

The Impact of Learner Violence in Rural South African Schools

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ABSTRACT A safe school environment is central to learners' academic performance and holistic development. This article reports on part of a study that sought to identify the forms of learner aggression, the contributory factors to aggression, the consequences and psychological effects of learner aggression and the identification of strategies that can help to manage learner aggression in rural secondary schools in the Empangeni district of KwaZulu-Natal. A qualitative research design was deemed to be most appropriate for the purpose of this study and interviews were conducted with principals, teachers and students in the selected schools. The findings identify a number of psychological responses of victims to learner aggression and the consequences of learner aggression in schools, which have had a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning in these schools. This research concluded that the consequences of learner aggression are devastating, have a serious effect on the victims mental health and leads to high levels of stress, anxiety, depression and even suicide.