The School in School Violence in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa

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ABSTRACT The aim of this study was firstly to determine whether there is a correlation between the predictors of school violence (school culture and school climate) and school violence, and secondly to investigate the influence of school-specific demographic variables on safety at schools, school culture and school climate, and school violence. Two research hypotheses have been formulated: (1) School culture and school climate can be used to explain school violence; (2) Significant differences in the average counts for school safety, school culture, school climate and school violence occur between the following variables: gender, grade and the size of the school. An adapted California School Climate and Safety Survey – Short Form (CSCSS-SF), which has been utilised as data collection instrument, was completed by 900 Grade 10-12 learners. With the help of Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient, it was determined that, the better the school culture and school climate at a school, the lower the levels of violence at the school. The results of the MANOVA analysis indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the average school culture and school climate counts, as well as the count for school violence for all the biographic variables. Significant differences in mean scores for the two genders, different school sizes and grades for the CSCSS scales were determined with the help of unidirectional variance analyses. The results of this study are confirmed by earlier research findings. The article concludes with recommendations on how the results can be utilised to address school violence.

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

South Africa is regarded as one of the most violent countries globally (Read et al. 2006). Accordingly, during the period from 2008 to 2009 more than 2.1 million serious criminal activities were registered in South Africa (South African Police 2009). The problem with violence, however, is that not only does it occur in the broader community, but also spills over to schools (Morrell 2002; Reid et al. 2006). Researchers (Morrell 2002; Prinsloo and Neser 2007; Burton 2008; Bender and Emslie 2010; Masitsa 2011) have found that violence in South African schools has become a general tendency during the past decade, which could have a negative impact on learners' progress and development. During the school years, violence could increase the risk of anti-social and delinquent behaviour, which in turn could give rise to criminal behaviour. In the school itself, violence could have a negative impact on the academic development and performance of learners, as well as the ability of learners to function in a healthy manner both inside and outside the school en-vironment. However, schools are supposed to offer an environment where learners could be protected against dangers from inside and outside the school environment. Schools should be an environment where positive citizens are developed and enhanced with regard to pro-social attitudes and values, as well as where individuals are prepared for the role they have to fulfil in society (Burton 2008; Masitsa 2011). Learners in South Africa furthermore have a right, based on the Constitution and common law, to receive tuition in a safe school milieu (Masitsa 2011).

Furlong and Morrison (2000:75) place the school central to school violence ("the school in school violence"). According to them, schools have to accept "educational ownership" for school violence. This means that issues within the everyday management of schooling tasks largely determine safety at schools.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

Against the background of the above, and taking into account the needs of schools in their action against violence, this study is guided by the following primary question: What effect

does school culture and school climate have on violence at schools in the Eastern Cape (South Africa)? In an endeavour to find an answer to this question, the following two research hypotheses were formulated:

⬥ School culture and school climate can be used to explain school violence.
⬥ Significant differences in the mean scores for school safety, school culture, school climate and school violence occur between the following variables: gender, grade and school size.

The aim of this research was firstly to determine whether there is a correlation between the predictors of school violence (school culture and school climate) and school violence, and secondly to investigate the influence of school-specific demographic variables on safety at schools, school culture and school climate, and school violence. The results will be reported against the background of an exposition of key concepts and a theoretical foundation.

Concept Elucidation

School culture and school climate are two different, but strongly related and interactive dimensions in the functioning of a school (Saufler 2005). Both school culture and school climate are concepts that could be linked to the atmosphere at a school, but which could influence the circumstances at the school in different ways. Both concepts are important in determining the quality of the circumstances and the ability to ensure positive learning outcomes. This includes high academic performance as well as non-academic achievements such as well-developed citizens and positive school environments (Saufler 2005).

Barth (2002) defines school culture as a complex pattern of norms, attitudes, convictions, behaviour, values, ceremonies, traditions and myths, which are deeply embedded in each aspect of the school. This is a historical legacy of power, which is exerted over people's thoughts and behaviour. Hinde (2004) regards school culture as norms, convictions, traditions and customs that have been developed at a school over time. According to him, these are implicit expectations and suppositions that directly influence the activities of the school personnel and learners. School culture therefore reflects the shared ideas, suppositions and convictions that give every school its own identity.

