal way of life.”*

It is the opinion of the interviewees that most of the religions are promoting gender inequality and female subordination to male dominion. Religion is one of the microsystems in Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological theory (Guy-Evans 2020) and its influence reaches deep into the relationships which every individual maintains. This needs to be reflected in the response of schools to SRGBV.

#### **4.2.1.4 Sexual orientation**

Mayeza and Bhana (2017:409) claim that boys who do not conform to the accepted norm of behaviour and often are perceived as "less-masculine" usually get bullied by peers. Thornberg (2018) articulates his observation of rejection and bullying as consequences for transgressing the norm of "being a boy". This is also confirmed by some of the participants in the current study.

Learner H: *"...It is very sad. A boy should not be treated otherwise if he does not conform, if he doesn't shape up or fit the criteria, and just because of that is treated differently."*

The different treatment Learner H is referring to may take the form of peers making fun of the boy, ostracising him, excluding him from games and other activities, taking advantage of his quiet nature and pushing him away from the queue at the school tuckshop, bullying him physically, etc. These attitudes are likely to be displayed by the other boys, however girls may also join in, if they perceive him as not fitting in the accepted norm.

Just as boys, girls do not always comply with the expectations for them. Similarly, they will be treated differently from the rest of the females.

Educator A: *"...I spoke about sexuality issues, sometimes their sexual orientation could affect them, where girls would like to be in a certain demeanour, their characteristics are more of a male gender. They are teased about things like this. Maybe a girl wants to cut her hair in a boy's hair style, for example, and some of the learners will mock or so on."*

These examples confirm that sexual orientation is one of the causes of GBV at schools, as suggested by findings of previous studies reflected in the literature.

#### 4.2.1.5 Absence or limited parental presence and involvement in the children's life

The absence or the limited parental presence is a factor that contributes to the vulnerability of the children. Kidman and Palermo (2016) confirm the high prevalence of GBV, specifically sexual violence, experienced by children who do not reside with their fathers. It was established that in sub-Saharan countries, the likelihood of such violence is attached to the absence of a father, but not maternal absence. Attention was drawn to the presence of the father and not his survival status in the household as a mitigating factor against sexual violence experienced by children and adolescents.

The experiences of the participants of this inquiry confirm the above findings.

SMT G reflected on the devastating results parental absence has for learners. She stated that she was a form teacher of a class of 42 children and only eight of them lived with either mother or a father. The rest of them lived with aunts, or grannies, and often they were moved from place to place, from person to person, because it was difficult to support them. This exposed the learners to different types of violence.

SMT G: “...*And of the kids that lived only with the mother, they had no idea who the father was. They knew who their mom was, their mom did not abandon them, but pass them on, because she had to work, to make a living. In some cases, the mothers want the social grant, which is such a meagre amount, **but they don't even share it with the person who is taking care of their child.***”

The financial struggles of some parents cause them to live and work away from their children whom they pass on to a close relative to look after while the parent is busy earning income. The child support grant provided by the government in assistance of parents who earn below R105 600 per annum for combined income of the two parents, or R52 800 per year for single parent, (South African Government 2022) is often not shared with the guardian of the child. As a result, the guardian would struggle to provide adequate care and is likely to get frustrated and mistreat the child.

One of the participant learners, Learner H, described his struggles to overcome the emotional abuse suffered from very young age by his stepfather and his mother. The

absence of his biological father made him vulnerable to this violence. He concluded that a child in similar situation may turn to negative behaviour as a coping mechanism.

Learner H: *“...the child becomes withdrawn of everything, and they tend to turn towards bad things for example GBV, they become racist, they become homophobic. And the reason is all that hurt...It is like venting for the child.”*

Another contributing factor to vulnerability to SRGBV is the limited parental guidance and involvement in the learner’s life. Sometimes parents are unable to exercise control due to work commitments and extended hours of work which makes their presence at home very scarce. However, that may not always be the case, as argued by the interviewee below.

Educator H: *“...When a child is in a primary school, you get complete assistance from the parents. Once the same child comes to high school, somehow the parent leaves the hand of the child...I find it strange...We need more involvement at the secondary level.”*

Educator H argues that if parents made themselves available in the primary school years, they must not neglect to do the same in these very important years of adolescence.

In some instances, parents lack appropriate parenting skills and therefore they are not able to provide the guidance that the growing children require.

Educator H: *“...most of the problems stem from poor parenting. I think parenting skills need to improve. ...Now we have in most families both the parents are working and that is also a bit of a challenge...when they come home, they got no time to resolve problems, because they are tired themselves.”*

There are instances when parents are present and available to get involved in their children’s lives, but parental supervision cannot always be exercised over certain areas of interest for the children such as online behaviour. The rapid development of technology, which is widely used in most households in the form of cell phones or tablets, makes it hard for the generation of the parents to keep up with new functions

and trends. Many parents have just basic skills in navigating online options and using their cell phones or other pieces of ICT. They are not able to track the online activities of their children and therefore cannot exercise parental guidance and control. This leaves parents unaware of the behaviour of their children online.

SMT D: *“Unfortunately, the use of cell phone technology, social media and internet creates chaos. Because the parents are not knowledgeable about these things, it’s created a very, very tight situation in their homes.”*

The parental presence and involvement in their child’s life and schooling career remains a crucial protective factor against SRGBV. The lack of parental presence and involvement, or the complete absence of such, contribute to making adolescents vulnerable to SRGBV.

#### **4.2.1.6 Immaturity of the learners**

Adolescence is a time of the life of every individual when a transition from childhood to adulthood takes place. The physical growth and changes also coincide with an emotional and mental development; however, the outward appearance of body changing into adult does not necessarily reflect emotional stability or mental maturity. On the contrary, the gradual emotional and mental maturing take place in the second decade of individual’s life, which is also characterised by impulsive actions and irrational decision-making (Backes and Bonnie 2019).

Some of the participants in the current study identified that the discord between body changes and emotional instability becomes one of the reasons for SRGBV in secondary schools in Phoenix.

Learner E: *“I would say more immaturity in the students, I won’t say anything besides immaturity in the students, because it is more the lower grades that tend to get involved in this.”*

Educator G: *“What happens is, when you listen to both sides of the story of the learners, you find that it was a silly misunderstanding, where one learner spoke to another learner about something and then it got taken to the other learner. In that case we counsel the learners.”*

The interviewees claim that the emotional and mental immaturity often leads learners to misunderstand the actions of others and causes them to over-react in different situations which is sometimes expressed as SRGBV.

#### **4.2.1.7 Drugs and substance abuse**

In their cross-sectional study on two South African provinces, Western Cape and Gauteng, Kutwayo et al. (2021) established that the likelihood of experiencing violence, including GBV increases by 92% for adolescent boys who use substances like alcohol and drugs, in comparison to those who never used.

Being under the influence of such substances clouds the ability to reason and to respond appropriately to situations (Page 2021). This most often leads the intoxicated person to overreact to a statement by a peer and to start a fight. Educator F stated that many learners who come from the informal settlements endure issues connected to substance abuse at home and that is also one of the reasons for violence in school.

Educator F: *“Some of their parents are forcing them to leave school, their uncles are on drugs, and they are violent, shooting people, killing, and they want them to follow in the same footsteps... lots of them come from impoverished homes, some of them are on weed so they do come to school a bit frustrated. If someone interferes with them, they might become rebellious and want to fight.”*

Another emerging trend is noted by SMT C who reported that in the recent years, girls have been caught smoking and selling drugs. This was something very rare in the past; however, it is quickly becoming problematic. The new attitudes and behavioural trends could be stemming from the emphasis on gender equality embedded in the curriculum taught in school.

SMT C: *“We had people that were selling drugs at one stage at school. I found in the trial exams. The perpetrators were girls ... We’ve got teachers on ground duty, and we monitor everything. If you came today, 2 female learners got caught smoking by the teachers.”*

As education emphasises gender equality many girls want to prove that they have equal rights and equal place in society. Mayeza, Bhana and Mulqueeny (2022) deal with this

aspect in the context of a particular high school in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, where girls attempt to claim equality by joining boys who deal drugs in abundant building on the school premises and thus unknowingly expose themselves to danger of GBV.

#### **4.2.1.8 Peer pressure**

Learners spend big part of the day in school together with their friends. According to Taole (2016), schools are the platforms of gender socialisation where gender roles instilled at home are further reinforced and power structures are normalised. The combination of the curriculum and the interactions with peers enrich learners with different values like diversity, for example. However, peers may have a negative influence on the choices made by learners. One example of negative peer pressure at school is breaking the Code of Conduct through misdemeanour.

Learner D: *“...our teenagers think those types of things [policies] don’t matter, obviously the age they are in, and the peer level influence them. I’m just being as transparent as possible.”*

SMT C: *“The influence here, and a lot of peer pressure, especially amongst the girls and there’s lots of drug abuse and lots of girls get caught for smoking.”*

Teenagers seek to be popular amongst their peers and often they make choices contrary to their personal values just because they want to fit in a group and to feel accepted. Mulawa et al. (2018) have found that young adolescent boys experience peer pressure to prove their masculinity and will behave according to the norms of their peer group even if they do not adopt or internalise these attitudes.

#### **4.2.1.9 Romantic relationships**

The current study was conducted in secondary schools where the age of the school population is ranging from 13 to 18 years with small exceptions of individuals being two or three years older than 18. The teenage years are associated with rapid development both physically and mentally and inevitably this is the time when romantic relationships are common.

Learner G who is a matric student, spoke of romantic relationships being the grounds for GBV at school.

Learner G: *“I think that something that may be the reason for gender-based violence in school ... it could be relationships. Kids my age now have partners at school, so they might be having a little argument or something, and it might turn out that the other partner is abusive, ... and then gender-based violence may happen at school, for that reason.”*

Jealousy, control, and domination are the starting point for conflicts within romantic relationships at school. As discussed earlier, boys do not tolerate their girlfriend talking to other boys and sometimes they may try to control and overtake the other friendships their partner has. That eventually is a cause for arguments and altercations within the couple or may reach out to others.

SMT E: *“...and again it’s the relationships that are the cause – romantic relationships, where one girl fights over a common partner with another girl.”*

As illustrated through the examples used by the participants in this study, the majority of the cases are not serious. They can range from a minor argument, verbal fight, and can escalate to physical fight between two boys or two girls over a common partner. Although not frequent, there are cases of adolescent dating abuse (ADA).

SMT E: *“...maybe I am generalising but the link between the poor academic performance of boys who come from dysfunctional families and have low self-esteem and there is this kind of aggressiveness that comes and there are incidents of boy hitting the girl while they are in a relationship, and meant to humiliate publicly, to maximise the attention. ...It is almost like an attraction of the bad boy.”*

Elboj-Saso et al. (2022) discuss the issue of the “bad boy” attraction. They have established that adolescents tend to be attracted to individuals who conform to the hegemonic masculinity and reproduce values of male domination and female subordination. The belief that violent boys are attractive, however, increases by 36,8% the likelihood of girls becoming a victim and with 52,3% becoming aggressor of sexual



violence within dating relationship for boys (Rios-González et al. 2018 in Elboj-Saso et al. 2022).

#### **4.2.1.10 Victims of GBV become perpetrators of GBV**

A learner participant suggested that possible cause for SRGBV could be that a child has felt powerless at home, and within school settings, the victim finds opportunity of regaining power through violence against a fellow learner who is weaker or younger.

Learner F: *“...you may say that, ok, you are less powerful than your mother or your father and then you go to school and see learners that are less powerful, and you take it out on them. Sometimes, it is because you were bullied before and now you can see that you are powerful, and you can bully somebody else and make them feel what you felt.”*

Menesinni and Salmivalli (2017) suggest that many children who are bullied at school have also been bullied in other settings including home. The relationship between adult and a child within a family always entails power positions. The adult has the dominant position of being in full control, whereas the child is powerless. Bullying experience also bears the traits of power imbalances. Furthermore, in their study, Plummer and Cossins (2018) trace the link between being sexually abused at childhood and later becoming a perpetrator. They suggest that the psychological trauma and the sense of powerlessness associated with the child sexual abuse are related to the transition of the victim to perpetrator.

#### **4.2.2 Mesosystems**

**The second level** in the Bioecological theory of Bronfenbrenner involves the **mesosystems** which interrelate between the microsystems of the individual. This is linked to the relationships between parents and teachers, interactions between the friends of given learner and so on. On this level there was only one proposed cause for SRGBV, namely, stereotyping.

Mlamla, Dlamini and Shumba (2021) state that **stereotypes** are often the means through which social roles are affirmed and prescribed. From their very early years, children are taught that boys will be the head of the household, they are given freedoms

and encouraged to enact patriarchal roles, while girls are often restricted and advised to be passive and submissive.

The learners participating in this study shared opinions similar to the literature view that stereotypes reinforce the structures of patriarchy.

Learner B: “...when you talk to a person and tell them ‘You can’t do this because you’re a girl, you can’t do that because you’re a boy’”.

Learner G: “It is always about: ‘women cannot do this, women cannot do that’...and it is ‘how girls play soccer, that’s not ordinary’...like those type of things.”

Learner H: “There’s nothing happening currently, but in previous years there were a lot of fights and it mainly used to be because boys used to say ‘girls should do this or girls should do that’; ...We live in a society that has conformed to an ideology that men should kick the ball and women should play with dolls and that a boy is better than a girl.”

Similarly to Learner H who illustrated the point using his school, Mlamla, Dlamini and Shumba (2021) conclude that stereotypes and specifically gender stereotyping contribute to imprinting expectations for certain behaviour. Furthermore, gender constructions legitimise gender inequalities and indirectly lead to GBV.

#### **4.2.3 The Mexosystem**

**The next level** in the Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological theory is **the mexosystem**. This is where the influence of the community on individual lives impacts their behaviour and attitudes. On this level, the participants identified community issues which filter into the school and the socio-economic background of individuals as causes of SRGBV.

##### **4.2.3.1 Community issues filter into schools**

Taole (2016) states that the school is reflecting the surrounding community. When certain social ills are plaguing the community, they inevitably will filter in the school. This view is also shared by the participants in this study. SMT C relates the

involvement of girls in his school with drug dealing and use of substances to the home and the community where the learners live.

SMT C: *“The problem is, these things come from the household that they live in. It’s not coming from here, so these things were brought from their house where these are happening, it’s filtering out in the schools.”*

Another educator referred to a case where a learner was attacked at school for an issue that was started in the private communications between the perpetrator and victim out of school.

Educator H: *“... It is a totally outside incident which supposed to be resolved outside but they brought it into school. And this child was threatened, grade 11.”*

As illustrated, many societal problems which occur in the community, such as drugs, gangs and criminal activities, fights, inevitably cross the borders of the school and influence the school climate (Jacinto and Greene 2018). If nothing is done to prevent them from entering in the school, they will erode the school ethos and have a negative impact on the overall running of this educational unit.

#### **4.2.3.2 Socio-economic background of learners**

The unemployment rate in South Africa for the third quarter of 2021 is 34,9% (South Africa, Department: Statistics South Africa 2022), which is a record high for the economy of our country. This indicates a serious situation which was aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Graaff and Heineken (2017) state that the high rate of unemployment leads to inability to fulfil the social expectations placed on males and creates a crisis in the male identity. In turn this leads to frustration which eventually vents out in the form of GBV directed at the females.

The excerpts below speak of the reality endured by many learners in the secondary schools in Phoenix, some of which reside in the nearby informal settlements and experience multiple challenges linked to the community where they live.

SMT C: *“We have lots of learners that are socially, economically disadvantaged. We have 220 learners here that are SASSA grantees. They come from very **abject poverty backgrounds**.”*

Educator F: *“...Our school – we have lots of learners from poor background, **the socio-economic issues are very extreme**; they come from poverty, unemployment, so they are not worried about violence, they are **fighting for survival**. They come to school just to have a meal.”*

SMT B: *“...our children who are coming from poverty-stricken communities, low social economic conditions, **tons of social problems** ...they are being exposed to GBV outside of school.”*

SMT A: *“...the socio-economic situation or the climate surrounding the school and like I said sometimes problems start off in the society and filter into schools and we see them playing out in school, problems at home contribute to it as well.”*

The South African reality includes people living in “very extreme,” “abject poverty” conditions. This is reflected in the words of Educator F who described it as “*fighting for survival*”. These conditions are characterising the life in informal settlements, where basic sanitation, water and electricity are lacking, there are high levels of unemployment, crime and substance abuse. Such challenges summarised in the words of SMT B, “*tons of social problems*” are heavy burden to bear. As SMT B points out, young people are further exposed to GBV either in the household or in the community where they live.

Coming from such background these learners often may feel inadequate and frustrated. Incidents of bullying younger learners or physically weaker peers, aimed at getting money, lunch, or just a pen, are not a strange occurrence in schools.

