

**LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATORS' AGGRESSION IN A
SECONDARY SCHOOL IN GAUTENG**

by

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Dedication

This research study is dedicated to my wonderful husband Kevin and our beautiful children, Taleah and Taylan, who supported and encouraged me throughout my studies. Thank you for your love, motivation and for always believing in me.



Acknowledgements

I would first and foremost like to thank the Almighty for giving me the strength and courage to complete my studies.

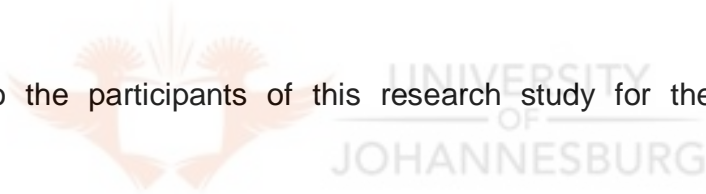
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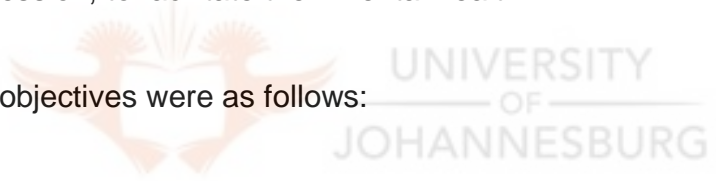
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Summary

Adolescence is a phase in human development that is synonymous with change, namely, physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes. Educators start playing an important role in the lives of adolescents, and the school as an institution of learning is a place to promote social, emotional and intellectual growth that fosters the development of a positive self - concept in adolescent learners. The researcher was interested in the experiences of learners who witness educator aggression in the schooling environment and the impact this has on the adolescent learner and on the education system as a microcosm of the South African society. Current research on educator aggression indicates that aggression is detrimental to the emotional, social and mental health of learners, because aggression begets aggression. Guidelines are proposed to support both educators and learners who experience educator aggression, to facilitate their mental health.

The research objectives were as follows:

- 
- to explore and describe the learners' experiences of educator-aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng; and
 - to describe guidelines to assist learners and educators concerning educator aggression in order to facilitate their mental health.

The data collected was used to formulate effective guidelines, designed to assist the adolescent learners and educators in a secondary school in Gauteng. Through this approach the researcher was able to gain insight into the experiences of learners related to educator aggression.

A qualitative research approach helped the researcher to understand and interpret the meaning allocated to educator aggression through the eyes of the learners. The information gathered in this study will help determine concepts for further research on educator aggression. Face to face interviews were conducted and essays were written. This study was descriptive as its aim was to obtain learners' views on educator aggression in the schooling environment.

The major categories were as follows:

- learners' experience of distress associated with educators' aggression towards them;
- learners' experiences of rage associated with educators' aggression towards them;
- learners' experience of abandonment associated with educators' aggression towards them; and
- learners' experience of insecurity associated with educators' aggression towards them.

From the interviews conducted and essays written, recommendations were made regarding guidelines related to educator aggression in the schooling environment. These guidelines aim to support educators, learners and the school as a whole in creating a healthy educational environment that promotes effective teaching and learning and addresses aggression in the school.

Isiqoqo

Umfundi oseqede ubuntwana osesimeni sokukhula kubekhona izimpawu zokushinsha ezifana nokushinsha komzimba, nengqondo nemizwa yakhe, nendlela azipatha ngayo kubanye abantu. Indlela afundiswa ngayo umfundi imkhulisa ukuba aphepne azizwe enethezekile kube nezimphumo ezinhle ekufundeni. Umfundi onolwazi ngothisha ohlukumezayo esikoleni, uzithola esekhiphela isibhongo kulowo thisha kanye nesebe lezemfundo ngokuhluleka ukubathuthukisa baze bafikele kwizinga eliphakamile.

Abafundi bazizwa kungekho ukuxhumana nenhlonipho. Phakathi kothisha nabafundi, kodwa kukhona ukuhlukumezana phakathi kwabo. Abafundi bacabanga ukuthi makungabakhona indlela yokungena lodaba kuzanywe ukuxazulula, ngokuthi abafundi kunye nothisha, bazame ukubhekana nokuhlukumeza abafundi esikoleni, kuzanywe ukulekela abafundi bakwazi ukubhekana nezinkinga ngedledla okuyiyona bakwazi nokuzethemba ngokwendlela yezemfundo. Abafundi kufanele babe yimibonakaliso emihle nabaluleki. Ngalokho umfundisi ohlukumeza abafundi, udala imizwa engoneme nenzondo phakathi kothisha nomfundi.

Eningizimu Afrika, isebe lezomfundo lizithola lisengxakini kumaphephandaba. Udlame ezikoleni lukhuphu kaknulu. Umklamo ezikoleni ukhuphuke kakhulu. Umklamo ubonisa othisha iningi labo lihlaselwe yisifo ugawulayo (H.I.V.) kuboniswa kuyibona obahlukumeza izingane zesikole ngokocantsi. Abafundi bayafuna ukwethemba olthisha, kunjalo nje othisha yibona abasezingeni elephezulu loku xineka engqondweni. Lo kuxineka engqondweni kwenziwa ngumsebenzi womaphepha ababhekene nawo, bese kubayizingane ezingenanhlonipho emagumbibi okufundela. Abacwaningi bathande ukwazi ngabafundi abaqabuka ukuhlukumezwa egcekeni lesikole, nomenzakalo eliwenzayo kumfundi nakumphakathi wase- mzantsi Afrika.

Abacwaningi, imibono yabo inje:

- ④ Uphenyo nokuchaza abafundi ngolwazi lothisha abahlukumeza abafundi ezikoleni zebanga eliphezulu eGauteng. Ukuchaza ngolwazi lokusiza abafundi, uphenyo kubuzwa intsha, yeyokuthi kwenziwe indlela yekusiza lezingane esezikhulile kanye nothisha phakathi elizweni lase mzantshi Afrika.
- ④ Umcwaningi ukwazile ukuthola ulwazi olungaphakathi lwabafundi ngokothisha abahlukumezwa ngabafundi emagcekeni wesikole. Okuphathelene nocwaningo kuvele ngosizo locwaningo ukuqonda nokuchaza incazelo ababekelwe yona othisha ngokuhlukumeza phakathi kwamenlo abafundi.

Ulwazi oluhlanganiswe ngalesifundo luzokwazi ukuveza nokuqonda phambili ngocwaningo lothisha oluhlukomezayo. Kwabakhona ukubonana kukhulunywana ngale nodaba ebhaliwe kuleli bhuku, ngokuhlukunyezwa emagcekeni esikole.

Izigaba ezinkulu yayilezi:

- ④ Abafundi bebabonakala bebonisa izimpawu sosizi, eziphathelene nokuhlukunyezwa ngothisha
- ④ Abafundi bebonakalisa ulaka oluphathelene nokuhlukunyezwa kwabo ngothisha
- ④ Abafundi babonisa ukulahlwa oluphathelene nokuhlukunyezwa ngothisha
- ④ Abafundi bazibona bengazithembi ngokuphathelene nokuhlukunyezwa

Okwamanje abacwaningi ngokuhlukumezeka kothisha kubonakala kuchukumisa imizwa nesimo senhlalo nesengqondo kubafundi. Ngoba ukuhlukunyezwa (kudala) abantu babe ngabahlukumezi.

Izincwadi zokuqondisa zichaza uthisha nomfundi ngolwazi lothisha abahlukumezanayo nokubazisa ngokwengqondo. Ukubonana nokokhuluma ngalendaba elotshiweyo, kwenziwe ukuncoma okumayelana nokungenela nokuba (naamasu) okuphanda ngalolu daba. Uthisha ohlukumeza emagcekeni esikole. Lombhalo wenzelwe ukululeka nokusiza ithisha nomfundi wesikole.

Lombhalo wenzelwe ukubaluleka nokusiza uthisha nomfundi wesikole sonkana, ukuze kube nempilo entle endaweni yokufundela kuphakamiseke indlela yokufundiswa nokufunda kulungiseke ukuhlukumeza ezikoleni.



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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY AND RATIONALE

According to Professor Kader Asmal, Former Minister of Education: “We are to live our constitution and Bill of Rights in our everyday lives rather than hear it interpreted for us, we have to distil out of it a set of values that are comprehensive and meaningful to every citizen” (Valued Citizens Initiative - Educators Guide, 2005:1).

1.1 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The phase of adolescence sees dramatic physical changes in young people. Accompanying these changes are personality development, a period during which elements of personal autonomy appear. Tensions are often created for the adolescent, and conflict does occur. Within the schooling environment, educators represent authority; classroom difficulties can arise when learners feel that their personal identity and respect is being challenged in front of their peers (Capel, 1995:147).

According to Papalia (2002: 412), the school is seen as a central organising experience in most adolescents' lives. It offers opportunities to learn information, master new skills, and sharpen old ones, to participate in sports, the arts and other activities, to explore vocational issues and to be with friends. The school widens intellectual and social horizons. Some adolescents, however, experience school not as an opportunity but as one more hindrance on the road to adulthood. The school experience can have a profound effect, not only on cognitive development, but on social adjustment as well.

A school as an institution of learning is a place to promote social integration. This is evident when principals, educators', learners and parents co-operate constructively to achieve their vision for the school. The school should be seen as a safe place to develop a sense of nationhood, where the South African Constitutional values (Valued Citizens Initiative – Educators Guide 2005:52), such as *Openness, Accountability, the Rule of Law, Democracy and Respect* are taught and practised on a daily basis, from the management to the learners (Valued Citizens Initiative - Educators Guide, 2005:52).

According to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (2004:3), and in keeping with the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (Revised National Curriculum Statement, 2004:3), great emphasis is placed on making schools a safe place to learn and teach in, and on promoting commitment as well as competence among educators through effective role modelling. School wellness depends on the daily maintenance of essential factors, leading to a healthy school environment (Hill & Hill, 1994:19), and through socialisation, interaction and formulation of relationships, learners acquire skills that enable them to function effectively.

An accepting classroom is one in which the learner feels accepted as a person who has both dignity and worth. In this classroom, learners are given the opportunity to grow towards understanding and accepting themselves. In meeting the child's emotional needs, the educators give him or her the emotional freedom to meet the needs of others. The school environment is apparent when one walks onto a school campus and into the building. The school environment ranges from pleasant settings, where learning is the central focus, to chaotic institutions (Hill & Hill, 1994:27). It is in such an environment where learners are exposed to frequent acts of aggression, and when anger and violence undermine the learning environment, learners cannot, and will not, learn without feeling safe and secure (Wilde, 1995:3).

The educators within these schools need to provide an environment where emotional growth, together with intellectual growth fosters the development of a positive self concept in learners. A hostile and angry learning environment will interfere with learner performance where anxiety affects achievement, and more hostility leads to less achievement (Wilde, 1995:5).

This ultimately could lead to a negative self-concept resulting in fear and rejection. According to Hill and Hill (1994: 16-17), a single act of violence or aggression within a school has the potential to destroy any possibility of a safe and orderly environment. Educators are pivotal leaders within a school, and educators who are aggressive and hostile, who shout and manhandle learners physically and emotionally, create an atmosphere for learners to react the same way. A solid educator- learner relationship is characterised by mutual respect. It is difficult to respect each other in an aggressive environment (Wilde, 1995:5).

Educators creating such an aggressive environment are often demoralised, showing little interest and immense dissatisfaction in their work. This attitude rubs off onto their learners, who are also likely to show little interest in their work (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997:115). The stressful situation experienced by the educator results in anger and frustration and is released through frequent acts of harassment and criticism (Wilde, 1995:4), physical violence such as hitting, scolding, slapping, insulting, shaking and lack of communication. These so-called "hidden-effects" of anger, violence and aggression can be seen and felt in many classrooms in schools (Wilde, 1995:3) and such forms of punishment drive a student further away from social cooperation (Epanchin & Paul, 1987: 82). Problems of violence affecting the youth of South Africa are of deep social concern. Gang violence (Donald et al., 1997:205-206) is a growing and very disturbing social problem in South African society, with gang members often killing other gang members in violence based on power, territory and group discipline. General criminal violence includes violent robbery, rape and gang defense.

Relationship violence occurs between two people who know each other and there is an existing personal relationship, such as child abuse (sexual, physical and emotional abuse) (Donald et al., 1997:205-206). Any learner who becomes repeatedly involved in aggressive and violent conflict is probably acting out an interpersonal pattern which has been laid down in his or her personal environment. This is not something that can easily be changed - and certainly not with punishment (Donald et al., 1997:218). The learners come to school feeling that violence is normative, and thus being exposed to aggression by an educator who is supposed to be a role model, makes it even more socially acceptable and an appropriate response to interpersonal relationships (Huesmann, 1994: 10). It is therefore evident that aggression begets aggression.

1.1.1 The unsafe learning environment

According to Louw (1997: 449), Abraham Maslow, a leading figure in the development of humanistic and transpersonal psychology, proposed a hierarchy of needs. The second need in the hierarchy is the need for safety and security. This is the need to feel protected and secure in one's environment. Anger and violence undermine the feelings of safety and will not allow the learners to move onto higher level needs such as love and esteem needs. The highest need on Maslow's hierarchy (McEvelly & Tiley, 1990:13) is referred to as the 'self-actualisation' need. Maslow believed all people have the need to reach and achieve everything that is within their capability (Wilde, 1995:3). Learners who are concerned about their safety and security will not be able to focus on learning (Wilde, 1995:12). A pleasant setting must be established. Fear leads to an inability to concentrate and, when lack of attention is coupled with poor attendance, performance and achievement suffer. Eventually the strain must end. When living with daily fear becomes too much to handle, learners decide to end the tension in one way or another- drugs, violence, murder, theft, joining a gang or ultimately suicide (Hill & Hill, 1994:44). When adolescent learners feel safe and secure in their environment, effective relationships are formed thus developing communication and trust.

1.1.2 The Learner-Educator relationship

Who is the learner?

The learner is a distinctive person with a variety of needs, wants and abilities; one who has anxieties, concerns, perceptions, knowledge, intelligence, personal problems, motivations and the like. He or she has great capacity for further growth, and is one who also possesses their own distinct methods of learning. These characteristics combine and, more importantly affect, interaction between learner and educator and educator, and learner (Lancaster, 1974:336).

Who is the educator?

The educator, like the learner is a distinctive person with a variety of needs and wants, one who has the capacity for further growth - a factor that should not be taken lightly. Further growth not only influences the capacity of a person to learn and to teach but more importantly affects interaction between educator and learner. "The essence of the teaching art", declares Pullias and Young (Lancaster, 1974: 336) "lies in the character of the person".

According to Johnson (1990: 3), people reach out to others because they have goals they wish to pursue and that require the participation of other people as well as themselves. Social encounters are profoundly cooperative in the sense that they are improvised jointly by all present. Relationships are built on interdependence and how a person perceives others. Anger can interfere with relationships between educators and learners. Anger affects the individual and subsequent social interactions (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993:13). The aim of anger should be to correct the situation, restore equity, and/or prevent recurrence, not to inflict injury or pain on the target or to achieve selfish ends through intimidation (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993:183).

According to Johnson (2003:11), it is through a person's relationships that he or she actualises his or her personal resources and finds joy and a sense of fulfillment. It is within a person's most meaningful relationships that he or she autonomously lives in the present to actualise the person that he or she has the potential to be. Anger - inducing frustration is primarily caused by another human being or a social institution, which is someone or something that can be held responsible (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993:180). Thus the school, including the educator, is held responsible and accountable through the formulation of relationships.

1.1.3 Aggressive behaviour

Johnson (2003: 284) views aggressive behaviour as an attempt to hurt someone or destroy something. It infringes on the rights of others and involves expressing one's feelings indirectly through insults, sarcasm, labels, put-downs and hostile statements and actions. Aggressive behaviour involves expressing thoughts, feelings and opinions in a way that violates others' rights to be treated with respect and dignity.

Those learners who live with continual harassment, or are attending school in an environment full of tension and aggression, continually wonder when they will be the next victim. Frustration, hurt, abuse and fear arrive at school in many forms, these include intimidation, extortion, assault, sexual harassment and discrimination (Hill & Hill, 1994:3).

An environment permeated with environmental deprivations, frustrations and provocations is one in which habitual aggression often develops (Huesmann, 1994:158). Disturbing behaviour interferes with academic progress (Epanchin & Paul, 1987:11) and delays social and emotional development.

A safe and secure learning environment needs to be promoted. The reactions and actions of adults in the school environment are influential. Educators and staff need to demonstrate acceptance of diversity, non-discrimination, no stereotyping, respect for each learner, strategies to handle frustration and pressure, involvement and orientation (Hill & Hill, 1994:50; Hill & Cole, 1999:1-4). It is appropriate for educators to have negative emotions such as sadness and irritations, but the goal is not to use more emotion than the situation calls for (Wilde, 1995:25).

1.1.4 Discipline

If there is to be a positive culture of learning and teaching in a school, the learning environment must be safe, orderly and conducive to learning. In the past situations where learners were exposed to an authoritarian approach, including corporal punishment, sarcasm, shouting and other abusive forms of behaviour, as ways of teaching learners a lesson, ensured that learners were so afraid that they never 'stepped out of line'. These measures were reactive, punitive and punishing rather than corrective and nurturing (Gauteng Department of Education, 2000:9). These previously used methods are still in existence today, to the detriment of the secondary school adolescent.

In managing the school environment, discipline, rather than punishment should be used proactively and constructively. In such a system, learners experience an educative, corrective approach in which they learn to exercise self-control, respect others and accept the consequences of their actions.

Discipline is vital in every school, but punishment is the least effective way of discipline, because it does not change behaviour. Research (Gauteng Department of Education, 2000:9) shows that children who are punished often feel humiliated and negative about themselves, try to hide their mistakes and learn to lie. They are often unable to control their behaviour when away from authority.

The removal of corporal punishment (spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting a learner with a stick, hose-pipe or a belt) in schools, is a necessary step toward the development of a culture of human rights in South Africa (Valued Citizens Initiative - Educators Guide, 2005:46). According to Wolfgang (1986:228), corporal punishment is the granddaddy of large sanctions. As a part of the back-up system, these sanctions will likely:

- be destructive to the educator- learner relationship;
- cause the learner to feel resentment and withhold all future cooperation;
- make the learner irresponsible;
- make the learner dependent on external authority; and
- cause the learner to become counter-coercive to get even.

Physical punishments cause adolescents uncalled for humiliation. An educator who uses physical punishment such as caning and who is aggressive, is not only compounding the learners' problem, but is also setting up him or herself for severe reprisals of retaliation by violence (Wolfgang, 1986:279).

1.2 RATIONALE

The destructive power of human aggression is one of the greatest social and political concerns of current times. The news media regularly confront audiences with violence in war, deaths through faction fighting and gang conflict, violent crime and family violence. Anger and aggression have been of great concern to psychologists all over the world.

Research on aggression and reconciliation has been carried out in other countries, however not much has been done on learners' experiences of educator aggression in South Africa (Louw, 1997:471).

The media has often portrayed adolescent learners and young adults as being at loggerheads with those in authority, searching for independence, often protesting and constantly misunderstood. Research has been conducted on aggression in youths, however, not much at all has been done on educator aggression and the experiences of secondary school learners of educator aggression in Gauteng. Research has shown that conflict in the secondary school can be inevitable, but, depending on how it is managed and resolved, it can be an important and healthy process in the growth of the organisation as a whole, as well as the development of people (Johnson, 2003: 206-207).

Productive interaction between educator and learner depends not only on knowledge about, and effective carrying out of, typical respective roles of the educator and of the learner but, upon understanding of the learner and of the person as educator. It is the total person in each instance who takes part in the interaction, rather than just his or her mind, hence there must be appreciation and understanding of the total person (Lancaster, 1974:325).