Although the concept school climate has been studied since 1908, researchers have not yet come to an agreement about a uniform meaning of the terminology or definitions (Cohen et al. 2008). Depending on the nature of a study, school climate can be regarded as the school environment or the school learning environment (Johnson and Stevens 2006). School climate refers, amongst others, to the set of norms and expectations presented to learners (West 1985); the psycho-social context in which teachers work and teach (Fisher and Fraser 1991); the morale of teachers (Brown and Henry 1992); the level of empowerment for teachers (Short and Rinehardt 1992); learners' perceptions of the "personality" of the school (Johnson et al. 1996); the environment for learners, as indicated by the amount of negative learner behaviour at the school (Bernstein 1992); as well as the physical and emotional well-being of the school organisation (Freiberg and Stein 1999). School climate can, therefore, be regarded either as a composition representing the involvement of all at the school, or as something which could primarily be regarded as a function of teachers and learners. Researchers (Johnson and Stevens 2006; Cohen et al. 2008) are of the opinion that four core dimensions of school life can influence school climate, namely safety, teaching and learning, relations and the environment.

The above exposition recognises the differences in nuances between culture and climate. However, the instrument used in this study does not make any distinction, and uses the inclusive concept "*school culture* and *school climate*".

Furlong and Morrison (2000:71) define school violence as

A multifaceted construct that involves both criminal acts and aggression in schools, which inhibit development and learning, as well as harm the school's climate.

School violence therefore comprises behavioural patterns which can violate a school's pedagogical mission. This definition recognises the intertwined nature of school culture and school climate.

Theoretical Framework

Although many traditional and integrated theories pertaining to violence exist (cf. Bender and Emslie 2010), school violence will come up

for review for the purposes of this study from a bio-ecologic perspective, as adapted by Benbenishty and Astor (2008). The theory can be used as the basis for illustrating the mutual bond between the individual, manifold environments and patterns of violent behaviour. According to Benbenishty and Astor (2008), Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecologic theory creates a notion of violence as interaction occurs between relevant subsystems. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979:3), "the ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls". This theory consequently illustrates the interaction between a person's characteristics and environmental variables (socially and physically). The environment under discussion could include other people who are involved in the situations (co-learners, teachers), as well as the physical environment (school, class size, school structures). Whilst other bio-ecological models place the individual at the centre, Benbenishty and Astor (2008) place the school context at the centre. Benbenishty and Astor's (2008) model implies that rules and norms; physical safety; social and emotional security; support for learning; social and civil learning; respect for diversity; social support – adults; social support – learners; school attachment and physical environment are key aspects in interrogating school violence. This model serves as indicator for the conceptualisation of ideas and the analysis of data in this study, because the objective of this article is to investigate the influence of school-specific demographic variables, namely gender, grade and school size, on school climate and school safety (cf. research hypothesis 2).

METHOD

Instrument

An adapted version of the California School Climate and Safety Survey – Short Form (CSCSS-SF) was used as data collection instrument. The CSCSS-SF was developed by the *Centre for School-Based Youth Development* in California. It is a structured questionnaire for learners, exclusively directed at determining aspects of the school environment, namely school culture, school climate, as well as school safety and school violence. According to Barnes (2010), this instrument has already been used by nu-

merous international researchers to investigate aspects of school culture, school climate and safety at schools.

The section in the questionnaire about school culture and school climate measures respondents' perceptions pertaining to the school environment. Respondents must answer questions about aspects of safety, respect, support and interpersonal relations at the school. Items in this section are divided into ten subdivisions: rules and norms; physical safety; social and emotional security; support for learning; social and civil learning; respect for diversity; social support – adults; social support – learners; school attachment and physical environment. In this division, a five-point Likert scale was used, which varies from *entirely disagree* to *entirely agree*. A high score in these subscales indicate that respondents experience school culture and school climate as positive support.

