




RS Global
Journals

Scholarly Publisher
RS Global Sp. z O.O.
ISNI: 0000 0004 8495 2390

Dolna 17, Warsaw, Poland 00-773
Tel: +48 226 0 227 03
Email: editorial_office@rsglobal.pl

JOURNAL	International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science
p-ISSN	2544-9338
e-ISSN	2544-9435
PUBLISHER	RS Global Sp. z O.O., Poland
ARTICLE TITLE	EXPLORING THE FACTORS AND STRATEGIES FOR ENSURING EDUCATIONAL STABILITY IN KWAZULU-NATAL: A FOCUS ON MITIGATING SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND PROMOTING A FAVORABLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
AUTHOR(S)	Ngogi Emmanuel Mahaye, Oluwatoyin Ayodele Ajani
ARTICLE INFO	Ngogi Emmanuel Mahaye, Oluwatoyin Ayodele Ajani. (2023) Exploring the Factors and Strategies for Ensuring Educational Stability in KwaZulu-Natal: A Focus on Mitigating School Violence and Promoting a Favorable Learning Environment. <i>International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science</i> . 3(39). doi: 10.31435/rsglobal_ijitss/30092023/8048
DOI	https://doi.org/10.31435/rsglobal_ijitss/30092023/8048
RECEIVED	24 August 2023
ACCEPTED	29 September 2023
PUBLISHED	30 September 2023
LICENSE	 This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License .

© The author(s) 2023. This publication is an open access article.

EXPLORING THE FACTORS AND STRATEGIES FOR ENSURING EDUCATIONAL STABILITY IN KWAZULU-NATAL: A FOCUS ON MITIGATING SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND PROMOTING A FAVORABLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Ngogi Emmanuel Mahaye

Languages and Social Sciences Education

University of Zululand

KwaDlangezwa, South Africa

Oluwatoyin Ayodele Ajani

Languages and Social Sciences Education

University of Zululand

KwaDlangezwa, South Africa

DOI: https://doi.org/10.31435/rsglobal_ijitss/30092023/8048

ARTICLE INFO

Received 24 August 2023

Accepted 29 September 2023

Published 30 September 2023

KEYWORDS

Instability, Crime, KwaZulu-Natal, Teaching and Learning, Ubuntu, Violence.

ABSTRACT

Achieving educational objectives within the school system is contingent upon a conducive environment (Ajani, 2022). In the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province, the alarming rise in school violence has disrupted academic activities, sparking concerns among education stakeholders. Numerous incidents of violence, resulting in fatalities and property damage, have been well-documented (Mahaye et al., 2022). The recurring nature of these incidents has led to a lack of stability within schools, hindering effective teaching and learning. This study investigates the factors contributing to educational instability in KwaZulu-Natal, drawing from published literature and the authors' direct experience as education administrators. The research reveals that crime and violence are the primary causes of school instability, stemming from internal factors involving learners and staff and external influences from the local community. The study identifies multiple strategies to mitigate school violence, creating a secure and conducive educational environment. Additionally, it proposes measures to ensure school stability in the KwaZulu-Natal province, including moral guidance, heightened security protocols, the cultivation of emotional intelligence, instruction in African philosophy (Ubuntu), and improved teacher welfare packages.

Citation: Ngogi Emmanuel Mahaye, Oluwatoyin Ayodele Ajani. (2023) Exploring the Factors and Strategies for Ensuring Educational Stability in KwaZulu-Natal: A Focus on Mitigating School Violence and Promoting a Favorable Learning Environment. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science*. 3(39). doi: 10.31435/rsglobal_ijitss/30092023/8048

Copyright: © 2023 **Ngogi Emmanuel Mahaye, Oluwatoyin Ayodele Ajani**. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the **Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY)**. The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) or licensor are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.

Introduction.

Education is a cornerstone of societal progress, fostering not only the acquisition of knowledge and skills but also the cultivation of human values and the advancement of humanity itself (Ajani, 2022). It is a powerful catalyst for positive change, capable of shaping individuals' identities, perceptions, and aspirations. In the quest for educational excellence, it is essential to recognise that attaining educational objectives is intricately linked to a favourable and conducive learning environment (Ajani, 2022).

This recognition takes on added significance when considering the unique educational landscape of the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province in South Africa. Within this province, the escalation of school violence has emerged as a pressing concern, threatening to disrupt academic activities and undermine the educational system's stability. Tragically, numerous violent incidents within these schools have resulted in fatalities and extensive damage to human lives and property (Mahaye et al., 2022). The recurrence of such incidents has contributed to pervasive instability within these educational institutions, eroding the foundations necessary for effective teaching and learning.

This research embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted factors that contribute to educational instability in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. It seeks to shed light on the underlying causes of school violence and its impact on the learning environment. Additionally, it delves into the strategies and measures to mitigate these challenges and foster a secure and favourable atmosphere conducive to educational activities.

As we delve into this critical examination, it becomes evident that the issues extend beyond the classroom walls. They encompass a complex interplay of social, cultural, economic, and historical factors that have left an indelible mark on the educational landscape of KwaZulu-Natal. Furthermore, the study considers the perspective of education administrators, who play a pivotal role in shaping and responding to the challenges faced within the province's schools.

In a broader context, the research underscores the global significance of addressing educational stability and safety. Dr. Nelson Mandela's assertion that education is a potent tool for global transformation resonates profoundly in a world where discrimination, prejudice, and social injustice persist. In this regard, the recent upsurge in crises within KwaZulu-Natal schools not only poses a threat to the welfare of the province's future generations but also serves as a poignant reminder of the critical role education plays in rectifying past injustices and securing the well-being of current and upcoming generations.

To explore these themes, this study delves into the factors contributing to school instability, drawing from a wealth of academic literature and real-world experiences. It concludes by offering insights into effective models and strategies for addressing the challenges faced within educational institutions in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, and beyond.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the intricate web of environmental factors that impact human development (refer to Appendix 1). This theoretical model asserts that individuals continuously interact dynamically within and between different environmental levels. The microsystem constitutes the central level, encompassing immediate relationships and environments where children and young people (CYP) primarily interact, including their households and educational institutions. Moving beyond the microsystem, the mesosystem addresses the interconnectedness between various microsystems. The exosystem encompasses contextual factors that indirectly influence an individual's development, spanning domains such as their parents' or caregivers' workplaces, mass media, national services like the National Health Service, and local authorities (Ajani & Dosunmu, 2018). The macrosystem encompasses broader societal elements, including cultural dimensions, prevailing norms, values, ideologies, economic structures, governmental systems, and legal frameworks.

Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner (1989) introduced the concept of the 'chronosystem' to his theory, emphasising the role of time in human development. The ecological systems theory posits that these multiple levels of influence can interact, exerting direct and indirect effects on individuals. Adopting this theory has proven advantageous in contextualising the current study within the microsystem of young people and categorising and analysing in-depth interviews while considering the various systems to which the interview data pertains.

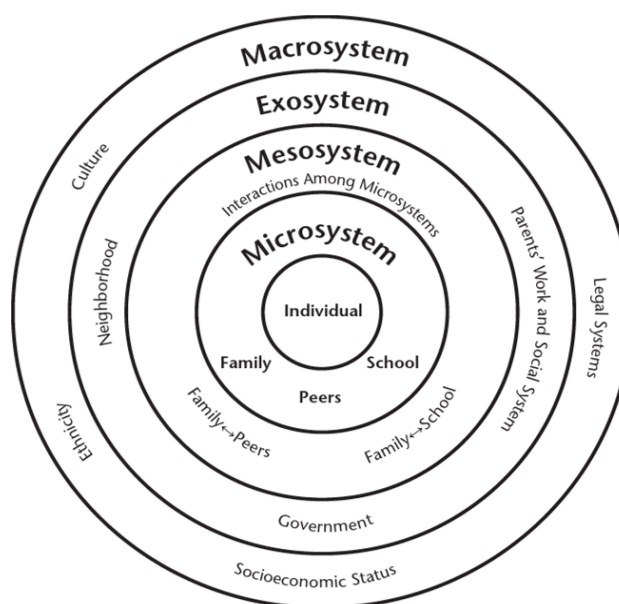


Figure 1. Ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner (1989)).