In a classroom where there is open communication and less hostility, a relaxed atmosphere is evident. Learners who are safe and secure in their surroundings will feel more confident about themselves. In classrooms where there is a fear of harsh comments, criticism and bouts of aggression, the open exchange of ideas is inhibited. The searching, challenging and exploration aspects of learning are compromised.

Approaches to maintaining safe and orderly environments for learners require complex, comprehensive planning and commitment. Effective schools and safe schools, require wide community care and dedication to provide a safe, stimulating setting for students. An unsafe, aggressive environment is detrimental to the adolescent learner who is experiencing rapid transition, and a safe and orderly environment is paramount for learning to take place (Hill & Hill, 1994:16).

Research has shown that those children who have higher levels of emotional support or higher self-esteem, are less likely to have anti-social behaviour problems than children with lower levels of emotional support or lower self- image (Huesmann, 1994:191). According to Covey (1989:189), the learner's self- concept develops through his or her relationships with others. Negative communication can therefore lead to a negative self-image, negative views of others and social misbehaviour.

The performance of both educators and learners improves in a setting enhanced by support, attention and assistance. When the positive factors are present in the school atmosphere, conditions supporting violence, aggression and harm subside (Hill & Hill, 1994: 65). Empathy needs to be promoted (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993:151) and learners need different settings that can create different possibilities for their behaviour (Hill & Hill, 1994: 45).

From a child-development perspective, it is the role of the educator to build discipline plans on an understanding that learners are still in transition from this immature fear of authority and are growing to a more mature social responsibility. They are gaining empathy for others and a social conscience to understand that their actions can endanger others and disrupt the social setting in which they live.

If disciplinary actions are based on fear, power, aggressiveness and unilateral authority to simply bend the will of learners and coerce them to perform under strict rules and severe punishment, the learners' moral growth and development will be inhibited. Excessive authoritarian school discipline procedures not only mis-serve the learner, but also the democratic society in which the adolescent learner will become an adult and assume responsibility as a citizen (Wolfgang, 1986:123).

According to Jones (1989:73), effective relationships between educator and learner can exist through:

- clarity of expectations;
- an atmosphere conducive to effective teaching and effective learning;
- warmth and humor in relationships;
- support which helps combat the problems of a difficult environment, where such exist; and
- a general demonstration of sensitivity.

Aggression is a learned behaviour that can be changed. The challenge is to develop workable alternatives to aggression (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993: 111-114). According to Jones (1989: 84), learners and educators need to talk about how they feel.

Educators are unsure of how to approach discipline problems. They are far too busy with other equally essential tasks and are unable to spend the necessary time on creating effective relationships and solving problems. It is one of the symptoms of the low morale in the profession; educators are expressing their frustration and anger at being overworked and undervalued. This results in displays of aggressive behaviour being internalised by learners, who thus become aggressive themselves as a means of solving problems.

Positive educator-learner relationships need to be developed by employing effective communication skills and communicating positive expectations, developing relationships and developing positive self-concepts (Jones & Jones, 1992:101-159) Lack of confidence may be due to past experiences of failure by the individual, represented by low self-efficacy or by current circumstances (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993:31).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.3.1 Problem statement

There seems to be little or no information regarding educator-learner aggression in the secondary school in Gauteng (Louw, 1997:471). A hostile, aggressive environment creates an unsafe climate for learners, resulting in negative relationships and exposure to unacceptable forms of punishment. Most educators, often those in public schools are exhausted by their heavy workload and the numerous challenges faced in the classroom. This study will attempt to explore whether there is educator-learner aggression in the secondary school. Therefore, this study will focus on the learners' experiences of educator aggression from the learners' perspective, in the learning environment.

1.3.2 Research Questions



The research questions that arise from the problem statement are below.

- What are the experiences of learners regarding educator aggression towards them?
- What can be done to assist learners and educators concerning educator aggression, in order to facilitate their mental health?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are to:

- explore and describe the learners' experiences of educator- aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng; and
- describe guidelines to assist learners and educators concerning educator aggression in order to facilitate their mental health.

1.5 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

Paradigms in the human and the social sciences help people to understand phenomena. They advance assumptions about the social world and what constitutes legitimate problems, solutions and criteria of “proof” (Creswell, 2003:1). Denzin and Lincoln (2002: 330), describe a paradigm as a set of basic beliefs that deals with ultimatums of first principles.

“Realities” or “domains of experience” (Mouton, 1996:3) are distinctive features of being human; hence the researcher believes that a holistic approach towards understanding human and social problems needs to be used in studying the phenomena (Creswell, 2003:2). According to Donald, et al (1997: 34), the ecological theory is based on the interdependence and relationships between different organisms and their physical environment.

These relationships are seen as a whole. Every part is as important as another in sustaining the cycles of birth and death, regeneration and decay, which together ensure the survival of the whole. Schools have a crucial responsibility towards society. The school as a community is required to develop a culture of cooperation and understanding in order to progress towards a balanced society, a healthy civil society. Social justice is a collective moral principle, which needs to be ensured by all stakeholders and society (government, private firms, non-governmental organisations and citizens) through their active participation in the decision-making and progress of society (Valued Citizens Initiative - Educators’ Guide, 2005:6).

The experiences of the learners and the educators need to be addressed, in order to promote a healthy and happy environment. The paradigmatic perspective of this study will be under meta-theoretical, theoretical and methodological assumptions, relevant to the particular research study.

1.5.1 Metatheoretical assumptions

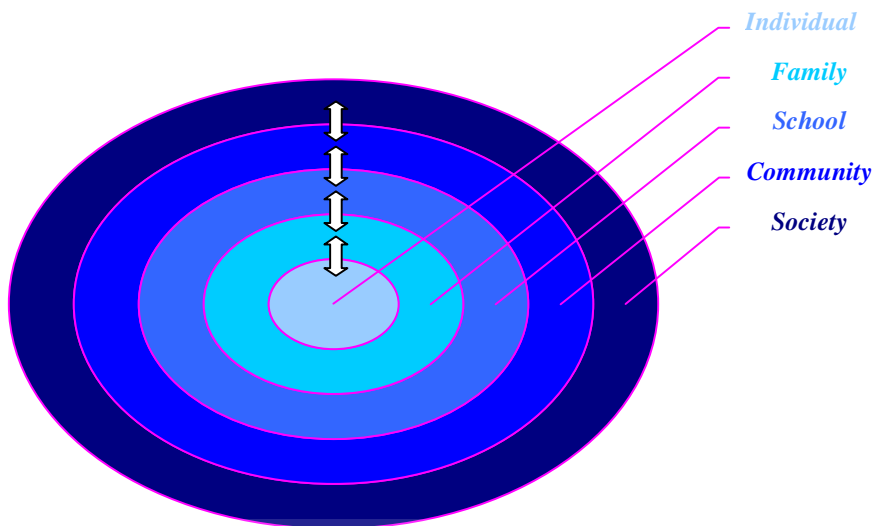
Meta-theoretical assumptions are researchers' statements of their conception about the nature of the reality of human beings and their world (Mouton, 1996:16).

According to the National Education Policy Act of 1996, "The state is committed to enable the education system to contribute to the full personal development of each learner, and to the moral, social, cultural, political and economic development of the nation at large, including the advancement of democracy, human rights and the peaceful resolution of rights' (Valued Citizens Initiative - Educators' Guide, 2005:38).

Figure 1.5.1.1 outlines the relationship that exists between the individual and his or her surrounding environment. As citizens of a democratic South Africa, educators and learners share in the social and political aspects of the learning environment and participate in society as critical and active individuals, each bringing with him or her, different backgrounds. The learner's development should be acknowledged in totality. The contextual factors which impact on learners include the home, school, environment and the community. The learners act as important engines of change in society, and form an integral part of the school. Therefore, the relationships that exist, allow learners and educators to be purposefully involved in each other.

According to Donald, et al (1997:34), the interdependence and relationships between different organisms and their physical environment is imperative, as relationships are seen as a whole. Every part is as important as another in sustaining the cycles of birth and death, regeneration and decay which together ensure the survival of the whole. The learner is constantly involved in interactive relationships with different levels of organisation in the social context, and each of these levels can be seen as interacting with other levels within the total ecological system.

**Figure 1.5.1.1 Interacting levels of organisation within the social context
(Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997:35)**



According to Capel (1995:186), there is a need to promote the emotional, spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of learners at the school and to prepare such learners for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. Learners are not only equipped with knowledge and skills to earn a living, but also to become good citizens, pursue a healthy life-style and value themselves, their achievements and their relationships. An appreciation of one's cultural heritage and of the spiritual and moral dimensions of life should also be fostered.

Erikson's Theory (Louw, 1997:501) views adolescent learners as individuals who begin to regard themselves as unique persons with their own identity and value systems. If this development fails to occur, confusion and insecurity result. Placed in the right environment and through effective interpersonal relationships, adolescent learners will develop positive self-concepts and ease into early adulthood forming meaningful relationships.

1.5.2. Theoretical Assumptions and Conceptual clarification

1.5.2.1 Theoretical assumptions

According to Capel (1995:78), positive interactions need to exist between learner and educator through a positive environment in which learning can occur. Learners and educators should fulfil their potential. Learners usually experience certain behaviours and feelings, by means of contact and discovery, of certain aspects and choices (Huesmann, 1994:3).

Papalia (2002: 284) is of the view that aggression by educators could consist of one or more of the following:

- ✚ *instrumental aggression* - aggressive behaviour as a means of achieving a goal;
- ✚ *hostile aggression* - aggressive behaviour intended to hurt another person;
- ✚ *overt aggression* - aggression that is openly directed at its target; and
- ✚ *relational, covert, indirect, psychological aggression* - aggression aimed at damaging or interfering with another person's relationships, reputation, or psychological well-being.

The above mentioned behaviours breed hostility and fear within the learning environment. In view of the existentialist theory and in accordance with Carl Rogers (Louw, 1997:19), the educator must provide understanding of, and respect toward the learner and relate to them in the most genuine and honest way to develop their human relationship. Humanistic theorists such as Rogers and Maslow (McEvelly & Tiley, 1990:12) believed that healthy development will not take place in unfavourable conditions, such as where care-givers fail to provide consistent loving care, or are hostile and critical.

A learner may be prevented from developing a sense of separateness and independence when the educator sets hostile conditions. Educators withhold approval and love when learners do not behave according to their standards. Rogers (Du Toit, 1998:60) called these conditions of worth. Learners must meet these conditions to be accepted as worthwhile by adults. Learners suppress their spontaneous feelings and impulses in order to meet these conditions.

Rogers (Louw, 1997: 587) identified three personal qualities that facilitate the development of others as fully functioning persons: empathy; unconditional positive regard; and congruence. Educators should respect and understand the feelings of learners, accept the learner as a human being who is allowed to make mistakes and accept the learner unconditionally and positively no matter what. It is important that the educator still accepts the learner when the learner feels frightened, and does not reject and criticise the learner. Congruence means behaving in a way that matches what a person truly thinks and feels. It means emotional honesty and is the opposite of defensiveness.

Incongruence on the other hand, creates discomfort within the learners. They feel threatened and unsafe in relationships and they keep up their defenses allowing them to become used to the discomfort so much so that they no longer notice it. Educators who are congruent within themselves radiate warmth and comfortability, are empathic and display unconditional positive regard.

According to social theorists and in accordance with Erikson's view (Louw, 1997:500), the social environment (parents, community, social institutions) plays an important role throughout the lives of people. Learners need to trust their school environment and they must receive encouragement and support and be provided with opportunities to explore.

According to Bandura (1973:57), aggressive behaviour is learned and maintained through environmental experience, either directly or vicariously. Learning of aggression is controlled by reinforcement contingencies and discipline in a fashion similar to learning of any new behaviours. Bandura (Louw, 1997: 267) and his colleagues demonstrated the role of modelling in learning new behaviour. Modelling is a kind of observational learning in which a person learns to reproduce or copy behaviour exhibited by a model.

Therefore learners, who observe and experience aggressive behaviour, would most probably show aggression while those who observe peaceful behaviour would most probably not show aggression. It is understandable that anti-social models (including violent and criminal behaviour) in a learner's environment, family, and in the media, can lead to anti-social behaviour.

Educators have a tremendous responsibility with regard to the modelling of positive and constructive behaviour and creating an atmosphere that is conducive to learning and teaching. According to the social learning theory model, aggression is usually seen as being controlled by positive reinforcement and mediated by negative reinforcement or escape from a harmful situation (Bandura, 1973:57).

In Du Toit (1998:109), Carl Rogers emphasises methods of communication pertinent to the learning situation. The person centered- approach focuses on attentiveness, listening and empathy. The educator's entire attitude and action should facilitate the growth of the learner as a person. When the educator is attentive, he or she enters the learner's total life world and the message to the learner is that education is accessible to him or her as a person. This helps to create a safe environment in which the learner will not feel threatened. In order to understand the learner's experiential world, his or her perceptions and reality, the educator first needs to listen to what the learner is experiencing and how she or he is experiencing it.

The educator needs to listen to what the learner is saying in relation to the total person. Empathy as a form of communication involves listening to and understanding the learner. In a hostile, aggressive environment the learner feels frightened to communicate and cannot express him or herself effectively; where the learner is exposed to aggression, retaliation is evident in communication.

Effective communication is essential for developing effective relationships with learners, a positive classroom environment and effective teaching (Capel, 1995:92). Aggression towards learners makes them emotionally vulnerable (Goleman, 1996:235) and this can lower self-esteem - creating a negative self-concept.

The researcher will enter the research field with an open mind and without any pre-conceived ideas, by using “bracketing” (Creswell, 1994:147). After the data collection and data analysis, the results will be recontextualised in the literature. The theoretical assumption used in this study serves to clarify the researcher’s stance on concepts in the investigation.

1.5.2.2 Conceptual clarifications

a) Aggression

The South African Oxford Dictionary (1986: 14), defines aggression as “an unprovoked act; the first attack in a quarrel; an assault” (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993:52). In a well known study of the stability of aggression, aggression is defined as “an act that injures or irritates another person” (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993:58).

“Aggression is any form of behaviour directed toward the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment” (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993:171). Aggression takes many forms such as child abuse, spouse battering, mugging and robbery, manslaughter, gang violence, urban riots and warfare

Aggression has been defined as “an act whose goal- response is injury to an organism” (Huesmann, 1994:4). According to Epanchin and Paul (1987: 111), aggression is defined as a behaviour that inflicts physical or psychological injury on another person. It includes physical assaults, such as hitting, kicking, biting and shoving, and verbal assaults such as making threats, hurling insults, and name-calling. Even subversive, underhanded behaviour meant only to annoy or pester is sometimes labelled aggressive. Learned experience is an important determinant of aggressive behavior in humans (Louw, 1997:471). Elicitors of aggression such as personal insults, status threats and the presence of weapons are all learned sources of aggressive behaviour. Further, aggressive actions are often followed by rewards and are therefore likely to be repeated.

Children learn that aggression can enable them to control resources such as toys and parental attention. Children also learn aggression by observing others behaving aggressively. The violent behaviour of some teenage gangs provides their younger members with aggressive role models.

Children whose parents discipline with physical force tend to use more physical aggression when interacting with others, and parents who abuse their children, were often typically abused children themselves. The influence of the mass media, especially television, in promoting aggressive behaviour is not yet well understood, but some research evidence indicates that, in children, watching violent entertainment is linked to subsequent aggression (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, 1993-2003). Sigmund Freud (Tedeschi & Lindskold, 1976:70), explained aggression in terms of a death wish or instinct (Thanatos) that is turned outward toward others in a process called displacement. The productive, creative, positive energy (Eros) is believed to be in conflict with a destructive death-seeking force (Thanatos) in each individual. Aggression in this dissertation refers to the negative Thanatos force that is turned against others.

b) Educator/ Teacher

An educator or teacher is the person who acts as the caregiver, model and mentor, treating learners with love and respect, setting an example, supporting pro-social behavior and correcting harmful behaviours. He or she also creates a moral community in the classroom, helping learners to become acquainted with care about each other (Madubye, 1997:6). Capel (1995:15) sees the educator as one who has a secure subject knowledge, gives attention to planning, has an awareness of learners' needs and who has a concern for the welfare of learners.

The educator is an individual who is part of the learning process. The educator has the responsibility of using various strategies to develop the learners to their fullest potential. The multi-dimensional roles of the educator include: the educator as researcher, leader, manager and supporter (Donald et al, 1997:82).

The Revised National Curriculum Statement (2004:4), envisages South African educators who are qualified, dedicated, competent and caring. Educators are seen as mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of Learning Programmes and materials, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, community members, citizens and pastors, assessors and learning area or phase specialists.

c) Experience

According to Wundt (Louw, 1997:15), experience is defined through introspection. Introspection means 'looking inside'. The way to understand experience is to break it down into its smaller components (colours, tastes, degrees of brightness, contours). He set out to discover how these parts contribute to the structure of the whole experience.

This is done by 'getting to know' through senses: absorbing information about the world, perception: how the information a person receives from their senses is organised to provide all with an experience of real things in a real world; memory: how a person stores information so one can use it again and again; learning: how new behaviours are learned, or old habits are changed or lost; and thinking: how concepts, words, reasoning and making plans and decisions affect peoples relationship to the world around them. The individual becomes the recipient of the values and meanings of the particular situation.

d) Learner

According to Harris (1990:192), a learner is a person enrolled in an educational institution. A learner is one who is taught and who accepts teaching by an adult (educator). The learner admires not only these teaching skills, clarity and good classroom control, but also characteristics like fairness, impartiality, patience, cheerfulness and empathy.

The Revised National Curriculum Statement (2004:4) envisions South African learners imbued with values and acting in the interest of a society based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity, life and social justice. The learner is seen as one who is confident and independent, literate, numerate and multi-skilled, compassionate, with a respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active participant.

e) Learning

According to Capel (1995:215), Kyriacou defines learning as 'a change in learners' behaviour which takes place as a result of being engaged in an educational experience'. He bases this definition on Gagnes' conditions of learning, which highlight five main areas of learners' learning that need to be considered in learning and teaching framework.

They include:

- ✓ intellectual skills;
- ✓ verbal skills;
- ✓ cognitive strategies;
- ✓ attitudes; and
- ✓ Motor Skills.

f) Secondary school

Secondary Education is the programme of public education immediately following primary schooling. It generally begins between the ages of 11 and 14 years and continues for four to seven years. Secondary schooling usually involves both academic and, increasingly, vocational education. Some countries follow a National Curriculum that sets out the basic programme of study in a number of compulsory subjects (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, 1993-2003).

The secondary school usually consists of learners from Grade Eight to Grade Twelve. Learners are normally 12 or 13 to 18 years of age. The learner entering secondary school experiences a period of rapid growth and physical, mental and emotional change. The aim is to grow vocabulary and other aspects of language development, especially those related to abstract thought, such as social perspective taking (Papalia, 2002:404).

g) Teaching

Teaching requires educators to transform the knowledge they possess into suitable tasks which lead to learning. Acquiring up-to-date knowledge requires effort on the part of the teacher. Teaching is a very personal activity and, while certain teaching styles and strategies may suit one educator, they may not be appropriate for another. There is no one way to teach. Provided effective learning and teaching takes place, a whole range of approaches and teaching styles is appropriate (Capel, 1995:8).

1.5.4 Methodological assumptions

Methodological assumptions refer to the researcher's choice of the design as well as the selection of appropriate methods in a specific research study (Shaw, 1999:77). The data collected from the interviews with the learners in the secondary school will be used to formulate effective guidelines to facilitate the mental health of the educators and learners in South African schools.