Furthermore, participants identified the financial dependability of victims on the abuser, which is a consequence of the socio-economic background of the individual. This factor is on the mesosystem level, but it strongly impacts the individual’s relationships on the microsystem level, which illustrates the interrelatedness within the ecosystem.

Educator H: *“Young lady should not be dependent on a man, to take care of her. That’s why, the education is so important...They are dependent because sometimes they come from not so affluent background...They meet up with somebody, that’s affluent or maybe, ‘deep pocket’ or such, and they feel that they are obligated to that person, so they take any kind of abuse. In fact, that has been a hallmark of abuse of females for generations.”*

Mayeza, Bhana & Mulqueeny (2022) discuss the economic factor in SRGBV as a factor that is used sometimes to entice girls to enter in a relationship with a boy. The material dependence perpetuates the subordination of the females, maintain patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity.

Participants in this study have made similar observations. The school SMT G belongs to has majority of learners coming from near-by informal settlements where poverty, crime and violence are inseparable part of life.

SMT G: *“To tell you the truth, it is difficult to tell whether it is actually gender-based violence or it is consensual, because I hear in my conversation with girls, ‘I have a boyfriend for my hair, I have a boyfriend for tuckshop’ ...that’s what they say – ‘I have a boyfriend for x, y and z’, so, to extract money from them obviously. For what kind of favours, I don’t know. So, they may very well be used and not realise it, you know?”*

SMT G makes an assumption related to the position some adolescent girls from very impoverished backgrounds have placed themselves through engaging in relationships which carry material benefits to them. These relationships are to some extent resembling “the sugar daddy” phenomenon. Hoss and Blokland (2018) discusses such sugar daddy relationships of high school girls and concludes that whether the girl is perceived in a passive position and as a victim in the relationship, or she is perceived as an active agent who has some freedom in negotiating the terms of their interactions, in both cases the power imbalance stands on the side of the person who holds the material goods. This creates a further gap of gender inequality and therefore contributes to GBV.

The question raised by SMT G remains to be answered by further research. The lived experiences of many young girls would contribute to clarifying the reasons for this reality. However, it is evident that such relationships continue to reinforce the hetero-patriarchal norms, as was also concluded by Mayeza, Bhana and Mulqueeny (2022).

#### **4.2.4 The Macrosystem**

The last level of the Bioecological theory of Bronfenbrenner is the macrosystem, which incorporates the social norms, and culture. Even though these factors are external to the individual learner, they have very strong influence on the behaviour of the person. The identified factors contributing to SRGBV include patriarchal norms, culture of violence and normalization of violence, religion, and socio-economic background.

##### **4.2.4.1 Patriarchal norms**

Patriarchy can be labelled as a fundamental cause of GBV, and it lies at the core of this phenomenon. Mlamla, Dlamini and Shumba (2021) suggest that patriarchal cultures produce cultural norms which pave the way for dominant masculinities. This is enacted in male subordination of female. The participants of the current study had similar views to the findings of the scholars.

Learner H: *“Okay, first of all, it’s the inequality between the man and woman. It’s that women should be economically dependent on men, right, and I think the third cause would be that a woman and her child or her children are under man’s control and under his protection. So, in other words, it’s like they must shape themselves according to how he views certain concepts and views certain topics. They aren’t allowed to air their views all the time and they aren’t allowed to speak or stand up for themselves.”*

Learner C: *“...men think they are superior to women, and they are more dominant. Women nowadays also want to feel equal. Nowadays what a man can do that woman can’t do? So women are fighting for their rights and men are getting aggressive because they feel that they believe in the olden days.”*

Learner C depicts a very important nuance in the current state of GBV. The power imbalance is shifting, women are becoming independent and aware of their rights. The

employment opportunities made available to women are also increasing while men feel left behind and “disrespected” because they cannot fulfil their role of providers as prescribed by the hegemonic masculinity image. This leads to frustration and aggression on their part (Graaff and Heinecken 2017).

Educator F: “...males are very dominating; they don’t like their girls talking to other boys. Most of the time that’s an issue.”

SMT C: “In our school we have African culture, I feel that males see themselves as superior to females and that is how we get some of the conflicts.”

SMT B: “...Majority of our learners are coming from the black culture. In fact, more than 95% are from the black culture. And there is still that patriarchal, ruling in their homes. ...For them it is unacceptable; therefore, if a girl comments or passes a remark about you that questions your manhood because they come from that background therefore find now the males respond in a violent way.”

The patriarchal order and beliefs assimilated from early childhood at home are seen by the male adolescents as a justification for them to exercise control over their female partner within a relationship, to the point of determining who the girl can speak to and who can be her friends. In addition, from the comment of SMT B, we understand that passing remarks about someone’s manhood most certainly will start a conflict. This indicates that even though the power imbalance has started shifting, the cultural norms maintain the status quo. This conflicting reality leads to perpetuating GBV.

Graaff and Heinecken (2017) discuss the gap between the legislative freedoms women should enjoy, together with the democratic rights prescribed by the constitution, and the reality of gender inequalities that remain untouched. The progressive laws South Africa boasts with seem to remain on paper while male domination and patriarchy continue to prevail. Confirmation of these claims is found in the experiences shared by the participants of this study.

Educator H: “As much as we want equality, is it really practiced? Even in modern day society...People always want...the male to be earning higher, because for them it

*shows that he is the head of the house and feel that [if other] people are earning higher than him all of a sudden, his manhood is basically stripped.”*

Our society expects men to be providers, protectors, and leaders in the family. Anything that may be a threat to this standard is immediately dismissed and rejected. The statement of Educator H portrays the conflicting reality in which policies and regulations however progressive, are slow in translating to practice. Hundreds of years have taken to establish the current patriarchal norms and behaviours in the society and although we may hope for a quick change, we can expect that it will take some time for the new norms to grow roots and to reflect in the daily lives of the people.

Patriarchy and cultural norms belong to the macrosystem which has a strong influence over the individual's microsystems: the way a person treats others and the way they treat him/her is dictated by the culture and social norms of society. Any interventions and preventions of SRGBV should consider this influence as well.

#### **4.2.4.2 Culture of violence in South Africa and normalisation of GBV**

In the course of the interviews, another contributing factor was highlighted: the culture of violence and the normalization of GBV. Multiple participants referred to this as a cause for SRGBV. SMT F was one of those participants.

SMT F: *“It’s just that in our country, in South Africa, because of the apartheid era, there is a lot of violence. We solve problems with violence. If we want to protest – there is violence. You see, that’s how we have been brought up. And I think we need to change that.”*

The normalisation of violence as an expression of disagreement has penetrated deep into the soul of our contemporary society to the point that it may be referred to as a South African feature. Being masked as normal, violence becomes invisible and acceptable part of the way things are. The study concluded by Graaff and Heinecken (2017) established that many of the participants believe that the level of normalisation of GBV within the communities is so high that it makes perpetrators unaware that what they are doing is wrong. This opinion was also shared by the participants in the current study.



Learner A: “...*they [perpetrators] have grown and they are at a level that they know and believe that what they have done is not wrong...*”

Educator G: “...*the first resort that they [learners] see happening in their community is violence. And I think they do what they see, which is very hard for us to take them out of ... that’s now normal and for us to tell them that it is not normal is unusual for them.*”

SMT B: “...*a large part of them [learners] are brought to believe that violence is acceptable. It’s the way of handling and dealing with problems.*”

SMT B, among other participants, communicated her opinion that the upbringing and the surrounding environment and culture play a big role in shaping the attitudes and the behaviour of the perpetrators.

Similarly, Learner H discusses the role of the upbringing of young people in shaping attitudes towards GBV through modelling acceptable behaviour.

Learner H: “...*your children are reflection of you ... I think that even parents they are also a cause of GBV, how they treat, how they bring up their child.*”

The normalisation and acceptance of violence as a way to resolve issues remains a major driver for SRGBV in secondary schools in Phoenix. It is inculcated by the attitudes of parents who are the role models for their children, and it is further perpetuated by the individual experiences a learner lives through. It is through the normalisation of the violence that a blindfold is created in identifying, reporting, and monitoring violence. This is likely why some of the participants like SMT F described the status of SRGBV in their school as “*undercurrent, we don’t even notice or pick it up, and it is not reported*”.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

The participants of the current study indicated that all the levels of the Bioecological theory of Bronfenbrenner are represented in reflecting on the causes for SRGBV. The first level, microsystems was including physical strength, learnt behaviour, religion, sexual orientation, the limited or completely absent parental presence and involvement

in the child's life, peer pressure, immaturity of learners, romantic relationships, substance abuse, and victims becoming perpetrators. On the second level, which is the mesosystem, stereotypes reinforced within school interactions were identified. The mexosystem was represented with community issues filtering into the school and the socioeconomic background of learners as causes leading to SRGBV. The last level, the macrosystem, included patriarchal norms, culture of violence and normalisation of GBV. All these causes identified by the participants of this study illustrate the complex nature of SRGBV which influence all the spheres of individual's life. Therefore, interventions and preventions dealing with SRGBV have to impact all the levels of the Bronfenbrenner's theory.

#### **4.4 Perpetrators and victims of SRGBV in Phoenix secondary schools**

The plethora of causes of SRGBV testifies of the complex nature of this phenomenon. This multi-layered construct must be studied, understood and only then can be addressed successfully. In the context of Phoenix secondary schools SRGBV has involved both males and females as **perpetrators and victims**. The conclusions of the SMTs and Level 1 educators on who are the perpetrators and who are the victims, are based on what was reported to them. The response of the learners was founded on their personal observations and perceptions. The overall outcomes suggest that majority of the participants have witnessed males being the perpetrators, small group are holding an opinion that females are perpetrators and another small group believe that equally males and females are perpetrating GBV at school. Regarding the gender of the victims, most interviewees claim that the victims are females, few participants identify males as victims and few believe that both males and females are victims of SRGBV.

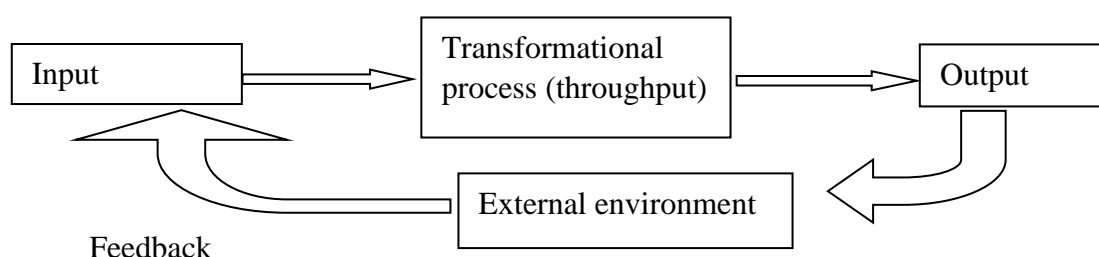
This concludes the first section of Chapter 4, in which the researcher sought to answer objective 1 of the study linked to the current state of SRGBV in the selected secondary schools in Phoenix. The second section continues with answering objectives 2 and 3 of the study, which deal with identifying what are the intervention and prevention programmes used currently in the selected secondary schools and how are they managed.

#### 4.5 Section Two: Management of intervention and prevention programmes for SRGBV in the selected secondary schools

Section Two of the analysis uses the lenses of the Systems theory of von Bertalanffy (1968) to explore how the selected secondary schools are dealing with SRGBV and is their response efficient, as it is determined by objectives 2 and 3 of this study. Objective 2 required the exploration of what gender-based violence prevention and intervention programmes are currently in place in secondary schools in the Phoenix area. Objective 3 dealt with assessing the management of these programmes and their effectiveness in preventing and curbing SRGBV at selected secondary schools in the Phoenix area.

Systems theory provides a holistic view of organisations and has been applied to evaluation of different programmes used by organisations (Harney 2019). In our case study of the management of intervention and prevention programmes for SRGBV, systems theory provides outlook for better grasp on the efficacy of functioning of schools regarding this phenomenon.

Every system, a general representation of which is Figure 2.5, Chapter 2, has input-throughput-output characteristics. A simplified representation of a system is used below.



**Figure 4.1:** Input-Output model of a system, adapted from Weihrich et al. (2008, in Chikere and Nwoka 2015)

The input of schools includes human resources, which are the Level 1 educators, management (Level 2 and Level 3 or higher); supporting staff (administrative staff, cleaners); learning and teaching support materials (LTSM); learners, and school policies and regulations. The throughput is the process of teaching/learning which is the main function of this system, and the output is young people who have received education. Every system also has outcomes, which for schools are the academic achievements of learners. They are interrelated to the output: we judge how prepared for life and the work force young people are by the academic results at the end of the final school year.

Very crucial part of every system is the feedback, both internal and external. It allows the system to self-maintain and regulate its functions (Friedman and Allen 2014). The internal feedback for every school is received through the process of monitoring, which is the priority function of lower management or Departmental Heads, also known as Grade Heads in secondary schools. The process of reporting is also part of the internal feedback, and it is done on all levels: learners report to educators, educators report to management, and lower management cascades it to higher management. The external feedback includes reactions from the community where the school is placed, communications by parents, and information from the Department of Education.

As we follow this theoretical model through every segment of the system, we can draw conclusions on how it functions and what needs to be improved. For the purposes of this study, the system is a system of systems, and more specifically, the system of secondary schools participating in the study. As discussed above, the input in the school system includes policies and regulations, which can be developed at school level and departmental level. The data collected by the means of interviews addressed what policies each school has in place, in order to regulate SRGBV incidents.

Each school is required to have a discipline protocol that is observed when necessary. The school policy and/or Code of Conduct are consulted upon establishing the circumstances of problematic situation as prescribed by the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 Sec.8(1) (South Africa, Department of Education 1996b). The majority of the schools reported that their policy is not GBV-specific and that they rather view

such cases as violence. Only one school had a GBV policy, a second school had a section dedicated to GBV in their discipline policy and a third school had a Bullying policy.

All schools have developed processes to ensure that learners are aware of their school's policy and Code of Conduct. One learner's response is used below to illustrate the point of view of learners.

Learner F: *"...When you register for our school, they give you a circular where there are school rules, things you shouldn't do and should do. ... On our first day of school, I was in grade 8, our form teacher came in our class, learning our names and stuff, and then she was going through the rules, what we shouldn't do, she was telling us about skirts ... things we shouldn't wear, things we should wear. ...sometimes, in our LO classes they remind us."*

Learner F testifies of her school routinely informing learners of the rules and regulations and what is expected from them. It becomes clear that the process is reinforced by additional reminders during LO lessons. Similar responses were provided by all the other learners. Learner E described below how the awareness of school policy is maintained.

Learner E: *"Ok, so in terms of knowing about the policies and the responsibilities, our school constantly reminds learners of the Code of Conduct. I think, every term we've gotten the printed copies of the Code of Conduct, which states that fighting will get us in trouble."*

The respective Code of Conduct which Learner E refers to stipulates *"Zero tolerance"* for *"bullying, fighting and violent behaviour"* among other types of misconduct. The discipline procedure described in the school policy outlines three degrees of sanctions. The first degree for fighting, bullying, foul or derogatory language, and gangsterism, entails a *"warning"* and *"call in parent"*. The second degree of sanctions comprises *"severe reprimand"* and/or *"suspension"*. Sanction three is *"expulsion"*

The Level 1 educators and members of management confirmed the statements of learners on how the school informs learners and parents of its policy and Code of Conduct.

Educator G: “...we make them aware of the Code of Conduct, generally when they come on the first day of school, because there is lots of administration to do especially with the incoming learners, we generally keep all the classes based in their form rooms, and we do discuss the Code of Conduct, we do discuss the importance of RCL, we do tell learners that if there are issues they can write to RCL or inform the Form Manager, and also outside we have a suggestion box, they can write a note anonymously and put it in there...”

SMT A: “They are given the school Code of Conduct; they are briefed on the school’ Code of Conduct. The parents themselves are briefed on the Code of Conduct when they registered the child because they are given a copy and they are made aware of the channels to follow to report any misdemeanours etc.”

The extent to which learners **know the channels** for reporting was evaluated by all participants as sufficiently well-known, because those are the same channels used for reporting any type of violence. During the interviews, it surfaced that most of the learners choose to skip the protocol and go directly to a person of authority. This is understood as driven by desire for keeping confidentiality and also expectation for quick intervention. This perception is confirmed by the words of SMT B and SMT E below.