Items in the questionnaire dealing with school safety can be divided into two subdivisions, namely campus disruption and drug abuse, as well as the carrying of weapons. The first of these subdivisions indicates less serious events such as theft, fights and vandalism, while the second subdivision represents serious activities. The items in this section have been designed to measure respondents' perceptions of the incidence of dangerous activities on the school premises. Respondents are requested to indicate how often activities such as drug abuse, vandalism and the carrying of weapons on the school premise. In this division a five-point Likert scale, which vary from *not at all* to *regularly,* was also used. A high score in the subscales will indicate a high incidence of campus disruption and drug abuse, as well as carrying weapons.

The section on school violence in the questionnaire measures the scope of incidents of school violence. Respondents were asked to indicate their personal experiences during the preceding 12 months (not what had been perceived by them) with regard to victimisation. Items in this section were divided into three subdivisions: physical and verbal harassment, weapons and physical assault and sexual harassment. The five-point Likert scale was also used, with answers that varied from *not at all* to *constantly*. A high score in the subscales indicates a high level of victimisation.

Sample

In the composition of the research group, non-probability sampling was used. The sample was performed in a non-random manner; the schools and learners were therefore approached purposefully, according to their availability. Thirty schools in the Eastern Cape Province, offering Grade 10 to Grade 12, were used as a convenience sample for the study. Because the Eastern Cape Province comprises 24 school districts and covers a large area, only districts in the immediate vicinity of the first author were selected: East London (11), Queenstown (13), Lady Frere (5) and King Williamstown District (1). With the exception of two single-sex schools (one for boys and one for girls), all the schools who took part in this study are mixed-gender schools. Ten learners each from Grades 10, 11 and 12 were selected at each school to complete the questionnaire. Schools were requested to make equal numbers of boys and girls available from each grade. In total, 900 learners participated in the study. From this total, 49% were boys and 51% girls. With regard to the number of learners from the different grades, the schools were requested to make the same number of learners from the different grades available. From the total number of learners, Grade 10 represented 32.9%, Grade 11, 33.8% and Grade 12, 33.3%.

Data Collection

Each school was visited by the first author between 28 April 2010 and 21 May 2010. The administration and taking down of the tests were performed by the author in person. In that way, he could ensure that the respondents understood the questionnaire, he could clarify any obscurities regarding questions, and he could ensure that all questions in the questionnaires were answered. At the same time, he could also ensure that the correct number of learners per school completed the questionnaires.

Data Analysis

Statistic calculations were done with the help of the SPSS computer software programme. The 1% level of significance was used in this study. The following guiding values (f^2) were used to come to a decision about the practical value of statistically significant results: 0.10 = small effect; 0.15 = medium effect and 0.35 = major effect.

Quality Criteria

In an attempt to enhance the validity of the questionnaire, attention was paid to the validity of form and content (cf. Pieterson and Maree 2007). A statistician, as well as other experts in the field of research, checked the questionnaire before distribution to determine whether the instrument was valid and covered the content of the research area in full. The use of an existing instrument also enhanced the validity of the study (cf. Bless et al. 2006). A pilot investigation was also undertaken. After ten learners from a senior secondary school that was not involved in the research had completed the questionnaires, the necessary changes were made to the content and structure of the questionnaire. The internal consistency with which the items of the three scales of the CSCSS-SF measure, was calculated with the help of Cronbach's α coefficient. The alpha coefficients for the scales for school safety, school culture and school violence were 0.709, 0.760 and 0.815, respectively. Internal consistency was therefore at acceptable levels (cf. Pieterson and Maree 2007).

Ethical Aspects

The appropriateness of the principle of permission was already visible in the initial phase of the research project. A supporting letter of motivation by the University of the Free State accompanied the letter requesting permission from the Eastern Cape Department of Education and schools (Cohen et al. 2003). The participants' dignity, privacy and interests were respected at all times. The questionnaires did not contain any identifying signs, names, addresses or encoding symbols. Prior to completing the questionnaires, the learners were also reminded that the process was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the process at any time. The first author, who was present throughout the completion of all the questionnaires, was available, if necessary, to support traumatised respondents and to refer them for counselling.