The nature of the research problem and the research, directs the choice of the method most suitable for the research process (Creswell, 1994:10). The researcher will explore the everyday lives and lived experiences of the learners regarding educator aggression and understand how aggression affects the learning and teaching process. The researcher will "bracket" her own experiences in order to understand those of learners.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHOD

In order to achieve the research aim; the researcher will make use of a qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and contextual research design.

1.6.1 Research Design

The research design enables the researcher to anticipate what the appropriate decision should be so as to maximise the validity of the research (Mouton, 1996:107). A qualitative study explores and describes the phenomena, and thus allows the researcher to explore the experiences of learners regarding educator aggression in the secondary school with a view to achieving an effective support system. It is also descriptive and contextual. These aspects will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

1.6.2 Research method

The research will be conducted in two phases which are described below.

- The first phase will be to explore and describe the learners' experiences of educator aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng.
- The second phase entails the formulation of guidelines for learners and educators who experience educator aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng.

1.6.2.1) Phase 1: *Exploration and description of learners' experiences of educator aggression in the secondary school in Gauteng.*

In this phase interviews will be conducted with adolescents to explore their experiences of educator aggression in a secondary school.

1.6.2.1 (a) Data Collection

According to Pole and Lampard (2002:32), the sample of people that one studies determines the nature and validity of the findings and theory generated by the research. The criteria for the selection of participants will be further discussed in Chapter Two. The researcher will make use of a face-to face interview approach with open-ended questions in order to gather data (Mouton, 1996:177). Each interview will be recorded on audiotape and later transcribed. The sample size will depend on the saturation as indicated by the occurrence of repeated themes (Burns & Grove, 1987:309). Interviews will be conducted until data-saturation is reached. Field notes will be made at the end of the interview and these will include observations and experiences of learners and educators in the learning environment.

After the research interview the researcher will conduct a debriefing session to rectify any misconceptions that may have arisen in the minds of the participants. This will allow the participants to work through their experiences.

1.6.2.1 (b) Data Analysis

The data will be transcribed and analysed, using Tesch's approach (Creswell, 1994:155). The information will be reduced to themes and categories by the researcher and an independent coder. Data analysis will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

1.6.2.1 (c) Literature Control

The researcher will do a literature control (Mouton, 1996:119) to confirm the results of the investigation on educator- learner aggression. The aim is to build a body of accepted knowledge on the topic and to enable the reader to gain further insight into the study. The literature control will promote confidence in the research and will present the results of other studies that are closely related to this study (Creswell, 1994:20).

1.6.2.2 Phase 2: *Description of guidelines that could be used by learners and educators regarding educator aggression in the secondary school*

Data collected during phase one will be used to draw up guidelines that could be used to promote the mental health of educators and learners in the secondary school, concerning aggression.

1.6.2.2 (a) Measures to ensure trustworthiness

Trustworthiness can be established by means of a dense and rich description of all aspects of the research investigation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 290-327). Guba's model to ensure trustworthiness (Krefting, 1991:215) will be used. This qualitative research study will incorporate the four criteria of: truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. In this qualitative study, credibility is relevant to truth value, transferability is important for applicability, dependability is needed in consistency; and confirmability requires neutrality. These criteria within the research will be discussed in more detail Chapter Two.

1.7 ETHICAL MEASURES

According to Brink (1994:20), anything that violates an individual's basic rights becomes an ethical issue. It is imperative that ethical considerations are adhered to within the research process. The researcher will aim to maintain professionalism when conducting the research and will behave appropriately, respecting the rights of the participants. The ethical measures discussed below will be considered during the research process.

- ❖ The participants will be informed beforehand about the goal and purpose of the study. By expressing their experiences of educator aggression within their schooling context, and evaluating contributing factors to their hostile learning environment, effective guidelines can be established to facilitate the mental health of learners and educators in the school regarding educator-learner aggression. The methods, nature, duration and procedures as to how data will be collected, used and what can be expected from the research protocol, will also be discussed (see Annexure 2).

- ❖ The phenomenological interviews will consist of learners who are purposively selected. Participants will be notified that they can withdraw without penalty at any time as their participation is totally voluntary. The language will be easily understood and effective communication will take place (see Annexure 3).
- ❖ Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the research. The research will be available to participants if they wish to view it. Being an educator herself, the researcher will remain objective and refrain from making value judgments with regard to the experiences of the participants.
- ❖ The researcher will be open and honest, and not misrepresent facts about the research in order to persuade participants to participate. Informed consent to conduct the research will be obtained from the participants, that is; the learners and their parents, as well as the educators (Burns & Grove, 1987:209).
- ❖ The participants will also be informed that the research project will be readily available to them should they wish to view it after the investigation.
- ❖ A letter will be given to the principal of the school requesting permission for the researcher to conduct the research (Annexure 2).
- ❖ Letters will be sent to parents requesting their permission for their child to participate in the research study (Annexure 2).
- ❖ Letters will be sent to the Gauteng Department of Education requesting permission for the researcher to conduct this particular research (Annexure 2).

- ❖ Letters will be given to participants requesting their permission to participate in this particular research study (Annexure 2).
- ❖ Audiotapes will be kept under lock and key. Only researchers and supervisors will have access. They will be destroyed two years after completion of this dissertation.

1.8 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

Learners' experiences of educator aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng

CHAPTER 1

Overview of the study and rationale

CHAPTER 2

Research design and methodology

CHAPTER 3

Exploration and description of experiences of educator-learner aggression at a secondary school in Gauteng

CHAPTER 4

Guidelines to facilitate mental health of learners and educators. The conclusions, limitations, recommendations and summary will also be discussed.

1.9 SUMMARY

This research investigates the experiences of learners concerning the aggression of educators in a secondary school in Gauteng. The aim is to understand how to create a safe and secure environment conducive to learning and teaching.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

According to Henry James in The Portrait of a Lady: 218, "We know too much about people in these days; we hear too much. Our ears, our minds, our mouths are stuffed with personalities (Silverman, 2004:342).

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As suggested by Silverman (2004: 343), a qualitative researcher is concerned with the individuals' point of view. The investigator gets closer to the actors' perspective through detailed interaction. He or she captures the participants' in-depth experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002:10).

In Chapter One the researcher presented an overview of the study. In this chapter the objectives, the research design and the method has been discussed. This will help to clarify how the researcher has implemented the qualitative research method regarding learners' experiences of educator aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng.

The researcher intended to gain insight into what learners' experiences were concerning educator aggression towards them and what would be a viable means to assist both educator and learner when dealing with aggression within a hostile school environment. The qualitative paradigm stems from an interpretive, non-positivist, idiographic, systematic, holistic approach (Creswell, 1994:147; Crabtree, 1999:20; Mason, 2002:7).

According to Louw (1997: 36), the humanistic and holistic approach consists of words, which give an in-depth understanding of the nature of what people experience. They do not only reveal in an academic manner, the psychological dimensions of what the participants go through, but also communicate to individuals as fellow human beings, about the personal qualities of social life and human experience in the everyday lives of people.

The researcher investigated the experiences of learners regarding educator aggression in a secondary school with a view to describe guidelines to facilitate the mental health of learners and educators at secondary school level.

2.1.1 Type of design

Mouton (1996: 28), mentions the sociological, phenomenological and ethno-methodological dimensions, as tools one could use to design a qualitative research study. These are the methods that were used for the purpose of this research. According to Berg (1995:117), the sociological dimension adds breadth and depth to observations by reaching beyond local meanings to broader social ones.

The ethno-methodological dimensions conceptualise how people make sense of things around them and adjust their meanings to fit their observations. The phenomenological dimensions allow people to relate their personal experiences of life in their own words. The aim of this approach was to help the researcher to understand and interpret the learners' experiences of educator aggression in the school. In order to accomplish this, the researcher should be able to enter the participants' life world and place herself in the shoes of the participants (Creswell, 2003:22).

2.1.2 Characteristics of a qualitative research design

Creswell (2003:181-182) further identifies the following as being characteristic of a qualitative research design. It needs to occur in natural settings - this allows the researcher to be closely involved in the actual experiences of the participants. This research took place in the school. A quiet comfortable setting resulted in effective feedback from the adolescent learners. Communication was interactive and humanistic. The researcher built rapport and credibility, was sensitive and engaged in active participation. The researcher probed learners as he or she learnt what to ask and to whom it should be asked; was fundamentally interpretive, and viewed social phenomena holistically. The researcher reflected systematically on who he or she is - this introspection and acknowledgement of biases, values and interests represented openness and honesty; used complex reasoning that is multi-faceted, iterative and simultaneous. The qualitative researcher adopted and used one or more strategies of inquiry as a guide for procedures in qualitative study.

Morse (1991:20) states the following as the characteristics of a qualitative research problem (Creswell, 2003:75). The concept is "immature" due to a conspicuous lack of theory and previous research, a notion that the available theory may be inaccurate, inappropriate, incorrect or biased. A need exists to explore and describe the phenomena and to develop theory. The nature of the phenomenon may not be suited to quantitative measures.

Merriam (1998: 6-8), asserts that the advantage of qualitative research is that it enables researchers to study human experiences in a great deal of depth; in this particular study, the learners' experiences of educator aggression at school. The methods stayed closer to the experience of participants and researchers. People who read the research report can obtain a deeper understanding of what has been discovered on educator aggression at a secondary school.

2.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research are :

- to explore and describe the learners' experiences of educator aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng.
- to formulate guidelines to assist learners and educators concerning educator aggression in order to facilitate their mental health.

2.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design can be defined as “an exposition or plan of how the researcher plans to execute the research problem that has been formulated, the objective of the research design is to plan, structure and execute the relevant project in such a way that the validity of the findings is maximised” (Mouton, 1996:175). According to Brink (1994:100), the purpose of research design is to provide a plan, a blueprint to specify the control mechanisms used in the study.

This blueprint for the research (Mason, 2002:25) is based on the ongoing data collection and analysis (Taylor and Bagden, 1998:42). Creswell (1994:2) claims that the research design in the qualitative context refers to the entire process of research from conceptualising a problem to writing the narrative. The research design and method guiding this study is described in this section.

It is the researcher's choice to decide on the most appropriate strategy, based largely on the objective specific to a particular research study (Mouton, 1996:133). For this research, a qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and contextual design was used. Learners' experiences were explored and described and used as a basis for formulating guidelines to support these learners when they experience educator aggression. A brief exposition has been given of these descriptions to motivate the choice of research design.

2.3.1 Qualitative

Qualitative research attempts to describe, interpret or reconstruct the depth, richness and complexity of an identified phenomenon in order to gain an understanding of, and insight into, it (Burns & Grove, 1987:67). According to Berg (1995:10), qualitative research can be used as a multi-perspective approach where researchers focus on naturally emerging languages and the meanings individuals assign to experience. Life-worlds include emotions, motivations, symbols and their meanings and empathy.

Different qualitative techniques and data collection methods were utilised. It aimed to describe and make sense of the social interaction in terms of the meanings that the subjects attached to it. A qualitative research approach has been used in this study because the focus of qualitative research is on the product or outcome (Creswell, 1994:162).

The qualitative research interview aims to obtain many nuanced descriptions from the different qualitative aspects of the interviewee's experiences as possible (Kvale, 1983:175). The qualitative approach assumes that for an interpretation, the researcher needs inter-subjective personal knowledge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:162). This research explored learners' experiences of educator aggression. It was conducted in a naturalistic setting (Creswell, 1994:2) where the researcher actively participated in the discovery of learners' reality and how they had experienced educator aggression.

2.3.2 Explorative

In this research, the main focus was based on the description and exploration of learners' experiences of educator aggression in a school in Gauteng.

According to Mouton (1996:103), the objective in exploratory studies is to establish the facts to gather new data and to determine whether there are significant patterns in the data. Qualitative researchers engage in explorative studies to gain a richer understanding of the phenomenon of interest, and seek new insight about an unknown research area (Brink, 1994: 106-107).

As discussed by Mouton and Marais (1990:49), the researcher departs from a position of "not knowing" to an exploration of an unknown area of educator aggression in a Gauteng secondary school. Successful exploratory research depended on the researcher being open and investigating new ideas, stimuli and suggestions, without allowing preconceived ideas to interfere with the investigation process.

The essence of a phenomenon is captured through exploration in phenomenological interviews and field notes. This allows for the development of new concepts and ongoing theory (Mouton & Marais, 1994:43). A literature control was used to verify the findings.

2.3.3. Descriptive

In a qualitative, explorative observation process, the main aim of the research is to obtain undisrupted descriptions. Participants were invited to describe their experiences as precisely as possible, that is learners' experiences of educator aggression toward them. They described their experiences, feelings and reactions (Kvale, 1996:32). Therefore, it is imperative that researchers have a clear picture of the phenomena on which they wish to collect data, prior to the collection of the data.

According to Mouton (1996:102), descriptive statements make claims about how things are and what the actual state of affairs or fact of the matter is. The depth of the researchers' investigation yields a dense description of the participants' meanings, allowing data to be presented in the participants' own written or spoken words, or in pictures (Creswell, 1994:170).

The researcher employed an inductive form of reasoning to recognise themes, patterns and categories from the collected data (Creswell, 1994:145). The researcher developed an awareness of the experiences, without forcing prior expectations or knowledge on the process (Brink, 1994:106-107). The researcher therefore facilitated the description of learners' experiences of educator aggression by applying the principles of 'bracketing' and 'intuiting'.

➤ Bracketing

Burns and Grove (1987:80) explain that to bracket, the researcher suspends or lays aside what is known to him or her about the experience being studied. In this instance the researcher discarded any preconceived ideas of learners, educators and aggression within the school. The interviewer became the real questioner to the degree that they were able to bracket their bias and understand the inner most world of the individual.

➤ Intuiting

Burns and Grove (1987:80), explain that bracketing must have taken place before intuiting can occur. Intuiting is the process of “looking at” the phenomenon. The researcher focused all her energy and awareness on what the learners and educators had to say about their experiences of aggression. The researcher was absorbed and concentrated thoroughly on what was being said.

2.3.4 Contextual

This research was contextual in nature. In contextual research the phenomenon is studied because of its intrinsic and immediate contextual significance. The primary aim of the investigation is learners and educators in their specific contexts (Mouton, 1996:133).

The main aim of this study was to gain an understanding of learners’ experiences of educator aggression in the secondary school environment. It was thus imperative to “observe qualitative research in natural settings, where human behaviour and events occur” (Creswell, 1994:162). The researcher interviewed participants at their school, as this was their natural setting.

The contextual nature of this qualitative research indicated that the description and exploration of the phenomenon occurred within the natural context of the life world of the participant under investigation. This was so because the phenomenon had to be understood in totality and in the unique context in which it occurs.

The social context of the participant was taken into consideration. Therefore the researcher's role was to gain a holistic overview of the context under study and be involved with learners and educators in their everyday lives (Taylor and Bagden, 1998:57). This study was contextual because by constructing research on the experiences of learners' educator aggression, these experiences were explored and described within the unique context of their life world. Based on these results effective guidelines could support learners and educators to facilitate their mental health.

2.4 RESEARCH METHOD

The research was conducted in two phases. The first phase was concerned with the exploration and description of learners' experiences of educator aggression in a secondary school. The second phase was concerned with a description of guidelines for learners and educators who experience aggression in the school. These guidelines facilitate their mental health.

2.4.1 Phase One: Exploration and description of learners' experiences of educator aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng

The objective of the first phase of the research is to explore and describe the learners' experiences of educator aggression in the secondary school. The researcher aimed to gather as much information as possible from the informants about their experiences. In order to achieve the above aim of the researcher, a careful selection of participants was made by adhering to the criteria described below.

2.4.1.1 Population

According to Myburgh and Strauss (2000:44), population refers to a collection of members on whom the investigation will be focused (reachable population). A population is defined as all members of any well-defined class of people, events or objects. This research study aims to investigate a population of adolescent learners' experiences of educator aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng.

2.4.1.2 Sampling

According to Arkava and Lane (1983:27), a sample implies the elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study. A sample is studied in order to understand the population from which they come. A sample includes those involved in the research, and is a portion of the population (Myburgh & Strauss, 2000:44). Sampling is seen as a vehicle for maximising the validity of the research (Kidder & Judd, 1987:166).

The sample was purposive (Silverman, 2004:23). Therefore, the sample came from the portion of the school's population who experience educator- learner aggression. The sample in this case was characteristic of the target population with regard to more universal social experiences and processes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002:370).

The researcher selected a small number of participants who were be specially chosen because of their ability to describe a particular experience clearly and in detail. According to Babbie (2004:183), the informant is one who has the knowledge and the experience that the researcher requires, the ability to reflect, is articulate and is willing to participate in the study.

The school participating in the research study was situated in a disadvantaged area in Gauteng. The learners consisted mainly of second language speakers, foreigners and the occasional learner from an outside area. The learners came from different socio-economic backgrounds. The educators consisted of different races, varying in ages. The school maintained a stringent discipline policy and boasted satisfactory pass rates yearly.

➤ **Sampling criteria**

The following criteria were adhered to:

- learners who were exposed to educator aggression;
- grade eleven and twelve learners between the ages of 16 and 18 years;
- learners who attended a secondary school;
- participants who had agreed, through written assent, to participate voluntarily in the research until data was saturated;
- participants who had can communicated in English; and
- participants who had agreed that interviews can be audio-taped and transcribed.

➤ **Sample size**

The researcher conducted interviews with the purposively selected learners who experienced educator-learner aggression. The sample size was determined by data saturation. Saturation means that the researcher has conducted an exhaustive exploration of whatever phenomenon is being studied (Morse, 1994:106).

Data saturation is evident when there is a repetition of themes and categories that indicate the detailed and in-depth information. In this study data saturation will be reached when the experiences of learners begin to be repeated (Creswell, 1994:106).

2.4.1.3 Data Collection

The learners who participated in the naive sketch writing were from a Grade Eleven class comprising 45 learners (21 males and 24 females) and a Grade Twelve class comprising 43 learners (22 males and 21 females). In total 88 learners participated in the essay writing. The sketch writing took place in the school hall at the end of Term 1, where the learners were confronted by the researcher. The question “**What are your experiences of educator aggression towards you in your schooling environment?**” was asked and the learners were given an hour to write about their experiences. The graphical representation, depicted as annexure 4, was completed by one of the learners. The essays were collected and categorised according to themes.

The researcher used different methods to collect data such as interviewing, observation and field notes, in order to collect data from participants. According to Creswell (1994:185), the data collection is guided by collecting information through unstructured, phenomenological interviews, educated hunches and emerging findings.

a) Semi-structured Interviews

The learners who participated in the semi-structured interviews consisted of four adolescent boys who were between the ages of 16 and 18 years and in Grades Eleven and Twelve. In the interview, the researcher spoke directly to the person and obtained direct information. Interviewing was the primary source of data during this qualitative research approach. The researcher was guided exclusively by the participants’ narration (Myburgh & Strauss, 2000:29). The researcher carefully probed for more information when required and the explanatory question asked will was:

“What are your experiences of educator aggression towards you in your schooling environment?”

The question was not rephrased, as it was an open question allowing participants to tell their story in narrative form. This helped the participants to organise their own descriptions and to emphasise what they themselves found important (Kvale, 1983:185). Pole and Lampard (2002:133-134), view semi- structured interviews as having the following important characteristics:

- Questions need to be clearly specified and unambiguous.
- Questions need to be posed in language which will be fully understood by interviewees.
- Questions should not prejudge answers but should provide latitude for a range of different views.
- The interview schedule should include clear instructions on when to probe and seek clarification and when not to.
- The interview should come to a conclusion allowing any loose ends to be tied up.
- There should be an effective way of recording responses.