SMT B: “...Knowing is one thing, practising is something else. In terms of reporting, they know the channels of reporting, they know that in terms of expectations, they must report to their form teachers first, if the form teacher can’t handle it, they will bring the issue to management. 1<sup>st</sup> level of management, which is heads of department, the direct supervisor; if the direct supervisor cannot handle it, then it comes up to the DP’s. They know the channel but, in most cases, the truth is they skip the channels and they come straight to the office. ...And you see they understand if it’s serious, I mean they won’t come if someone stole their pen. But if it is serious matter like for example GBV, where someone has hit them or touched them inappropriately then they don’t go

*to the form teacher but come straight to me [DP]. In fact, most of them come to me, because one thinks I'm a DP and one thinks I am a female. Because lots of time the issues are female. So, there is a tendency to come directly to me and then they know also that I'm very hard on them and very strict when it comes to the idea of a female oppressed in any way. So, the girls rely on that strictness so they directly come to me knowing that I will handle it instantly and I do."*

The SMT B brings to light a very important point: GBV is a sensitive issue, if victims have to follow the normal procedure of reporting they will have to disclose their experience to many people, which is uncomfortable and traumatising. Therefore, they prefer to go directly to the office especially if the person in charge is of the same gender with them. Hence there is a suggestion made here for reworking of reporting procedure which will be recommended at the end of this study.

The words of SMT E confirm this need for confidentiality once again.

*SMT E: "Often they would speak to an educator whom they are most comfortable with, and it may not necessarily be the form educator and it may not be a subject educator, so you either may have children who are drawn to them and want to confide to them because they see them as a parent figure, or they would like somebody who is neutral. I get notes pushed under the door, especially after the lockdown as I mentioned to you, the child is saying 'please, can you help me, I think I'm going to be pregnant, this was the violence, and I do not want you to tell any other teacher'. So, they look for somebody neutral, away from the classroom, away from other learners, and physically safe environment to be able to report."*

Learners apply their personal judgment and depending on the case they decide who to report to. When there is no need for observing confidentiality learners report to the form educator and in general follow the prescribed procedure of reporting. When the case is of personal nature, learners choose to skip most of the levels and approach either Deputy or Principal, whoever they are more comfortable with, because they want to limit the number of people who know about it and also, they believe this way the case will be undertaken faster.

#### 4.5.1 Procedure of handling SRGBV

The study found that there is no different disciplinary procedure specific to SRGBV cases. Instead, schools rely on the usual procedures followed for SBV. The selected excerpt below illustrates the procedures observed in the secondary schools. The general structure of interventions is standard and common to all secondary schools. The response is guided by the Code of Conduct which is specifically designed by the SGB of the individual schools as prescribed by the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, Section 8(1), and the context of the school is taken in consideration (South Africa, Department of Education 1996b).

*SMT A: “The learners know the channel of reporting as per normal discipline processes, ...the first call is usually the form educator. If the form educator can handle it, a minor fault, but also has to report to the grade controller, that is the SMT member once the SMT member has to intervene and resolve the issue, he/she reports it to the disciplinary committee which has to filter either to the principal or to the Deputy principal, so we got a record of all the misdemeanours like that and we follow the similar trend. If the matter requires that we call a parent, then the parent would be called in to school; we try to mediate amongst the parents. If we are to go to the resort of suspension, etc. then we call the Student Governing Body component (SGB) to schedule a tribunal, so that is the process we follow as per the normal disciplinary process.”*

In the cases where the Code of Conduct is non-GBV specific, the cases are viewed as violence and dealt with according to their severity. Such is the case with school G. In the Code of Conduct of the school under Level 4, misconduct is listed as “*very serious violations*” some of which are directly linked to GBV, such as “*limited sexual abuse, e.g. grasping*”; “*sexual conduct or sexual contact by mutual consent*”; “*bullying*”. Recommended sanctions include but are not limited to “*written warning and/or community service and/or a maximum of seven days suspension and/or an assembly talk and/or referral to the SAPS and/or psychologist*”. Under Level 5, misconduct is classified as “*criminal violations*” and those related to GBV are “*sexual harassment, sexual abuse, engaging in sexual activity, rape*”. The repercussions for this level repeat



the previous and are extended with “*possible recommendation for expulsion from school*”.

Following the normal disciplinary procedures and being guided by the Code of Conduct ensures that every component of the system adheres to due process.

#### **4.5.2 Examples of interventions regarding SRGBV used by selected secondary schools in Phoenix**

Various strategies have been utilised by the different schools in dealing with SRGBV. Many of the measures have both characteristics of intervention and prevention. The selection of response was dictated by the context and seriousness of the issue.

##### ***4.5.2.1 Educating learners and parents on the consequences GBV has for perpetrators and victims***

Upon occurrence of an SRGBV incident of a more serious nature which requires the involvement of parents, schools such as school A use the opportunity to create greater awareness and educate not only the learner but the parents as well on the seriousness of the issue.

SMT A: “*The first is educating, we need to educate the learners and the parent component. During the pre-COVID-19 times, we tried as school bringing in NGOs to come and speak to the learners. ...If need be, we can recommend them to the social workers for help. Sometimes we see that problematic learners belong to a certain faith and we seek faith-based organisations for assistance. So, we look at all these stakeholders that can assist us when it comes to having this sort of problems in school.*”

The strategy described by SMT A is designed to deter negative behaviours through educating on the effects and consequences such actions have for perpetrators and victims. The participation of all stakeholders is very important because the problems are addressed on all the levels of the ecosystem of Bronfenbrenner. As mentioned by SMT A, parents are part of the strategy; they are on the microsystem level of the individual learner’s ecosystem and when parents are relating to the teachers of the school, this impacts the mesosystem. The involvement of NGOs in this process which

represent the community and bringing in religious leaders and faith-based organisations to assist with counselling, works on the mesosystem level.

Through this type of intervention and in reference to the Systems theory a **new input** is brought into the school system: values, morals and knowledge are taught to influence behaviour of learners.

#### ***4.5.2.2 Outside interventions involving clinics, SAPS, and other organisations***

Educator G tackles another aspect of interventions used in schools: in certain cases, outside intervention is needed. This may be done through local clinic, or various other organisations.

Educator G: *“In our school, we get – it depends on the gender – we get a manager that will talk to the learner, and then they will advise further, and ...again, we fall in the Code of Conduct there. Because it tells us what we need to do. So we have to actually follow that because in case it ends up in outside intervention, then will know what person to connect to. ... there are possibilities where we look at the local clinic, there are structures there... There is that body ...organisation that our school is affiliated to, that generally talk [to learners] ...but [does] not [deal with] specific cases, but they would advise as well, because that involves the police and the health authority... We have lots of learners brought in by Inglesa – big organisation that cares for the indigent learners and orphans. ...sometimes we do phone them and ask them for assistance and they help.”*

The above-mentioned organisations such as Inglesa perform a supportive role in the sense that they advise how the case should be approached and who should be contacted. They may provide information on counselling services or booklets regarding GBV. Since most schools have no pre-existing structures ready to deal with cases of SRGBV, they turn for assistance to the social partners with which they have contact.

#### **4.5.2.3 Counselling at school level – educators or faith-based organisations**

Other schools try to resolve issues through counselling at school level, via either educators who are on the staff and available and willing to do it, or faith-based organisations which provide counselling to learners.

SMT D: *“Then we have pastoral care, counsellors who actually get involved and advise the children. ...It is school-based.”*

Educators and members of faith-based organisations are generally not qualified counsellors or psychologists. They rely on their life experience and skills acquired over time of interaction with young people to provide guidance to perpetrators and victims of SRGBV. However, time constraints, need for more specialised skills, and necessity for a person who is neutral and away from the classroom and other teachers are some of the factors indicated by participants that make this strategy to be effective to a limited extent. This is further discussed under problems encountered during implementation of prevention and intervention strategies.

#### **4.5.2.4 Involving social worker**

When the situation dictates it, a social worker is contacted and the case is referred to her for further assistance. Such cases usually require informing the parent and getting parental consent for further intervention.

SMT E: *“We have had social workers who are happy to come almost immediately, as far as possible. They interview the learners and often parental involvement is required, or a behaviour modification. The learners go to such workshops with the social workers. The social workers give us a report saying: “I have addressed this couple about their violence. They require 4 hours of this workshop on a certain day”, and I will follow up in terms of have they attended it and has there been any change.”*

School E established a good relationship with the social workers at Phoenix Child Welfare and always contacted them when the issues were beyond the capacity of the school. This intervention was very successful, and it was initially triggered by the many notes that were slipped under the door of the Deputy Principal.

SMT E: *“She [the social worker] did one-on-one counselling with them even with this jealousy about relationships, she has done group work, she has done individual work with them and eventually she became so popular, she used to come on three consecutive days, more and more children would come ... And then it became too much, it was like we needed a full-time social worker, we realised that many of the children sitting in our classrooms do have emotional baggage that they bring in class and the kind of aggression and violence they resort so spontaneously in school is what they are imitating from their home environment. But that social worker resigned, so that was a really backward state for us, because that social worker was doing some amazing work. She did the behaviour modification workshops and encouraged the community service.”*

The overwhelming response of learners to the social worker’s intervention indicates the great need schools have for professionals who are equipped to influence behavioural changes in adolescents. The realisation of SMT E that so many learners are carrying a burden from home and are not able to respond appropriately to the issues they encounter as individuals, explains the aggression and violence outbursts that happen at school and further highlights the necessity of full time professional.

This strategy has worked very well for school E, more especially the combination of involvement of social worker, behaviour modification workshops and community service in a shelter for victims of GBV.

#### ***4.5.2.5 Community service***

Some schools have been proactive in finding solutions that will have transformative and rehabilitating effect on perpetrators and victims, such as the reality check at a shelter for abused women where they can see for themselves the ultimate effects of GBV on families.

SMT E: *“...One of the things that I did, is to take many of these perpetrators to do some community service. I am not sure if you have been to the Sahara Shelter? It is a shelter for abused women, it is about two kilometres away from our school and it is a project run by Phoenix Child Welfare. They encourage volunteers. So if anyone has been a victim and a perpetrator of any kind of violence against each other, they used*

*to spend a half an hour after school at the shelter. So, it depends like if the person likes gardening, they will make a veggie patch and constructively there is a way to be good again. At the shelter they have more serious adult victims of violence, and the message is that if the learner is starting with this kind of violent behaviour at school level, one of the couple may end up in prison and the other is going to be in shelters like this. This was pre-COVID intervention.”*

The Sahara Shelter community service presents opportunity for these young people to see through the eyes of other victims the reality experienced as a result of GBV. This leads them to reflect on their behaviour and to think about their future. The impact of the intervention is change of attitudes and improved relationships for both perpetrators and victims.

#### **4.5.2.6 Liaising with SAPS**

When the situation required it and was serious enough, some schools resorted to contacting SAPS as a way of impressing upon the particular perpetrator that their action is taken very serious and it will not be tolerated.

*SMT B: “There are only one or two instances we call SAPS more as a threat, more to frighten them into understanding to listen when come to harassment, the only time I did it was when the child is old because we got some much older kids. We got kids of 21 ...”*

Calling SAPS to school is done in very serious cases of violence. The comment of SMT B suggest that some learners do not realise how serious their actions are when harassing another person. This carries the notion that the internalisation of violence as a means of conflict resolution and the desensitisation to violence have taken root in the individual’s conscience so deep that they do not see anything wrong with it.

#### **4.5.2.7 Pledge for non-violence**

Another intervention shared by participant involved learners signing a Bullying Pledge, and similarly the educators from the school signed a pledge to treat learners with respect. This together with other measures that were put in place brought in positive change in the school climate.

SMT G: *“So, what our school has done, and we do have that, like fights amongst boys, so from 2017, I may be wrong, we started a programme, if you go to the classrooms, you will see a Bullying Pledge, that was signed by the principal, where learners undertake to work with each other, not bring anyone down, help each other rather than...you know, so learners say the pledge, and they have to sign it. ...so even amongst staff— each educator signs every term a sort of a pledge not to abuse learners, not to use verbal or physical, psychological, emotional abuse.*

Signing of a pledge is a formal public declaration of a promise undertaken by the signatory. This act carries obligations to the person making the pledge and can be viewed as having contractual binding power (Merriam Webster n.d). When these facts are explained to the young people and they are given a time frame to consider the pledge prior to signing, they can be expected to honour their promise. In the context of school G the non-violence pledge produced good results and contributed to curbing of all forms of violence there.

The same school, school G also used the assistance of social workers.

SMT G: *“... So educators used to identify learners that they thought in terms of socio-economic difficulties, drug issues and we also opened it up to the learners, ‘should you feel a need to speak to a social worker, for whatever reason,’ then we had a time slot when each one could come.”*

The combination of responses like anti-bullying pledge and the availability of social workers to do counselling contributed to limiting of SRGBV in school G.

#### ***4.5.2.8 Talks by principal, educators and departmental officials***

School C used simple but effective tactic – teachers and principal gave talks to learners regularly, and to reinforce the message, they invited departmental officials to also give talks to the learners.

SMT C: *“I generally have talks...We talk about respect all the time, I told them 3 things I want from learners: 1 is to respect everyone in this plant, 2 is good behaviour and 3 is a good, sound education. Three things that they come here for and respect is the most important in my opinion...I also had Dr Singh [Circuit Manager] coming here,*

*talking to our grade 12 learners about work and I had Mr. K. M. Subrayan [Circuit Manager] talking about behaviour – how we should behave and the role function, mutual respect for one another. “*

The strategy of giving talks to the learners was also mentioned by most of the participants as intervention in their schools. Prior to COVID-19, talks related to disciplinary issues were conducted at the assembly; however, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the strict health regulations impacted the usual format of such talks and they were done either with separate classes or a grade at a time.

SMT D: *“But you’ll find in our daily announcement we constantly talk about bullying and GBV ... They [announcements] are done in writing. Because of COVID, we do not have large assemblies, so the assemblies are basically done in the classrooms through the form teacher who have 20 in the class, but if there is a serious problem of bullying – I recall a case where I had to call the entire grade out and I had to read them the Rights Act, that if such kind of things are done obviously they are going to land themselves into serious trouble.”*

The interventions are usually done because of incident that has occurred and their main purpose is to correct unacceptable behaviour in accordance with South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, Section 9 (South Africa, Department of Education 1996b). Talks to learners are used in clarifying what is problematic and also have a preventative impact because they inform of consequences for perpetrators and victims.

Learner A: *“Mostly in Life Orientation there are a lot of discussions on violence and abuse, GBV, but if something had happened in my school, then it would be followed by a lot of talks about it, making people more aware about it. Otherwise, it is not done just for the sake of doing it.”*

The talks to the learners are creating greater awareness of the effects and consequences of SRGBV. They are also complimented by the content studied in the subject of Life Orientation, which deals with violence, GBV, substance abuse and how to find help in any of these situations, among other topics.

#### **4.5.2.9 Networking with social partners**

When schools experience problematic behaviour of learners which continues over extended periods of time, and most of the above-mentioned strategies are already implemented with not much change in the situation, the school's management comes to the realisation that they need a multi-level approach.

School H established a network with social partners who were committed and responsible to bring change in the lives of learners. Educator H shared that the school had been experiencing issues for many years, and the surrounding community is plagued by drugs and other social ills, which adds to the problem.

Educator H: *"We've got our ex-SGB chair person, she is involved with CPF, Community Policing Forum, and she has a programme set up to get help from NGOs, and from the Department, to come and deal with problem cases; these learners are taken up from school, and sent for counselling there is a programme as such, where the Department helps us, and we get a lot of help from an ex-learner.... It is a collaboration; we've been privileged to be tied up with all these social partners so to speak.... it [this programme] is done through a process, we actually have to apply for this process where we get help from outside and once we establish that, it becomes much more easier for us, we know who to contact."*

This is the only mention of a specific programme coming from the Department of Education regarding SRGBV. From the words of Educator H, it becomes clear that the school had to go through a process of applying and being approved for this programme and it deals with counselling learners.

#### **4.5.2.10 Applying disciplinary measures**

Valuable feedback on the procedures prescribed in the disciplinary policy is provided by Learner D:

Learner D: *"I feel the tribunals really helped, because they bring about certain sense of fear, we sit at the table with SGB members, principal, deputy, parents of victim and the other parents. It definitely ensures a feeling of fear, so the perpetrator is now*



*scared to attempt it again. I would definitely say our tribunals assist greatly in such matters.”*

The complex nature of SRGBV causes some interventions to have a preventative character. A tribunal hearing, described in detail by Jacobs (2000), is part of the procedure in handling serious discipline issues and it resembles court hearing. It is a formal process which includes investigation, presentation of facts and issue of disciplinary action.

The repercussions for serious acts of violence including gender-based violence are significant and serve as a deterrent to future perpetrators, as they have punitive character.

#### **4.5.3 Examples of prevention strategies regarding SRGBV in selected secondary schools in Phoenix:**

Phoenix secondary schools have developed the following preventative strategies against SRGBV.

##### ***4.5.3.1 Surveillance and security measures***

Some schools, which are situated in areas where the crime levels are very high and have experienced continuous violence issues over the years, have resolved to implementing stricter surveillance and security measures related to installing of surveillance cameras and involving SAPS. School G is one of these schools who had successfully implemented these strategies.