The Ecological Systems Theory centres on the intricate interplay and interdependence between individuals and the systems surrounding them. It advocates for social workers to adopt a holistic perspective that considers the reciprocal influence between individuals and a myriad of physical, social, political, and cultural systems. Rooted in the amalgamation of ecological theory, systems theory, and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory, the contemporary application of ecological systems theory is built upon five core principles. These principles scrutinise systems' dynamic interactions and mutual dependencies, highlighting the inadequacy of assessing a single system in isolation. Instead, it necessitates considering how various systems mutually influence one another. Within social work practice, applying ecological systems theory, primarily through tools like ecomaps, proves invaluable during the evaluation phase. It provides a comprehensive framework for assessing clients, aiding social workers in identifying the most appropriate system for intervention based on their evaluations.

As per Addison (1992), Bronfenbrenner contends that the adverse effects on a child's development primarily stem from the instability and unpredictability of family life, driven mainly by economic factors. Consistent and meaningful interactions with significant adults are necessary to ensure children's developmental progress. According to the ecological theory, when there is a breakdown in relationships within the immediate microsystem, a child's ability to explore other facets of their environment may be compromised. Children who seek the affirmations typically expected in child/parent or child/other significant adult relationships may seek attention through inappropriate means. These deficiencies often manifest, particularly during adolescence, in the form of non-conformist behaviour, a lack of self-discipline, and an inability to provide self-guidance (Addison, 1992).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is widely acknowledged as a prominent framework for elucidating the impact of social contexts on human development processes. The theory posits that an individual's upbringing environment significantly influences all aspects of their life. Social factors shape an individual's cognitive processes, emotional experiences, and preferences.

Justification for the theory in this study.

The utilisation of the Ecological Systems Theory in this study is justified for several compelling reasons. The Ecological Systems Theory encourages a holistic perspective examining the factors and dynamics that influence individuals' lives. In this study, which explores educational stability in KwaZulu-Natal, it is crucial to consider the myriad interconnected systems impacting learners and their learning environments. By adopting this theory, the research can account for the complexity of factors affecting educational stability, including microsystems (e.g., schools and households), mesosystems (e.g., interactions between school and home), exosystems (e.g., community influences), macrosystems (e.g., cultural and societal norms), and even the chronosystem (e.g., changes over time).

The theory emphasises the reciprocal influence between individuals and their environments. Regarding school stability and violence in KwaZulu-Natal, it recognises that learners are not passive recipients but active participants in their educational experiences. Their interactions with various systems, such as family, community, and culture, can shape their behaviour and well-being. Conversely, the broader systems can be influenced by individual actions. This perspective is particularly relevant when studying the complex interplay between learners and their educational contexts.

Ecological Systems Theory provides a comprehensive framework for assessing and understanding the multifaceted nature of educational stability issues. By considering the various systems and their interactions, the study can identify factors that might be overlooked in a more narrow analysis. For example, it allows for a nuanced examination of how family dynamics, community resources, cultural norms, and historical developments all contribute to the challenges of school violence and instability in KwaZulu-Natal.

The theory's application, including tools like ecomaps, offers practical benefits for social work and intervention strategies. It helps social workers and policymakers identify appropriate entry points for intervention, whether at the microsystem level (e.g., individual learners), mesosystem level (e.g., school-community partnerships), or exosystem level (e.g., policy changes). This can lead to more targeted and effective approaches for addressing the identified issues. Given that the study is situated in the specific social context of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, the Ecological Systems Theory aligns well with the need to consider cultural and societal factors. It acknowledges that the impact of educational instability and violence is not solely a product of individual behaviours but is deeply intertwined with the social and cultural context in which it occurs.

In summary, the Ecological Systems Theory offers a robust framework for this study by providing a comprehensive, interrelated perspective on the multifaceted issues of educational stability, particularly in the context of school violence in KwaZulu-Natal. It allows for a nuanced examination of the various factors and their interactions, ultimately supporting a more holistic understanding and effective strategies for addressing these critical challenges.

School Instability in Africa.

School instability is a significant issue in Africa, affecting the quality of education and hindering learners' academic progress (Armoed, 2021; Mahaye & Ajani, 2023). This literature review explores the factors contributing to school instability in Africa and its impact on learners' educational experiences. Barnes (2021) posits that one of the reasons for school instability in Africa is the lack of academic preparedness among learners entering higher education institutions. Many learners need more academic skills for success in higher education, leading to increased time taken to graduate (Deliwe, 2020). This "articulation gap" between school and higher education challenges learners and affects their educational journey.

Furthermore, Estisari et al. (2023) argue that political and social unrest in Africa can disrupt the functioning of schools and universities, leading to instability in the education system. Learner protests, persistent demands, and conflicts can result in the closure of educational institutions, causing interruptions in learning and academic progress. The #FeesMustFall movement in South Africa is an example of learner protests that have impacted higher education institutions (Barnes, 2021). Implementing curriculum policies, such as the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), can face challenges in African countries, leading to school instability (Landa et al., 2021). Factors such as non-delivery of textbooks, lack of resources, and inadequate teacher training can hinder the effective implementation of the curriculum, affecting learners' learning experiences (Ghazal et al., 2018; Harry & Chinyamurindi, 2021).

Socio-economic challenges, including poverty and underfunding, contribute to African school instability (Mayet, 2021). Limited access to resources, inadequate infrastructure, and poor working conditions for teachers can negatively impact the quality of education. These challenges disproportionately affect learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, perpetuating educational inequalities (Holmes & Fray, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the technological challenges faced by educational institutions in Africa (Musitha & Mafukata, 2018). The shift to online teaching and learning modalities has exposed the digital divide, with limited access to technology and internet connectivity hindering learners' educational experiences. The need for effective policies and infrastructure development to support online education has become evident (Ntombana et al., 2023).

The quality and availability of teachers play a crucial role in school stability (Ajani, 2021). Challenges such as teacher shortages, unmotivated teachers, and inadequate training can impact learners' educational experiences (Ajani & Govender, 2021). Addressing these challenges requires investment in teacher education, professional development, and creating supportive working environments. Cultural and linguistic diversity in Africa can pose challenges to the education system. Language of instruction issues, particularly in multilingual contexts, can affect learners' comprehension and academic performance (Zainuddin et al., 2019). Embracing culturally relevant curricula and supporting learners with diverse linguistic backgrounds can contribute to school stability.

Landa et al. (2021) opine that school instability in Africa is a multifaceted issue influenced by various factors, including lack of academic preparedness, political and social unrest, curriculum implementation challenges, socio-economic factors, technological challenges, teacher training and workforce challenges, and cultural and linguistic factors. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive strategies, including improving academic preparedness, addressing political and social issues, enhancing curriculum implementation, addressing socio-economic disparities, investing in technology and infrastructure, improving teacher training and support, and embracing cultural and linguistic diversity (Safitri & Lestari, 2021). By addressing these factors, African countries can work towards creating stable and inclusive educational environments that promote quality education for all (Mahaye & Ajani, 2023).

School instability encompasses any factor capable of interrupting the flow of academic activities within a school environment, subsequently depriving children of their fundamental right to access education (Bowman & Barksdale, 2004). This indisputable right to quality education for every child originates in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948. Adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on 10 December 1948, the UDHR unequivocally proclaims that every individual possesses the right to education, which should be freely accessible, particularly at the primary level. Education is not just a right; it should also facilitate holistic human development, reinforce respect for human rights, and foster understanding, tolerance, and friendship among individuals (UDHR Article 26).

The Republic of South Africa, as a signatory to the declaration of fundamental rights of a child, bears the responsibility of enacting necessary laws and measures to ensure that each child within the country enjoys access to basic education. Consequently, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, in section 29(1), guarantees that "everyone has access to basic education" (the Republic of South Africa, [RSA], 1996a). Furthermore, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 stipulates that stakeholders must uphold discipline within schools and classrooms, ensuring that teaching and learning proceed without disruptions (RSA, 1996b).