Mason (2002:62) acknowledges qualitative research as operating from the perspective that knowledge is situated and contextual, and therefore the job of the interviewer is to ensure that the relevant contexts are brought into focus so that situated knowledge can be produced. The interview is a social interaction and entails:

- the researchers' ontological position;
- the researchers' epistemological position;
- qualitative interviews that are contextual, situational and interactional;
- bias that can be eradicated and controlled;
- the construction of explanations and arguments which lay emphasis on depth, nuance, complexity and roundedness in data; and

- the researcher being conceptualized as active and reflexive.

The researcher prepared for the interview with the learners by “bracketing” (Kvale, 1983:184) all preconceived ideas and notions about participants’ experiences and established viable strategies for intervention purposes. The interviewer strove to establish a friendly atmosphere, asked appropriate questions, obtained the required responses, recorded the responses and avoided being biased (Hoyle, Harris & Judd 2002:145-149).

A communicative relationship needs to be formed between the interviewer and interviewee (Henning, 2004:66-78). “...a *qualitative interview is essentially a conversation in which the interviewer establishes a general direction for the conversation and pursues specific topics raised by the respondent*”.

The following information indicates the criteria for effective interviewing within the research design (Babbie, 2004:300; Crabtree, 1999:77-106, Henning, 2004:60-66; Hoyle et al., 2002:144-149; Mason, 2002:62; Pole & Lampard, 2002:133-134), displaying an interactive process resulting in effective communication.

- 📖 Seeing, listening and touching are primary sources of information about the world. The interviewer enters the participants’ life world.
- 📖 The researcher listens as an unobtrusive outsider, actively participates, shares and hears within confidentiality and maintains open-ended discourse.
- 📖 The interview is a research-gathering approach that seeks to create a listening space where meaning is constructed through an inter-exchange/ co-creation of verbal viewpoints in the interest of knowing.

📖 The explorative interview acts as a partnership on a conversational research journey and details the interview as qualitative, descriptive and contextual.

➤ **Probing**

According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998:106-107), in qualitative interviewing, the interviewer asks open-ended, directive, descriptive questions, then waits for the participants to talk about meaningful experiences in their lives or what is important from their points of view, and probes for details and specific descriptions of their experiences and perspectives.

Qualitative interviewers have to force themselves constantly to ask informants to clarify and elaborate on what they have said, even at the risk of appearing naïve. Constant encouragement was required on the part of the researcher, so that detailed descriptions of the learners' experiences of educator aggression were explored.

b) Field notes

According to Babbie (2004:285), the researcher as an observer has various roles. The one that was adopted in this study included the researcher's actual participation in the daily life of the participants in their school environment, in order to observe aggression in the learning space. The researcher made field notes as observation in the schooling environment took place.

The advantages of a researcher making field notes include these points below.

- The researcher can take note of subtle, non-verbal cues to participants' motives and emotions, constructs that might not be apparent to the participants themselves (this is clarified with participants before being used).
- Results can be achieved as participants are in a natural setting.
- The costs are minimal and the observation itself is in no way affected by the goals of the research (Hoyle, et al 2002:366).

Detailed records of what the participant observer hears and sees are reliant on the words and voices of the people being studied. The goal of the researcher is to record as much detail as possible of the learners' voices, actions, intentions and appearances. This researcher will try to record as much useful information as possible (Hoyle, et al 2002:415).

(i) Theoretical notes

Theoretical notes are self-conscious, systematic attempts by the researcher to derive meaning from some or all of the observational notes (Schurink, Schurink & Poggenpoel, 1998:286). The researcher made notes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:281). This was done every time after each phenomenological interview took place so as to make data as accurate as possible.

(ii) Methodological notes

These notes are reminders, instructions and critical comments that the researcher makes for personal consumption (Schurink, et al 1998:285).

(iii) Personal notes

Personal notes consist of reflections on the researcher's own feelings, ideas, assumptions, reactions and experiences about the interviews. These reflections will help the researcher to determine the influence of her own biases on the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:281).

(iv) Observational notes

According to Brink (1994: 147), observation is a method of collecting descriptive behavioural data. Observational notes refer to what the researcher sees as well as what she hears in the interview so as to expand field notes beyond immediate observations (Silverman, 2004:140-142). In qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument in data collection (Creswell, 1994:162), and observation notes are used to clarify the research settings, since observational notes are objective descriptions of the who, what, where and how of a context or situation (Henning, 2004: 90-96).

2.4.1.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative research data is often in the form of written (typed) language. A descriptive method of analysis as suggested by Tesch (Creswell, 1994:155) was used when analysing the experiences of educator-learner aggression in a Gauteng secondary school (Myburgh & Strauss, 2000:41). The 88 essays and 4 interviews were analysed and catergorised according to this method.

According to Mouton (1996:111), data is analysed by identifying patterns and themes in the data and drawing certain conclusions from them. This must be done after the interviews and observations have been completed. The audio-taped, recorded phenomenological interviews are transcribed verbatim. Written field notes served as material for the subsequent interpretation and meaning (Kvale, 1996:27).

Pole and Lampard, (2002:209), view the data analysis process as the most rewarding and exciting aspect of the research process, as it is here that things start to make sense and one ultimately begins to understand social relationships, interactions and structures.

In analysing data, the researcher made use of Tesch's eight steps (Creswell, 1994:155) to reduce the information into themes and categories, namely learners' experiences of educator aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng.

The steps described below were used to analyse the data.

☞ The researcher created a sense of the whole by carefully reading through all the transcriptions and jotting down some ideas as they came to mind.

☞ The researcher selected the most interesting document from the pile and examined it, thinking about its underlying meaning. Thoughts were also recorded in the margin.

☞ After reading through the individual interviews, similar topics were clustered together and thereafter arranged into major topics and unique topics.

☞ The list was taken back to the data and codes were written for each topic against appropriate segments.

☞ Suitable descriptive headings for each topic were given and the topics were transformed into categories. Lists of categories were reduced by grouping topics that related to each other.

☞ A final decision was made on the abbreviation of the codes and placed in alphabetical order.

☞ The data material belonging to each category was assembled and a preliminary analysis was performed.

The existing data was transcribed and the independent coder (Krefting, 1991:221), who had sound knowledge of the qualitative research process and research methodology, was analysed the researcher's data, based on the prescribed protocol.

The analysis was systematic, sequential, verifiable and continuous, so as to identify themes, categories and sub-categories. The independent coder and the researcher held consensus discussions to confirm and modify the identified themes. Findings were explored and described using the actual words of participants to describe their experiences of aggression in the school environment.

2.4.1.5 Literature control

The results of the research were checked against existing literature on the topics highlighted. The aims of the literature control are to examine the results of similar studies to situate the present study in the context of current discourse in the literature and to provide a background for comparing the results of the study with other similar studies (Creswell, 1994:37).

The main purpose of doing a literature control is to show the reader how the study supplements work that has already been done on the topic (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 1997:375). Thus the reader should take into consideration all previous work conducted in the same field.

Merriam (1998:55), states that a literature control is a narrative essay that integrates, synthesises and critiques the important thinking and research of a particular topic, thus the analysed data are compared to the literature to verify the findings. This would subsequently involve the systematic search for literature that fits the collected data. With this the researcher will be able to discover the universal implications of the findings.

2.4.2 Phase Two: Description of guidelines that could be used by learners and educators regarding educator aggression in a secondary school.

The objectives of Phase Two were to describe guidelines that secondary schools can use to facilitate the mental health of learners who experience educator aggression, and educators who experience aggression within themselves in the teaching and learning situation. After analysing the results of Phase One, the literature was further reviewed to formulate effective guidelines (Creswell, 1994:168).

2.5 Measures to ensure trustworthiness

Guba's model of trustworthiness (Schurink, et al 1998:331) was applied to ensure trustworthiness of this research. The four criteria for trustworthiness are truth-value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

2.5.2 Truth value ensured by credibility

The first criterion of trustworthiness is truth-value ensured by credibility. Credibility refers to the 'truth', 'value', or believability of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:290). Truth value asks whether the researcher has established confidence in the truth of the findings for the subjects and the content in which the research was undertaken (Schurink, Schurink & Poggenpoel, 1998:331). Krefting (1990:215), states that truth value is usually obtained from the discovery of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by informants.

In this research study the researcher collected data on educator-learner aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng. The data was collected from the participants themselves in order to explore a problem or describe a setting, a process, a social group, or a pattern of interaction that was valid.

The researcher gave an in-depth description showing the complexities of variables or interactions of educator-learner aggression and educator aggression, so that other learners and educators who experienced it recognised the description immediately. The researcher's biases were clarified as a way to enhance the truth-value of the research. Krefting (1991:218), further states that truth-value is a criterion for the evaluation of qualitative research. See Table 2.1 for an application of the research.

2.6.1.2 Applicability ensured by transferability

The second criterion of trustworthiness is applicability ensured by transferability. Applicability refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings, or with groups; thus it is the ability to transfer from the findings to other similar populations. In the qualitative perspective, applicability refers to how well the threats to external validity have been managed (Krefting, 1991:216).

Table 2.1. Strategies to ensure trustworthiness (adapted from Krefting, 1991:227)

Strategy	Criteria	Application
Credibility	Prolonged and varied field experience	<p>The researcher spent sufficient time with the participants to identify reappearing patterns, which allowed her to check perspectives and also allowed the participants to be more accustomed to the researcher. Prolonged engagement with the field assists in detecting responses where informants constantly either agree or disagree with the questions (Silverman, 2004:140). The researcher, in this instance, spent most of her time with learners participating in the study.</p>
	Reflexivity	<p>Reflexivity refers to the assessment of the influence of the researcher's own background, perceptions and interests in the qualitative research process. Kidder (1987:304) states that the qualitative researcher is part of the research and not separate from it; seeing, hearing, feeling and thinking; thus making this approach reflexive. Lincoln and Guba (1985:327), suggest that the researcher analyses herself within the context of the research and keeps a field journal to reflect on her values, thoughts and interests on methodological decisions made during the research process. Krefting (1991:218), states that the researcher is a participant and not merely an observer in the research process.</p>
	<p>Triangulation</p> <p>Member checking</p> <p>Peer examination</p> <p>In depth interviews</p>	<p>Triangulation of the data method was achieved by conducting phenomenological interviews and observation of learners who have been exposed to educator aggression. Participants were purposively selected.</p> <p>Theoretical triangulation will be achieved by using Erikson's and Rogers' (Louw 1997:500) theory.</p> <p>Member checking was done by giving participants an opportunity to read through the transcription of the tape-recorded interviews, thus allowing them to clarify any misinterpretations made by the researcher.</p> <p>According to Krefting (1991:219), peer examination involves the researcher's discussion of the research process with an impartial colleague who has experience with the qualitative research method. The peer would increase credibility of the study by checking categories that have been developed.</p> <p>The researcher used appropriate interviewing techniques and became the measurement tool to report what had been personally investigated.</p>

Table 2.1 cont....

Strategy	Criteria	Application
Transferability	Nominated Sampling	<p>A key factor in the transferability of data is the representation of informants for that particular group (Krefting, 1991:220). The informants in this instance were learners who have experienced educator aggression in the schooling environment. Sampling took place. The demographics were described.</p> <p>A dense description of the research results was provided by including, direct quotes from participants, literature control and data analysis.</p>
	Dense description	
Dependability	Audit trail	<p>Guba (Krefting, 1991:221) uses the term “auditable” to describe the situation in which another researcher can clearly follow the decision trail used by the investigator in the study. Dense description of the research methodology is done with the help of an independent coder.</p>
	Triangulation	<p>Dependability is accomplished by triangulation, as well as a code re-code procedure with an independent coder. In this study a dense description of the research methodology which includes phenomenological interviews and field notes was given. To enhance dependability each interview began with a short explanation during which the researcher explained the interview process to each participant.</p>
	Peer Examination	<p>According to Krefting (1991:219), peer examination involves the researcher’s discussion of the research process with an impartial colleague who has experience with the qualitative research method. The peer increased credibility of the study by checking categories that had been developed.</p>

table 2.1 cont...

Strategy	Criteria	Application
Confirmability	Confirmability audit	<p>Neutrality captures the concept of objectivity of the data and interpretational confirmability and describes the audit strategy as the major technique for establishing confirmability (Krefting, 1991:221).</p> <p>Lincoln and Guba (1985:319-320), identify the following categories to use to establish an audit trail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ raw data including field notes and transcriptions; ➤ data reduction and analysis including thematic categories and interpretations; ➤ process notes including design strategies, methodologies used as well as trustworthiness of data; ➤ materials related to intentions and dispositions, including researcher's personal notes; ➤ Information regarding instrument development, including the pilot study ➤ triangulation of multiple methods, data sources and theoretical perspectives which will enhance the confirmability of the research; and ➤ to avoid the researcher's experiences influencing the study, field notes will be used in conjunction with a tape-recorder.
	Triangulation	<p>This strategy is used to enhance the quality of the research, especially credibility (Krefting, 1991:219). Triangulation of the data method was achieved by conducting phenomenological interviews, observation of learners who have been exposed to educator aggression and educators experiencing aggression towards learners. Participants were purposively selected.</p> <p>Theoretical triangulation was achieved by using Erikson and Rogers' theory (Louw, 1997:500).</p>
	Reflexivity	<p>The researcher's own background, interests and perceptions as well as her interest in the research process and the assessment of these influences are known as reflexivity. The qualitative researcher is part of the research and not separate from it. Krefting (1991:218), states that the researcher is a participant and not merely an observer in the research process. Therefore the researcher must analyse herself within the context of the research.</p>
	Code-recode procedures	<p>A consensus discussion with an independent external coder was held after the data was analysed.</p>

Qualitative research is conducted in a context where each situation is unique (Krefting, 1991:220). The researcher will fulfilled this criterion when the findings from one context fitted into a similar context in another study situation. Data from different sources can be used to corroborate, elaborate or illuminate the research. The applicability of qualitative research can be assessed through the criterion of transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:297).

In this research, applicability referred to whether the findings of the study were fitting or transferable to other settings. The aim of the research was to analyse learners' experiences of educator aggression and educators' experiences of aggression within themselves in the learning and teaching situation.

The information gathered assisted in developing guidelines for the South African secondary school that would meet the needs of all stakeholders in the school environment. See Table 2.1 for an application of this research.

2.5.3 Consistency ensured by dependability

The third criterion of trustworthiness is consistency ensured by dependability. The consistency of the data depends on whether the findings would be consistent if the inquiry were to be replicated with the same subjects or in a similar context (Krefting, 1991:216).

The consistency criterion for qualitative research focuses on identifying and documenting recurrent and consistent features such as patterns, themes, values and world views, life ways and other phenomena under study in a similar human context (Brink, 1994:16).

The central question always remained the same. The important aspects regarding the research were logic and clarity, and the usefulness of the information obtained. According to Krefting (1991:216), consistency is defined by dependability. For application of this research see Table 2.1.

2.5.4 Neutrality ensured by confirmability

The fourth criterion of trustworthiness is neutrality ensured by confirmability. Neutrality refers to the degree to which the findings are a function solely of the informants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations and perspectives. Confirmability is the strategy used to ensure neutrality (Krefting, 1991:216).

Neutrality captures the traditional concept of objectivity of the data and interpretational confirmability. It describes the audit strategy as the major technique for establishing confirmability. Neutrality is achieved when truth-value and applicability have been established.

Adhering to the following criteria achieves confirmability in the use of audio-visual methods of research: audit trail, triangulation and reflexivity by the researcher using field notes (Schurink, et al 1998:331). See Table 2.1 for application to the research.

2.6 Ethical Measures

According to Babbie (2004:437), the participants in the research study are human beings and should be accorded respect and gratitude for their partnership in the research enterprise.

The ethical measures have been discussed in Chapter One, and should be carefully considered by the researcher when interacting with participants. The aim of this aspect of the research process was to treat participants with dignity and allow them to leave this study with their self-esteem intact. They needed to feel profound respect for the researcher and their respect for behavioral science should have been enhanced rather than diminished.

Ethical issues need to be considered in all research methods. Therefore the researcher applied the principles that protected the participants in the research from any kind of harm or risk. An example of the letter of consent is enclosed as Annexure 2 to this study.

2.7 Summary

This chapter focused on the characteristics of the qualitative research process that had been discussed, as well as how the researcher used the qualitative research process to conceptualise learners' experiences of educator aggression. This chapter further served as a guide for the researcher when conducting the interviews. The researcher selected learners between the ages of 16 and 18 years who were experiencing educator aggression in the secondary school environment with whom to conduct the interviews.

All participants who participated in the study had been exposed to aggression. In this chapter the research design, research method, the role of the researcher as interviewer and data collection was discussed. The data analysis techniques were addressed and the ethical considerations revisited to ensure that trustworthiness was adhered to in the research process. In the following chapter the learners' experiences of educator- learner aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng will be described.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS: THE EXPERIENCES OF LEARNERS REGARDING EDUCATOR AGGRESSION

According to Carl Rogers “*Experience is for me, the highest authority. The touchstone of validity is my own experience. No other person’s ideas, and none of my own ideas, are as authoritative as my experience. It is to experience that I must return again and again, to discover a closer approximation to truth as it is in the process of becoming me*”.

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Two dealt with the research methodology and design which are followed in this research study. In this chapter the findings of the research are presented and discussed according to the data obtained from the interviews and field notes. The first phase of the research is designed to explore and describe learners’ experiences of educator aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng.

The target population of this study was Grade Eleven and Twelve learners between the ages of 16 and 18 years who experience educator aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng. The sample collected depends on in-depth and important information (Sarantakos, 2000:156) from the interviewees. The focus is on learners who experience aggression in the daily classroom situation and the schooling environment, and how this aggression towards them affects and threatens their emotional, physical and mental well-being. Participants participated voluntarily in the study and they were interviewed in English. They were purposively selected. Data saturation was reached when learners voluntarily participated in writing essays describing their experiences of educator aggression towards them in the classroom and in their schooling environment.

Learners were more comfortable expressing themselves in written format. The learners who participated in the semi-structured interviews consisted of four adolescents who were between the ages of 16 and 18 years in Grades Eleven and Twelve. The learners who participated in the naive sketch writing consisted of a Grade Eleven class comprising 45 learners (21 males and 24 females) and a Grade Twelve class comprising 43 learners (22 males and 21 females). In total 92 learners participated in this research.

3.2 Data Analysis

Learners were selected on the basis that they have had exposure to and or experience of educator aggression in the schooling environment. Thus they were able to contribute a rich description (Patton, 1990:169) of their “experiences” (White & Epston, 1990:9) to the study at hand. The focus was on their daily experiences in the classroom and the interaction that took place.

The researcher had the necessary permission to enter the participants’ life-world (Kvale, 1983:174) and to understand, describe and measure educator aggression. The research was exploratory in nature as it attempted to gain insight into what learners perceive to be educator aggression in the schooling environment. A pilot study was conducted in order to satisfy the researcher with regard to the feasibility and correctness of the research, so that the analysis became systematic, sequential, verifiable and continuous, and it entertained alternatives (Myburgh & Strauss, 2000:53).

In the phenomenological interviews, one central question was asked: “**What are your experiences of educator aggression towards you in your schooling environment?**” The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. The “open-coding” method of Tesch (Cresswell, 1994:155) was used to analyse the data collected from the interview as discussed in Chapter Two.

The researcher and independent coder analysed the data and reached consensus regarding the categories and sub-categories (Kvale, 1996:187). Field notes were written after conducting subsequent phenomenological interviews and were integrated into the discussion as part of the data collected.

3.3 Learners' experiences of educator aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng

The learners in this research study have experienced educator aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng. The following themes outline the learners' experiences of this educator aggression (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Themes associated with learners' experiences of educator aggression towards them

☹ Theme 1	learners' experience of distress associated with educators' aggression towards them
☹ Theme 2	learners' experience of rage associated with educators' aggression towards them
☹ Theme 3	the learners' experience of abandonment associated with educators' aggression towards them
☹ Theme 4	learners' experiences of insecurity associated with educators' aggression towards them

3.3.1 The first theme identified from the results was the learners' experience of distress associated with educators' aggression towards them

The learners have experienced a variety of distressful emotional feelings associated with educator aggression towards them in their schooling environment. According to the South African Oxford Dictionary (1986:217), distress can be defined as "anguish or suffering caused by pain, sorrow, worry or exhaustion; state of difficulty or helplessness".