RESULTS

The correlation between the predictors of school violence (school culture, school climate and safety at schools) was calculated with the

help of Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient. The information is indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Correlation between predictors of school violence and violence at school

Independent variable	School violence		
	Physical and verbal harass-ment	Weapons and physical assault	Sexual harass-ment
Rules and norms	-0.170[*]	-0.200[*]	-0.108[*]
Physical safety	-0.241[*]	-0.147[*]	-0.138[*]
Social and emotional security	-0.172[*]	-0.141[*]	-0.136[*]
Support for learning	-0.085	-0.116	-0.049
Social and civil learning	-0.190[*]	-0.066	-0.067
Respect for diversity	-0.307[*]	-0.106[*]	-0.179[*]
Social support – adults	-0.265[*]	-0.116[*]	-0.178[*]
Social support– learners	-0.229[*]	-0.133[*]	-0.149[*]
School attachment	-0.195[*]	-0.215[*]	-0.181[*]
Physical environments	-0.164	-0.122[*]	-0.181[*]
School Safety			
Campus disruption	0.361[*]	0.102[*]	0.183[*]
Drug abuse/carrying of weapons	0.276[*]	0.121[*]	0.204[*]

[*]$p \leqslant =0.01$

The correlation coefficients in Table 1 firstly indicate that, with the exception of one school culture and school climate scale, namely support for learning, all the other scales (culture, climate and school safety) on the 1% level indicate significant correlations with the violence scales, physical and verbal harassment. Secondly, it transpires that, with the exception of one school culture and school climate scale, namely social and civil learning, all the other scales (culture, climate and school safety) show a correlation with the violence scales, weapons and physical assault. Thirdly, it transpires that, with the exception of two scales referring to school culture and school climate, namely support for learning and social and civil learning, all the other scales (culture, climate and school safety) show significant correlations with the violence scale, sexual harassment, on the 1% level. All the school culture and school climate scales, therefore, show a negative correlation with the three violence scales. All the school safety scales dealing with a lack of safety, display a statistically significant positive correlation with the violence scales. It follows that the better the school culture and school climate at a school, the lower the levels of school violence, while the lack of school safety, in turn, leads to learners experiencing higher levels of violence as school.

The results of the MANOVA analysis that were used to investigate the possible role of the adolescent's biographical details, appear in Table 2. In the last column, the *partial eta squared value* is indicated, which is an indication of the result's effect size.

Table 2: MANOVA F values for the testing of main effects regarding school culture, school climate and school violence

Source	F value[+]	V	P	Quadrated partial Eta
Gender	3.068[*]	15.884	0.000	0.05
Grade	2.667[*]	30.1764	0.000	0.04
School size	7.698[*]	30.1764	0.000	0.10
Single-sex school	3.340[*]	15.134	0.000	0.27

[*]$p \leqslant =0.01$
[+] Hotteling's test size was used

From Table 2, it transpires that there are differences in the average school culture and school climate, as well as scores for school violence for all the biographic variables, and these are statistically significant on the 1% level.

Table 3: F values of the unidirectional variance analyses to test for differences in the mean scores on CSCSS scales regarding the two genders

CSCSS scales	Boys (n=441)		Girls (n=459)		F value	p	f
	x	S	x	S			
School Violence:							
Physical and verbal harassment	1.98	0.71	1.38	0.68	10.925[*]	0.001	0.12
Weapons and physical assault	1.28	0.50	1.16	0.37	18.311[*]	0.000	0.20
Total	1.64	0.51	1.51	0.46	16.902	0.000	0.20

[*]$p = 0.01$

In order to determine on which of the CSCSS scales significant differences in the means ($\bar{\chi}$) occur for the independent variables, unidirectional variance analyses were made. The latter procedure firstly provides an indication with regard to which subscales significant differences occur and secondly, for which groups (if more than two groups) these differences occur. It is important to note that, only for the CSCSS scales for which statistically significant results were obtained on the 1% level, data will be indicated in Tables 3 to 6. In order to determine on which of the CSCSS scales significant differences in means occur for the two genders, unidirectional variance analyses were made. The results pertaining to the scales, together with the calculated effect sizes (f) appear in Table 3.