SMT G: *“... we have 35 cameras and there are very few blind spots. So where we think boys and girls could be getting together – there is a duty point during the breaks and educators are placed. So, it is highly unlikely that it is happening at school.”*

Learner G: *“Hmm, I remember in my first year in high school, every Friday will be a fight or whatsoever...I remember police used to patrol our school road, so fights couldn’t really happen because the police were patrolling. ... A lot of troublemakers at school are no longer at school because our former Principal made sure that students that are doing something that is illegal or something that is going to put our lives at risk...he made sure that they are taken out of the school and not coming back and he*

*made sure that those drug lords, those wanna-be, he made sure that they did not enter the school gate.”*

School G experienced a turnaround in the situation with violence due to the approach of the principal who ensured surveillance cameras were installed, patrols by police were done at dismissal times, and learners who wanted to use the school for drug sales were dealt with accordingly. The school had followed the disciplinary procedures and when no change in the actions of those learners was observed such learners were either transferred to other schools or they were expelled.

In school F, educators took it upon themselves to do patrols after school and in doing so they prevent fights or other forms of violence. Educator F describes how learners were not given any opportunity to engage in delinquent behaviour because educators diligently will be on duty during breaks.

Educator F: *“In our school, this is how we manage violence – teachers are on duty all the time. We have a roster in our school, so educators are positioned at various duty points, and so learners know that there is no chance for them to get up to nonsense. Hence they have violence when teachers are not around, for example, when they are walking home after school, or on their way to school, or maybe change of periods when there is no educator around. But you won’t find them going out and fighting when teachers are around. ...Even after school, we have educators driving around the area, so learners are monitored quite actively.”*

Similarly to school G, which used the assistance of SAPS patrols and school F where educators themselves do patrols after school is dismissed, Educator H shares their experience of parents assisting when collecting their learners and preventing any fights.

Educator H: *“And we got some responsible parents, they are there to even help us, like we got policemen, and their children are in school, and sometimes they come and pick up. Their presence alone deters any problems. We work very, very close with the parents as well.”*

From the examples above becomes clear that every school has developed strategy according to their context and the state of SBV and SRGBV.

#### ***4.5.3.2 Creating awareness on SRGBV***

Creating awareness through talks to learners by Police Forum and SAPS, holding Life Orientation discussions on sexuality and SRGBV were applied by all schools. The Department of Education has established a partnership with SAPS and signed a Collaborative Protocol on the 12 April 2011 as part of promoting safer schools. This initiative aims at creating positive relationships between the schools and police stations; it assists in building capacity within the school community to manage and prevent school safety issues. SAPS and the Police Forum holding talks for learners on pertinent issues such as substance abuse, GBV, and delinquent behaviour is part of the Safer Schools Framework (South African Police Service 2019).

The accounts of school A and C are provided below.

Educator A: *“We used to have the police forum coming and speaking to our learners, ... We had assembly talks, also when SAPS came in, they also gave assembly talks and it helped obviously made kids more aware of the different types of violence that take place. During LO lessons we discuss about sexuality, about how you carry yourself out, about violence, about human rights, and about children’s rights. It’s all discussed in the Life Orientation lessons. Well, ... we give our kids that little bit of motivational talks...”*

Educator C: *“We do have that in LO, Life Orientation, there is a section that is covered in a grade. And they teach that sections about what it [GBV] is and how you report, you know, in general they talk about it and they test them on it. It’s in the syllabus from grade 8 to grade 12.”*

Crooks et al. (2019) acknowledge the impact of creating awareness and educating has on preventing of GBV. This strategy has been used over many years and remains one of the very successful approaches that sets the ground for further interventions. The Department of Education has included different aspects of violence and GBV in the syllabus with the intention of creating awareness and preventing this phenomenon. The

dual nature of some strategies is clearly seen here: they work both as interventions and preventions.

#### ***4.5.3.3 Setting and maintaining a culture of meaningful learning in school***

Even though the strategy below was mentioned by only one school, it takes a central part of the efforts of every school's Level 1 educators, management and support staff. The core duty of every educator is to ensure that meaningful teaching/learning takes place daily.

Educator B: *"The overall culture of the school ...the children must be in class all the time and have to be learning all the time and the admin members are around keeping a watch on them and going around. The kids are not out to violate somebody's rights."*

When learners are occupied with schoolwork, they will not divert into delinquent behaviour (World Health Organisation 2019). However, when learners are not able to follow the class work for different reasons such as barriers to learning, unable to read, or their emotional state does not permit them to focus, this is when some of them could cause discipline issues. Therefore, addressing the possible reasons that keep learners from advancing academically is very crucial in the combat of SBV and SRGBV.

#### ***4.5.3.4 Initiating nutrition programmes and mentorship***

There are learners from different backgrounds attending every school and when there are those who come from underprivileged homes the school structures like the welfare committee or management try to find solutions and alleviate factors like hunger, uniforms, and stationery. SMT C described how the need for feeding scheme was identified and it was established. This prevented learners from being distracted in class or having aggressive behaviour.

SMT C: *"I started nutritional programs, so we are feeding them. So that disadvantage was removed from them. There are about 90 learners that are being fed every single day. With good, quality food. ... they are not coming hungry, you know that psychologically when you are hungry your mind is not focused. You become aggressive. I'm trying to take that away through the feeding scheme, then the emotional support comes in. ... I look at innovative ways to take this school forward."*

The personal observations of this participant of learners who come from a very underprivileged background, who cannot bring lunch to school and as a result remain hungry through the school day, is that they tend to be irritable and aggressive. To prevent discipline issues as well as to assist such learners with opportunity to focus on their schoolwork, SMT C established a feeding scheme. The observations of SMT C are also confirmed by Swami et al. (2022), who found that hunger is connected to feelings of anger and irritability. They conclude that daily experiences of being hungry lead to negative emotions and tendency of aggressive behaviour.

SMT C: *“They don’t have a role model or somebody that is the head of the household. These learners try to go into different directions, there is no control over them. The mum might be working and nobody to look after them at home. ... Economic issues and most of them come from townships here. Family break ups, drug abuse, alcohol abuse – are very common. ...I decided I will be the role model [to the troubled kids] because [they] look up to me and listen to me ... I would appreciate such [mentorship] programme because it is an additional support.”*

The comment of SMT C that the help has to be on all levels, such as physical, with feeding and emotional, by providing role models, is very valuable, because a holistic approach can and should be used in intervention and prevention of SBV and SRGBV (UNESCO 2019). Mentorship is a successful approach which can influence attitudes and behaviour of adolescents. SMT C has decided to become a role model and mentor to few problematic adolescents in his school and by doing that he will help them to grow into respectful young people who can resolve peacefully problems instead of using violence. Crooks et al. (2019) inform us of mentorship being used in the United States of America, where a structured violence prevention curriculum is provided to coaches and their athletes. The results of this mentorship programme, named *Coaching Boys into Men*, have shown positive outcomes for the past decade. The potential of mentorship should be considered by the Department of Education in developing suitable SRGBV prevention mentorship programme.

#### **4.5.3.5 “Prevention is better than cure”**

##### **- Educating through literature for target groups**

One of the strategies mentioned by SMT E used in her school was providing specialised literature to target groups of learners who are more vulnerable to SRGBV.

SMT E: “... and there is also literature from the Sahara Shelter, which had targeted groups, so if you are looking at a very vulnerable group of 14 years, and even the social worker had group work and she had given literature about violence and how to cope with that...”

The use of literature had a supportive role to the counselling and individual or group work done by the social worker in this school. This preventative measure has also characteristic of intervention which is indicative of the dual nature of the strategies. In the same vein, school A used educating both learners and parents as an intervention strategy and they also acknowledge that it has a preventative nature.

##### **- Creating awareness through educating and holding programmes for the school**

SMT A: “... they always say prevention is better than cure. So we need to prevent it at grass root level. I always repeat that education and educating the learners is the main way to prevent, and when a person becomes aware that he/she has displayed such behaviour, then only he/she can rectify it. So, people need to be educated, Number 1. Number 2, the community, the school itself, and our homes must not be a place where we display such behaviour and where it is a norm and accepted. We need to make sure that it doesn't become a norm and when the more subtle forms of GBV start playing out, that they get stopped at that stage and do not escalate to the more serious forms of GBV. The more subtle forms of GBV must be taken seriously and act accordingly. Otherwise we will see dangerous forms playing out in our schools. Again those are the best ways we can prevent GBV from taking place... So, we try to encourage the learners to educate themselves because the key way to free society from GBV or at least to minimise it, is by educating society. “

SMT A makes very profound statement that only through awareness of the wrongfulness of one's behaviour, can it be corrected. Awareness is brought about

through educating people. The best place to do that is school, because that is where young characters are formed and shaped. Furthermore, the normalisation of this phenomenon at home, at school and in the community, can be undone through creating awareness. This is incorporated in the whole school approach which is developed to promote building of capacity of school leadership, parents, teachers and students through educating and training. One of the eight strategies of this approach is the strengthening of school-family-community partnerships (Madyirapanze 2020).

During pre-Covid-19 years, schools had different programmes which were dedicated to creating awareness through music and drama. This is another very effective strategy because it is not only entertaining but educating as well. İşyar and Akay (2017: 215) confirm that drama is a very powerful teaching tool and “strengthens the individual’s communication with himself/herself,” thus makes teaching/learning human and socially-oriented. In addition, drama helps learning by providing “multi-dimensional perspective” (İşyar and Akay 2017: 215).

SMT B: *“...we had religious organisations that come and do plays, that talk about violence against women, rape of women and different scenarios ... even people who came in from overseas and so forth for the part of exchange group, they come in and they’ve done shows for our children. Shows that entertain but educate at the same time. So, we had at least one per year.”*

The involvement of various faith-based organisations through programs related to violence and substance abuse is always welcomed input of morals and values that assist schools with problematic behaviour of learners. The inclusion of music and drama is enjoyed by learners and educators because of their entertaining nature. In addition, they facilitate easier delivery of concepts and topics that are not easy for discussion.

#### ***4.5.3.7 Parental involvement in curbing GBV at schools***

Important preventative measure divulged by Educator H describes a strategy of observing the patterns of behaviour of learners in the lower grades and intervening through counselling and involving parents before the issues become serious.

Educator H: “... we do a projection, right, and we look at our learners, ...and we looking at the trouble-makers in gr. 10, and 9, and the gr.8s we getting to know now, and over the years, because we’ve been doing our homework, and getting to parents as quick as possible, ...kids know, we can call the parents just like that.”

Choosing to keep a close check on learners’ problematic behaviour and addressing it by involving parents as soon as possible, illustrate that prevention is better than having to intervene. For the success of this approach, however, cooperation from the parents is necessary. If the parents decide that teachers are over-reacting or victimising their child for no reason, they will not correct their child and the problem is likely to deepen and escalate further. Therefore, maintaining positive relationship between parents and educators will be beneficial to the school climate and it will contribute to good discipline and academic success (Segoe and Bisschoff 2019).

#### **4.6 Conclusion on intervention and prevention strategies in selected secondary schools in Phoenix**

The collected data indicates that there are no specific intervention or prevention programmes operating continuously in these schools. The only exception is school H, where there is a programme from the Department of Education involving counselling of learners which is done by professional psychologists out of school.

The responses to SRGBV of school are ad-hoc. The factor determining what preventions and interventions should be implemented is the seriousness and frequency of occurring cases as well as their nature. Some schools have been very proactive and creative, and others have kept to the basics and relied on tried and tested methods. Ranging from talks by principal, educators and organisations; educating and raising awareness in learners through the content in Life Orientation; organising a feeding scheme to cater for the well-being of indigent learners and alleviating their frustrations; mentoring learners; strategically placing educators on duty in various points at school; utilising technology like surveillance cameras; patrolling streets after school to ensure safe return of learners to their homes; instilling a culture of respect for each other; establishing collaboration with parents who fetch their children in assisting after



learner dismissal, and involving SAPS patrols for dismissal times. All these factors have contributed to limiting negative behaviours.

It was noted that many interventions have dual nature because they also have preventative character. Furthermore, it was discussed how each strategy addresses a level in the Bioecological Theory of Bronfenbrenner (2005) and overall all the levels (microsystems, mesosystem, mexosystem, and macrosystem) are catered for. When using the lenses of the Systems Theory of von Bertalanffy (1968), it was acknowledged that the strategies used by the secondary schools influence the throughput process in order to produce the desired outcome. All the interventions and preventions used by Phoenix secondary schools are represented in the whole school approach recommended by UNGEI (2019), even though they are not systematically applied because the perception of the current state of SRGBV is that it is not serious.

Participants have described the state of SRGBV as “*undercurrent*”, “*very isolated incidents*” and the response of the schools was according to this perception. Interventions were implemented when necessary, and preventative measures have ongoing application. The focus of both prevention and intervention strategies was mainly the learners.

The study provoked critical thinking in managers and educators. They realised that a more holistic approach is necessary, which has to include educators and supporting staff, parents and community members.

#### **4.7 Challenges identified by secondary schools incurred during implementation of intervention and prevention measures for SRGBV**

Schools as key component of the educational system are placed in the community and liaise with multiple stakeholders such as parents, members of the surrounding community, NGOs, faith organisations and departmental officials. In order to deliver academic results, schools rely on the cooperation of the stakeholders to enhance their efforts in delivering the curriculum which prepares learners for the future work experience (Mashau, Kone and Mutshaeni 2018).

#### **4.7.1 Parents' attitudes**

The value and importance of guidance and presence of the parent in the life of the child cannot be overstated. Literature across the years testifies of the shortfall on the side of parents who rarely get involved in their learner's schooling experience. Even though parents follow up on their children's schooling progress, there are few who are ensuring to be available and present to exercise parental control (Chan et al. 2022; Coşkun and Katitaş 2018; Costa and Faria 2017; Ogwuche, Igbashal and Chiahemba 2018; Segoe and Bisschoff 2019).

##### **- Parents are overprotective of their children**

Educator H brings to light a different side to parental involvement which takes another extreme. He spoke of parents who are ready to protect their child and take his/her side even if the child needs to be corrected for a wrongdoing.

Educator H: *"... There are sometimes problems when the parents are overbearing... sometimes we are in a situation where parents take it so personally...Parents take it – if they don't get their way, then they want to take the law into their hands. ...It's only when parents take the part of the child, whether the child is right or wrong, but take the part of the child, that's when the child feels he wins and he can have his own right in school because he's been protected by the parent."*

Educator H highlights interesting side of the process of dealing with cases of violence: led by their love and concern for their own child when he/she is a victim, parents can be "overbearing" by insisting for the strictest punishment to the perpetrator of violence. In their pursuit for justice they could lose sight of the bigger picture and demand retribution regardless of how it affects the adolescent's future. Another extreme of the case of parents' involvement is when the parent shields their child regardless of his/her evident guilt, which sends the wrong message to the young person. Instead of the teenager being corrected and counselled by the parent, the youngster takes the parent's protection as permission to continue with the wrong behaviour.

##### **- Parents do not discipline their children**

The lack of parental skills places the adults in a peculiar position. Being unsure of how to approach their growing child's attitudes, and not taking action until it is too late, also constitute a cause for many incidents that could have been prevented through decisive action of the parent. Educator D illustrates this:

Educator D: *"...we find on the weekend on social media and WhatsApps and all, messages that are being sent in, derogatory messages, and it filters down to schools – for us to handle. It starts off at home. You see, this is where the parents come – **they delegate the responsibility** to the school, we've got to take action, instead of them taking action, it comes to our school, that's the problem we are having."*

Educator D emphasises that a lot of issues "*start off at home*" by learners navigating social platforms unsupervised by their parents and sending messages that are offensive and inappropriate to their peers. Such problems even though started behind the screen of smart device such as a cell phone, eventually filter into the school environment and could escalate further. Therefore, school management is forced to intervene, whereas if parents exercised their monitoring authority at home, issues would have been resolved on that level.

. The educators above argue that not just parental involvement is needed, but an approach with the best interests of the learner at heart. In certain situations, where parents are involved and exercising parental control and guidance, the interventions may be sabotaged through overprotective and hypersensitive attitudes or misunderstood and misguided protection by the parent. Dealing with such situations requires suitable training for educators and SMTs which currently is not included in their studies (Đurišić and Bunijevac 2017). On the other hand, passive parental presence is also not beneficial to adolescents who are still in a need of guidance and correction. When parental monitoring is not exercised at home, a further burden is added to educators to carry, because they have to mediate in resolving issues which have started at home.

#### **4.7.2 Lack of proper support by the DoE in the establishment of Quality**

##### **Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC)**

The DoE has been proactive in developing criteria and requirements cascaded to the management of schools to ensure smooth functioning and suitable response to challenges. One such strategy is the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC). According to Khosa (2018), the aim of this strategy is to get the different stakeholders to become involved and responsible for quality of teaching and learning. QLTC is developed to assist the underperforming schools in addressing the challenges experienced in their particular locality. The implementation of QLTC, however, has stumbled upon lack of structures mostly caused by the nature of QLTC as a campaign and not a programme (Khosa 2018).