Any disruption to the teaching and learning process within schools results in instability and contravenes the South African Constitution (Ajani et al., 2020). Numerous studies conducted by scholars and education stakeholders have identified several factors causing disruptions in academic activities across the country (Nzama & Ajani, 2021; Mahaye et al., 2022). It has come to light that parents, teachers, and learners each play distinct roles in contributing to the disruption of academic activities within schools (Ajani & Gamede, 2021). Teachers, in particular, are entrusted with the duty to act in loco parentis within schools, bearing the utmost responsibility for creating and maintaining conducive learning environments (Theron & Theron, 2014; Khathi et al., 2021).

Research Methodology.

The study adopted a systematic literature review coupled with the authors' lived experiences of school instability in KwaZulu-Natal (Page et al., 2022). A systematic review of the authors' lived experiences combines the rigorous methodology of a traditional systematic review with the authors' firsthand experiences and insights related to the research topic. Thus, the study adopted the PRISMA approach to systematically review various literature sources published from 2018-2023 (Attrai & Pathak, 2023). Beller et al. (2013) posit that a systematic literature review enables researchers to draw in-depth information on the phenomenon to create novelty in research. In this case, the research focuses on exploring the factors and strategies for ensuring educational stability in KwaZulu-Natal, specifically mitigating school violence and promoting a favourable learning environment.

The research employed a diverse group of experts, including researchers with experience in systematic reviews, education administrators, and teachers with firsthand knowledge of the KwaZulu-Natal educational context. A comprehensive search strategy will be developed to identify relevant

studies, reports, and documents related to school stability, violence, and educational strategies in KwaZulu-Natal. Both academic databases and grey literature sources will be included in the search (Zarate et al., 2022). The Inclusion criteria for the study focused on peer-reviewed articles, reports, and policy documents relevant to the research questions. In contrast, the exclusion criteria identified sources that did not meet the predefined criteria or were outside the scope of the study (Attrai & Pathak, 2023). Data was systematically collected to extract in-depth and relevant information from the identified sources, including quantitative data, qualitative findings, and authors' lived experiences. The authors' lived experiences were integrated into the systematic review through narrative summaries, reflections, and personal insights related to the research topic. Thematic analysis was employed to classify common ideas or information into themes, used for the presentation and discussion of findings for this study (Page et al., 2022). The authors' lived experiences were synthesised and woven into the review's narrative, offering a unique perspective and personal insights into the factors and strategies discussed. Thus, the authors' lived experiences were critically examined for their relevance and credibility in contributing to the review's insights. Connections between the research evidence and the authors' insights were explored, enhancing the depth of the review.

The systematic review concluded with a summary of key findings, implications for policy and practice, and recommendations for addressing school instability and violence in KwaZulu-Natal. The authors' lived experiences were highlighted as a valuable source of contextual knowledge and potential guidance for future initiatives. Ethical considerations were duly addressed, and transparency in presenting authors' lived experiences.

Presentation and discussion of findings.

The study identified school violence as a significant factor contributing to educational instability in KwaZulu-Natal. Incidents of violence, including physical altercations, bullying, and vandalism, were reported across various regional schools. Factors external to schools, such as community violence, gang activity, and poverty, significantly influence school stability. These external pressures often spill over into school environments, creating disruptions. Challenges related to teacher welfare, including burnout and dissatisfaction, were noted. These issues sometimes led to teacher strikes and absenteeism, impacting the continuity of education.

Several strategies focused on community engagement were proposed. These included establishing community policing initiatives, fostering partnerships with local organisations, and creating safe routes to school. Schools that implemented moral guidance programs reported improved learner behaviour and reduced violence. These programs aimed to instil values and ethics among learners. Emotional intelligence programs for learners and teachers were found to be effective in improving conflict resolution skills and reducing violent incidents. Addressing teacher welfare issues, such as workload and professional development opportunities, was seen as essential for retaining motivated and effective teachers.

Factors Contributing to School Instability.

Violence and Crime in Schools.

In 2019, SADTU KZN issued a stark statement addressing the pressing issues afflicting education and its workforce, notably highlighting the recent surge in violence and crime within our schools. The statement vividly depicted schools evolving into battlegrounds, where teachers, support staff, and learners alike were exposed to distressing situations that subjected them to these distressing acts (SADTU, 2019). This declaration underscored the alarming escalation of violence within our educational institutions. One eyewitness account from a high school in KZN chillingly likened the brutal fights between learners to scenes from a war movie (Mail & Guardian, 2019). The grim description of school incidents as reminiscent of "war movies" is profoundly disturbing, given the traumatic impact such events can have on teachers and learners unfortunate enough to witness them.

The scourge of violence in KZN schools has emerged as a formidable obstacle, significantly disrupting the pursuit of academic excellence. A prominent example is a high school in KZN, where recurrent confrontations among learners have precipitously lowered the school's matriculation pass rate from over 90% to under 40% in less than 15 years. Moreover, research reveals numerous learners frequently miss school due to safety concerns, while others grapple with the emotional aftermath of

having experienced bullying (see Figure 1). Beyond its deleterious impact on the educational system, school violence inflicts psychosocial stress upon learners and teachers.

School violence manifests in many ways: theft, bullying, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, and physical abuse (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Khuzwayo et al., 2016; Nzama & Ajani, 2021). Disturbingly, violence in schools can be initiated by learners against their peers, learners targeting teachers, or teachers subjecting learners to mistreatment. The unpredictable nature of who might be the next perpetrator or victim compounds the challenges posed by school violence, confounding teachers, government authorities, stakeholders, and society at large. Research discerns a distinction in patterns of abuse: learners tend to direct verbal abuse more frequently toward teachers than the reverse (see Figure 2). Conversely, the same research exposes that teachers resort to physical abuse more often when compared to learners' actions against teachers (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). The high incidence of physical abuse of learners by teachers can be attributed to the continued use of prohibited corporal punishment within schools. Figure 3 illustrates a disturbing trend wherein the utilisation of corporal punishment has surged in KZN, rising from 48.7% in 2008 to a disconcerting 73.7% in 2012. Notably, KZN reported the highest number of documented cases of corporal punishment usage in the country during 2012.

Violence and crime in KwaZulu-Natal schools have emerged as significant and profoundly concerning issues that have garnered widespread attention and scrutiny (Nzama & Ajani, 2021). These problems encompass a range of troubling incidents and behaviours that disrupt the learning environment, traumatise learners and teachers, and pose substantial challenges to the educational system and broader society. Here are vital aspects of violence and crime in KwaZulu-Natal schools as shown in the table below:

