

Investigating Violence-related Behaviors among Learners in Rural Schools in South Africa

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ABSTRACT Learners' safety, social well-being and academic success are a product of a proactive and supportive school and home environments. This study investigated violence-related behaviours among rural learners in ten rural secondary schools within the Vhembe district of South Africa. A cross-sectional descriptive survey design was adopted using self-response questionnaires to collect data from a total of 334 randomly selected learners aged between 14 and 25 years. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. In this study almost 1 in 10 males (n=19; 12.4%) and females (n=21; 11.7%) participants felt that the safety of learners in the school environment was poor. Sixty-one (39.9%) of male participants alluded that their schools experienced vandalism and theft of school property. Among the males, 3(2%) admitted ever carrying a knife to school; and in addition, 41(27%) males and 53(29.8%) females indicated that their schools experienced faction fights in the past three months. This situation calls for school-based behaviour modification and intervention programmes which must be monitored by all stakeholders. In addition, school-based management and governing bodies must be adequately empowered to handle violent situations and security issues within and outside the perimeter of the learning environments.