SMT B communicates below her frustration from trying to get through to the necessary stakeholders, nurses and social workers, in order to create the network required by DoE. This participant reached a “dead end” – one person passing the responsibility to another and no one committing to make themselves available in a case of need. Her experience made her feel that the promising idea of the Department is becoming ineffective “*paper chasing*” due to lack of cooperation and will for participation in the particular institutions approached by her.

SMT B: “... *it does fall under QLTC – we supposed to have our social partners like SAPS and social workers etc. We all know that is paper chasing, we fill in the document because I take responsibility for that, and we go to SAPS to get it signed to say that we have a connection with SAPS. We have social worker. GBV is related to all social issues. But even there the truth is that is just names on a piece of paper, half the time you can’t get a social worker attached. I tried the last time, I phoned so many places, you suppose to have someone from nursing, someone from the health department, for example, a girl is raped...we need help from the health department. I couldn’t get a representative from the health department to put up my QLTC.*”

The participant felt very frustrated and disappointed because every time she spoke to someone from the necessary institution, she was passed to another person who will turn her down and not commit to associate with the school. After many attempts, she

took a name and filled it in the block without knowing if the person still works there because she had to submit the document.

It becomes evident that some schools have managed to put together intervention programmes incorporating many social partners. Others are battling to identify the willing partners who can step in and make a difference. This reality does not stand on the lack of attempt or initiative on the side of the unsuccessful schools. The major issue is found in the words of the same SMT B.

SMT B: *“We should be provided with those names. They [Department of Education] should be able to say these are the people available to you. We should not be phoning and begging people to accept our school, to adopt our school, but no one wants to take on the responsibility, so they are not playing their part. ... You can’t leave to educators that responsibility of finding people, I don’t think it’s fair as managers. We don’t have the time for it. I have a full teaching load, I’m trying to manage a school; we are overworked.”*

This participant is of the opinion that the Department of Education has to identify and provide a list of suitable candidates who would be responsible to fulfil supportive role to the schools. This approach will ensure that when contacted these candidates will comply and assist the schools as need arises.

#### **4.7.3 Educators lack counselling skills**

One of the seven roles a teacher is expected to perform as suggested by South African Department of Basic Education (2000:18), is pastoral care, which entails the educator responding to “the educational and other needs” of learners. The module on child psychology covered over two semesters during training to qualify as a teacher equips educators with some basic understanding on child’s mental development and how best a teacher can assist given learner in acquiring knowledge. Participants of this study, however, question whether this training background of educators is sufficient and effective in performing the role of a counsellor as prescribed by the Department of Basic Education.

SMT B: *“Remember the teachers, they are not trained to handle these kinds of social problems. What if I handle it incorrectly and child would have killed herself? I think it’s such a burden for me to be responsible to handle it properly. You can’t assume I know how to handle it.”*

This educator, SMT B, is holding a strong argument: the Department of Education has placed very serious burden on the shoulders of educators by expecting them to be able to handle and counsel issues they are not trained for. Another educator added to this argument that teachers may be long in the profession and their training was a long time ago and therefore not relevant to the current context in schools. The social issues dealt with in those days were different from the ones now.

Educator G: *“You know...I have been trained as an educator in 1991. I graduated, long time ago, and in my training at that time there was no module on this matter [GBV] although we were told to be aware of having different learners in the classroom, I think we had to learn it as we went along. There was no training, so I can’t say I am fully equipped for it.”*

Some years back schools used to have guidance counsellors appointed by the Department; however, in the 1980s, the South African government “authorised the ...redeployment of guidance and counselling services together with professional school counsellors” (Muribwathoho, 2015: 8) This responsibility was added to the duties of educators.

Educator D: *“... those days we had a counsellor appointed by the department, which they did away with and it’s honestly the biggest mistake they made. Now we appoint teachers who have free time just to counsel learners. That’s about it. We have appointed teachers to counsel them, and especially about bullying. Our concern are the suicidal thoughts, sometimes bullies, you know, the silent one can’t take it anymore, they go and do something to themselves which we’re trying to prevent. So, we stress over...”*

“...we stress over...” is a statement which carries heavy emotional load and expresses the concern of teachers that they are ill-equipped and yet expected to counsel learners.

The fear of making a mistake due to no training is weighing down on educators because a mistake may cost the life of a young person.

SMT B: “... *So, I think in that sense since GBV is a major issue in our country our department is failing. Having workshops galore on bureaucracy, but management must do A/B/C/D, the department is loading us with what management must do. But where we can be of social assistance to the needs of our learners, you are not workshopping us on that. So, in that sense the department is really failing us. Even when teachers in class find about child abuse, they panic they quickly run to us not because they are irresponsible or negligent but because they don't know how to handle it. Teachers panic.*”

Educators feel ill-prepared to handle these issues and they conclude that specialised help is necessary in order to resolve behavioural problems.

SMT C: “...*those issues have to be resolved with a psychologist. They cannot be resolved by me when I am telling learners to stop doing it. ...Both of these types of people need psychological help, the one, that is being abused, and the one that is the abuser.*”

The situations in the classroom environment that an educator encounters on a daily basis are complex and intricate. Minor misdemeanours are handled as they arise, but dealing with SRGBV requires specialised skills that are not possessed by educators.

The theme of insufficient skills for counselling can be followed throughout the interviews in all selected schools. Educators and SMTs alike claimed that there is a need for suitably qualified guidance counsellors who have the single mission of alleviation of the burdens carried by learners, while teachers focus on the delivery of syllabus and improving results.

#### **4.7.4 “... Suspension ... and no counselling ... and nothing is being resolved”**

Observations shared during the interviews indicated the concern of some participants that the standard procedures in handling violence at school do not resolve the actual problem; rather, they have a reactive nature. The educator SMT C relates to the suspension which is applied in very serious matters and concludes that “*nothing is*

*being resolved” by suspending the learner, because the individual simply stayed away from school.*

*SMT C: “After 7 days of suspension, during which there was no talking to the learners and getting guidance, or giving counselling, in that 7days they [perpetrators] are sleeping at home and doing nothing, and nothing is being resolved. Such learner just stayed away from school. I would prefer that the learner be counselled by somebody like a counsellor in school.”*

The view of the SMT is also shared by Learner A, who feels that a perpetrator would need *“a lot of counselling”* and goes further to say that even that may not be enough to change the perpetrator’s behaviour.

*Learner A: “They would receive a lot of counselling and advise, but I personally feel that would not really change the person they are even if they have to get a lot of counselling and advise, even if they have to get in prison or get suspended, because they have grown and they are at a level that they know and believe that what they have done is not wrong, so it will take a lot of time to try and change their minds.”*

The conviction of Learner A is that the counselling and advice that would be provided by the school would not make a difference to the perpetrator, assuming she is referring to a ‘hardened’ perpetrator of GBV, because it takes much more to change someone’s belief system. SMT C felt that a professional counsellor can make the necessary impact.

*Educator A: “Basically, if the child is found guilty of committing an act that is against the Code of Conduct, there will be a suspension given to the child. Obviously, the child must acknowledge that he has done something wrong or she has done something wrong, and maybe allow them to get into some sort of programme or to go for counselling to try and help the learner in order to get back on track.”*

In Section 4.5.2.4 (examples of intervention regarding SRGBV), SMT E referred to a behaviour modification workshop administered by a social worker as part of the interventions done in her school. In addition to the workshop, school E had a “reality check” – collaboration with the Sahara Shelter, which allowed learners to assess their



actions and change their behaviour by interacting with victims of GBV and doing community service. The above excerpt of educator A describes the need for similar interventions to be adopted in other schools in order to impact the perpetrator's attitudes and behaviour.

#### **4.7.5 Lack of formal communication from DoE regarding SRGBV**

The education is a system in which the different levels are hierarchically connected. The lower levels depend on instructions from the higher levels. The Department of Basic Education regularly issues different circulars with instructions to the different levels as a way of communication.

SMT C: *“Every now and then, we get a circular or policy, something related to that, radio makes us quite aware of the schools’ issues. As principals we used to have little talks at the assembly for 5 minutes. But for the past year, we haven’t had anything [regarding GBV] from the Department, but I heard quite a lot on the radio or TV and media. Most of the information I get is probably from radio, quite a few of other people also get it. But in terms of circulars and reminders, in terms of that I haven’t heard much.”*

This SMT tackles important aspect: the DoE has remained silent during the period 2020-2021, known for an exponentially-increased number of GBV cases (Vallabh, 2022). Media has been informing on the issue, and the President of the Republic, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa called the wave of GBV cases “the second pandemic”. A National Strategic Plan on Gender Based Violence and Femicide was published in 2020, while no communication came from DoE.

#### **4.7.6 Insufficient awareness on SRGBV**

The lack of SRGBV awareness was another theme that surfaced throughout every interview. This study caused each participant to reflect and realise that not enough is done to prevent such violence from happening and especially through raising awareness.

Participants shared their concerns and issues in this regard during the interviews.

SMT C: *“But what I feel, since you brought it to my attention, the awareness is very limited, and we should make the learners more aware of this kind of things and these things do exist, maybe it’s not prevalent in our school, but they may exist in other schools.”*

Educator A: *“Honestly, no, I think that many of them [learners] or even us as educators would not know that it falls under the category of gender-based violence.”*

Educator D: *“... we have incidents of bullying, I call it bullying, I won’t call it GBV. I won’t refer to it as GBV; I don’t know how you determine that.”*

The insufficient skills to recognise and classify a case as GBV are a serious issue that has surfaced during this inquiry. If the incident is not identified correctly, it is possible it would not be handled correctly. Thus, the need for specialised training on identification and handling SRGBV becomes a major call in this study.

#### **4.7.7 Time constrains and teaching load prevents educators from dealing properly with SRGBV**

Teaching is a demanding profession, which expects complete dedication and high energy levels. Even though it can be very rewarding, it has been proven to be also very stressful occupation. Jomuad et al. (2021) investigate the demands placed on teachers and conclude that the blend of growing demands without removing any of the previous work; increase in paperwork; multiple meetings; often, reforms and changes which require re-organisation of work and work tasks; having to use new software without being provided with suitable training; managing overcrowded and under-resourced classes with ill-disciplined learners, and so forth, inevitably lead to teacher burnout and high stress levels. This is characterising the experience of level 1 educators as well as management.

South African educators are enduring pressures of the profession as described above combined with lack of safety, job insecurity, lack of control, lack of opportunities for professional growth, communicated by Iwu et al. (2013). In order to meet the demands placed on them, teachers are forced to use afterhours and manage wisely their time. The Department of Education expects educators to fulfil a pastoral care and

counselling role; however, the time constraints are minimising the possibility of such activity. SMT C highlights another issue, the need for multiple sessions and follow up when dealing with behaviour problems, which is not possible for educators and management due to the workload they are carrying already.

*SMT C: “Due to time constraints, I can’t spend hours here, the principal’s job is not only curriculum management, it’s personality management and conflict management, maintenance management, pavement management, there’s a whole lot of meetings. ...Look it’s not one session, I have to have several other sessions. I have 400 learners to give my time and effort to, spending time with a few learners in the office is not being productive.”*

*Educator G: “The only hustle with us teaching all the time is to get all this admin work [records of misdemeanours and interventions] going and that goes on, the paper work...What we have now is the LO-teacher [counselling], but I think that the LO-teacher is swamped with the syllabus and he has to prepare and there is an exam as well, so it has become the same thing in all subjects...”*

There is a considerable shortage of qualified educators especially in secondary schools which puts the pressure on the ones in the school to carry the load. As a result, free periods that educators have for preparation, marking of assessments or learners’ books, and printing of worksheets, are cut to minimum. This makes counselling by educators very difficult mission. Even though these challenges of time and teaching load persist and take a serious toll on the educator, many teachers ensure to find few moments to exchange thoughts and advice with learner in need for counselling. However, the need for follow up and having many sessions remains unanswered.

#### **4.7.8 Confidentiality issues**

Learners experiencing GBV are in the difficult position to disclose something so personal to a teacher and in following procedure, they will have to repeat it again to an SMT. Often they choose to skip the steps in the line of reporting and go directly to the SMT, because of their desire to see quick intervention. Learners interviewed in the current study stated that given a choice they probably would pick a friend or a neutral person who does not teach them daily to report such cases. Their preference would be

a person they can turn to for counselling, away from the classroom, who can look at them through the lenses as human being and not their academic performance, as they assume teachers do.

Learner E: *“I think if it is happening in school, first and foremost a learner is going to go to speak to their friend. And then from there, if the matter escalates, they are going to go to their form teacher first, because they spend more time with their form teacher than any of the other teachers, and it all depends on how the learner feels. If it is a learner who is more within himself, who don't like to speak out, then they will go to a friend.”*

Learner A: *“To add to that most often the person attacked by GBV is afraid to go to a teacher, rather than go and speak to a friend. So I will understand more what people are going through rather than teachers. It is hard to go and open up to a teacher about what the learner is going through just because of what they are.”*

Educators have similar opinion to the one of learners on this matter. They realise that children do not trust easily and they would not share personal issues unless they are “very comfortable” with the teacher.

Educator H: *“...as a teacher you are not that approachable, let's not kid ourselves. A child has to be very comfortable, to come to you and divulge or share their problems, only when they come, and it doesn't happen overnight.”*

Educator G: *“...but what I am talking about is having easy access, you have for example this room, a guidance room, the learner can make an appointment with the guidance counsellor and won't bother educator, and meet with him and talk to him, and so that stays between two people. And so the confidentiality is assured. ... by having that one person and they talk to him and that person obviously keeps a record of it and what is going on. So that one person is aware of everything from start to finish and he is able to follow up as well.”*

SMT E: *“... they look for somebody neutral, away from the classroom, away from other learners, and physically safe environment to be able to report.”*

These words of the participants underscore the need for a guidance counsellor as individual who is equipped and available to handle SRGBV cases. The expectation for confidentiality due to the nature of SRGBV, as well as the safe environment away from other learners and teacher, can be met by having such counsellor appointed by the Department of Education.

#### **4.7.9 Under-reporting of SRGBV**

According to Mkhathshwa (2021), the available data on GBV in South Africa is either outdated or it is not representative to the whole population. It is reported that in 2014/2015, sexual offences had 37% underreporting, while physical assault had 44,9% under-reporting to SAPS. Some of the reasons for underreporting identified by the participants in this study are as follows:

- **Fear of revenge**

Learner A: "...but learners are very afraid to do so, because they are scared of the consequences, of what is going to happen when the other person finds out that you complained about what they have done to you."

- **Feeling embarrassed**

Educator A: "... *sometimes they are embarrassed as well, and do not want to inform anybody. ... lots of children, especially teenagers, don't like to be embarrassed and sometimes they rather hide it then actually come out and tell on someone else.*"

- **Fear of getting into trouble**

Victims of violence and especially GBV battle a sense of guilt as if they have caused the perpetrators to act. This misleading sense of guilt convinces the victim that they will be further punished by the parent for allowing or causing the violence to happen to them. Therefore, the victims choose to remain silent and not to report what has occurred.

Educator A: "*They could also be afraid that they would get into trouble.*"

Under-reporting is a serious issue which prevents scholars from assessing the real size of the phenomenon of SRGBV. Even though the true extent of GBV is not known, it is clear that there are high levels of prevalence of this type of violence.

#### ***4.7.10 The subject of Life Orientation should be taught by a specialist***

The subject of Life Orientation was introduced by the Department of Education in the late 1990s with the aim of preparing young people for life while teaching them values, responsibilities and shaping them as healthy and responsible citizens of South Africa (South Africa, Department of Education, 2003). The subject promotes social justice, inclusiveness, human rights, and healthy environment. A study done by Jacobs (2011) raises the question of how successful is in its implementation this otherwise very promising and well-intended subject. One of the issues surrounding the teaching of Life Orientation is that teachers who have very insufficient if any training, are given to teach this subject. Often management assigns this subject as a filler in order to get the required teaching hours per week. Nathan (2018) concurs with Jacobs (2011) that ill-trained educators are the factor that sabotages the success of the subject and claims that the list can be further extended with lack of resources and demotivated learners.

One participant of the current study shared his opinion that Life Orientation should not be overlooked and should be taught by specifically trained educators.

Educator H: *“Life Skills for me is the most important subject you can ever teach a child. A child does not fail in life because he has done bad in maths or physics, I am not picking on these subjects now, or geography, he fails in life because of bad decision making. That’s what, and not only for the child, it’s for everyone.”*

The reality in many schools is that the subject of Life Orientation is not seen as important as Mathematics or Physics, for example. As a result, it is assigned to teachers as a filler to get their required teaching load. On the surface, there seems not to be anything wrong with this since it is a common practice in many schools. However, educator H disagrees.