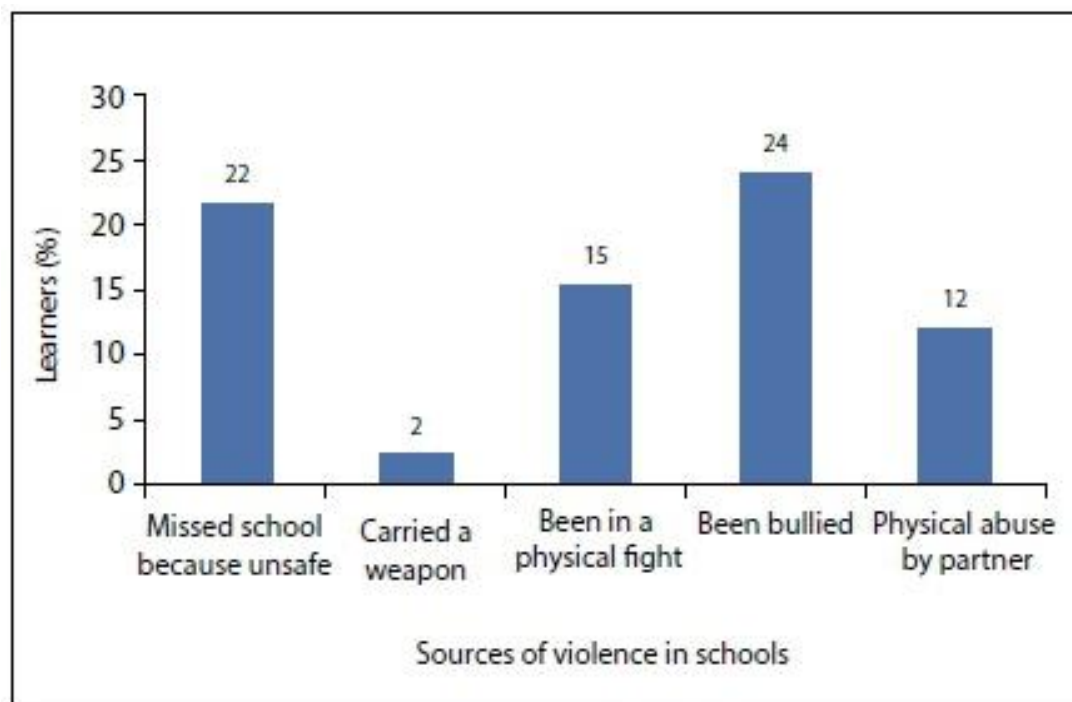


Figure 1. Violence in a school in KZN (Khuzwayo et al., 2016).

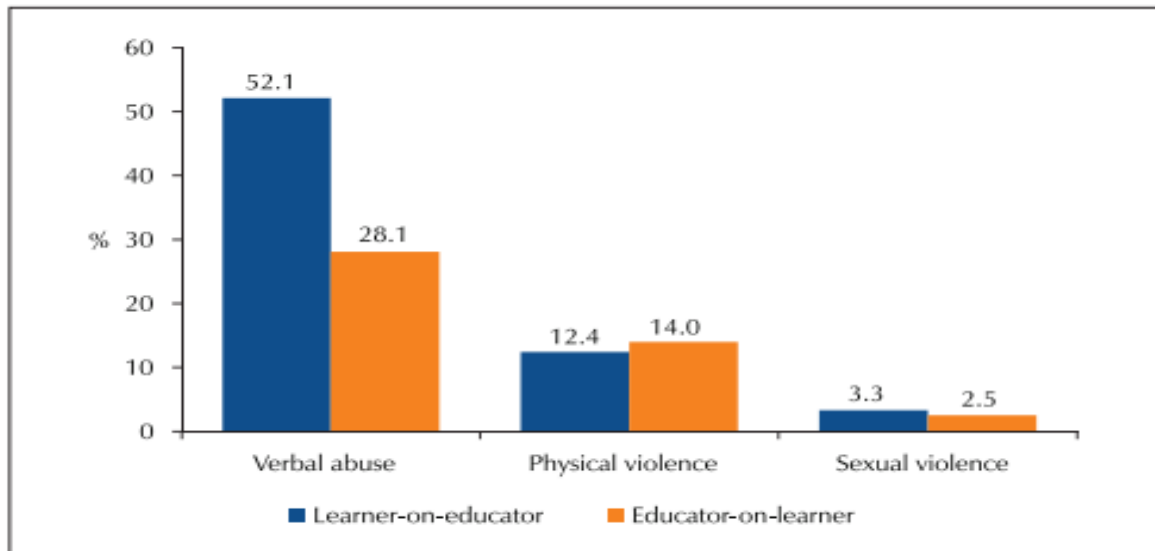


Figure 2. Rate of person-to-person violence in South Africa (Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

In 2012, KwaZulu-Natal was identified as having the highest prevalence of corporal punishment in South Africa. However, recent research reveals a shift in this pattern, with KwaZulu-Natal now trailing behind the provinces of Free State and Eastern Cape regarding the frequency of corporal punishment usage. According to South Africa's Education Statistics (2018), as depicted in Table 1, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) reports a prevalence rate of 10.1% for the application of corporal punishment. In contrast, Free State and Eastern Cape have registered higher rates of 12.6% and 12.7%, respectively. The decline in the utilisation of corporal punishment in KwaZulu-Natal represents a positive trend. Nevertheless, the imperative remains to eliminate such disciplinary measures in schools to create an optimal environment conducive to effective teaching and learning.

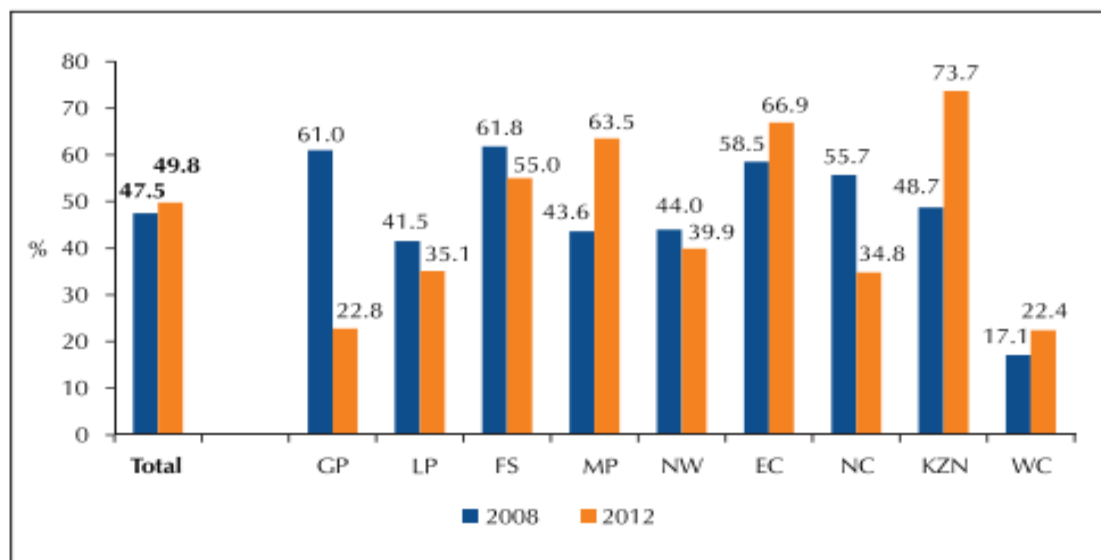


Figure 3. Use of corporal punishment in the provinces (Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

Table 1. Education Indicators (South Africa’s Education Statistics, May 2019).

Indicators	WC	EC	NC	FS	KZN	NW	GP	MP	LP	RSA
% of learners in schools who walk for more than 30 minutes to the nearest school of its kind	1,2	12,2	5,5	6,3	22,2	10,4	4,1	10,4	9,7	11,4
% of learners in public schools benefiting from free scholar transport	5,2	4,5	4,4	1,3	1,3	1,8	3,0	3,8	1,6	2,8
% of learners in public schools benefiting from the nutrition programme	55,9	90,2	86,0	80,3	80,5	80,5	54,8	87,7	92,2	77,3
% of learners attending school who reported incidents of corporal punishment	1,1	12,7	8,6	12,6	10,1	7,4	1,3	6,7	4,5	6,8
Adult literacy rates (persons 20 years and older with less than Grade 7 as highest level of education)	8,4	20,5	19,1	15,3	16,4	17,5	7,4	17,2	19,7	13,8

Physical violence and fights among learners have become distressingly common in KwaZulu-Natal schools. These confrontations can lead to injuries, emotional trauma, and disruptions to the educational process. Bullying, both physical and verbal, is a pervasive issue in schools. It encompasses actions such as name-calling, intimidation, and harassment, causing harm to victims and negatively affecting their well-being and academic performance.

Incidents of vandalism and property damage are on the rise in schools. This includes destroying school infrastructure, defacing property, and theft of valuable equipment and resources. Gang-related activities within and around schools have escalated, contributing to an atmosphere of fear and insecurity. Gang violence can lead to conflicts and criminal incidents on school premises. Schools often reflect the broader community's level of violence. Community violence can spill over into schools, affecting the safety and well-being of learners and staff.