It is clear from Table 3 that differences occur between group mean scores for the two genders with regard to school violence, specifically for physical and verbal harassment, weapons and physical assault and the total violence score, which is significant on the 1% level. Whilst a small effect size with regard to physical and verbal harassment was achieved, a medium effect size was achieved for weapons and physical assault. The latter results are therefore of practical importance. Furthermore, it is clear that the boys, compared to the girls, achieved significantly higher mean scores for both scales.

In order to determine on which of the CSCSS scales statistically significant differences in mean scores occur for single-sex schools (only boys or girls), unidirectional variance analyses were made. The results with regard to the scales, together with the calculated effect sizes (f), appear in Table 4.

It is clear from Table 4 that differences occur between group mean scores for the learners at single-sex schools (boys or girls) regarding to school violence, specifically physical and verbal harassment and the total violence score, which are significantly on the 1% level. In both cases, large effect sizes were found and the results are therefore definitely of practical importance. With regard to physical and verbal harassment and the total violence score, the learners at boys' schools, compared to learners at girls' schools, attained significantly higher mean scores.

In order to determine on which of the CSCSS scales significant differences in means occur for the three grade groups, unidirectional variance analyses were made. The results with regard to the scales, together with the calculated effect sizes (f) appear in Table 5.

It is clear from Table 5 that there are differences in the group mean scores for the three grade groups with regard to school culture and school climate, namely for rules and norms and respect for diversity, which are significant on

Table 4: F values of the unidirectional variance analyses to test for differences in the mean scores on CSCSS scales regarding single-sex schools

CSCSS scales	Boys (n=441)		Girls (n=459)		F value	p	f
	x	S	x	S			
School Violence: Physical and verbal harassment	1.98	0.78	1.47	0.42	26.089*	0.000	1.50

*$p \leqslant =0.01$

Table 5: F values of the unidirectional variance analyses to test for differences in the mean scores on CSCSS scales regarding the three grades

CSCSS scales	Grade 10		Grade 11		Grade 12		F value	p	f
	x	s	x	s	x	s			
School Culture and School Climate:									
Rules and norms	3.60	1.06	3.72	1.01	3.90	0.93	6.994*	0.001	0.15
Respect for diversity	3.38	1.08	3.46	1.14	3.19	1.06	4.944*	0.007	0.11

*$p \leqslant =0.01$

Table 6: F values of the unidirectional variance analyses to test for differences in mean scores on CSCSS scales regarding the three school sizes

CSCSS scales	> 500		> 500-750		> 750		F value	p	f
	x	s	x	s	x	s			
School Safety									
Scale 1-Campus disruption	2.50	0.87	2.59	0.77	2.79	0.79	9.088*	0.000	0.14
Total	2.36	0.79	2.40	0.72	2.54	0.75	4.580*	0.010	0.10
Scales for School Culture and School Climate									
Rules and norms	3.49	1.05	3.88	0.95	3.81	1.00	12.511*	0.000	0.17
Social and emotional security	3.23	0.84	3.51	0.75	3.53	0.79	12.389*	0.000	0.17
Social support - adults	3.48	1.00	3.67	0.92	3.78	0.89	6.786*	0.001	0.12
Social support - learners	3.92	1.06	4.11	0.89	4.21	0.83	6.782*	0.001	0.12
School association	4.01	0.76	4.15	0.67	4.18	0.69	4.568*	0.010	0.10
Physical environments	2.46	1.08	3.38	1.09	3.39	1.08	69.179*	0.000	0.39
School Violence									
Sexual harassment	1.41	0.76	1.24	0.66	1.32	0.68	4.605*	0.010	0.10

*$p \leq 0.01$

the 1% level. However, with regard to both these results, small effect sizes are achieved.

In order to determine on which of the CSCSS scales significant mean differences occur for the three school sizes (<500; 500-750 and >750), unidirectional variance analyses were made. The results with regard to the scales, together with the calculated effect sizes (*f*) appear in Table 6.