Educator H: *“And the LO being given to any teacher to teach is suicidal. In my opinion. I am predominantly a Life Orientation teacher. I’ve been from the time LO became a subject, I have been a LO teacher and that’s what I studied for. And so many modules I have done on child impairment and all these things and so it fell within my forte of understanding a child better and a subject like this shouldn’t be given as a filler, it should be given to a subject specialist.”*

This educator strongly believes in the qualities Life Orientation instils and the potential it has to become a stepping-stone for learners to build their life. This to be achieved would require a subject specialist teacher who can help learners to internalise the values of democratic society.

#### **4.7 Conclusion on problems experienced by schools when implementing intervention and prevention strategies for SRGBV**

During the course of the interviews, it became clear that the schools experience problems when implementing strategies for intervention and prevention of SRGBV. These problems were linked to each group of stakeholders in education. Starting with learners who are perpetrators, it was indicated that often they remain unchanged by the measures applied to them because the real problem was not addressed. The victims' need for confidentiality and sense of safety has to be addressed in amending the reporting channels and providing a psychologist to do counselling. The problem of under-reporting was also highlighted by the participants. Parental attitudes constitute another problem which schools have to deal with because some parents are "overbearing" and others are not exercising parental control and do not correct their child. Educators argue that they are not equipped to deal with complex social issues due to lack of training on how to handle them, lack of counselling skills, insufficient awareness due to which cases are not identified and classified correctly, and lastly, inability to handle such matters due to work overload and no spare time in which they could do counselling. Particular focus was given to the subject of Life Orientation which is relied on by the Department for creating awareness in the area of SRGBV, and it was argued that the subject has to be taught by a specialist instead of it being allocated to any teacher. It was noted that from the side of the Department of Education, there was no communication in the form of circulars or guidelines regarding SRGBV, which incapacitates management in providing suitable responses.

#### **4.8 Suggestions for improvement of the response to SRGBV in secondary schools**

The participants in this study were asked to suggest what can be done to improve the response of their school to SRGBV. The suggestions that were offered were directed towards the Department of Education and towards the management of their school.

#### 4.8.1 Awareness programmes

A group of suggestions dealt with raising awareness of SRGBV done through programmes of Department of Education, initiated by school, by SAPS, or done through NGOs.

Learner A captures the essence of the opinions of the learners.

Learner A: *“I would like to see more programmes speaking of GBV in our school done by the Department of Education, or the principal, or even the whole school coming together and initiating something in that regard, because we don’t hear that much about this issue, it is something aside and people focus more on the word ‘abuse’ or ‘violence’ rather than being gender-based violence.”*

In addition to requesting talks to learners, educators had some creative ideas which included music performances and dramas, because they make an impact.

Educator D: *“[We need] Intervention programmes, assistance from the department, with regards to talks, assembly talks, plays, maybe a drama to enact plays, those things make an impact, music also, they [learners] like that rapping kind of thing, bring it in with the GBV. ...assembly talks provided by SAPS and all that.”*

Educator A proposed use of posters, inspired by the example of the COVID-19 posters sent by the Department which created awareness of the dangers and the preventative measures.

Educator A: *“During the COVID-19-pandemic, DoE sent us nice big flyers, nice boards talking about the dangers of Covid-19 and then obviously preventative measures; it would be nice if they could make those nice posters concerning issues like GBV to make the kids more aware of it, so we could put it around schools and it would help them, even if they don’t speak to a teacher to know if this is happening, I can go to this person, or be assertive, ‘how do I learn to be assertive?’ and so on.”*

SMT C suggested talks done by people who have experienced GBV and can share real life examples together with important tips on protecting and avoiding situations that can be dangerous.



SMT C: *“...I think we can have programmes where social workers come and talk about these issues, we can have people who have experienced it to come and talk to learners and say: ‘I’ve been through it’ and what the situation is, and get people to be aware of these things.”*

The opinion of the majority of the participants is that there is insufficient awareness of GBV and there is a great need for emphasising what GBV is, how it can be reported and possible ways of avoiding becoming a victim of it. Some of the suggestions included creative ways to educate the learners through music and drama; others were linked to using posters placed around the school with information on who you can turn to or how you can protect yourself and overall, everyone acknowledged the need for talks to learners done by educators, social workers, SAPS or victims of GBV.

#### **4.8.2 Need for programmes by DoE to direct and streamline the response of schools to SRGBV**

Requests for specifically designed mainstream programme by the DoE which will allow for identifying, tracking, and dealing with SRGBV, also were brought forward.

Educator B: *“We need department policies, saying if you are found guilty of GBV you would be suspended, or you would be transferred. We need department to speak to the youth on the prevention of GBV.”*

SMT A: *“We need a mainstream program when it comes to monitoring GBV in schools, where we inform learners more of GBV, we monitor closely, and we look at the signs of GBV playing out.”*

Educators and SMTs proposed that the Department of Education designs and cascades to schools a streamlined programme which will assist with guidelines on the types of GBV; it will stipulate for each expression of SRGBV what possible consequences to be prescribed and the procedures to be followed. This would allow for uniformity in the approach of management and create confidence that correct measures were applied.

#### **4.8.3 Developing school GBV policy or amending school's Code of Conduct to cater for GBV**

The current inquiry led to schools examining their existing policies and their relevance to SRGBV. Quite a few schools realised that they did not have a particular GBV policy and therefore suggestions for amendments of an existing policy or developing specific GBV policy were raised in the course of the interviews.

Learner G: *"I think that it is important that...the Code of Conduct becomes a little stricter, especially on the GBV."*

Educator A: *"The first thing I think should be done, we need to make an amendment or we need to add a section in our Code of Conduct concerning GBV, making them aware of it and what the penalties or whatever will be if they are caught doing certain thing. I guess when they [learners] are given consequences, when they are given a penalty ... then they know that it is wrong first of all, and they would not want to act on it. I think our Code of Conduct needs to be amended..."*

SMT F: *"Well, it's nice to have a specific policy, because we don't have specific to gender-based violence. It is good to have it, even if we don't have so many occurrences here, it's good to have a policy so when it does occur at least we can refer to the policy... and that policy will dictate exactly what the violence is and how we should handle it in the various stages."*

This study provoked educators and SMTs to evaluate the state of their school policies and created awareness for the need of updating or developing specific policies dealing with SRGBV.

#### **4.8.4 DoE should appoint full-time qualified counsellors to assist schools with emotional support for learners**

A set of suggestions dealt with the need for a professional counsellor in the school, who would be available to provide support for learners regarding issues of GBV or any other nature. The proposal for bringing back the guidance counsellors to school was shared by all participants. Learner H motivated the return of counsellors with the need for confidentiality and trust.

Learner H: *“I really, really would want that [to have a counsellor at school] because we have many learners that go through that. We need someone to talk to, someone to interact with the learners. To become friendlier with the learners and make it easier for the learners to open to that person, because confidentiality is key when it comes to opening to somebody.”*

SMT D sums up what all teachers and SMTs expressed as a priority request.

SMT D: *“I would like the DoE to start introducing guidance counsellors to the school. Where they are paid by the state. Number 2, the DoE should have satellite counsellors to support this, so that if we can’t handle the situation in school, we can send them to these respective places. ...I would say that this is a critical problem and the DoE needs to act. I think the employment of guidance counsellors in school will go a long way into solving this problem.”*

The teaching and administrative load and time constraints experienced by teachers contribute to the difficulty for them to fulfil the role of counsellors. In addition to that, educators feel unfit to do counselling in cases of GBV due to the serious nature of the issues and the lack of training they have received in this subject of SRGBV.

#### **4.8.5 Training of educators to identify and handle SRGBV**

A number of educators have received their professional training a long time ago and they continued upgrading their knowledge through attending workshops and personal development. Even though the issue of SRGBV has come into light in the recent years, the Department of Education has not offered any opportunities for training or development in this area. The newly appointed educators also cannot boast with much knowledge on this subject. This creates a gap between the expectations trust upon teachers to handle any situation and their actual abilities to do so.

Level 1 educators and management concurred in suggesting that the Department of Education needs to provide training on handling SRGBV cases. SMT F represents all these suggestions in her own words.

SMT F: *“We need assistance because we are not trained to handle that. Yes, in terms of that, the Department of Education should provide some means by which to educate us how to handle them.”*

The insufficient training on handling SRGBV prevents management from having confidence that they provide appropriate response and in combination with lack of departmental guidelines schools feel incapacitated to deal with serious cases of GBV.

#### **4.8.6 Educating learners on conflict resolutions and relationships**

The need for appropriate conflict resolution skills was discussed by participants as a means for non-violent problem solving. Considering the fact that many learners live in communities where violence and crime is rife and seriously affects the worldview and beliefs of those individuals, it was suggested that alternative ways of conflict resolution be taught in school.

Learner E: *“...from grade 8 upwards, right up till grade 12, that learners should be educated more on relationships...resolving problems as well as moving on, after a break-up, or getting jealous, there are infinite possibilities that can come to mind when you think about educating learners on relationships.”*

Another very important aspect brought forward was the teaching of respect in school.

Learner F: *“The nice thing that should be done is to teach boys to respect girls as they respect their mothers. ...We should teach respect, and everybody must know the value of each other, and they shouldn’t take each other for granted.”*

The perspective of the learners was supported by educators. All of them identified the need for conflict resolution training of learners to be incorporated in the syllabus.

SMT E: *“...programs that schools actively do to encourage a culture of non-violence, and thinking out-of-the box, like how would you deal with conflict. A conflict is going to happen, violence can be prevented, so the children don’t know those alternatives, if you have two boys that have been involved in a fight and you sit them down and looking at some kind of restorative justice programme”*

Even though the subject of Life Skills introduces some ways of peaceful conflict resolutions from the primary school on, participants felt that there is a greater need for special emphasis to be placed on respect and non-violent culture.

#### **4.8.7 Need for mentorship programmes and community involvement**

Some participating schools indicated that they were fortunate to have had programmes involving peer-mentorship and greatly benefited from them. These programmes were developed and administered by NGOs. The programmes were successful; however, they were discontinued probably for the lack of manpower and funding.

Educator C: *“We need more peer groups in the school. We had one before called Crossroads, it was a mentorship program where somebody older came in and spoke to learners.”*

In other schools, the need for such mentorship programmes was identified by participants. For example, Educator H proposed a mentorship programme for females to instil self-worth and identity confidence.

Educator H: *“...I feel that especially females finding their identities is very important. ...You go to any school – females outnumber the males. And I think they are at the forefront of changing the mind sets of the young ladies. And in some cases, it is helping a lot. They need to know their importance...”*

Similar suggestion was proposed by SMT C with more holistic approach embracing vulnerable learners. He identified the need for mentorship programme for vulnerable learners, boys and girls, to provide them with attention and care as well as direction that is not found at home for different reasons.

SMT C: *“They don’t have a role model or somebody that is the head of the household. These learners try to go into different directions, there is no control over them. The mum might be working and nobody to look after them at home. ...Economic issues and most of them come from townships here. Family break ups, drug abuse, alcohol abuse is very common. ...I decided I will be the role model ...I would appreciate such [mentorship] programme, because it is an additional support.”*

Introducing such mentorship programmes will have a positive impact on the overall school climate and will establish healthy relationships between learners, learners and educators, and learners and their family members.

#### **4.8.8 Strengthening of relationships between educators, parents and children**

Educator H:” ...*if we have an intervention program and strategies, even with families coming in, having a family day, and basically getting to see the other side of teachers, it will actually break the barrier, break the ice so to speak, will make them more approachable....*”

Educator H advocates above for introducing ways to make educators more approachable for learners. This involves changing the perspectives of learners who see educators as distant and strict, and also changing the perspective of educators who often judge learners based on the behaviour instead of understanding the background and upbringing of the learner.

In addition to involving the families, participants suggested incorporating the broader community in combating SRGBV. The old African saying: “It takes a village to raise a child” completely supports this idea.

SMT D: “*I am hoping to get more community support. We will be able to resolve the problem because you must remember these children are very naïve and vulnerable and they are open to lots of outside influences and the community and parents can join hands with the school, I think we would be able to minimise GBV.*”

Reflecting on the suggestions for improvement in the relationships between learners and parents, learners-teachers, and parents-teachers a clear link to the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner (2005) becomes visible. The improvements in these micro systems within the school will have an impact on the outcomes. Strengthening the bonds within the family will also impact positively the community.

#### **4.8.9 Networking between primary and secondary schools in one area**

An educator shared his vision of creating a network between the two primary schools in the area and his secondary school in order to facilitate communication and cooperation in resolving issues. The current disconnect between primary and

secondary schools within one area is a cause of concern because issues are arriving on a secondary level, whereas they could be resolved on a primary level.

Educator H: *“We need to get these three schools networking together – the two primary schools and the high school, must network with each other and we must know the calibre of children coming to high school. We work as a community, because when we begin to develop these children from primary roots, eventually will get good society. And the school where we are, the area has a name as the drug capital of Phoenix, but we produce one of the best results in Phoenix. ...Schools coming together and working with parents, that will help a lot...we are going to document this here, and it will be a blueprint where we can send this blueprint from community to community. So it will not be an isolated thing. We will run it and get it ready for other communities to use it.”*

This educator informs of a project he is preparing to run in the coming years which aims resolving issues at grassroots level and building a strong community of educators, learners and parents working together for the benefit of all. The main thought behind this is facilitating communication and networking between primary and secondary schools.

If the secondary school can be informed of pre-existing behavioural issues or circumstances of learners coming to them, they can prepare accordingly a suitable approach to such learners. Creating collaboration between schools in the same area has a potential of resolving a lot of problems and it will benefit the whole community. This also resonates with the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner, which illuminates how the interconnected systems affect each other.

#### ***4.8.10 Reintroducing prefects to assist with monitoring during breaks***

Tsikati and Magagula (2019) divulge that the prefects’ functions facilitate learner participation in schools. These leadership positions are bestowed to suitable young people who display respect, who have proven to be responsible and trustworthy, who are able to motivate and counsel other learners.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, schools had to adjust the way many of their structures function in order to comply with the regulations of the government. For the period of 2020-2021, many high schools did not appoint prefects or limited their duties. This was made possible due to decreased attendance of learners who followed rotational timetable and half of the school's population was present on a given day. In addition, the Department of Education hired Educational Assistants who partially absorbed some of the prefects' duties by being placed in particular duty during breaks to ensure the observance of health and safety regulations. This was a temporary measure utilised by the government in their attempt to boost the economy by providing opportunity for unemployed youth.

Learner E is of opinion that the schools should reinstate prefects to assist with monitoring of discipline during breaks when incidents may occur.

Learner E: *“Well, in terms of COVID, in school...there are no longer prefects in the school, which were matric learners at the time. They are no longer present because of COVID, so re-implementing that would be very helpful in terms of reducing gender-based violence, because there is always someone on watch. Prefects can be standing anywhere and it takes a second for a situation to start. So that will help a lot in reducing it, because there are more eyes to watch and to get the matter up to higher management to stop it and solve it as soon as possible.”*

This suggestion has very valid grounding in the experience over the years. Prefects have been very useful structure in alleviating some of the burdens off the teachers' shoulders. Being learners themselves prefects detect easily any issues or potential conflicts being stirred up and report to educators or whenever possible deflate situations before they escalate. Bringing back prefects as a structure would empower school management to have a better control at any point of time.

The design of the study included document analysis for the purpose of strengthening the trustworthiness of the findings. Secondary data was collected through Data Collection Instrument 1 and 2 which looked at the schools' discipline records, written communications to parents and learners and policy regarding SRGBV. This aimed at triangulating the results of the interviews after member checking was done, affording



participants the opportunity to review the preliminary results and validate their accuracy.

Upon consolidating the secondary data results, it was found that the participating secondary schools in Phoenix did not differentiate in their response between SRGBV and school violence. Cases were logged in accordance with the school's code of conduct as misdemeanour or assault and treated as such. Plausible reason for that could be that GBV and SRGBV awareness was very low in the recent past. In the period 2020-2021, the DoE began to place emphasis on schools revising their policies and making them more relevant to the current issues. The lack of guidance and communication in the forms of circulars on the side of the DoE which was pointed out by the participants during the interviews as hampering the process of schools developing a GBV policy of their own.

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

This chapter offered an overview of the collected data which was discussed in the light of the research questions and theoretical framework. It was established that currently in Phoenix secondary schools, school-related gender-based violence exists, but it is not expressed in serious forms and is incidental in nature. The most common types of SRGBV are verbal, physical, emotional, bullying, GBV within romantic relationships, cyber bullying, and sexual (utterances/gestures/touching). The perpetrators of GBV at secondary schools were predominantly male as stated by majority of the participants of the study, and a small number of interviewees believed that females were perpetrators. A small number of participants claimed that both males and females are equally perpetrators of SRGBV. The victims are described to be mostly females, small group perceives males to be victims (this was understood in the frame of male fighting a male) and a few of the participants believe that both males and females are victims of SRGBV.