Teachers and other school staff members are not immune to violence and crime (Jansen, 2019). They may be subjected to threats, assault, or theft, impacting their job satisfaction and overall well-being. The prevalence of violence and crime in schools has a profound psychological and emotional impact on learners and teachers. Witnessing or experiencing such incidents can lead to trauma, anxiety, and a hostile learning environment (Clarke et al., 2016). School violence and crime can disrupt the educational process, leading to missed class time, decreased academic performance, and reduced learning outcomes. This can have long-term implications for learners' futures.

The pervasive fear of violence and crime in schools can erode trust among learners, teachers, parents, and the community (Herrero Romero et al., 2017). This fear can hinder the communication and cooperation necessary for effective education. Various stakeholders, including government authorities, teachers, parents, and community leaders, are working to address violence and crime in KwaZulu-Natal schools (Mahaye & Ajani, 2023). These efforts include implementing safety measures, anti-bullying campaigns, and interventions to support learners' well-being. Effective policies and strong leadership are crucial in combating school violence and crime. A coordinated approach that involves local authorities, educational institutions, and law enforcement agencies is essential to creating safer learning environments.

Engaging the community is vital to addressing the root causes of school violence (Pieterse, 2015). Partnerships with local organisations, parents, and community leaders can help create a safer and more supportive school environment. In conclusion, violence and crime in KwaZulu-Natal schools pose significant challenges to the well-being and education of learners and teachers. Addressing these issues requires all stakeholders' comprehensive and collaborative effort to create safer, more conducive learning environments (Nzama & Ajani, 2021).

Violence and crimes from outside the school environment.

Violence and crimes from outside the school that spill over into educational institutions have become a pressing concern in KwaZulu-Natal and many other regions (Mahaye & Ajani, 2023). These external factors significantly impact the safety and well-being of learners, teachers, and the school community (Jansen, 2019). Schools often serve as microcosms of the surrounding community (Nzama & Ajani, 2021). When the community experiences high levels of violence, this can spill over into schools.

Learners and teachers may be exposed to shootings, gang conflicts, and other forms of community violence on their way to school and within school premises (Clarke et al., 2016).

Schools may become focal points for gang conflicts in areas with high levels of gang activity. Learners may be pressured or coerced into joining gangs, and school facilities may be used for illicit activities related to gang violence (Sherr et al., 2016). Nzama and Ajani (2021) report that drug-related crimes, including the sale and distribution of drugs, can affect the school environment. Learners may be enticed or pressured to engage in drug-related activities, leading to disciplinary issues and declining academic performance. In their study, Mahaye and Ajani (2023) affirm that schools are not immune to robberies and thefts, especially in neighbourhoods with high crime rates. Criminals may target school property, stealing valuable equipment, electronics, and resources. The presence of external violence and criminal activities can create a pervasive atmosphere of fear and intimidation within schools (Herrero Romero et al., 2017). Learners and staff may feel unsafe, affecting their mental well-being and ability to focus on learning and teaching.

Schools often implement security measures such as perimeter fencing, security guards, and surveillance systems to address external threats. These measures aim to deter criminal activity and enhance the safety of learners and staff. Spaul (2015) suggests that schools collaborate with local law enforcement agencies to address external threats effectively. Police presence in and around schools can serve as a deterrent and facilitate rapid response to security incidents. Furthermore, Pieterse (2015) advocates for community engagement as essential in preventing external violence from spilling over into schools. Community organisations, parents, and local leaders can work together to address root causes and provide support to at-risk learners. Seemingly, schools impacted by external violence often adopt trauma-informed practices to support learners who have experienced trauma (Leoschut & Kafaar, 2017). These practices prioritise learners' mental health and well-being and provide counselling and support services. Schools may implement preventive education programs to educate learners about the risks of external violence and involvement in criminal activities (Jansen, 2019). These programmes empower learners to make informed decisions and resist external pressures. Hence, violence and crimes from outside the school can profoundly impact the safety and learning environment of educational institutions in KwaZulu-Natal. Schools, communities, and authorities must work collaboratively to mitigate these external threats and create a secure and supportive educational atmosphere for learners and teachers.

The Role of Learner Leadership.

In education, ensuring the smooth operation of schools is a fundamental obligation shared by all stakeholders. Among these stakeholders, learner leadership plays a pivotal and integral role. Their active engagement in decision-making processes, particularly in the formulation and implementation of policies directly impacting their education, is of paramount importance. This involvement extends to areas such as developing codes of conduct, shaping extracurricular activities, influencing subject selection, promoting social responsibility, and overseeing the distribution of grants for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), among other responsibilities. Per the South African Schools Act (SASA) 76 of 1996, the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) assumes the authorised mandate for fulfilling its designated functions. It is essential to underscore that the primary objective of the education system is to meet the academic needs of the nation's learners, and the participation of adult members in the School Governing Body (SGB) is not a matter of discretion. Regrettably, specific individuals may undermine this objective to further their own self-serving agendas, whether they are financial or otherwise.

Challenging the prevailing notion that learners are inherently minor and immature, a perspective that has significantly shaped the current education system, as exemplified by the historic Soweto 1976 uprising, merits thorough examination. The populace exercises democratic principles through various means, including holding elections and convening parliamentary sessions to deliberate on critical issues such as substance abuse and adolescent pregnancy.

Community Protests and Robberies – reported cases.

When communities express dissatisfaction with the government's delivery of services, it is not uncommon for them to resort to the destruction of government property. This includes acts of vandalism targeting public institutions, including educational facilities perceived to be under government ownership. A recent instance occurred in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, where local community

members set a primary school on fire. Additionally, Ukusa High School in Hammersdale experienced a violent attack on three security officials. Overcoming the trauma of such incidents can be a protracted process for teachers and learners, disrupting regular academic activities. Tragically, a teacher at Laduma High School was fatally attacked during a Saturday session of extra tuition, purportedly as an act of patriotism.

Inter-Factional Conflicts.

Inter-factional conflicts among community leaders occasionally spill over into educational institutions. In these settings, learners aligned with conflicting factions may persist in hostilities. The involvement of other peers can further exacerbate these conflicts, leading to disruptions in academic activities and creating an unfavourable learning environment within the school (Charak et al., 2016). A recent incident unfolded at Sahlambe High School, requiring substantial financial resources from the Department of Education to restore academic normalcy. Funds earmarked for educational development in the province were diverted to address issues stemming from community and learner conflicts, impeding progress in the intended focus area.

Availability of Substances and Instruments.

The availability of substances, such as drugs and alcohol, to learners, has significantly contributed to the elevated violence within educational institutions. On multiple occasions, learners have been found to possess these substances within the confines of the school (Nzama & Ajani, 2021). Even more concerning, some learners have been discovered with dangerous weapons on school premises, including firearms and bladed instruments. Figure 4 illustrates the accessibility of these substances and weapons to learners. According to the study's findings, a substantial % of surveyed learners, precisely 23.1%, agreed that obtaining knives was a relatively effortless endeavour. Additionally, 15.5% of respondents reported that acquiring alcohol was easily achievable, with 11.9% claiming they could readily access drugs. Alarmingly, 9.0% of participants stated they had easy access to firearms.