In cultivating a culture of learning for all, it is imperative that learners feel that learning is taking place, that they are allowed to communicate what they feel towards an educator and that all feelings of anxiety are removed. The worst of all long-term effects on development, and that which is experienced by learners in this study, are emotional abuse due to educator aggression in the schooling environment.

3.3.1.1 Adolescent learners' experience of educator aggression as emotional abuse

Learners who experience educator aggression are distressed at school. They encounter anxiety and discomfort when educators react negatively to them. Many learners are subjected to ridicule and sarcasm, degradation and humiliation on a daily basis. Learners are afraid to approach educators, for fear of failure and defeat. Educators end up scolding and threatening learners, resulting in the learners having a negative perception of themselves and school as a whole. When educator aggression occurs at school, learners struggle to prosper and achieve in their schooling environment, and this damages their mental health. This impact not only distresses the learner mentally, but emotionally and physically as well. Learners lack a combination of self-confidence, self-esteem and self respect - in short, a sense of personal worth. The learners who experience aggression at school, eventually hate the educator and the subject being taught. These experiences cause the learner much distress and agony as he or she begins disliking school and the negative relationships formed at school. The learners become withdrawn and these pent-up, unexpressed emotions cause unhealthy inner turmoil within the adolescent learner.

Learners are distressed in an unhealthy environment that is not conducive to teaching and learning. The emotional abuse as experienced by the learners creates negativity and the learners do not view themselves as valuable members of society. The distress experienced by the learners as a result of educator aggression will now be discussed with supportive verbatim quotations from the interviews. The experience of distress emerges as learners are emotionally abused through actions of being. See Table 3.2

Table 3.2 Adolescents' experience of educator aggression as emotional abuse

Emotional abuse	Statements from participants
<i>Belittled</i>	<i>"They belittle you at times"</i>
<i>Demoralised</i>	<i>"He made me and the rest of the class feel stupid, he just concluded that we were not studying, I feel so demoralised because I do study and make an effort to pass."</i>
<i>Hateful</i>	<i>"I hate teachers, they don' care about me, why should I care about them?"</i>
<i>Insulted</i>	<i>"A school is supposed to be a place where you get educated, not where you get insulted and pushed around by teachers."</i>
<i>Scared</i>	<i>"It is not a good environment because we are nervous and scared of the teachers, some of the teachers, they don't understand us."</i>

The above quotations of learners' experiences of educator aggression in the schooling environment, reveal violations of the integrity of learners in the educative process. According to Donald ,et al (1997:206), emotional abuse entails the educator engaging in patterns of behaviour which are consistently destructive toward adolescents' emotional and psychological well-being. A learner stated that it is

"Mostly emotional abuse. The teachers just say we are stupid without finding out the real cause of the problem."

Learners stated that educators were unaware of problems that the learners might be experiencing at home and thus the aggressive educator contributed further to the hurt experienced by the adolescent. The aggressive educator contributes to the failure to meet the learners' psychological and developmental needs, thus creating an unhealthy schooling environment.

When schools fail to meet these needs, it is understandable that adolescents will respond by becoming frustrated. It is therefore imperative for educators to focus their interventions on either altering unproductive environments or at least providing adolescents with assistance in understanding and coping with these environments. The learners' experience of distress in this unhealthy environment impacts on the learners' personal sense of identity. The educators' negative comments create feelings of discrimination and rejection as factors of emotional abuse as revealed in the quotes below.

"It really hurts to hear hurtful words from your teacher. This teacher would say 'we've got no future' and criticise us, shouting and insulting us; he would go crazy, banging the doors and destroying everything."

"I felt so demoralised because I do study and make an effort to pass."

"These days a teacher can discourage his students and it is not a nice thing to do. I mean being aggressive is not the answer."

Learners see a need for educators to influence and shape their self-image more positively. This would entail abandoning bouts of emotional abuse that leave the learners withdrawn and degraded. The key is to a realistic and positive self-concept of the learner. These perceptions determine the educators' actions and influence the learners' behaviour, attitude and achievement. It is the actions of the educator in the classroom situation that are observed by the learners. The aspects of attitude and atmosphere, therefore, are imperative in the educators' classroom (Novak, 1992 : 25-39).

Learners also expressed a need for the aggressive educator to create a comfortable atmosphere in the subject being taught and his or her teaching approaches. This would decrease learners' bunking classes and create rather a positive approach to the educator and the subject being taught. Learners would take an interest in the field of study thus increasing their achievements and concept of self-worth as valuable members of a South African society.

Loring (1994:1), states that emotional abuse is an ongoing process in which one individual systematically diminishes and destroys the inner self of another. The essential ideas, feelings, perceptions and personality characteristics of the victim are constantly belittled. Eventually the victim begins to experience these aspects of the self as being seriously eroded or absent.

Errera (2001:57) agrees that psychological maltreatment has been referred to as emotional abuse, emotional maltreatment, mental cruelty, maternal emotional deprivation, maternal deprivation syndrome, and mental injury. Psychological maltreatment is seen as a concerted attack on the learner's development of self and of social competence. It is a repeated pattern of behaviours that conveys to the learner that he or she is worthless, unloved, unwanted, only of value in meeting others' needs, or is threatened with physical or psychological violence.

Donald et al (1997:23), acknowledge that the primary causes of the education crisis (in South Africa) are to be sought in the political realm, and they take the view that 'educators are the key agents in any schooling system', and that the reconstruction of education in South Africa will require educators to discover and rediscover their responsibilities as teachers. Educators who belittle learners create a negative self-concept within learners.

Burns (1982:45) describes the self-concept as the evaluation that an individual has about him or herself and the extent to which he or she feels that he or she is a worthy and capable person. It can also be based on what others show and tell an individual about themselves. Therefore the learner's self-concept is susceptible to external forces in the school environment. Through all his or her experiences, the learner is able to come to a certain understanding or belief of him or herself (Purkey & Novak 1996: 113-126). Therefore positive experiences will develop a positive self-concept, whilst negative experiences, due to factors such as educator aggression in the school environment, will have a negative impact on what the learner believes him or herself to be, and his or her expectations of the educational system. This will result in distress.

Learners' who experience educator aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng, have described numerous incidents of emotional abuse towards them. Hamarman and Bernet (December: 2000), describe emotional abuse in terms of an "action based" focus. These actions displayed by the aggressive educator and that cause distress in the schooling environment result in rejection, isolation, and terrorisation, ignoring, corrupting, verbally assaulting and over-pressurising the learner. When these elements are present in the educational arena, the adolescent learner does not feel comfortable and this impacts on the learner's self-concept.

For learners to prosper and achieve in their schooling environment, they need a combination of self-confidence, self-esteem and self-respect; in short a sense of personal worth. This is highly unlikely when the aggressive educator emotionally and mentally terrorises adolescent learner. When learners feel comfortable in their schooling environment, a positive impact is made upon their self-concept, ultimately resulting in a higher achievement at school and a more positive relationship between educator and learner (Purkey & Schmidt, 1996:160).

In Erikson's view (Louw, 1997:500), adolescents in their educational environments, therefore, have to learn to trust their environment, and must receive encouragement and support from educators and be provided with opportunities to explore. Learners' who view their learning environments as safe and healthy, develop a sense of significance, power and competence, which according to Erikson, is the necessary ingredient able to sustain and complete stage 5 of the eight psychosocial stages of man, as next discussed.

In adolescence the learner experiences **identity versus role confusion**; adolescents start to regard themselves as unique persons with their own identity and value system. If this development fails to take place, confusion and insecurity develop. Negative features in the educational setting such as aggression of educators towards learners, create insecurity amongst learners and discourages them from forming meaningful interpersonal relationships with educators whom they are supposed to idolise and trust.

Social learning theory explains human behaviour in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural and environmental influences. A learner who is exposed to bouts of aggression, models this behaviour as acceptable and displays such behaviour as a coping mechanism. Thus, aggression begets aggression (Louw, 1997:266). According to Ntlhe (1995: 20), acceptance in the class is important to learners as this allows them to be loved, and creates a sense of belonging and value within the learner. When the learners feel emotionally abused in the classroom, they feel they have no potential and begin to feel angry and withdrawn.

Anger has often been defined as the subjective experience that accompanies certain forms of aggression; as a state of physiological arousals that enhances the probability of aggression; or as an intervening variable (drive) that mediates the effects of frustration, say, on aggression. Anger and “rage” as experienced by learners toward educators, will be discussed in greater detail in the next theme.

3.3.2 The second theme identified from the results was the learners’ experience of rage associated with educators’ aggression towards them

According to the South African Oxford Dictionary (1986:626), “rage” can be defined as “fierce or violent anger; speak furiously or madly.” Learners expressed anger at educators’ aggression in the classroom. Learners are infuriated at the way they are mistreated and violated. When the aggressive educator displays anger toward the learner, the learner in turn becomes angry with the educator.

According to Madubye (1997: 64), educators sometimes use anger to release pent-up emotions, particularly when they feel rather powerless to effect change and when the situation seems hopeless. They are at the end of their emotional endurance. There is a sense of release, as they feel better for releasing something pent-up inside.

Educators who evoke moral authority should do so without authoritarian oppression. Educators are not likely to relate to learners in a caring way when they place blame upon learners. Educators who are hostile towards learners leave learners feeling angry and frustrated.

The learners' anger soon becomes a habit leading to anti-social behaviour, which becomes a 'conduct disorder' to educators (Faupel, Herrick & Sharp 2000:18). At the same time learners do not understand the conduct disorder of educators. Loring (1994:117) believes that adolescents cope better in a warm stimulating environment.

An environment where educator aggression instills terror as a discipline measure, threatens the child with extreme or vague, but sinister punishment and intentionally stimulates intense fear creates a climate of unpredictable threat. The educator sets unrealistic standards and punishes the learner for not meeting them.

3.3.2.1 Adolescent learners are enraged that aggressive educators mistreat and neglect them

Educators who act out aggressively generate neglect and cause rage within the learners. Learners fear they are being punished at the hands of educators who come to school in a stressed, frustrated mood. Learners feel ignored and mistreated and need to understand what the root of the aggressive educator's behaviour is, as it certainly comes from other sources as well.

At this stage of development, the adolescent is excessively concerned with what people think. Therefore the aggressive educator needs to understand the feelings experienced by the learner and should promote a positive self-esteem in the learner instead of a negative self-esteem. The learner might already have the latter and may become convinced that others view him or her as a loser. To avoid the hurt of rejection and neglect, adolescents with low self-esteem may respond by maintaining a mask of hostility, contempt or mistrust of others. If others see the hostility as unpleasant, their feelings of inadequacy are reinforced.

Learners expressed their concerns at educators constantly becoming angry and frustrated in the classroom.

“Mr. X comes to school with his stresses from home, he does not even greet us properly and gets angry at us for no reason”

In this study, anger, as here conceived, is the mane of an emotional syndrome; aggression, a response intended to inflict pain or discomfort upon another, due to frustration (Averill, 1982:30). To foster a sense of professional responsibility will involve all dimensions of challenge. This would include allowing learners to develop ownership, including active participation in decision-making, creating a positive learning environment by effective communication strategies and allowing learners to feel worthwhile and encouraged. When it comes to discipline, the school should not rely on power or punitive models to enforce discipline, but rather share decision-making, because this contributes to a positive self-concept in learners.

Learners expressed their need to understand the cause of the educator’s anger. They want to behave in acceptable ways and should be given the opportunity to display their feelings to trusted, caring educators who would understand their problems and they would no longer need to act out aggressively (Epanchin & Paul 1987:26).

“The teachers, they come with their home stresses and take it out on us learners, it’s so unfair.”

Learners believe that educators chose the profession of teaching because they cared about the learners and educators should not make school an emotional roller coaster for them. Learners are angry at the way educators treat them, that is without human dignity and respect and also with the way educators neglect them in the learning environment by not paying enough attention to them and abusing them both verbally and physically, thus creating a negative impact on the mental health of learners.

Successful learning and development are dependent on the environment in which they take place. Learners are outraged at the way they are mistreated in the schooling environment. They feel they are humiliated and treated with disrespect and this result in feelings of low- self esteem.

“He like threatened me with words and stuff and then walks out the classroom.”

Stevenson (1998:4) outlines neglect as a severe and persistent lack of attention to the learners' basic needs, resulting in significant, harmful impairment of the mental health and the development of, or the exposure to, serious danger. In this research study learners' experienced aggressive educators hurting them as they did not meet the intellectual expectations of the educator.

The adolescent learners develop a sense of identity by themselves or assume an identity that is provided by others. A personal identity is necessary for moving into adulthood (Ingersoll, 1982:12). Failure on the part of the aggressive educator to establish a sense of identity within the adolescent learner interferes with life-tasks that are part of adult personal development.

Learners would like to be treated more compassionately in the classroom; learners would feel more comfortable and more able to perform effectively when they are surrounded by conditions that indicate that they are accepted, liked and valued (Jones,1980:107).

The creation of a more supportive learning environment, that is one that abandons aggressive behaviour on the part of the educator, will have a positive impact on the adolescent learner. It seems logical that educators should, whenever possible, work to create environments that provide the learners with a sense of competence and significance.

3.3.2.2 Adolescent learners are outraged that aggressive educators judge and blame them

Suppressed feelings can lead to frustration, regret and outburst. It is essential to express feelings in a safe, non-judgmental environment. A healthy environment, that does not entail shouting, screaming and becoming verbally and physically aggressive, but one that allows the adolescent learner and aggressive educator to understand themselves well enough to get along with each other, should by all accounts be created. When an aggressive educator targets a learner personally, the behaviour of the learner who stands up to authority is seen as defiant. The learner who does not prove him or herself academically in the classroom is seen as uninterested.

“This educator just does not like me, she tells me that I have boyfriends, that is why I cannot learn.”

Learners are angry that their rights as individuals are being violated. They are not given the chance to express themselves, and if they do express themselves in the classroom, they are seen as being rude and disruptive. Learners are outraged that educators target them personally by referring to incidents outside the schooling environment; blaming them for things that are not a part of their life at school.

“We have some teachers just jumping into blaming you for something you never done and just for the simple reason of that they don't like you so whatever goes wrong in their class they just jump into blaming you and it just makes some of us feel that we don't mean anything to them.”

Gossiping about learners who approached the teacher in private and in trust, and judging them before even knowing the truth in the situation, is a violation of the learners' rights.

“This teacher started trying to convince other teachers that I am a bad child only because I told him that he was not doing something right.”

Learners described experiences of rage as follows:

“It makes us feel ignored and angry, because her attention is directed to towards other people so it’s almost as we worthless.”

“We were kicked out of the classroom and she asked us to take our desks outside... she took the dictionary and threw it on the desk, frightening me. I was so mad..”

Learners are outraged that educators judge them constantly. It is crucial for the educator to act as role-model to the learners. Learners gain when educators practise what they preach. Learners need to be allowed to experience those rights, duties, morals, attitudes and values that contribute to the development of a positive self-concept. Due to educator aggression in the schooling environment, learners lack the element of flexibility, originality and enthusiasm (Ntlhe, 1995: 23). The learners in this study were of the opinion that if educators could abandon their feelings of anger and concentrate on developing trusting relationships, they would be more attentive in the classroom.

“Teachers’ should respect their students... they must stop judging us with our subjects and not discourage us”

Learners in this study experienced educators becoming aggressive with the entire class and blaming the entire class. Averill (1982: 245) notes that the attribution of blame inherent in anger can also involve self. The educators became angry at themselves, although they typically focused their anger on some external object or person. In the schooling environment, the learners felt betrayed and saw the educators’ acts of aggression as unjustified. The participants often stated that in the angry episode they had been “wronged” or otherwise unfairly treated.

“They blame us for what other children did, they don’t give us a chance to express what we feel and even if we try explaining to them what had really happened they say we are back chatting them and say we don’t have respect for them.”

Learners agreed that educators view anger as natural and use it as a form of discipline. Educators see it as a need to express their own feelings as this assists with classroom management. The participants' were of the opinion that educators' anger represents blowing off steam and that it releases bottled-up pressure, and educators cannot control this "pressure cooker".

The learners' wish to be treated more maturely in the classroom stems from a need to find their place and position in society. The adolescent, at this stage of development, needs to experience a sense of power (Jones, 1980:9) in order to feel good about him or herself. As they are making their way into young adulthood and creating their own personal identity as unique individuals, they tend to voice their opinions and in a way stand up to authority. This behaviour is perceived by the educator as unacceptable, disrespectful and an instigation to other learners to behave in the same way.

When the learner knows this behaviour can produce frustrating results for the educator, it occurs more often (Jones & Jones, 1998:11) therefore the educator should not become aggressive in such instances, but should provide adolescent learners in the schooling environment with appropriate opportunities for obtaining significance, competence and power, in ways that the educator considers acceptable.

3.3.2.3 Adolescent learners are enraged that aggressive educators physically and verbally abuse them

The complete removal of corporal punishment in schools is a necessary step towards the development of a culture of human rights in South Africa. It is vital for the aggressive educator to realise that becoming physical in the classroom is generally neither creative nor appropriate. It negates fundamental human rights; it perpetuates a culture of violence through modelling - in the classroom, school and society as a whole; and it frequently does not solve the problem (Donald, et al 1997:131).

This type of physical aggression experienced by the learners upsets the teaching and learning environment. Learners become uninterested and biased toward that educator, resulting in a negative attitude towards the educator. Where educators are facing the challenges of teaching large classes in South Africa, discipline problems may become worse. Educators are at the end of their tether and become aggressive over minor issues. As a result they discipline all the learners in the class. Thus the “punishment” does not suit the “crime”. Learners feel this is unfair and that it should be approached in another manner.

Corporal punishment has been so entrenched in South African education that many educators have difficulty in adapting to discipline with respect and dignity and responsibility being given and shared in the classroom. Learners were of the opinion that in a “new democracy” where corporal punishment was “supposedly abolished”, educators still violated their rights. They were appalled by the behaviour of educators as they became so aggressive that they could not control their anger and thus lashed out violently at learners.

“Mostly their tone changes completely... aggression in their tone, you can hear it, anger.”

“so he got upset, you could see he started getting red in the face, he started you know, fist was clenched... my teacher actually punched the student”, “He’ll grab a compass, and like you see aggressive, like struggles to speak...”

According to Valued Citizens Initiative - Educators’ Guide (2005:46), discipline is vital in every school and at home, but punishment is the least effective way of discipline, because it does not change behaviour. When an educator becomes aggressive towards the learner, anger and frustration set in and the educator becomes unequipped to control his feelings. This is evident in the body language and even the mere tone of the educator.

Research shows that adolescents who are punished often feel humiliated and bad about themselves, try to hide their mistakes, and learn to lie, and are often unable to control their own behaviour when away from the authority.

According to Ingersoll (1982:125), during adolescence the individual's self concept is consolidated into a personal identity. It is with the identity of "**Who am I?**" that the adolescent enters adulthood. The development of a positive self-concept may be the most important task in adolescence. Adolescents who have negative feelings of self-worth is oversensitive to criticism. Because they view themselves as inadequate, they take criticisms as rejection. They are less likely to engage in activities, and if they do, their participation is affected by fear of failure.

Learners need to feel competent in activities. The key for aggressive educators is to develop a sensitivity that enables them to provide structure and support to the adolescent learner, when it is needed, and to decrease these when they begin to stifle growth.