In the course of the data collection, the researcher unearthed some misconceptions and limitations in the understanding of SRGBV by the participants. Some believed that GBV must be repetitive and happening over prolonged period of time to be classified as GBV. In addition, the majority of the participants recognised GBV across the gender

but not within the same gender. These limitations and misconceptions were clarified by the researcher during the interaction with the participants.

The identified causes for SRGBV varied from physical strength; learnt behaviour; sexual orientation; economic causes; patriarchy and male dominance; culture of violence and normalisation of GBV in the South African context; absence or limited presence and parental involvement in the child's life; stereotyping; fights within romantic relationships; religious views; socioeconomic background of learners; substance abuse; peer pressure and societal issues filtering in school. The opinions of the interviewees were supported by the existing wealth of knowledge in the literature.

The intervention and prevention strategies included many tried and tested methods as well as more innovative solutions. The interventions comprised of the disciplinary procedures which are standard for all schools including informing and calling of parents, counselling, disciplinary hearings, tribunals, suspension, involving social workers, some innovative forms of community service and behaviour modification classes used prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The preventative strategies embraced talks by educators, SMTs, SAPS, NGOs, circuit managers; raising awareness and educating learners and parents of transgressing learners on what is GBV; reinforcing Life Orientation content as additional education tool; allocating duty points for educators to monitor learner behaviour in the mornings, during breaks and upon dismissal; confining learners to assembly area during breaks for supervision purposes, and some "out-of-the-box" ideas like mentorship programmes, installing surveillance cameras on school premises; collaborating with parents and SAPS during dismissal times, and SAPS patrolling and teachers patrolling streets to ensure safe return of learners. All the strategies adopted by different schools have brought the expected results by limiting SRGBV.

The participants highlighted some problems experienced while dealing with SRGBV such as parental attitudes, with parents taking their child's side, or parents not exercising parental guidance and control and expecting the school to do that for them; DoE is not assisting with the establishment of Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) and as a result, schools struggle to connect with the required

partners. Furthermore, teachers lack counselling skills and need training in identifying and handling SRGBV. Participants claimed that the DoE did not issue circulars on SRGBV for the period 2020-2021 regardless of the unusual number of GBV cases reported. A need for professional counselling, confidentiality issues and limitations in teachers' response due to time constraints and workload were identified. Under-reporting of SRGBV was also viewed as possible reason for low awareness of this problem. Allocating Life Orientation as a filler subject instead of having LO specialist teaching, was perceived as sabotaging the impact of this subject on learners' attitudes. These examples display the multi-layered and complex nature of the SRGBV and the problems that accompany this phenomenon.

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological theory (2005) allows for analysis of appropriate responses to social ills such as SRGBV which infiltrate the schools. This theoretical framework also provides the understanding that the interconnectedness between the levels inevitably will lead to changes on each level initiated by changes on one of them. In this respect, an example of interconnectedness can be the improvement of teacher-parent communications, situated on the mesosystem of the individual learner's ecosystem, which will lead to better support and motivation provided by the parents to their children (microsystem level); this will result in improvement of academic results, increased confidence and less victimisation (mesosystem). Better academic achievements will open opportunities for employment and in time, this will uplift the community and bring in resolutions to some social ills (mesosystem). More girls are getting educated and being able to earn a good income, which will impact the social and cultural norms in the macrosystem.

The second theory, the systems theory of von Bertalanffy (1968), frames the evaluation of the management of intervention and prevention strategies applied by the secondary schools. It was found that overall, the selected schools are managing SRGBV as they apply the normal procedures for SBV. The current policies and codes of conduct used by these schools were not GBV specific. A need for adjusting of the reporting procedure was noted in order to protect the victim from further trauma and to maintain confidentiality. In addition, professional counselling was identified as a factor that will contribute to recovery of victims, transformation of perpetrators, and it will benefit all

learners. Therefore, the introduction of guidance counsellors in schools is recommended. According to the systems theory, if a change is facilitated on one level without further changes on other levels, the system will force the changed level to lapse back into its previous condition. This makes it imperative that holistic approach be adopted by the schools and on departmental level.

The next chapter offers conclusions and recommendations of the study.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter concludes the study on the management of intervention and prevention programmes for SRGBV in selected secondary schools in Phoenix, Durban area. Dictated by the aim of the study, to explore the management of gender-based violence prevention and intervention programmes at secondary schools in Phoenix and to what extent are they effective in curbing gender-based violence at these schools, as well the need for deeper and richer understanding on the problem, a qualitative approach was selected.

This chapter begins with brief reflection on the research process and continues with consolidation on the results which were analysed in the previous chapter. It concludes with discussion on the insights gained through this study regarding the management of the intervention and prevention programmes for SRGBV in selected secondary schools in Phoenix, and recommendations on the practical applications of the findings and how this research can be extended.

### **5.2 Reflections on the research process**

Initiating this research and going through every step till its very conclusion were deeply satisfactory and growing experiences for me. Acquainting myself with the existing wealth of literature, visiting the sampled schools and establishing positive relationship with participants, conducting the interviews in the most challenging times of the second and third wave of COVID-19 pandemic, observing all safety regulations while meeting in-person with participants, were all part of a great learning curve. Delving into the rich qualitative data and having to submerge myself in it while studying and analysing it, further expanded my understanding on the depth of work that goes into crystallising the themes in qualitative research.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on this study was inevitable and limiting for the number of participants for schools which could be accessed. Even though the initial planning envisioned having focus groups incorporating eight learner participants, two or three Level 1 educators, and two SMTs, the researcher had to reconsider and limit

to bare minimum the number of participants in order to be able to access the schools. Bearing this in mind, a recommendation for a further and more in-depth study is made.

### **5.3 Main conclusions from this study**

Guided by the research objectives, as outlined in Chapter 1, the findings can be concluded as follows:

#### **State of SRGBV in selected secondary schools in Phoenix**

The study found that SRGBV exists in Phoenix secondary schools; however, it is not perceived as rife by the stakeholders. Rather it is perceived as incidental and as occurring occasionally. Its expression takes on different forms at the schools: verbal, physical, bullying, emotional, GBV within romantic relationships, cyber bullying and sexual violence. The most common type is verbal, followed by physical and emotional GBV. It has been noted that in the past two years (2020-2021), cyber bullying incidents have increased due to social media and network platforms becoming a major way of communication during the pandemic. The participants described the condition of SRGBV as “*undercurrent*”, “*very isolated incidents*”, and “*not common*”. Partial explanation for this is found in the words of one participant: “*we don’t even notice it or pick it up, and it is not reported*” (Educator F). The review of the school policies brought further light to this context. The current codes of conduct and discipline policies used in the selected schools are GBV-blind and therefore this phenomenon is not always identified correctly.

Schools reported the need for raising greater awareness of this phenomenon. Educators felt unable to identify GBV cases and differentiate them from other forms of violence. In addition, there were misconceptions and limitations in the perceptions of the participants which further prevented educators from identifying cases as SRGBV. They believed that GBV has to be a prolonged and repetitive phenomenon, which is usually observed between the different genders. If an incident occurred once off or within the same gender, it was interpreted as interpersonal conflict, not as GBV.

#### **Current intervention and prevention programmes for SRGBV in Phoenix secondary schools**

Due to the incidental nature of the cases of SRGBV in the selected secondary schools, there is no continuously running intervention or prevention programme. Measures are applied as the need arises and in accordance with the seriousness of the matter.

**There are some problematic findings that schools need to address:**

- There is no GBV-policy available in the school, or if there is a section on GBV, it is rather vague.
- The existing channels of reporting are the same used for any other type of violence; however, the GBV-cases require protecting confidentiality for the victim.
- There are very limited provisions for rehabilitating of perpetrators: usually counselling is done by teachers or an SMT member; only on rare occasions were the services of a professional counsellor made available. Very few schools mentioned behaviour modification workshops, community service or mentorship programmes that were used.

**Issues that have to be addressed by the DoE:**

- There is no clear and comprehensive mainstream policy or document that schools can refer to regarding SRGBV.
- DoE requires secondary schools to have a network of stakeholders available under the banner of Quality Teaching and Learning Campaign (QLTC); however, there is no assistance from the Department in identifying suitably qualified persons and the onus is on the school to do so. This creates challenges when such social partners are approached for the purpose of networking, and they decline.
- There is no training provided to Level 1 educators and SMTs on how to identify and handle SRGBV cases. This leads to uneasiness and stress in educators who worry for potential negative effects if a case is wrongfully handled.
- Even though educators are expected to fulfil the role of counsellors, for SRGBV a specialised training is needed. Educators are unable to carry the teaching and administrative load and follow up on developments with GBV

cases. There is a need for provision of social workers, who will be allocated and placed by the DoE to handle these issues.

- The reporting procedures need to be adjusted in order to protect the victim's confidentiality and prevent further trauma by disclosing details to many people in the chain of command.

### **Assessment of the management and the effectiveness of intervention and prevention programmes in curbing SRGBV at selected secondary schools in the Phoenix area**

The findings of the study indicate that because the DoE has not provided specific guidelines regarding SRGBV, the majority of secondary schools have a GBV-blind policy and therefore cannot differentiate between GBV and other types of violence. As a result, the common procedures and channels have been used to handle SRGBV-cases.

Every school has a code of conduct in line with South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 Sec.8 (1), which identifies the level of offence and suggests disciplinary measures (South Africa, Department of Education 1996b). All schools have adopted the same approach to ensure that both learners and parents are aware of the content of the code of conduct. When a learner is enrolled in a secondary school, he/she is given the school policy and the code of conduct. Learner and parents are briefed on the content, and they have to acknowledge that they are aware of the rules with their signatures. At the beginning of every school year, all learners are given the code of conduct to read and occasionally during Life Orientation classes or at assembly, they are reminded again of the consequences of breaking the code of conduct. This ensures that all learners are well acquainted with the rules of their school and follow them.

The monitoring system, which is standard for all schools, has facilitated reporting to management and interventions to take place. Feedback on interventions was also collected and follow up was done. The study found that SMTs have undertaken disciplinary problems immediately, as soon as they were reported, and this led to de-escalation of the issues before they become more serious.



The prevention strategies selected by each school have been identified in accordance with the contextual factors of the school. They have allowed any issues that arise to remain manageable. The participants of the study hold the opinion that the preventions have limited the GBV cases, which transpire relatively seldom.

The combination of all the above factors have contributed to sufficient management of such situations and limiting their recurrence.

Even though the findings of this study suggest that SRGBV is not rife within the selected secondary schools in Phoenix, the results cannot be generalised for the whole township of Phoenix, or the greater Durban area. Previous research has established that GBV is problematic in urban settings with low-income characteristics (Naidoo et al. 2017; Yang, Qin and Ning 2021). The current findings differ from previous research. The participants' opinions on the status of SRGBV in their school could be influenced by the two years (2020-2021) of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, during which daily attendance did not exceed 50% of the total roll of the school and discipline was managed with ease. Secondly, the lack of training and awareness in identifying SRGBV has created a "blindfold" which prevents educators and management from assessing the real proportions of the phenomenon in their school. Thirdly, under-reporting of cases contributes to the impression of "*very isolated*" incidents of SRGBV.

#### **5.4 Recommendations of the study:**

To address the identified needs and shortfalls in the response to SRGBV the following recommendations are made:

##### **To the DoE:**

1. The DoE should develop and cascade to schools a comprehensive SRGBV policy and create a mainstream programme for identifying, monitoring and handling of SRGBV-cases.
2. The DoE should provide a suitable training to educators in the use and application of the policy and the programme.

3. The DoE should cascade a list of available and suitably qualified persons from the relevant institutions who can be included in the network required by QLTC to ensure functionality of such networks when needed.
4. The DoE should consider guidance counsellors to be appointed to schools once again, and social workers should be allocated to a cluster of schools to assist with serious cases.
5. Opportunities for rehabilitation of perpetrators of SRGBV should be made available by the DoE, such as mentorship programmes, behaviour modification classes and community service. These programmes can be administered by social partners identified by the Department.
6. The content of the subject of Life Orientation has to be enriched with peaceful conflict resolutions, emphasis of respect for others, coping strategies when experiencing emotional distress, how to build healthy relationships, and responsibilities to be highlighted next to the rights of individuals.

**To the schools:**

1. In the interim, while the DoE is developing SRGBV-policy and mainstream programme for identifying, monitoring, and handling SRGBV cases, schools should review their existing policies and add a GBV section.
2. Schools should consider a specific channel for reporting and handling SRGBV which should be an SMT-member in order to protect confidentiality of the victim. An opportunity for anonymous reporting such as “suggestions and complaints box” should be designated and made known to learners. The person selected as a reporting channel should be responsible for checking the box daily.
3. Programmes for SRGBV should be initiated and conducted at schools, incorporating music, dance and drama to educate and create better awareness of the consequences and the impact of this phenomenon on perpetrators and victims. Survivors of GBV can be motivational speakers to provide vital information to learners on ways to prevent and report cases, as well as how to cope with and overcome the effects of this violence.

4. Schools can develop their own resources such as posters and signs and place them around the school to further reinforce awareness on ways of reporting and how to find help.
5. Networking with other schools to share ideas on addressing SRGBV should be encouraged.
6. “No-violence Pledges” can be designed with the cooperation of learners, educators, parents (SGB) and should be read and signed by learners. Similar pledges for respect and dignified treatment of learners should be signed by educators. Both pledges should be renewed every term or as often as the school determines it is necessary.
7. Schools should seek to have a multi-level approach to addressing cases of SRGBV by creating awareness and educating not only learners but parents and community members. Sensitisation to violence and addressing the beliefs and norms that reinforce violence should be included in the approach.
8. Teachers should also be sensitised to the attitudes and beliefs they carry that may contribute to perpetuating SRGBV.

### **5.5 Possible future extension of this study**

The true dimensions of SRGBV in secondary schools in Phoenix could not be established through the current study because of various factors. The lack of suitable policy and training regarding SRGBV has constrained schools from identifying cases as GBV. Furthermore, the issue of underreporting of SRGBV prevents from assessing the real extension of this violence. A more in-depth study, covering the majority of the secondary schools in Phoenix and possibly including interviews with victims and perpetrators of SRGBV, could provide a more comprehensive view and better understanding of this phenomenon.

### **5.6 Conclusion**

This qualitative study contributes to the existing wealth of knowledge by providing current view on the state of SRGBV in selected secondary schools in the Phoenix, Durban area. It also reviewed the strategies secondary schools use to curb this phenomenon and assesses the efficiency of these structures.

Recommendations to the Department of Education and the schools were made and future extension of this study was suggested. It is firmly believed that a further study may uncover different results regarding the current state of SRGBV in Phoenix secondary schools, if it is preceded by training on identifying cases.

The researcher would like to conclude with the words of Educator H who affirms that schools are in the unique position within communities to influence individuals, families and ultimately society. They have the power to correct inequalities and instil morals in the learners, families, communities and the nation.

*” ...Where is the best place to solve this problem? It is in the school. I cannot see any other place and any other avenue where we have the most influence. It’s the school... we educate a child, we educate a family, we are educating a community, we are educating a country.”* ~Educator H

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## Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance



**Institutional Research Ethics Committee**  
Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Berwyn Court  
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus  
Durban University of Technology

P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001

Tel: 031 373 2375

Email: [lavishad@dut.ac.za](mailto:lavishad@dut.ac.za)

[http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional\\_research\\_ethics](http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics)

[www.dut.ac.za](http://www.dut.ac.za)

16 April 2021

Mrs M S Guleva-Govender  
P O Box 60934  
Phoenix  
4068

Dear Mrs Guleva-Govender

**The management of prevention and intervention programmes for school-related gender-based violence in selected secondary schools in the Durban area**  
**Ethical Clearance number IREC 107/20**

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your final data collection tool for review.

We are pleased to inform you that the data collection tool has been approved. Kindly ensure that participants used for the pilot study are not part of the main study.

In addition, the IREC acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letter.

Please note that **FULL APPROVAL** is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's).