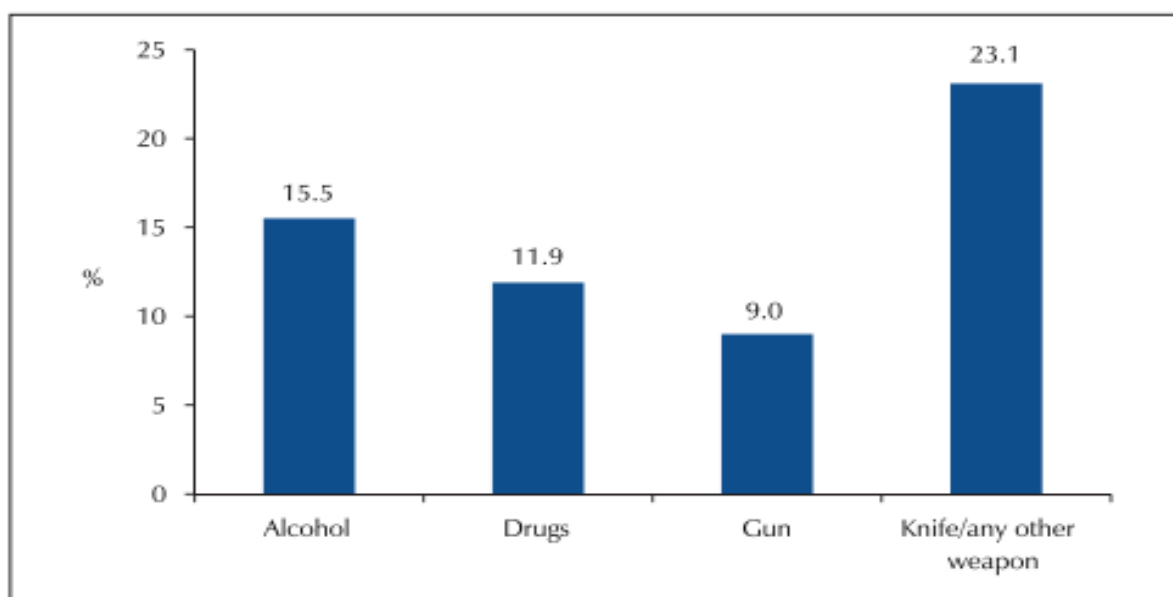


Figure 4. Learners' access to drugs/substances and weapons (Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

The Influence of Socio-economic Disadvantage on Learners' Vulnerability to School Violence in South Africa.

In South Africa, a stark inequality divide, as highlighted by The World Bank (2017), leaves only 40% of children surpassing the poverty line, exposing many youngsters to educational shortfalls and delayed schooling. This educational disadvantage is notably pronounced in various provinces. The current study delves into the connection between teacher support and school delays in South Africa.

Statistics South Africa's data from 2013 reveals that a substantial portion of intermediate (29.3%) and senior phase (35.8%) adolescents in the Eastern Cape are categorised as "deprived learners" according to the Learning Environment Deprivation Index. This index encompasses factors associated with schools that correlate with adolescents' educational outcomes, including access to basic amenities such as water and electricity. School delay, wherein learners are placed in grades lower than age-appropriate levels, is prevalent in socio-economically disadvantaged regions of South Africa, as noted by Spaul (2015).

The 2013 report by Statistics South Africa unveils that a significant number of learners in the Eastern Cape were older than typical for their grade, with 69% falling into this category. Moreover, only 77.3% of 15-year-olds in this province completed primary education. School delay in South Africa is linked to adverse outcomes such as high dropout rates, limited social mobility, unemployment, and poverty, as emphasised by Mahaye, Dlomo, and Ajani (2022). According to Spaul (2015), contributing factors include poor educational quality, learning deficits, and grade repetition. According to studies by Burton and Leoschut (2013); Ward, Artz, Burton, and Leoschut (2015), socio-economic disadvantages, educational exclusion, and exposure to violence are associated with higher levels of violence against children and adolescents in a variety of settings, including homes, schools, and communities. Research findings by Leoschut and Kafaar (2017) indicate that a substantial proportion of adolescents aged 15 to 18 in South Africa encounter multiple forms of violence during their lifetime, with 64% experiencing two or more forms and 35.4% facing five or more forms.

The combination of socio-economic disadvantage, educational exclusion, and exposure to violence poses a risk to educational progress, supported by unpublished data by Herrero Romero, Hall, Cluver, Meinck, and Hinde, Pieterse's (2015) study, and Sherr et al.'s (2016) research. Pieterse (2015) examined 4,747 individuals aged 14 to 22 and found that repeated exposure to physical abuse in the home was linked to lower math achievement and increased school dropout rates. Only one study has explored the relationship between exposure to multiple forms of violence and academic achievement, conducted in the Eastern Cape and based on unpublished data by Herrero Romero et al. The implications of these findings underscore the urgent need for collaborative efforts among government entities, teachers, school administrators, and learners to address the root causes of violence and instability in South African educational institutions and create a conducive environment for academic success (Nzama & Ajani, 2021).

The ethical direction.

It is crucial to instil in learners that their prospects are closely tied to their choices and actions (John, 2015; Ansong et al., 2017). The primary goal of education is to equip individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute meaningfully to their personal growth, national development, and progress. Violence poses significant risks, including dashed aspirations, wasted potential, and legal consequences. Given the rising incidents of antisocial behaviour in educational settings, there is a pressing need to integrate moral education into the school curriculum. Emotional competence involves effectively managing and regulating emotions in various situations. Teachers should receive training in developing emotional intelligence, which encompasses understanding one's emotions and those of others, self-motivation, and skilful management of emotions and interpersonal interactions. Equipping emotional competence will enhance teachers' ability to fulfil their roles as teachers and caregivers, effectively overseeing learners within the educational environment.

Incorporating Ubuntu philosophy into the educational framework necessitates recognising schools as collective communities rather than mere assemblies of individuals. Like an operating system, Ubuntu provides a robust philosophical foundation for its user community, and educational institutions should be regarded in a similar collective light. By conceptualising schools as communities and advocating for the welfare of all stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, and learners, we embrace collectivism's values of harmony and cooperation. This approach prioritises the collective entity's well-being over transient individuals, with a forward-looking perspective rather than immediate gains. Implementing Ubuntu's core principles, such as humanness, caring, sharing, respect, and compassion, allows learners to nurture their humane qualities and enhance their potential as future leaders in our rapidly globalising society. Ubuntu underscores the importance of tapping into our innate human inclination towards solidarity, recognising individuals not by colour or race but as beings created by a divine entity.

The Beneficial Outcomes of Embracing Ubuntu.

School leaders, including principals and teachers, spearhead introducing Ubuntu into educational environments. Many successful and academically accomplished schools have embraced Ubuntu leadership principles, emphasising equitable treatment for all learners and the practice of Ubuntu values. In South African education, the implementation of Ubuntu is evident in the maintenance of school discipline to ensure the safety of both staff and learners, creating a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning. Sustainable development hinges on harnessing the collective energy of the majority, involving collaborative efforts from the school community, faculty, and learners in upholding Ubuntu principles. Regardless of the discipline, pedagogical and professional development should be rooted in Ubuntu principles.

Ubuntu leadership is commonly seen as a manifestation of collective agency, fostering strong collaboration between the school and the community. Various stakeholders, including teachers, learners, administrators, parents, residents, and governmental bodies, work together to design and implement educational initiatives. Teachers and school staff are expected to demonstrate respect and self-care, extending the same treatment to all learners, regardless of their backgrounds or circumstances. This study explores the potential impact of implementing the Ubuntu philosophy in schools, specifically focusing on its implications for school discipline. High-performing schools often exhibit Ubuntu practices, while the level of discipline observed within a school setting reflects the extent to which Ubuntu philosophy is embraced within the school and the broader community. The adoption of Ubuntu by educational institutions contributes to the cultivation of well-behaved learners. The correlation between the presence or absence of Ubuntu and the type of leadership practised significantly influences school performance, with undisciplined learners often needing more commitment and proper conduct.

The application of technological advancements.

The pursuit of progress through technological, socio-economic, and scientific advancements is what drives progressivism in education. In KwaZulu-Natal, the Department of Education is working on providing internet connectivity to educational institutions. To address violent school attacks, a potential solution is developing a mobile application for immediate alerts to the nearest police station during attacks on learners, teachers, or administrators. Progressivism is rooted in social justice and democracy.

The adverse effects of the social environment and socialist ideology as a solution.

Throughout history, various individuals and groups have envisioned creating an ideal society or utopia, often linked to socio-political, economic, and educational factors (Jansen, 2019). Utopianism emphasises revolutionary education, emphasising the need for a decolonised education in anticipation of a better future. Achieving a non-violent society requires deliberate human intellect guided by social engineering frameworks like The Developmental State and Social Compacts (Sherr et al., 2016). This involves establishing a cohesive national identity, forward-thinking economic plans, business growth, improved governmental capabilities, and effective communication. The utopian socialist ideology emerged as a response to harsh working conditions, aiming to create a harmonious and stress-free society. This translated into social policies resembling communitarian social democracy. Utopian ideologists sought a progressive social science to restore a non-violent and non-opportunistic sense of community.