Too much structure does not allow adolescent learners to explore various alternatives and thereby reduces the amount of productive disequilibrium they experience. However, too little structure may create a situation in which adolescents experience so much dissonance that a feeling of confusion and impotence blocks productive integration and synthesis (Jones & Jones, 1981:8).

Educators are in control in the classroom and, since they have everyday contact with the learners, important relationships need to develop. When the learners experience educator aggression in the schooling environment, the educator-learner relationship may be harmed, as their interaction will be limited due to a lack of communication in the classroom because the educators talk down to the learners (Smith & Paul, 2000:30). This aspect leads on to the next theme on educator aggression: a lack of communication in the schooling environment due to learners' experiences of abandonment.

Learners are outraged at the aggression that takes place in the classroom, resulting in ineffective methods of discipline and learners not being treated maturely enough in the classroom. The words and actions of educators hurt learners, creating emotional turmoil and feelings of despair and threat. Bandura (2005:1) states that individuals learn from their interactions and observations, and names the dynamics that are vital to this process: reciprocal determinism; symbolising capability; vicarious capability; forethought capabilities; self-regulatory capabilities, and self reflective capabilities. This goes on to the next unit of meaning on educator aggression: learners' experiences of abandonment resulting in a lack of communication in the schooling environment.

3.3.3 The third theme identified from the results was the learners' experience of abandonment associated with educators' aggression towards them

To build a relationship with others, a person must let the other person get to know him or her. Trust between an educator and a learner is a very important relationship (Johnson, 1993:65). The learner needs to know that he or she can rely on the educator, and that he or she can share information that is confidential with the educator.

The educator needs to be a support system to the learner and must create a safe and comfortable learning environment for the learner, through open communication assurance. When this trust is destroyed, the learner feels vulnerable and exposed, which creates negative feelings. Just one betrayal, may create distrust and, once established, distrust is extremely resistant to change.

The aggressive educator dampens the spirits of learners when there is a lack of communication. Learners want to feel free enough to listen attentively to the educator and also contribute to class discussions without feeling frightened and silenced. Learners expressed a willingness to learn and behave in a friendly, interactive learning environment.

3.3.3.1 Adolescent learners fear a loss in important relationships at school due to educator aggression

Empathy is the ability to attend to, respect and understand the feelings of others. Unconditional positive regard is the ability to accept and respect the other person, no matter what the other person thinks and feels; and congruence means behaving in a way that matches what one truly thinks and feels. It means emotional honesty and is the opposite of defensiveness. The educator and learner need to develop a relationship where the above-mentioned qualities are practised. When the learners deny or suppress what they think or feel due to educator aggression, it creates an inner discomfort where they feel threatened and unsafe in relationships and the learning environment and so they tend to keep up their defenses.

The learners were of the opinion that if educators could curb their aggressive behaviour in the schooling environment, a better relationship could be formed and positive attitudes would be attributed to a positive self-concept. Therefore positive feelings about learning and ultimately positive feelings towards a better future would develop.

“I could not understand why we were so scared to stand in front of this educator. This one time I was shaking, being scared of a person is not a sign of respect.”

According to Ingersoll (1982:167), the relationships that adolescents establish with friends and peers, play an important role in aiding the adolescent to develop the social skills and feelings of personal competence that are necessary for adult functioning. The learner feels abandoned by the educator when the aggressive educator embarrasses the learner in front of peers, as was experienced by learners who stated the following:

“There has been times where children/student are being embarrassed by their teachers in front of their peers.”

As the adolescent works toward establishing a sense of personal identity and independence, peers and friends provide emotional support and a sense of security. At this stage of development, what friends think of each other is extremely important to the learner in the schooling environment. The experiences of learners regarding educator aggression towards them leaves them feeling abandoned and uncomfortable.

“They put us in an uncomfortable position like when they swear at us in front of our fellow students. After that you are not going to break down and cry, you have to suck it up to show that you are not a sissy or cry baby.”

“I wanted to defend myself but that would have been seen as rude, I felt really heart sore... I couldn't cry simply because I'm in grade eleven and 16 years old and everybody would laugh at me.”

Learners stated that there is ineffective communication with the educator and that they were offended by the educators' verbal aggression and educators who did not consider their needs and feelings. This is evidenced through educators' aggressiveness in the schooling environment and lack of communication:

“... Showed aggressiveness through the unpleasant tone of voice and language he expresses himself with. This is found to be most unpleasant when he refers to the students as useless and stupid.”

” Teachers swear at students, I think it has to stop and it also hurts the students feelings...a teacher who cannot finish a sentence without 2-3 “I” words.”

There is a strong reciprocal relationship between self-concept and scholastic achievement (Purkey & Schmidt, 1996:160). Academic achievement can be positively influenced if self-concept is positive, and if the climate at school is conducive to learning. In this study, learners' attitudes towards their aggressive educators revealed feelings of resentment and negative feelings toward their schoolwork.

"I don't feel like going to class, I know she's gonna pick on me for something or the other, my grades are slipping, I want to learn but I just hate going there."

O' Hagan (1993: 31) stresses language as the principal means of communication between most human beings. Language and open communication in the classroom are based on mutual respect, this means that both educators and learners allow each other to express their ideas, points of view, feelings and emotions without fear of being ridiculed (Du Toit, 1998:109). A study conducted by Schaefer (1997) found various behavioural patterns of educators that constitute verbal abuse. It was found that these verbalizations were potentially harmful.

According to Louw (1997:261), social learning theory is learning that takes place as a direct result of social interaction. The adolescent learner who experiences educator aggression in the schooling environment does not interact positively with his or her learning environment because negative interaction is taking place.

According to Bandura (1973:3), modelling is a behaviour exhibited by the role model.

Anti-social role models (including violent and criminal behaviour) in the learners' environment can lead to anti-social behaviour within the learner. Therefore it is imperative for educators to develop excellent relationships with learners, where exemplary behaviour on the part of the educator is modelled. In this way learners trust and communicate with the educator who portrays him or herself in a positive manner.

Erikson (Jones, 1980:4) lists the task of establishing a basic sense of trust in relationships with others as the first stage in human development. Erikson's theory also emphasises that adolescence is a time when emphasis is placed upon developing a sense of significance. When outlining the central developmental tasks of adolescence, Erikson includes the importance of developing an integrated, acceptable personal identity and the task of establishing mutually satisfying long-term relationships.

Educators essentially need to communicate more appropriately in the schooling environment. Aggressive educators end up saying hurtful things, not realising that it is being done in front of peers. It is being done in front of their friends, peers and classmates who will either feel their pain or laugh at them. At this stage of development learners are mortified at being humiliated in front of their colleagues. Adolescents are rapidly approaching adulthood in terms of their cognitive and physical abilities, and they have a desire to experience greater independence and responsibility. As a result of these factors, head-on confrontations that strengthened authority and respect during the pre-adolescent period, quickly begin to undermine authority and respect during adolescence (Jones, 1980:9).

3.3.3.2 Adolescent learners fear a decline in their academic performance at school and future possibilities due to educator aggression

Many of the learners who experienced educator aggression in this study, sense that they are at a loss, in terms of education, due to educators who do not know how to control their temper and react in the classroom.

“He threatens everybody. He tells us if we can’t cope now, we’ll never be able to.”

The learners fear that their future possibilities are being hampered as they are not learning but are playing truant, and are not interested in the subject being taught.

“I suppose like you don’t want to go to that class... it changes the subject for you, for example this subject now we hate the class...it just irritates you in your day and you know, you just don’t need it.”

The learners also feel that if educators were more interested in teaching the subject appropriately and in placing the learners’ needs first, the learners would be more enthusiastic about learning. The learners ultimately respond negatively, internally and externally, since they feel negative about coming to school, their marks are not good, and they ultimately feel their future opportunities are slim.

The learners also expressed their negative feelings with regard to South Africa's Educational system. They feel that they are being let down by the fact that the government employs educators who display aggression in the classroom. The learners assume these educators do not have a love for teaching and that they are not equipped to use useful strategies in the classroom to cope with the new generation of challenges.

“He is the kind of teacher that makes you lose interest in school.”

Jones (1980:3) believes adolescents need to be accepted, liked, trusted, and treated with respect. They need to understand their environment and to be involved in making decisions that affect them. Aggressive educators who target certain learners also have their favourites whom they personally address (making good eye contact in the classroom) and motivate constantly.

” She has her favorites in her class, if you are a good student like me she will like you but I feel sad for some of the kids...they have their number one students.”

Educators, who use outbursts to accompany aggression in order to control their learners, contribute to the development of antisocial and delinquent learners. Some of the learners have stated that they feel suicidal and aggressive themselves due to their experiences of educator aggression in the classroom (Jones, 1980:5).

“ She almost selects whom she's aggressive towards and who she doesn't like... she'd turn to the other side of the classroom, the treatment makes you feel less important, then you start hating the subject.”

A fundamental duty of the educator is to understand and respect the views and opinions of the adolescent learner, without acting in an aggressive and hostile manner. Learners would like to take responsibility for their actions, but not at the hands of an educator who displays physical and verbal aggression towards adolescent learners.

Educators need to provide learners with opportunities to seek independence (Jones & Jones 1989:6), as a maturing young adult, brimming with pride and a sense of belonging.

3.3.4 The fourth theme identified from the results was learners' experiences of insecurity associated with educators' aggression towards them

According to Donald, et al., (1997:125), the educator has the responsibility for creating a safe environment for the learner, by playing a supportive role in the learning domain. The educator who does not maintain a supportive role in the classroom, creates within the learner a sense of insecurity and resentment. The learner finds it extremely difficult to communicate with the educator; and thus begins to feel unsafe and intimidated.

3.3.4.1 Adolescent learners experiences of insecurity due to a breakdown in communication with the educator

The educator who displays aggression in the learning environment emotionally upsets the learner, creating feelings of insecurity within the learner and making it impossible for the learner to approach the educator. The need arises to want to feel safer and more assertive in the classroom.

"There is no communication between my teachers... it's almost as if you would try to build on that relationship again, you know with your teacher so that you can get to the level, where you understand her and she understands you..."

"I just cannot speak to my teacher, I begin to feel all tense and scared inside... I mean you're supposed to speak to your teacher bout anything..."

"Even though my answer might be right, I'm too insecure to raise my hand... I feel like a fool, just unable to communicate or even look my teacher in the eye..."

In the South African context, with the recent spate of aggression taking place between learners in the schooling environment, a climate of violence is escalating. Disruption and lawlessness prevailed in the not too distant past. Conditions are still far from normal and academic achievement is being compromised when learners do not have positive self-concepts. This results in negative attitudes towards schools and the education system as a whole. Ultimately learners consider themselves less valuable members of society. Miller and Perrin, (1999: 34) confirm that within the social learning theory is a process called modelling, in which a person learns social and cognitive behaviours by simply observing and imitating others.

The aggressive educator who displays violent acts of aggression in the school is indirectly leading the learners to internalise this behaviour and eventually display it in another or the same setting. It is evident in this research that learners have voiced the need to express themselves as openly as possible and this includes using vulgar language and becoming aggressive themselves. Thus it is noted again that aggression begets aggression.

3.3.4.2 Adolescent learners' experiences of insecurity due to educators' negative attitude towards them, including tendencies of xenophobia

Due to educator aggression in the schooling environment, learners are intimidated and reluctant to approach the educator, fearing that the latter will lash out at them or embarrass them in front of their friends. This creates a sense of insecurity and vulnerability within the learner. The learner feels unsafe and uncomfortable in the learning environment.

Learners in the study experienced educators' attitudes toward them as being unacceptable. The learners stated that they deserved a more mature approach to the handling of negative occurrences in the classroom. They were often victimised by the aggressive educator and feared defending themselves in the classroom. This experience is evident in the following quotes from learners:

“... He kept telling me that he would make sure that I failed and that he would nail me... and that to me as an individual is unacceptable.”

“Some teachers hit us for speaking our minds, and trying to get our voices out there. I think there was a way we could have solved the problem but I realized it was all done to prove a point of power.”

“They’ve been aggressive towards me, why can’t I fight back, why must I sit back and take all of this, where maybe they are wrong?”

Learners’ experiences of insecurity as individuals and citizens of an “autonomous” country create disillusionment and trepidation. The institution that is supposed to embrace human rights and acceptance is the same institution where learners are experiencing educator aggression as a result of xenophobic attitudes. The learners experience aggressive attitudes that discriminate and offend them in their schooling atmosphere, as educators demean them and treat them without compassion. This insecurity escalates as the learner feels socially unacceptable.

“... who hates our guts, just because we are..... and he is..... He does whatever there is in his power to make our lives at school a living hell.”

“He would complain about the litter, toilets and students and he would blame the foreigners telling them they came to this country to learn but instead they do the opposite.”

Learners want to feel safe and secure in their school that should equip them with the life-skills to be valuable members of society within South Africa. This entails accepting each other no matter their race, colour or creed and approaching subjects such as xenophobia and HIV /AIDS with confidence.

If the element of mutual acceptance is lacking, the learner may feel that he or she is not a person but an object; a negative self-concept may develop within the adolescent and this may increase the risk of him or her dropping out of school. Developing security in the learner is crucial to his or her sense of personal worth. Positive interactions will not only precede the public victory (social acceptance), but ultimately and most importantly, the private victory (self-acceptance) (Covey, 1989:53).

Xenophobia can be defined as fear of, and hostility towards, foreigners. It is related to the widespread perception within South Africa that there are 'floods' of illegal immigrants coming into South Africa. Xenophobic attitudes have indeed translated into violent attacks on foreigners recently.

In Cape Town, the Cape Town Refugee Centre (CTRC) identified a number of serious attacks on foreigners in the year 2000 to 2003. "Xenophobia, defined as a deep dislike of non-nationals by nationals, is a dangerous trend that must be condemned unequivocally. A culture of human rights cannot be fostered in South African schools, when xenophobic tendencies are evident. The results of xenophobia is unforgiving, uncaring and sometimes even brutal with deadly consequences (<http://www.1hr.org.za/refugee/policy/xenonatplan.htm>).

Xenophobia is experienced by the learners to a large extent, and learners contend that they should be treated with more respect and human dignity. When educators are very aggressive in this learning environment, learners internalise this unhealthy behaviour by imitating the educators. Thus aggression begets aggression. Learners were of the opinion that, in spite of being in an aggressive environment, a sense of security needs to be developed within them. This can be achieved through effective role-modelling on the part of the educator.

3.5 Summary

Educator aggression as experienced by learners in a secondary school in Gauteng underlies the destructive attitudes that learners have toward teachers, the schooling environment, the educational system and society as a whole. In this chapter the main themes were identified that described educator learner aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng.

This was based on the analysis of data collected during the phenomenological interviews. A literature control was conducted to verify findings. Themes were used to represent learners' experiences of educator aggression towards them in the schooling environment. As a result of these findings, guidelines have been identified that will support both the learners and the educators to facilitate their mental health. Thus in Chapter Four guidelines, the limitations and recommendations of this research study will be discussed.

3.6 Conclusion

According to Maher (1987: 210), schools are one of the social agencies that can create change in a society and positive relationships are important for increasing the degree of significance, safety and respect of others, experienced by adolescents. These factors play an important role in creating a positive self-concept and enhancing learning.

Learners' experiences of educator aggression include distress, rage, abandonment and insecurity. The aggressive educators need to internalise the feelings of learners and develop more effective attitudes in dealing with issues in the classroom, thus developing a positive teaching and learning environment.

CHAPTER 4

Overview, Guidelines, Recommendations, Limitations and Conclusions

“Let the elephant fell the trees, let the bush pig dig the holes, let the mason wasp fill in the walls, let the giraffe put up the roof, then we will have a house” (Valued Citizens Initiative - Educators Guide, 2005 :63).

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter intends to provide an overview of the study with reference to the background, the problem statement and aim of the research. Guidelines and recommendations will be presented to assist educators and learners who experience educator aggression in their schooling environment. The limitations of the study will also be discussed.

4.2 RATIONALE, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND AIM OF THE STUDY

The degree to which a school environment or atmosphere meets the individual needs of the learners has an impact not only on higher academic performance, but also on the personal satisfaction of the adolescent learners and their feelings of personal adequacy (Ingersoll, 1982:98). In school settings where learners experience aggression at the hands of educators, the latter fail to respond to the personal characteristics of the learner, thus creating an unhealthy atmosphere for teaching and learning to take place. Learners therefore demonstrate a decline in performance and diminished feelings of personal adequacy.

Based on this, the researcher was interested in discovering what learners' experiences are regarding educator aggression towards them, and what the various intervention strategies are that could assist the learner and the aggressive educator in the educational setting of South Africa.

The research questions expressed below were produced.

- i) What are the experiences of learners regarding educator aggression towards them?
- ii) What can be done to assist learners and educators concerning educator aggression in order to facilitate their mental health?

The objectives of this study are :

- to explore and describe the learners' experiences of educator aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng; and
- to describe guidelines to assist learners and educators who experience educator aggression in order to facilitate their mental health.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

In order to achieve the research aims, the researcher has made use of a qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and contextual research design. The data was collected by conducting individual interviews with learners who were experiencing educator aggression at a secondary school level in Gauteng. Learners also expressed their views by writing essays based on the research question.

The following strategies were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the study:

- truth value;
- applicability;
- consistency; and
- neutrality.

These strategies have been discussed in Chapter Two.

The researcher also adhered to ethical measures by obtaining consent from the principal of the school, as well as the participants and their parents, to participate in the research. Essays were written and interviews were conducted with the participants and tape-recorded. The transcribed data was discussed with an independent coder in order to verify categories. After a consensus discussion with the independent coder, these categories were mutually agreed upon.

4.4.1 Phase One: Explore and describe the learners' experiences of educator aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng

The themes are as follows:

- learners' experience of distress associated with educator aggression towards them;
- learners' experience of rage associated with educator aggression towards them;

- learners' experience of abandonment associated with educator aggression towards them; and
- learners' experience of insecurity associated with educator aggression towards them.

The analysed data was discussed in Chapter Three and quotes from the learners' interviews and essays were provided to substantiate the categories. The learners made recommendations on how they would like educators to approach and interact with them in their schooling environment.

4.4.2 Phase Two: Description of guidelines to assist learners and educators concerning educator aggression, in order to facilitate their mental health

The recommendations made by learners are based on how learners would prefer educators to interact with them in an educational environment, without becoming aggressive, and certain strategies were suggested that could combat educators' aggression in the classroom.

The researcher holds the view that these recommendations should serve as guidelines for adolescent learners and educators who experience educator aggression at secondary school level.

Learners are of the opinion that educators should respond to them in a manner that promotes mutual respect and communication. This would promote an environment conducive to teaching and learning and one in which they would feel safe and secure (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. The following table outlines the description of guidelines that could be used by learners and educators when confronted with educator aggression in secondary school

The learners' experiences of educator aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng	Guidelines that could assist learners and educators concerning educator aggression in order to facilitate their mental health
Learners' experience of distress associated with educator aggression towards them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interpersonal skills training: the educator becoming an effective role-model to learners ✓ A programme on adolescent development: the educator understanding the different developmental stages of the adolescent
<u>caused by emotional and verbal abuse</u>	
Learners' experience of rage associated with educator aggression towards them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Anger control training: ongoing training for learners and educators in controlling their anger ✓ Workshop on discipline: educators to maintain discipline respectfully and learners to take responsibility for their actions ✓ Relaxation training: training for learners and educators who are overcome with anxiety
<u>caused by anger and neglect</u>	
Learners' experience of abandonment associated with educator aggression towards them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Assertive communication: strategies to assist educator with open communication ✓ Conflict resolution: methods of dealing with conflict constructively ✓ Peer mediation: the importance of supportive peer mediation
<u>caused by loneliness and distrust</u>	
Learners' experience of insecurity associated with educator aggression towards them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Life skills workshop: emphasising human rights issues
<u>caused by lack of communication</u>	

The guidelines can serve as facilitative programmes as it is crucial that the sensitive adolescent learner responds to, and communicates with, the educator and the aggressive educator is willing to build positive, trusting relationships with the learners. The programmes aim to assist learners and educators who experience educator aggression, in order to facilitate the mental health of the learners and of the educators, and focus on the major components of behaviour, anger and emotion.