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely,

---

Prof J K Adam  
Chairperson: IREC



## Appendix 2: Permission by DOE KZN



**KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**

EDUCATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT**

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200  
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201  
Tel: 033 3921063 / 033-3921051

Email: Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za  
Buyi.ntuli@kzndoe.gov.za

**Enquiries:** Phindile Duma/Buyi Ntuli

**Ref.:**2/4/8/1703

Mrs MS Guleva-Govender

PO Box 60934

**PHOENIX**

4068

Dear Mrs Guleva-Govender

### **PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS**

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"THE MANAGEMENT OF PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES FOR SCHOOL-RELATED GENDER- BASED VIOLENCE IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DURBAN AREA"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 19 March 2021 to 01 August 2023.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma/Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

**PINETOWN DISTRICT**

**Dr. EY Nzama**  
Head of Department: Education  
Date: 23 March 2021

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### Appendix 3: Letter of information - Schools



#### LETTER OF INFORMATION

(Principals, SMT-s, Members of Disciplinary  
Committee)

**Title of the Research Study:** The management of prevention and intervention programmes for school-related gender-based violence in selected secondary schools in Durban area

**Principal Investigator/s/researcher:** Maria S. Guleva-Govender

**Supervisor:** Dr Rosaline Govender

**Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:** Dear [name],[ principal/SMT- member/Disciplinary committee member] of [name of school],

Your school has been selected for conducting a study on the above mentioned topic. There are 10 secondary schools in Phoenix identified for this purpose. The data will be collected through interviews of Representative Council of Learners (RCL) Chair, interviews with representative of the School Disciplinary Committee and member of the School Management Team, and review of school policies, records of incidents and any official correspondence to parents or learners regarding school-related gender-based violence.

The aim of this study is to explore whether secondary schools in Phoenix, Durban area have gender-based violence prevention and intervention programmes at their schools and to what extent are they effective in curbing gender-based violence at schools.

**Outline of the Procedures:** You will participate voluntarily. Your participation in the interview can be discontinued at any moment if you feel uncomfortable. A copy of the interview schedule will be provided to you to familiarize yourself prior to sessions. The interview will be conducted during school hours on the premises of the school attended by you, preferably at the library. The maximum duration of an interview is 1 hour. A special consideration of your teaching/learning schedule will be made so that interviews do not interrupt those processes. The deliberations will be recorded with audio recorder after your permission is obtained. After concluding the interviews, the recordings will



be transcribed. To ensure confidentiality you and your school will be assigned fictitious names. A member- checking will be done, during which you will be able to verify the findings based on transcripts of the interview. In compliance with all Covid-19 regulations social distancing, sanitizing and wearing of masks will be mandatory during interviews. Alternative options for conducting the interviews in the case of disruptions by Covid-19 restrictions would be Virtual meetings via any platform accessible to you like WhatsApp, Zoom, Google Classroom, etc. Network Data will be provided by the researcher to ensure your participation.

**Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:** This study is not intended to create any risk or discomfort to you. However, if you should require, professional counselling will be provided.

**Benefits:** This study will contribute to better understanding and management of the school-related gender-based violence; the results will be shared with the schools and the Department of Basic Education.

**Reason/s why the Participant May Be Withdrawn from the Study:** Should you fall ill or indisposed before/ during the sessions you are free to discontinue your participation without any consequences.

**Remuneration:** There are no monetary or other forms of remuneration for your participation in this study.

**Costs of the Study:** This study is done without any charge on the side of the participants.

**Confidentiality:** Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the whole process of the study. Any personal information regarding sex, age, date of birth, initials, and name of the school will be anonymously processed into a study report. The results and findings of this study will be used only for academic purpose. The records of the study will be kept for 5 years in a safe location.

**Research-related Injury:** No injury or harm should be caused by this study.

**Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:**

Please contact the researcher: Mrs M. S. Guleva-Govender; Cell: 072 980 3916

**My supervisor:** Dr R. Govender; Work: 031 303 5643

or the **Institutional Research Ethics Administrator** on 031 3732375.

Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Dr L Linganiso on 0313732577or [researchdirector@dut.ac.za](mailto:researchdirector@dut.ac.za).

**For counselling:** Brenda Rajah (educational psychologist): 072 612 9700

## Appendix 4: Letter of Information – Parents



### LETTER OF INFORMATION

(Parents/ Guardians)

**Title of the Research Study:** The management of prevention and intervention programmes for school-related gender-based violence in selected secondary schools in Durban area

**Principal Investigator/s/researcher:** Maria S. Guleva-Govender

**Supervisor:** Dr Rosaline Govender

**Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:** Dear Parent/ Guardian of [name of learner] from [name of school],

The school of your learner has been selected for conducting a study on the above mentioned topic. There are 10 secondary schools in Phoenix Central Circuit identified for this purpose. The data will be collected through interviews of Representative Council of Learners (RCL) Chair, interviews with representative of the school disciplinary committee and member of the School Management Team, and review of school policies, records of incidents and any official correspondence to parents or learners regarding school-related gender-based violence.

The aim of this study is to explore whether secondary schools in Phoenix, Durban area have gender-based violence prevention and intervention programmes at their schools and to what extent are they effective in curbing gender-based violence at schools.

**Outline of the Procedures:** Your learner will participate voluntarily. His/her participation in the interview can be discontinued at any moment if he/she feels uncomfortable. A copy of the interview schedule will be provided to him/her to familiarize himself/herself prior to sessions. The interview will be conducted during school hours on the premises of the school attended by your learner, preferably at the library. The maximum duration of an interview is 1 hour. A special consideration of your child's learning schedule will be made so that interviews do not interrupt this process. The deliberations will be recorded with audio recorder after his/her permission is obtained. After concluding the interviews, the recordings will be transcribed. To ensure confidentiality your learner and his/her school will be assigned fictitious names. A member- checking will be done, during which

your child will be able to verify the findings based on transcripts of the interview. In compliance with all Covid-19 regulations social distancing, sanitising and wearing of masks will be mandatory during interviews. Alternative options for conducting the interviews in the case of disruptions by Covid-19 restrictions would be Virtual meetings via any platform accessible to him/her like WhatsApp, Zoom, Google Classroom, etc. Network Data will be provided by the researcher to ensure his/her participation.

**Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:** This study is not intended to create any risk or discomfort to your learner. However, if he/she should require, professional counselling will be provided.

**Benefits:** This study will contribute to better understanding and management of the school-related gender-based violence; the results will be shared with the schools and the Department of Basic Education.

**Reason/s why the Participant May Be Withdrawn from the Study:** Should your learner fall ill or indisposed before/ during the sessions he/she are free to discontinue his/her participation without any consequences.

**Remuneration:** There are no monetary or other forms of remuneration for your learner's participation in this study.

**Costs of the Study:** This study is done without any charge on the side of the participants.

**Confidentiality:** Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the whole process of the study. Any personal information regarding sex, age, date of birth, initials, and name of the school will be anonymously processed into a study report. The results and findings of this study will be used only for academic purpose. The records of the study will be kept for 5 years in a safe location.

**Research-related Injury:** No injury or harm should be caused by this study.

**Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:**

Please contact the researcher: Mrs M. S. Guleva-Govender; Cell: 072 980 3916

**My supervisor:** Dr R. Govender; Work: 031 303 5643

or the **Institutional Research Ethics Administrator** on 031 3732375.

Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Dr L Linganis on 0313732577 or [researchdirector@dut.ac.za](mailto:researchdirector@dut.ac.za).

**For counselling:** Brenda Rajah (educational psychologist): 072 612 9700

## Appendix 5: Consent – Parents



### Parental Consent Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, parent/ guardian of  
\_\_\_\_\_, hereby give my permission for him/ her to  
participate in the research with title:

**The management of prevention and intervention programmes for school-related gender-based violence in selected secondary schools in Durban area.**

Conducted by: Mrs Maria S. Guleva-Govender

- I have been given, read and understood the written information regarding the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and the given answers were to my satisfaction.
- I consent voluntarily for my child/ward to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Full Name of Parent/Guardian

Date

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Full Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

**Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:** Please contact the researcher: Mrs M. S. Guleva-Govender; Cell: 072 980 3916

**My supervisor:** Dr R. Govender; Work: 031 303 5643 or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 3732375.

Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Dr L Langaniso on 0313732577 or [researchdirector@dut.ac.za](mailto:researchdirector@dut.ac.za).

**For counselling:** Brenda Rajah (educational psychologist): 072 612 9700

**General:** Participation in this study is completely voluntarily.

## Appendix 6: Assent Form – Minors



### ASSENT FORM FOR MINORS

**Title of Research:** The management of prevention and intervention programmes for school-related gender-based violence in selected secondary schools in the Durban area

**Researcher:** Maria S. Guleva-Govender

**Contact Number:** 072 980 3916



#### What is a research study?

Research studies help us learn new things. We can test new ideas. First, we ask a question. Then we try to find the answer.

This paper talks about our research and the choice that you have to take part in it. We want you to ask us any questions that you have. You can ask questions any time.

#### Important things to know...

- You get to decide if you want to take part.
- You can say 'No' or you can say 'Yes'.
- No one will be upset if you say 'No'.
- If you say 'Yes', you can always say 'No' later.
- You can say 'No' at any time.
- We would still take good care of you no matter what you decide.

#### Why are we doing this research?

We are doing this research to find out more about the experiences learners have connected to school-related gender-based violence. We would like to make things work better in your school and the schools throughout South Africa. This research will help us to do that.

**Why have I been invited to take part in this research project?** We want to hear first-hand about your experiences and opinion.

**Who is doing the research?**

My name is Maria S. Guleva-Govender. I am registered for a Masters of Management Sciences in Durban University of Technology.

**What will happen to me in this study?**

You will be interviewed individually. The study will be done at your school during a school day. You will be informed of the exact date few days before. Before the interview you will be given the list of questions that will be discussed so you can read them, think about them, ask us any questions if you need and also decide if you are happy to answer them. The session with interview will be recorded with a voice recorder which will later be transcribed. Before the interview you will be asked whether you agree to the voice recording. After the recordings were typed out by the researcher and they were analysed you will be given to check if they were correctly transcribed (written/typed). You will be given the opportunity to delete any section that you feel uncomfortable about. Please be assured that all names will be removed from the transcriptions so what you say cannot be traced back to you. These recordings and transcriptions are private and will not be given to anybody else. They will be used only by the researcher for the purpose of the study and they will be kept in a safe place for 5 years.

**Can anything bad happen to me?**

Nothing bad can happen to you. Answering the questions may remind you of some unpleasant things that you saw or experienced. If this makes you very upset there will be someone to talk to you and help you.

**Can anything good happen to me?**

This research is being done so we can understand better what happens at school and we can improve the way things work there so the learners will be safer and happier.

**What else should I know about this research?**

If you do not want to be in the study, you do not have to be. It is also OK to say yes and change your mind later. You can stop at any time. If you want to stop, please tell the researcher.

**Will anyone know I am in the study?**

Your name will not be used in the study; instead, you will be given a fake name so no one can know what answers you gave. The teachers will not listen to the voice recordings, and they will not read the writing. The only thing that they will see is the recommendations that we will make on how to make things better.

**Who can I talk to about the study?**

If you have any questions you are more than welcome to speak to:

**Researcher:** Maria S. Guleva-Govender; **Contact number:** 072 980 3916

**Supervisor:** Dr R. Govender; **Work:** 031 303 5643

or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 3732375. Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Dr L Linganiso on 0313732577 or [researchdirector@dut.ac.za](mailto:researchdirector@dut.ac.za).

**What if I do not want to do this?** If you agreed to take part and then you changed your mind, it is perfectly fine. You can stop being part of this study at any time. If you don't want to be part of the study but your parent or guardian wants you to be part, you still don't have to do it.

**Do you have any other questions?** If you want to be in the research after we talk, please write your name below. We will write our name too. This shows we talked about the research and that you want to take part.

**Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?**

YES

NO

**Has the researcher answered all your questions?**

YES

NO

**Do you understand that you can STOP being in the study at any time?**

YES

NO

**Name of Participant** \_\_\_\_\_

(To be written by child/adolescent)

## Appendix 7: Consent Form – Educators



### CONSENT- Educators

#### Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I ....., Chair/Member of Disciplinary Committee hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Mrs M. S. Guleva-Govender about the nature, conduct, benefits, and risks of this study – Research Ethics Clearance Number: IREC 107/20,
- I have also received, read, and understood the above written information (Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, and initials will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

\_\_\_\_\_

Full Name of Participant Date/ Time Signature

I, Maria S. Guleva-Govender, herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full Name of Witness (If applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature



## Appendix 8: Consent Form – SMTs



### CONSENT- SMTs

#### Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I ....., principal/ SMT-member of .....hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Mrs M. S. Guleva-Govender about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study – Research Ethics Clearance Number: IREC 107/20,
  - I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Letter of Information) regarding the study and hereby give my consent for access to school records of disciplinary committee minutes, policy documents, code of conduct, accident book/file and official communications to parents and learners regarding school-related gender-based violence for the period 2016-2020.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, and initials will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerized system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

I, Maria S. Guleva- Govender, herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full Name of Witness (If applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## Appendix 9: Data Extraction Tool 1

### DATA EXTRACTION TOOL 1:

#### ASSESSING SCHOOL MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO SRGBV:

##### POLICIES/ PROTOCOLS

1. Does the school have a written policy and/ or protocol to address SRGBV at present?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. If yes, what is the main focus of the policy/ protocol? (is it specifically designed for SRGBV?)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Have the policy/ protocol been made accessible to learners and staff at school?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Is there a process in place for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of these policies/ protocols?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Is there a process in place for collecting feedback from the implementers of the policies/ protocols?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. If Yes , who is in charge of monitoring, evaluating and providing feedback to the SMT?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. If No, explain why is it so.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Is there a safe channel for reporting GBV cases at school? Explain.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 10: Data Extraction Tool 2**

**DATA EXTRACTION TOOL 2:**

**DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE RECORDS OF HEARINGS RELATED TO  
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

1. How many cases were handled during the year?

2016:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2017:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2018:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2019:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2020:

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What type/s of GBV were the cases dealing with?

2016:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2017:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2018:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2019:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2020:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What disciplinary actions were taken against the perpetrators of GBV?

2016:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2017: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2018: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2019: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2020: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Is there any support offered to the victims of GBV?

2016: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2017: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2018: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2019: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2020: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Are there any specific corrective intervention programmes conducted by professionals, offered to perpetrators of SRGBV? Elaborate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 11: Interview Schedule – Learner Participants**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: Learner Participants (Chairs of RCL)**

1. Tell me about Gender-Based Violence at school.
  - What do you think Gender- Based Violence (GBV) is?
  - What types of GBV do you know of?
2. How is the situation regarding GBV in your school?
  - How serious according to you is the issue of GBV at your school?
  - What types of GBV are most common to your school?
  - What are the causes of GBV in your school according to you?
  - In your opinion who perpetrates most often?
  - Who most often is the victim?
3. Do you know if your school has a policy or a guideline dealing with GBV specifically?
  - To what extend do the learners know the policies, their responsibilities and the channels of reporting according to you?
4. Describe how a learner can report a case of GBV in your school.
5. What happens to a perpetrator of GBV if they get caught or reported, what would be the consequences?
6. What happens to the victim generally?
7. What prevention programmes regarding GBV are currently running in your school?
8. According to your knowledge, how does the DoE support your school regarding GBV? Explain.
9. How successful you think the measures in curbing GBV are in your school?
10. What can be done to improve the response to GBV of your school?

## **Appendix 12: Interview Schedule – Educators**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: Educators (Members of Disciplinary Committee)**

1. Tell me about Gender-Based Violence at school.
  - What do you understand by Gender- Based Violence (GBV)?
  - What types of GBV do you know of?
2. How is the situation regarding GBV in your school?
  - How serious according to you is the issue of GBV at your school?
  - What types of GBV are most common to your school?
  - What are the causes of the GBV in your school according to you?
  - In your opinion who perpetrates most often?
  - Who most often is the victim?
3. Does your school have a policy or a guideline dealing with GBV specifically?
  - To what extent do the learners know the policies, their responsibilities and the channels of reporting according to you?
4. How is GBV managed in your school?
  - What are the procedures in reporting GBV cases?
  - Who is responsible to monitor and ensure that the procedures are followed?
  - Describe how the identity of the victim of GBV is protected in your school.
  - What are the interventions in dealing with GBV cases?
  - What prevention programmes regarding GBV are currently running in your school?
5. How does the DoE support your school regarding GBV? Explain.
6. How successful you think the measures in curbing GBV are in your school?
7. What can be done to improve the response to GBV of your school?

## **Appendix 13: Interview Schedule – SMTs**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: SMTs / Principals**

1. Tell me about Gender-Based Violence at school.
  - What do you understand by Gender- Based Violence (GBV)?
  - What types of GBV do you know of?
2. How is the situation regarding GBV in your school?
  - How serious according to you is the issue of GBV at your school?
  - What types of GBV are most common to your school?
  - What are the causes of GBV in your school according to you?
  - In your opinion who perpetrates most often?
  - Who most often is the victim?
3. Does your school have a policy or a guideline dealing with GBV specifically?
  - To what extent do the learners know the policies, their responsibilities and the channels of reporting according to you?
4. How is GBV managed in your school?
  - What are the procedures in reporting GBV cases?
  - Who is responsible to monitor and ensure that the procedures are followed?
  - What are the interventions in dealing with GBV cases?
  - What prevention programmes regarding GBV are currently running in your school?
5. How does the DoE support your school regarding GBV? Explain.
6. How successful you think the measures in curbing GBV are in your school?
7. What can be done to improve the response of your school to GBV?