School principals must understand sociological principles such as Diversity in Education, Inequality and Marginalisation, Access and Equal Opportunity for Education, and Transformation and Education (Pieterse, 2015). This understanding is crucial for addressing criminal behaviour. Schools play a vital role in providing learners with a comprehensive understanding of society through innovative approaches (Ajani & Govender, 2023). Based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, the study has implications at multiple levels. In the macrosystem, societal norms and ideologies must be critically examined, focusing on gender and sexuality (Clarke et al., 2018). Responsibility lies with the government and media in shaping perceptions. The impact extends to exosystems like youth services. At the microsystem level, addressing fear-based behaviours and enhancing introspection within educational institutions and E.P. programs is essential (Jansen, 2019). This requires empathy, diversity acceptance, supervision, training, inclusive curricula, policies, and institutional commitments to promote inclusivity and reduce discrimination in educational institutions.

Conclusion.

The challenges that hinder academic pursuits within educational institutions are multifaceted. Acts of violence, particularly physical altercations and verbal aggression, are the primary factors contributing to an unsafe learning environment in schools. Incidents involving dangerous weapons like knives and firearms within educational institutions are rising. The association of learners with older individuals exhibiting antisocial behaviour is positively linked to their likelihood of substance use, including drugs and alcohol. Using these substances within the educational setting can harm learners, potentially leading to severe misconduct. Regrettably, some teachers have failed to fulfil their parental responsibilities within the educational institution. Instances of physical and sexual abuse of learners by teachers do not align with positive parenting practices. Teachers engaging in such behaviours are considered unfit for their profession. The teaching profession is globally esteemed, as every individual who has gained knowledge and expertise in various fields, such as medicine, engineering, accounting, and other disciplines, has been under the guidance of a teacher.

Recommendations.

Drawing from scholarly sources, the personal experiences of the authors, and input from teachers in select KwaZulu-Natal schools, this research offers suggestions to address instability within educational institutions:

It is crucial for all educational community members, including learners, teachers, and other stakeholders, to understand the importance of establishing a secure and conducive learning environment. Teachers and relevant parties within the educational setting should take steps to prevent learners from bringing dangerous weapons and substances onto school premises. At the same time, it recommended that a thorough screening or investigation of all learners in unstable educational institutions is necessary.

Furthermore, teachers and guardians should promptly report instances of disruptive behaviour exhibited by learners to the relevant authorities. Teachers are encouraged to refrain from using physical punishment and instead employ prescribed disciplinary protocols to address non-compliant learners. Thus, the government must ensure the adequate fortification of school premises through measures like installing fences and providing security personnel. The well-being of teachers is paramount and should be encouraged for effective public quality education, innovation, and creativity to keep pace with the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Adequate welfare packages should be provided.

Promoting entrepreneurship among learners can help mitigate the negative impacts of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. Thus, developing a comprehensive School Safety and Security Strategy and Plan, including efficient structures within educational institutions with clearly defined responsibilities, is necessary. Societal leadership should be promoted in schools, which involves assuming social responsibility and leading with confidence rather than adopting a defensive mindset. This approach aligns with the National Development Plan (NDP). It involves reviving the Quality Teaching and Learning Campaign (QLTC) and promoting Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to address the root causes of school instability.

REFERENCES

1. Abbot, S. (Ed.). (2014). Hidden curriculum. In *The Glossary of Education Reform*.
2. Ajani O.A. & Dosunmu S. (2018). Significance of Parental Influence on School Growth and Population in African Contexts. *Arts and Social Science Journal*, 9 (4), 365. <https://doi.org/10.4172/2151-6200.1000365>.
3. Ajani O.A., Khumalo N.D.F., Maphalala M.C., & Govender S. (2020). Stakeholders' Support for Large Scale Assessment in Schools: A Case of Annual National Assessment (ANA) in South African Schools, *Journal of Social Sciences Research*, 6 (1), 103–113. <https://doi.org/10.32861/jssr.61.103.113>.
4. Ajani OA (2018). Parents' Influence on the Selection of Choice Schools for Their Children/Adolescents in Sub-Saharan African Countries. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, 9(1), 21–57.
5. Ajani, O. (2022). Decolonising Teacher Education in Pursuit of Multilingual Teaching and Learning in South African Higher Education. In E. Charamba (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching in Multicultural and Multilingual Contexts* (pp. 122–142). IGI Global. <https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/decolonising-teacher-education-in-pursuit-of-multilingual-teaching-and-learning-in-south-african-higher-education/310733>.

6. Ajani, O.A. & Gamede, B.T (2021). Curriculum Delivery and Digital Divide in South African Higher Institutions during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case of Social Injustice, *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity, and Change*, 15(8), 590-603.
7. Ajani, O.A. & Govender, S. (2023). Impact of ICT-Driven Teacher Professional Development for the Enhancement of Classroom Practices in South Africa: A Systematic Review of Literature. (2023). *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 13(5), 116. <https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2023-0125>.
8. Ansong, D., Okumu, M., Bowen, G. L., Walker, A. M., & Eisensmith, S. R. (2017). The role of parent, classmate, and teacher support in student engagement: Evidence from Ghana. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 54 (October 2016), 51–58. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2017.03.010>.
9. Armoed, Z. (2021). The COVID-19 pandemic: Online teaching and learning at higher education institutes. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 654(1), 012026. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/654/1/012026>.
10. Barnes, L. (2021). Challenges South African youth face in education and their quest to eradicate issues of the past. *A.H.*, (1). <https://doi.org/10.35293/ah.vi.3540>.
11. Beller, E. M., Glasziou, P. P., Altman, D. G., Hopewell, S., Bastian, H., Chalmers, I., ... & PRISMA for Abstracts Group. (2013). PRISMA for abstracts: reporting systematic reviews in journal and conference abstracts. *PLoS Medicine*, 10(4), e1001419.
12. Bowman, D. & Barksdale, K. (2004). Increasing School Stability for Students Experiencing Homelessness. National Centre for Homeless Education at SERVE, NCHE at SERVE, P.O. Box 5367, Greensboro, NC 27435.
13. Burton, P. & Leoschut, L., (2013). School Violence in South Africa Results of the 2012 National School Violence Study. Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention monograph series, no. 12.
14. Burton, P., & Leoschut, L. (2013). School violence in South Africa: Results of the 2012 national school violence study. Monograph Series, No 12. Cape Town, South Africa: Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention.
15. Charak, R., Byllesby, B. M., Roley, M. E., Meredith, A., Durham, T. A., Ross, J., ... Elhai, J. D. (2016). Child Abuse & Neglect Latent classes of childhood poly-victimisation and associations with suicidal behaviour among adult trauma victims: The moderating role of anger. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 62, 19–28. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2016.10.010>.
16. Chen, J. J. (2005). Relation of Academic Support from Parents, teachers, and Peers to Hong Kong Adolescents' Academic Achievement: The Mediating Role of academic engagement relation of academic support from Parents, teachers, and Peers to Hong Kong Adolescents 'Academic General Psychology Monographs, 131(2), 77–127. <https://doi.org/10.3200/MONO.131.2.77-127>.
17. Clarke, K., Patalay, P., Allen, E., Knight, L., Naker, D., & Devries, K. (2016). Patterns and predictors of violence against children in Uganda: A latent class analysis. *British Medical Journal Open*, 6, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2015-010443>.
18. Cluver, L., Meinck, F., Shenderovich, Y., Ward, C. L., Herrero Romero, R., Redfern, A., ...Lechowicz, M. (2016). A parenting programme to prevent abuse of adolescents in South Africa: Study protocol for a randomised controlled trial. *Trials*, 17 (328), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13063-016-1452-8>.
19. Cluver, L., Meinck, F., Steinert, J., Shenderovich, Y., Doubt, J., Herrero Romero, R., ...Gardner, F. (2017). Parenting for lifelong health: A pragmatic cluster randomised controlled trial of a non-commercialised parenting programme for adolescents and their families in South Africa. *BMJ Global Health Teacher support and school delay in South Africa*.
20. Cluver, L., Operario, D., Lane, T., & Kganakga, M. (2011). "I can't go to school and leave her in so much pain": Educational shortfalls among adolescent "young carers" in the South African aids epidemic. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 27 (5), 581–605. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558411417868>.
21. Cobb, S. (1976). Social support as a moderator of life stress. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, pp. 38, 300–314. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00006842-197609000-00003>.
22. Crosnoe, R., & Elder, G. H. (2004). Family dynamics, supportive relationships, and educational resilience during adolescence. *Journal of Family Issues*, 25(5), 571–602. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X03258307>.
23. Dass-Brailsford, P. (2005). Exploring resiliency: Academic achievement among disadvantaged black youth in South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 35, 574–591. <https://doi.org/10.1177/008124630503500311>.
24. Deliwe, A. (2020). The use of learner management system (moodle) in promoting teaching and learning. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(12B), pp. 8383–8392. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.082644>.
25. Elledge, L. C., Elledge, A. R., Newgent, R. A., & Cavell, T. A. (2016). Social risk and peer victimisation in elementary school children: The protective role of teacher-student relationships. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, pp. 44, 691–703. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-015-0074-z>.