It is clear from Table 6 that there are differences in the group means for the three school sizes with regard to safety at schools (scale 1 and total); school culture and school climate (rules and norms; social and emotional security; social support by adults and learners; school association; physical surroundings); and school violence (sexual harassment) – which are significant on the 1% level. A large-sized effect was only obtained for physical environments. All the other results show small effect sizes and will not be discussed any further.

Because three groups were raised here, the Scheffé test was done and the results indicate that learners at small schools (<500 learners), compared to learners at larger schools (both 500–750 and > 750), attained a significant lower mean score regarding to physical environments.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the focus was on the impact of three demographic variables, namely school size, gender and grade, on school violence (in accordance with Benbenishty and Astor's model). Firstly, the correlation between the predictors of school violence (school culture, school climate and school safety) and violence at schools was investigated. From the results it transpires that, the better the school culture and climate at a school, the lower the levels of school violence, while the lack of school safety, in turn, leads to learners experiencing higher levels of school violence (Table 1). This research confirms the viewpoint of various researchers (Gottfredson and Gofffredson 1985; Najaka et al. 2002; Strawhacker 2002; Benbenishty and Astor 2005; Cohen and Pickerall 2007; Akiba 2008:67; Masitsa 2011), namely that a positive school culture and climate are important dimensions that can be linked to effective prevention of risk and the promotion of teaching and learning. Secondly, the role of school-specific demographic variables in our concept of school violence was investigated in this article. The results of the MANOVA analysis indicate that significant differences occur between the mean scores regarding school safety, school culture and school climate, as well as school violence regarding gender, grade and school size (Table 2). These results will be discussed in context with results as contained in Tables 3–6.

Researchers (Gottfredson and Gottfredson 1985; Furlong and Morrison 2000; Strawhacker 2002; Benbenishty and Astor 2005; Bhana 2005; Prinsloo and Neser 2007; Akiba 2008) have found that more boys than girls are involved in school violence, physical assault in particular. Benbenishty and Astor's (2005) investigation, for example, has determined that the boys who participated in their study reported five times more than girls that they were stabbed with weapons or sharp objects. This study also indicates that boys, compared to girls, obtained statisti-

cally significant higher mean scores than girls for the school violence scales physical and verbal harassment, weapons and physical assault, as well as the total violence score, in school violence. The results also indicate a medium effect size pertaining to weapons and physical assault (Table 3). This tendency is confirmed by results of the unidirectional variance analysis to test for differences in mean scores on the CSCSS scales for single-sex schools (Table 4). Boys' schools' group averages with regard to school violence (physical and verbal harassment; total violence scale) obtained significantly higher mean scores than girls' schools. Learners at boys' schools therefore experience a higher degree of school violence than at girls' schools. From a feminist perspective, Morrell (2002) argues that boys, in their aspiration to conform to the hegemonic masculine identity that many schools present as the norm, not only become perpetrators, but also victims of school violence. Bhana (2005) supports Morrell's viewpoint and states that violence at South African schools is a manifestation of gender inequality. However, Bhana (2005:100) warns against generalisations – not all boys "enact violent masculinity".

The preceding discussion does not indicate that girls are not exposed to violence. In a comprehensive international study in which 33 countries participated, Akiba (2008) has found that in 58% of the countries – including the USA and Chile – boys reported higher levels of fear of violence than girls did. In three countries – Lithuania, The Netherlands and the Russian Federation – girls reported higher levels of fear than boys did. Statistically there was no significant difference between the genders in the remaining 11 countries. Bhana (2005) refers to the high levels of violence to which girls are exposed at South African schools. Results of this study indicate a mean of 1.38 and 1.16 for physical and verbal harassment, as well as weapons and physical attack scales, respectively, with regard to girls (cf. Table 3). Table 4 show a mean score of 1.47 for girls' schools on the physical and verbal harassment scale. The exposure is therefore minimal: on the five-point Likert scale, 1 indicates "*not at all*". Benbenishty and Astor (2005), as well as Prinsloo and Neser (2007) warn that the higher incidence of violence amongst boys could lead to the negation of girls as victims and/or aggressors.