4.4.2.1 Life skills workshop: learner and educator development

According to Donald, et al (1997:96), Life Skills education in relation to both educators and learners is an essential part of the development of people. Life Skills comprise particular attitudes, knowledge and skills which enable one to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life, and in this particular research study, within the educational environment of a developing society, such as South Africa. Developing life skills learning is imperative to learners and educators as it promotes social competence. This has a pivotal role to play in the promotion of mental and emotional health and social well-being.

- *Emphasise the significance of life skills awareness*

Life skills programmes will enhance learners' and educators' coping resources by promoting personal and social competence and confidence. Through the life skills programme, educators will learn how to identify the developmental stages of the adolescent learner. This is extremely relevant to this study as it enables one to address issues in a more understanding manner, to develop constructive relationships and to develop a positive self-image within adolescent learners.

Human rights issues in a democratic society will also be concentrated upon. Issues such as xenophobia within the school environment and resentment on the part of learners, as tomorrow's leaders, towards the educational system of South Africa and the type of educators that it breeds, should be given relevant focus.

Such issues addressed in the program will shed light on educator aggression in the classroom, school and educational system, thus working towards making the schooling environment for the adolescent learner safer, more comfortable and far more positive.

4.4.2.2 Interpersonal skills training

The educator is frequently not very forgiving when there are frequent, even minor disruptions caused by a particular learner in the classroom. It is often as if the aggressive educator has a personal vendetta against the learner, and he or she is immediately harshly punished for a minor crime, due to previous altercations that have occurred. The learner experiences insecurity at voicing his or her opinions in the classroom for fear of being ridiculed or inaccurate. The educator needs to

- *eradicate emotional abuse caused by the aggressive educator*

According to Jones (1980: 66), interaction between educator and learner is imperative, as the adolescent learner needs to understand his or her environment in order to develop a sense of self-respect.

- ✦ By **modelling** effective behaviour, the aggressive educator abandons hostility and could create a positive impact on the learner.
- ✦ Learners and educators are given opportunities to **role-play** scenarios and rehearse competent interpersonal behaviours.
- ✦ The **performance feedback** entails providing praise, reinstruction and related feedback on role-playing.

- ✦ **Transfer training** encourages the educator to learn skills that promote mental health, and thereby continuously use these skills in the schooling environment with the adolescent learners (Goldstein, 2004:158).

4.4.2.3 Anger control training

According to Blum (2001:1), anger is a daily feature of school life. It is a fact of life that often gets in the way of the teaching process for both learners and educators. The educators' anger is brought on by other forms of stress, particularly in the context of the South African educational system, often resulting in the educator becoming aggressive and frustrated with learners.

Diffusing strategies open to the learner and the aggressive educator to overcome aggression in the classroom:

- ✦ **distraction for the learner** - finding a way of getting the learners' attention focused on something else;
- ✦ **distraction for the educator** - distracting oneself from getting embroiled in confrontation mode;
- ✦ **relocation of the learner** - removing the learner from the environment that is stressful; and
- ✦ **relocation of the educator** - moving away from the situation to cool down.

Other techniques are listed below.

- ✦ **Changing the teaching materials and teaching styles** - educator tries to think about how the lesson or subject itself may be contributing to problems in the classroom
- ✦ **Emergency changes of learner activity** - educator changes activity of learner who is experiencing destructive rages
- ✦ **Changing one's mindset** - as aggression begets aggression, react differently to the situation
- ✦ **Calming body language** - engage in slow movements that diffuse tension
- ✦ **Active listening** - take an active role in trying to solve the problem (Blum, 2001:59).

4.4.2.4 Relaxation training

Relaxation Training (Jones, 1980:224) can be employed to assist anxious learners and aggressive educators in controlling their anxiety and thereby becoming more able to cope with the demands placed upon them. This method of relaxation can be done in the classroom to alleviate stress and tension:

- learning to relax by alternately tensing and relaxing various muscle groups;
- focusing on breathing, deep in and out and simply letting go of the body;

- envisioning a warm, soft flow of energy, gradually moving through the body;
- role playing - focus on being relaxed while working through a difficult encounter.

4.4.2.5 A workshop on “Discipline with Dignity and Respect”

Learners want to feel safe and secure in their school environment and therefore discipline should be achieved with dignity and respect. Constructive interpersonal relationships must be developed where assertive communication takes place. Learners want educators to listen to their views and not judge or condemn them unnecessarily.

- *Discipline should be executed respectfully*

Learners are distraught at the verbal and physical educator aggression and seek to take responsibility if they are wrong. Conflict resolution can be achieved through peer mediation and a win/win situation (Covey, 1989: 206). Through effective communication, all parties involved can reach an amicable consensus, without experiencing violence and victimisation.

Learners are expected to become actively involved in their personal education. They are thus expected to respond favourably to authority by obeying reasonable disciplinary measures established by educators. The aggressive educator must maintain control over his or her anger in the classroom, so that it does not result in physical and verbal aggression.

4.4.2.5a) Assertive communication (aggressive educator to pupil)

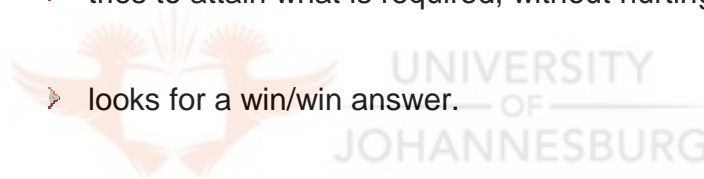
Assertive discipline and communication is a systematic and structured programme which is designed to give learners and educators a clear and sensible outline of what is expected of them. The emphasis is very much on the positive, through rewards and verbal praise, but with a series of sanctions that can also be used if necessary (G.D.E, 2000: policy document). The educator must:

- say what he or she means and mean what he or she is says;
- catch learners when they are doing something right;
- use rewards and praise liberally;
- use sanctions, but only after learners have been given clear warning;
- use golden rules;
- use a behavioural contract with learners; and
- include whole school effectiveness: involve the school (SBST: School Based Support Team), parents and community.

4.4.2.5b) Conflict resolution

Educators must deal with conflict constructively as a professional issue. It is also imperative for the educators to face this issue in his or her own personal and professional development (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997:129). Within the classroom the educator as facilitator :

- acknowledges that every person has a right to have their own point of view.
- displays empathy and listens attentively
- tries to attain what is required, without hurting others.
- looks for a win/win answer.



4.4.2.5c) Peer mediation

Educators play a significant role in this process by acting as facilitators in a supporting environment. In this way they assist the peer helpers to gain skills and strategies for solving problems. The following factors are important in efficient peer mediation.

- be a good listener and practise empathic listening.
- give everyone a chance to state their problem.
- stay neutral.
- urge both parties to work toward a solution.

- Interview learners away from others at first, to determine their position. (G.D.E, 2005: policy document)

4.4.2.6 The therapeutic relationship: a programme on adolescent development

The learners' insecurity increases as they experience victimisation by the educator and when they cannot defend themselves as they see fit. This would be seen as going against authority. When learners do stand up for themselves, it usually provokes the aggressive educator. The learner thereafter receives severe punishment for a crime that is hardly severe.

- *The educators' cognisance of adolescent learner development*

Learners were also of the opinion that the aggressive educator provoked them into doing or saying something that they usually would not do or say. Thus they contained themselves and tried to "act brave" to challenge authority. This angered the educator even more and the aggression became severe. It is almost as if the learners got a kick out of seeing the educator lose control (Jones, 1980:9).

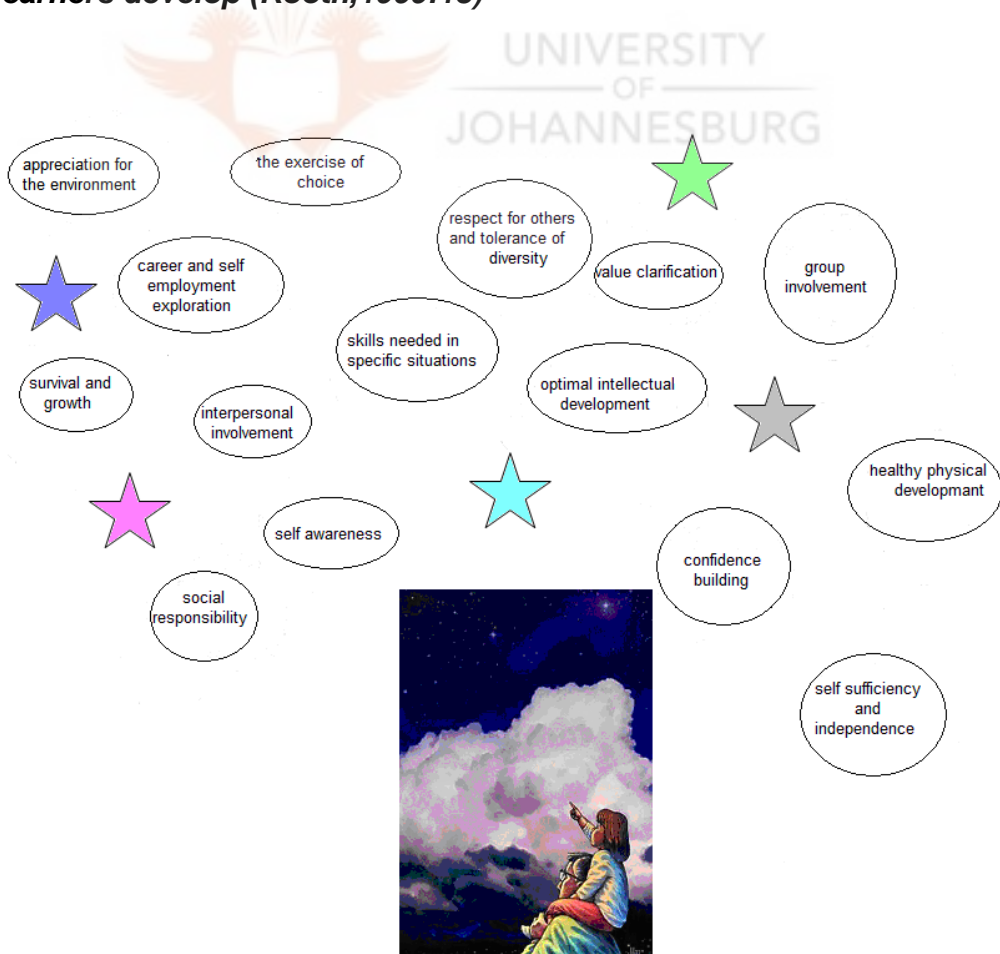
According to Jones (1980:46), adolescents are rapidly approaching adulthood and mistreatment by educators at this stage develops a negative mind set in learners and impacts on their personal sense of identity. Learners fear that they are incompetent and cannot make a valuable contribution in their schooling environment. The adolescent must accept him or herself as a unique individual with strengths and weaknesses. When educator aggression happens at school, the learners' pride and self-respect diminishes and they become as insecure and self-conscious.

Since learners value their peers in the secondary school, it is essential that a support system is in place for them so that they can feel secure and able to depend on, or consult with others who are going through a similar crisis. Learner's "want to be there for each other" and solve problems together.

The importance of developing a therapeutic relationship is characterised by effective communication, stability, trust and mutual respect (Jones & Jone, 1998:152). When educator aggression is evident in the schooling environment, adolescents experience emotional, behavioural and social problems; learners are not productive, and educators are not supportive.

Figure 4.1 outlines the numerous challenges facing the adolescent learner. Through effective relationships with educators and peers, learners can ease into adulthood positively. The adolescent learner with the support of an educator who understands what it means to be an adolescent and cope with various obstacles in life, can develop a trusting non-aggressive attitude and grow towards empowerment.

Figure 4.1 The qualities, attitudes and skills that life skills education aims to help learners develop (Rooth, 1999:13)



Therapeutic relationships are formed by:

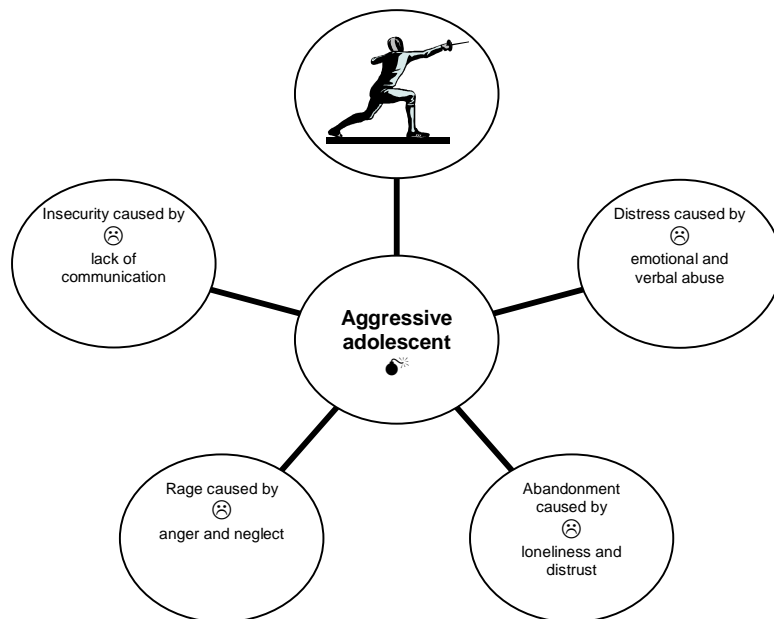
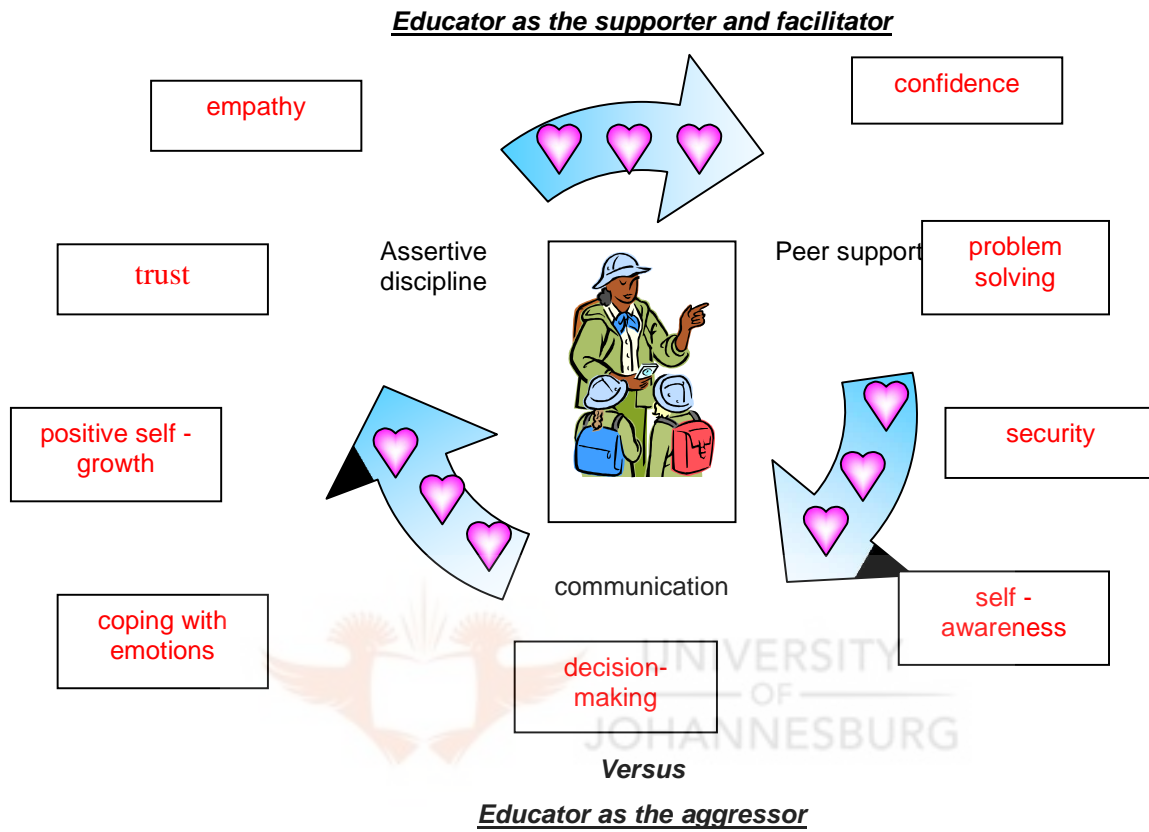
- creating within the adolescent learner a sense of significance;
 - creating within the learner a sense of competence; and
 - creating within the learner a sense of power (within limits).
- (Jones, 1980:4).

Figure 4.2 is a pictorial presentation of the guidelines of a life skills education strategy. Life skills education first and foremost is a concentric interactive process that begins with the educator as a facilitator and supporter. According to Rooth (1999:104), facilitation promotes learning by giving the adolescent the freedom to try, make an effort, make mistakes, experiment and discover. The educator as facilitator provides a healthy environment conducive to teaching and learning by creating opportunities for skills development. This encompasses being flexible, non-threatening, minimally directive, creative, genuine and trustworthy.

Various factors are essential to the growing adolescent and, as the arrows indicate, represent an elevation toward self-actualisation and promotion of mental health. These include positive self-growth, empathy and trust, confidence and hope and adequate problem solving and decision-making skills. Not only does the adolescent revel in assertiveness but so too does the educator. The educator develops a genuine understanding of the adolescent and shares knowledge and ideas through a positive environment thus creating a non-aggressive environment. The adolescent eventually trusts the educator as a supporter through the process of productive communication, assertive discipline and peer support.

Life skills education does not entail the educator as the aggressor, as the diagram (see Figure 4.2) below signifies. The educator in an aggressive environment is soon visualised as the attacker. This causes the learners to be distressed, abandoned, angry and insecure. This negative mental and emotional health is explosive to the adolescent and soon he or she displays aggressive behaviour thus confirming that aggression begets aggression.

Figure 4.2 A pictorial presentation of life skills education with the educator as facilitator and supporter versus the educator as the aggressor



4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH

The following recommendations can be made for further studies to build onto this research. This research study has only concentrated on the learners' experiences of educator aggression towards them in their school environment. Further research can concentrate on:

- the learners' perception of their own aggression in the school environment;
- the educators' perception of their own aggression in the school environment;
and
- the effectiveness of strategies used to combat aggression in the schooling environment.

4.6 LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this study can be listed as follows.

- Learners were more comfortable expressing themselves in written format through essay writing, than being interviewed. This limited personal interaction between interviewer and interviewees.

4.7 SUMMARY

This research aimed at exploring learners' experiences of educator aggression towards them in their school environment. Their perceptions were useful, as the issue of educator aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng was highlighted and guidelines were formulated to act as an intervention strategy in dealing with educator aggression at secondary school level.

The learners expressed their relief and gratitude that this issue in their schooling environment was being addressed. Learners also expressed concern over the crisis in the educational system brought about by the employment of aggressive educators and peers who model this behaviour as acceptable and who lash out abusively at the educational system and society as a whole. This creates negativity as these adolescent learners will soon become young adults and the future of the nation.

Learners hoped that effective strategies would be put in place to deal with this disturbing area; as they were in their final years of formal schooling and wished to form good relationships and have a positive self-esteem before venturing into the big wide world and being confronted with new perspectives.