26. Estisari, K., Wengrum, T., & Nurhantanto, A. (2023). Economic students' perceptions towards Learning management systems (LMS). *JAE*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.33365/jae.v3i1.198>.
27. Field, A. (2013). Chapter 9. Comparing two means. In M. Carmichael (Ed.), *Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics* (4th ed., p 320). London, UK: Sage.
28. Ghazal, S., Aldowah, H., & Umar, I. (2018). Satisfaction of learning management system usage in a blended learning environment among undergraduate students. *The Turkish Online Journal of Design Art and Communication*, 8 (Sept.), 1147–1156, <https://doi.org/10.7456/1080sse/156>.
29. Harry, T. and Chinyamurindi, W. (2021). “still haven't found what I am looking for”: rural black students' perceived work readiness and assessment of labour market access. *Education + Training*, 64(2), 276–289. <https://doi.org/10.1108/et-10-2021-0387>.
30. Herrero Romero, R., Hall, J. E., Cluver, L., & Meinck, F. (2017). Can supportive parenting protect against school delay amongst violence-exposed adolescents in South Africa? *Child Abuse & Neglect, Advance Online Publication*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.09.025>.
31. Holmes, K. & Fray, L. (2018). Student and staff perceptions of a learning management system for blended learning in teacher education. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(3), 21–34. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2018v43n3.2>.
32. Jansen, J. D. (2019). Inequality in education: What is to be done? *South African Schooling: The Enigma of Inequality: A Study of the Present Situation and Future Possibilities*, 355–371.
33. John, V. (2015). Special Investigating Unit to probe Eastern Cape education. *Mail & Guardian*.
34. Khuzwayo, N., Taylor, M. & Connolly, C., (2016). Prevalence and correlates of violence among South African high school learners in uMgungundlovu District Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *South African Medical Journal*, vol.106 n.12.
35. Landa, N., Zhou, S., & Marongwe, N. (2021). Education in emergencies: lessons from COVID-19 in South Africa. *International Review of Education*, 67(1-2), 167-183. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-021-09903-z>.
36. Leoschut, L., & Kafaar, Z. (2017). The frequency and predictors of poly-victimisation of South African children and the role of schools in its prevention. *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, 22(1), 81–93. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2016.1273533>.
37. Mahaye, N. E. & Ajani, O.A. (2023). School instability in South Africa: a Systematic Review of Reflections and Experiences for a way forward. *Qeios*. <https://doi.org/10.32388/U9LBH1>.
38. *Mail & Guardian*, (2019). Faction fights in KZN turn school playgrounds into battlefields. Published Online: 01 August 2019. Accessed from: <https://mg.co.za/article/2019-08-01-faction-fights-in-kzn-turn-school-playgrounds-into-battlefields>.
39. Mayet, R. (2021). Supporting at-risk learners at a comprehensive university in South Africa. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.18820/jsaa.v4i2.2>.
40. Meinck, F., Cluver, L. D., Orkin, F. M., Kuo, C., Sharma, A. D., Hensels, I. S., & Sherr, L. (2016). Pathways from family disadvantage via abusive Parenting and caregiver mental health to adolescent health risks in South Africa. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 60(1), 57–64. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2016.08.016>.
41. Musitha, M. and Mafukata, M. (2018). Crisis of decolonising education: curriculum implementation in Limpopo Province, South Africa. *Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/apsdpr.v6i1.179>.
42. Ntombana, L., Gwala, A., & Sibanda, F. (2023). Positioning the #feesmustfall movement within the transformative agenda: reflections on student protests in South Africa. *Education as Change*, 27. <https://doi.org/10.25159/1947-9417/10870>.
43. Nzama, M.V. & Ajani, O.A. (2021). Substance abuse among high school learners in South Africa: a case of promoting the promoting factors, *African Journal of Development Studies (AJDS)*, (formerly *AFFRIKA: Journal of Politics, Economics, and Society*), Special Issue, March 2021, 221-244. <https://doi.org/10.31920/2634-3649/2021/sin1a12>.
44. Page, M. J., Moher, D., & McKenzie, J. E. (2022). Introduction to PRISMA 2020 and implications for research synthesis methodologists. *Research synthesis methods*, 13(2), 156–163.
45. Pieterse, D. (2015). Childhood maltreatment and educational outcomes: Evidence from South Africa health economics. *Health Economics*, 24(7), 876–894. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hec.3065>.
46. Republic of South Africa (1996a). *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*. Cape Town: Government Printer.
47. Republic of South Africa (1996b). *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996*. Pretoria: Republic of South Africa Government.
48. Safitri, I. and Lestari, P. (2021). Optimising learning management system to teach English grammar. *EduLink Education and Linguistics Knowledge Journal*, 3(1), 51. <https://doi.org/10.32503/edulink.v3i1.1490>.
49. Sherr, L., Hensels, I. S., Skeen, S., Tomlinson, M., Roberts, K. J., & Macedo, A. (2016). Exposure to violence predicts poor educational outcomes in young children in South Africa and Malawi. *International Health*, pp. 8, 36–43. <https://doi.org/10.1093/inthealth/ihv070>.

50. South Africa Democratic Teachers Union (2019). SADTU KwaZulu Natal statement on issues affecting Education and workers. Published Online: 06 August 2019. Accessed from: <https://www.sadtu.org.za/content/sadtu-kwazulu-natal-statement-issues-affecting-education-and-workers>.
51. South Africa's Education Statistics (2019). 23 June 2018: Latest education statistics from General Household Survey (GHS). Accessed from: <https://www.southafricanmi.com/education-statistics.html>.
52. Spaul, N. (2015). Schooling in South Africa: How low-quality education becomes a poverty trap. *South African Child Gauge*, pp. 12, 34–41. Retrieved from <http://nicspaul.com/research/>.
53. The South African Child Gauge (2016). Social assistance: Investing in children South African Child. The World Bank. (2017). South Africa Overview. Retrieved from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/southafrica/overview>.
54. Theron, L., & Theron, A. (2014). Education services and resilience processes: Resilient Black South African students' experiences. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 47, 297–306. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chidyouth.2014.10.003>.
55. Zainuddin, Z., Hermawan, H., Nuraini, F., & Prayitno, S. (2019). Students' learning experiences with LMS tes teach in flipped-class instruction. *Elinvo (Electronics et al. Education)*, 4(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.21831/elinvo.v4i1.24405>.
56. Zarate, D., Stavropoulos, V., Ball, M., de Sena Collier, G., & Jacobson, N. C. (2022). Exploring the digital footprint of depression: a PRISMA systematic literature review of the empirical evidence. *BMC psychiatry*, 22(1), 421.