Moreover, results have indicated that there is not statistically difference between boys' and girls' exposure to sexual harassment. This research therefore confirms earlier research that sexual harassment is a reality not only in the lives of girls, but also in those of boys. Jacobs and De Wet (2011), for example, have statistically determined that the boys who participated in their research were significantly more victims of sexual harassment than the girls.

This study indicates that, with regard to only two scales of school culture and school violence – namely rules and norms, and respect for diversity – statistically there are significant differences in the mean scores on the CSCSS scales for the three grade groups. Effect size, however, is small. The small effect size can probably be attributed to the minimal age difference between participants in their late adolescence. In literature on children's psychology (cf. Louw and Louw 2007) and school violence (Strawhacker 2002; Sullivan et al. 2005; Bender and Emslie 2010), adolescence is studied as a specific phase in human development. This study has looked at "late adolescents" (Bender and Emslie 2010:174) or the so-called "finishing students" (Sullivan et al. 2005:27). Researchers (Strawhacker 2002; Sullivan et al. 2005; Louw and Louw 2007; Bender and Emslie 2010) have found that age determines how children experience school culture and school climate, and to which type of school violence they are exposed or are guilty of. This study has indicated that Grade 12 learners experience rules and norms at their respective schools more positively than respondents in the two lower grades (cf. Table 5). It could possibly be attributed to the fact that the learners are normally more mature and act as positive role models. According to Sullivan et al. (2005), learners are able to think for themselves and become part of a "mutually responsive society" at the end of their school careers.

School size results for group means indicate statistically significant differences, but a smaller effect size. There is only a practical significant difference with regard to physical environment, which indicates that learners at schools with less than 500 learners experience their schools more negatively than at larger schools. These findings are in conflict with those of Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1985), as well as Strawhacker (2002). They have also determined that smaller schools, compared to larger schools, are associ-

ated with better discipline and the prevention of violence. Khoury-Kassabi et al. (2005) on the other hand argue that school size as such does not have a major impact on school violence.

CONCLUSION

Although this study addresses a gap in the literature on violence at South African schools in general, and in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa in particular, it has its limitations. This research was explorative by nature. Therefore, no claim can be laid to the universal application of results. In order to obtain a broader perspective regarding the influence of school culture and school climate on school violence, all learners at the schools, as well as the teachers and parents could be involved. Research findings were not contextualised in this article. In a follow-up article, findings will be place within the socio-political and economic context of the Eastern Cape, one of the poorest provinces in South Africa. Education in the Eastern Cape is characterised by corruption on a large scale among education administrators, school principals and educators, as well as school violence. Furthermore, it is important to investigate what the reasons are why certain schools displayed higher levels of violence than other schools – in spite of corresponding socio-political and economic circumstances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Next, the practical implications of the research findings will be discussed. The correlation between the predictors of school violence (school culture and school climate, as well as safety at schools) and school violence emphasises the necessity of the bringing about of a positive school culture and school climate as a way in which to address school violence. Schools should consider the institution of a committee for the prevention of violence in which all role players are represented. The duties of this committee should be geared towards the institution of a comprehensive process to address all aspects pertaining to school violence. This committee could then investigate and address aspects of school culture and school climate, as well as school violence by means of a self-repetitive cyclic process. The CSCSS-SF, or a similar measuring-instrument, could be used very

advantageously. This will also enable individual schools to identify and address school-specific, and not only generic problems. Not only learners, but also parents, community leaders and governmental institutions should become involved in implementing programmes to prevent school violence, based on the institution of a positive school culture and school climate. It should be noted that a positive school climate does not always reduce the likelihood of perpetration of aggression. Similarly, a negative school climate does not inevitably increase school violence.

Schools should furthermore consider appointing councillors or specially trained persons to educate learners on how to socialise in a positive way must be taken into consideration. Learners should receive education in the handling of violence and rage explosions, as well as the handling of conflict.

To ensure that learners will feel free to report incidents of violence, it is recommended that schools establish a responsible policy to ensure that learners will have the unreservedness to report violence.

This study confirms findings about the relation between school culture, school climate and school violence, as well as the influence of school-specific variables on the predictors of school violence. It thus emphasises the necessity of a holistic approach towards school violence.

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