With effective strategies in place, teamwork can result in a change from aggressive educators to assertive, pro-active educators who understand their learners and have the interest of their learners at heart. This should foster the development of well-rounded, worthwhile individuals who have a positive outlook on the future. With ongoing training and workshops that address aggression in the school environment, learners and educators will learn to handle situations effectively and use strategies available to eradicate a negative, hostile, unsafe environment, in favour of one that is conducive to teaching and learning.

4.8 CONCLUSION

The educator and the learner are vital components in the educational process of South Africa. If either is unhappy, the system does not function as an integrated whole. As this research addressed the learners' experiences of educator aggression towards them in their school environment, it became evident that the atmosphere in which teaching and learning is taking place often dictates the outcome of personal adequacy, especially for the adolescent learner who is becoming a young adult.

The role of the educator is that of leader, manager, supporter, researcher and learner. The educator is constantly devising new techniques to reach the minds and hearts of learners and, sometimes to the detriment of the educator, anger and frustration set in. The aggressive educator becomes destructive to the adolescent learner and creates a negative mindset within the learner. However, with support and through effective interventions, the aggressive educator can combat a negative attitude and develop behaviour that contributes to a positive self-concept within learners. The educator can create feelings of safety, competence, significance and belonging.

South Africa has seen many challenges in its educational system and through developing democracy in the school environment, learners and educators should understand the value of promoting and sustaining meaningful relationships and belonging to a school with dignity and pride. However, educators experience isolation – they fear the burden of expectations imposed by the educational bureaucracy. They feel the tremendous weight of unruly and restless behaviour coming from a significant minority of the learners. They feel inadequate in that they are judged by their ability to quell the learners and find it a constant and exhausting battle. They often feel they are failing. They are struggling to keep their heads above water, often resulting in frustration, anger and aggression. Choosing an appropriate response to a difficult situation means taking risks and being courageous. One thing that is important to remember is that people always have the opportunity to make choices. If the choice turns out to be negative or disappointing, then one must take the responsibility and move on to a better choice.

There are support systems and intervention strategies that could be used to develop people as effective educators and instill in the learners feelings of perseverance and positivity. Educators in South Africa have a responsibility towards the learners. As the teacher's act of dedication states. *I will be guide and friend to the pupils in my care, and Not Misuse the authority that I shall hold* Teachers' act of dedication: 1999

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Annexure 1



Annexure 2



Dear Parents/Guardians

REQUEST TO CONDUCT AN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

I, Aneshree Naicker, a Master's student at the University of Johannesburg, Faculty of Education and Nursing, Department of Education require permission from you, the parent, to allow the participation of your adolescent child in educational research. As a requirement of my studies, I am engaged in a research study entitled "Learners' experiences of educator aggression in the secondary school".

The study is supervised by Professor M. Poggenpoel and Professor C.P.H. Myburgh.

I would like to invite your child to participate in my research project.

To complete my research study I need to conduct interviews with the learners of more or less 15-20 minutes. The interviews will be audio taped and then transcribed for verification with the supervisor and the independent coder. The following ethical principles will be adhered to throughout the research process:

- ✓ Your child's informed consent to participate.
- ✓ Your child's voluntary participation and freedom to participate and withdraw without penalty.
- ✓ Your child's safety, confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained.
- ✓ Your child will not use his/her name or the name of the institution when discussing information pertaining to research.
- ✓ Your child's information on the audiotapes will be erased as soon as conveniently so, field notes will be destroyed after saturation has been reached and all raw data will be kept confidential.
- ✓ Your child's summary of the research will be available to you, if required.

Your child will benefit from such a study, as he/she will have an opportunity to describe his/her experiences verbally as they apply to his/her situation. The research findings from his/her experiences will assist the education department in evaluating aggression and setting guidelines to facilitate the mental health of educators and learners', in order to create a healthy environment for learning. As this is a sensitive subject, a guidance counselor will be made available.

Thank You

A. Naicker (Mrs.) B.Ed M.Ed
(Researcher)
Contact number: 084 310 1725

Date

I have read the consent form and voluntarily agree to allow my child to participate in this research study.

Parents Signature

Date



Professor C.P.H Myburgh
(Supervisor)

Date

Professor M. Poggenpoel
(Co-supervisor)

Date

The Principal and School Governing Body
High School

Dear Principal and Members

REQUEST TO CONDUCT AN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

I, Aneshree Naicker, a Master's student at the University of Johannesburg, Faculty of Education and Nursing, Department of Education require permission from the Principal and Governing body of the school, to allow the participation of learners, in educational research. As a requirement of my studies, I am engaged in a research study entitled "Learners' experiences of educator aggression in the secondary school".

I would like to invite learners to participate in my research project

To complete my research study I need to conduct interviews with the learners of more or less 30-40 minutes. The interviews will be audio taped and then transcribed for verification with the supervisor and the independent coder. The following ethical principles will be adhered to throughout the research process:

- ✓ I will ensure voluntary participation and freedom to participate and withdraw without penalty.
- ✓ I will ensure that confidentiality and anonymity is maintained.
- ✓ I will omit or use false names regarding the names of the participants and the institution when discussing information pertaining to research.
- ✓ Information on the audiotapes will be erased as soon as conveniently so, field notes will be destroyed after saturation has been reached and all raw data will be kept confidential.
- ✓ Information regarding the research will only be accessible to the supervisors mentioned and the external independent coder
- ✓ The research will be available after completion if required
- ✓ I will leave my contact address and details in case I need to be contacted regarding information pertaining to research
- ✓ I will terminate the research at any time if you so require

Information from such a study will be beneficial to both learners and educators as participants will describe their experiences verbally as they apply to his/her situation.

The research findings from his/her experiences' will assist the education department in evaluating aggression and setting guidelines to facilitate the mental health of educators and learners', in order to create a healthy, safe environment for teaching and learning. As this is a sensitive subject, a guidance counselor will be made available.

Thank You

A. Naicker (Mrs.) B.Ed M.Ed
(Researcher)
Contact number: 084 310 1725

Date

I have read the consent form and voluntarily agree to allow the learners to participate in this research study.

Principals Signature

Date

Professor C.P.H Myburgh
(Supervisor)

Date



UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

Professor M. Poggenpoel
(Co-supervisor)

Date

Gauteng Department of Education

Dear Sir/Madam: Permission from participants

REQUEST TO CONDUCT AN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

I, Aneshree Naicker, a Master's student at the University of Johannesburg, Faculty of Education and Nursing, Department of Education require permission, for learners' participation, in educational research. As a requirement of my studies, I am engaged in a research study entitled "Learners' experiences of educator aggression in the secondary school".

To complete my research study I need to conduct interviews of more or less 30-40 minutes. The interviews will be audio taped and then transcribed for verification with the supervisor and the independent coder. The following ethical principles will be adhered to throughout the research process:

- ✓ Informed consent for learners' to participate.
- ✓ Voluntary participation and freedom to participate and withdraw without penalty.
- ✓ Safeguard, confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained.
- ✓ Names or the name of the institution will not be used when discussing information pertaining to research.
- ✓ Information on the audiotapes will be erased as soon as conveniently so, field notes will be destroyed after saturation has been reached and all raw data will be kept confidential.
- ✓ Summary of the research will be available to you, if required.

The study will be beneficial as opportunity will arise for learners to verbally describe their experiences' of educator-learner aggression as it applies to their learning situation. The research findings from experiences will assist the Education Department of the Faculty of Education: University of Johannesburg in evaluating aggression and setting guidelines to facilitate the mental health of educators and learners', in order to create a healthy, safe environment for learning. As this is a sensitive subject, a guidance counselor will be made available.

Thank You

A. Naicker (Mrs.)
(Researcher)
Contact numbers: 084 310 1725

Date

G.D.E Official: Signature

Date

Professor C.P.H Myburgh
(Supervisor)

Date



UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

Professor M. Poggenpoel
(Co-supervisor)

Date

Dear Participant

REQUEST TO CONDUCT AN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

I, Aneshree Naicker, a Master's student at the University of Johannesburg, Faculty of Education and Nursing, Department of Education require permission, from you the participant to participate, in educational research. As a requirement of my studies, I am engaged in a research study entitled "Learners' experiences of educator aggression in the secondary school".

I invite you to participate in my research project.

To complete my research study I need to conduct interviews with the participants, of more or less 15-20 minutes. The interviews will be audio taped and then transcribed for verification with the supervisor and the independent coder. The following ethical principles will be adhered to throughout the research process:

- ✓ Your informed consent to participate.
- ✓ Your voluntary participation and freedom to participate and withdraw without penalty.
- ✓ Your safeguard, confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained.
- ✓ Your name or the name of the institution will not be used when discussing information pertaining to research.
- ✓ Your information on the audiotapes will be erased as soon as conveniently so, field notes will be destroyed after saturation has been reached and all raw data will be kept confidential.
- ✓ Your summary of the research will be available to you, if required.

You will benefit from such a study as you will have an opportunity to describe your experiences verbally as they apply to your situation. The research findings from your experiences will assist the Education Department in evaluating aggression and setting guidelines to facilitate the mental health of educators and learners', in order to create a healthy, safe environment for learning. As this is a sensitive subject, a guidance counselor will be made available.

Thank You

A. Naicker (Mrs.)
(Researcher)
Contact numbers: 084 310 1725

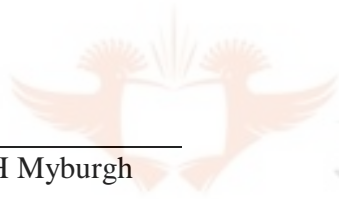
Date

Participants Signature

Date

Professor C.P.H Myburgh
(Supervisor)

Date



UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG



Annexure 3

Participant 1

Researcher: What are your experiences of educator aggression towards you in your schooling environment?

Participant: Umm okay well I've experienced different things in my school of teachers having aggression towards me, umm personally. Umm I feel there is a lot of favouritism in the classroom. Umm one incident where the teacher, or let say my friend made a joke in the classroom and the class was quiet and we started to laugh and umm then the teacher reprimanded me, but not my friend who made the joke...and I felt there was a lot of favouritism there you know, cause from the word go, she didn't like me. She always had a thing out for me you know and umm I think it affects my schooling as well because the teacher being you know, more friendly towards me my studies would be more, it would be a lot better. And umm there is a lot of aggression that the teachers have and sometimes it will build up and build up and build up and then eventually they'll just blow, and that's the worst. Sometimes, it's also they may have emotional issues themselves and they take it out on, on umm children in the classroom.

Researcher: From the teacher who took it out academically on you, you said it affected your schoolwork as well?

Participant: Yes.

Researcher: Do you find with other teachers having aggression towards you, it is also affecting your schoolwork?

Participant: It's you know, umm another teacher that has aggression towards me, I think she likes me a lot more, because she wants me to do well. Right and umm she may have that aggression that aggression at times because she wants me to stay focused and just to stay on track... and the teacher that has that aggression towards me, my other teacher umm I find it definitely affecting my schoolwork a lot, because she makes me understand that it is always like as if I don't want to listen to her. Maybe if she's more friendly and you know, if

she likes me a bit more better umm it would be easier for me to listen and to understand easier and umm ja.

Researcher: Can you give me examples of aggression towards you by particular teachers in the class? What would they do that makes you think they are aggressive towards you?

Participant: Umm mostly their tone changes completely, right. Aggression, there is a lot of aggression in their tone, you can hear it, anger. They belittle you at times, they say things that umm you know emotionally, can affect you. There's a lot of aggression, like maybe stamping on the desk or hitting their hand on the desk, you know hitting the board, getting upset. Walking out, slamming the door... things like that.

Researcher: Can you give me examples of things that they say emotionally, that is aggressive towards you?

Participant Umm, one teacher told me, I said umm ma'am how much did I get for the term and she said thirty nine or something, and I said umm ma'am I actually need a fifty, for, to apply to college and so on and she said, so she gave me the fifty percent but she said you are not worth it, you are not worth the fifty percent, and that now you know emotionally, that, that it was a lot of impact on my emotional state at the time.

Researcher: Are there any other examples of aggression towards you by other teachers in your schooling environment?

Participant: Umm, other teachers. Teachers, sometimes, they become aggressive, they tell me, you know they don't really say anything, but they just complain about what I do in the classroom and maybe they write a letter and say go down to your to your grade controller. It's, it's that there is not a violent aggression but maybe in their tone and maybe their body language and so on is aggressive, but maybe not aggression straight towards me like you know, wanting to fight or do something like that.

Researcher: Can you tell me how does this aggression make you feel inside?

Participant: Umm, on my fault I get angry as well, I become angry because of their aggression .Umm, it's almost as if you can say, you know they've been aggressive towards me, why can't I fight back, why must I sit back and you know, take all of this, where maybe they are wrong, you know and it's not only me that is at fault. So I become aggressive as well. Sometimes, sometimes it may also be funny the way my teacher gets aggressive and so on and I actually find it quite humorous at times, not in a bad way but just after that you know, I would go to her and say ma'am, you know why you angry and so on and she'll say not to worry, it's fine.

Researcher: Have you seen these teachers get aggressive towards other children your classroom?

Participant Yes actually there was an incident where one of my teachers got very aggressive. He told one of my peers to leave the classroom and he didn't want to so he got upset, you could see he started getting red in the face, he started you know, fist was clenched, my teacher now, he sent him down to the office. Eventually they were at the office, and what had happened was, my teacher actually punched that student, and the student had you know... and he punched him back . And that was, that was all I heard of that, but both were very angry and so on. There was a lot of aggression, I think that was the most violence there was, with a teacher and a student.

Researcher: Is there any other sort of aggression that you experiencing at the moment?

Participant: Umm, you know at the moment not, not as much aggression in the classroom, I think now everything is a bit turned down, because its exams and so on, you know so there is not a lot of aggression at the moment, but you do sometimes have something, some teacher might just snap at any time. So you never know when it's gonna happen.

Researcher: Thank you

Participant Okay

Participant 2

Researcher: What are your experiences of educator aggression towards you in your schooling environment?

Participant: Sure, okay umm, I don't think it's that aggressive towards me now. I mean I talk a lot in class and they shout and all the rest. Some teachers, like can go differently, they like bottle up everything inside and then like shout really bad, but I mean it's, it's not violent, like I don't get hit by a teacher. So I mean it's not violence, they threaten with violence and you can see they want to, obviously, but that's like human nature, I think. But I mean no one's ever tried to hit me or anything, but they do shout a lot, but I mean that's discipline.

Researcher: Can you give me examples of aggression towards you by teachers in your school?

Participant: An example?

Researcher: Examples of what do they actually do that makes you think that they are aggressive towards you. How do they display their aggression?

Participant: Okay, well there was one teacher, if you'll like talk in class, he'll grab a compass and like, like you can see aggressive like, like struggles to speak and he has to go outside and calm down. They'll shout a lot and whatever. It's not it's not like umm, he comes to your desk and threatens to hit you or anything. I mean I've never been threatened, no I'm lying, once, but I think he was joking.

Researcher: How can you tell the difference between joking and actually being serious?

Participant: Umm well, the teacher that jokes, he's like a funny teacher. Like, he'll like you know me and my friends and he would joke, like tease each other, like without being serious, he's like 'son' like he likes jokes like that. So I don't think he's being serious, he even laughed afterwards any way, even me so it wasn't bad.

Researcher: Do you think other teachers in your school are aggressive and maybe can you give me examples of their aggression towards you in class or in your schooling environment?

Participant Umm, an example, I mean I can't think of any. I know some teachers like if they could they would bring back corporal punishment like in a heartbeat. Like some of the older male teachers especially, I find like they are like aggressive and stuff. They shout a lot.

Researcher: Do they get very angry?

Participant Ja, it's like, I mean sometimes, they have to like go outside and calm himself down a bit, because he gets a bit angry. But I mean it's not like he has ever lashed or swung at us or gone off to the principle, like you know, like an uncontrollable rage or anything like that. So it's controlled, it's anger, but it's controlled.

Researcher: How does it make you feel inside when teachers are aggressive towards you?

Participant: Umm, sometimes embarrassed, sometimes like upset with myself because I made them angry. But, like umm... it's like sometimes I don't care, like if they get angry with me, I don't care, I mean it's their job to, okay it's not really, but it comes with the territory, I think. Some of the times I do feel upset with myself, because I made them so angry, especially with a teacher that I like, if they get angry.

Researcher: Okay, thank you.

Participant Thanks.

Participant 3

Researcher: What are your experiences of educator aggression towards you in your schooling environment?

Participant Well I've experienced some aggression from teachers towards me and a few of my other friends. Umm, for example one of my, my teachers, umm, have had a lot of aggression towards me personally. Umm, I feel she doesn't, like me, maybe for certain reasons. I may umm, talk in class or something and the whole class will be talking and then she would remind me and say 'why are YOU talking?' this, this, why are you... you know and I'll be like 'ma'am the whole class is talking' so I would be, it's more direct to me. Normally, I'd greet her, I'd say 'bye-bye ma'am' you know 'I'm leaving now', and whatever, and the other kids would also greet her, but she wouldn't greet me back. Almost, nasty towards me, you know she doesn't even want to see me, she doesn't want to speak to me, things like that. Umm, she's also been aggressive towards other people, maybe emotionally as well. You know she'd belittle people, saying they should grow up, to stop doing this and stop playing. You know when, when it's little things that bug her, it's almost like little things bug her all the time and there is no need for that in the classroom.

Researcher: You actually see this teacher aggressive towards other students and yourself in the classroom?

Participant Yes, a few students in the classroom, like certain students, it's like selective. She almost selects whom she's aggressive towards and who she doesn't like. You know, she almost knows who she wants to teach, sometimes she, like you know she would be teaching and she'd turn towards the other side of the classroom, directing her attention to them, instead of like, the other side of the classroom she regarded more bad. You know the students that she doesn't like.

Researcher: How does this make you feel?

Participant (Silence)

Researcher: How does this make you feel?

Participant: It's difficult, because we want to learn and umm, if we want to understand the work, which would make it easier for us to study and to do well, 'cause I mean we all want to do well. It makes us feel ignored, because her attention is directed towards other people so it's almost as if we worthless. You know we are not worth teaching, we not worth her time and we are not worth all of those marks that she should be giving us. It's almost as if she doesn't want to see our potential, because umm they may, teachers may also judge us on the outside, they might not know who we are. I had one incident where the teacher actually called my parents and told them that I was misbehaving, and so on, misbehaving and not doing well at school. And when I actually heard the news I was confused, because I do well at school and don't ever have problems, and when I went to speak to the teacher, she said don't worry about it, it's nothing big and then I said why did you phone my parents then, and she said no, after speaking to some of your teachers, I found out that you are not a bad boy and you do your work and so on. This was bad for me because I don't like people who judge, it was preconceived ideas about me and also most of the teachers do that before they even know the students.

Researcher: Can you think of any other situations where the teacher has acted aggressive towards you?

Participant Another incident was when the teacher did act aggressively towards me and a couple of my friends. We were kicked out of the classroom and she asked us to take our desks out and do our work outside, so we did it, and umm she took the umm dictionary, she took the dictionary and threw it onto the desk, she flung it onto the desk in front of me, and I mean...loud noises, loud noises scare people, and so I went back in shock and frightened. Teachers also, going banging the door out of the classroom...

Researcher: Have you experienced any other teachers being aggressive in your schooling environment?

Participant Umm, there was a time when the teacher reprimanded a boy to leave his classroom. He did so after a while and what happened was that the, I'm not sure if it was the boy who punched the teacher first or if it was the teacher who punched the boy, but there were fists were involved. Umm, I think this was the most

physical aggression there was from a teacher in my school that I've experienced.

Researcher: Would you like to talk about how this aggression has impacted on you emotionally?

Participant Emotionally, when teachers are aggressive towards you, towards me personally, it makes me more angry. It makes me want, makes me more, there is a lot of anger and rage that want to come out. It's almost like, why should I stand back, let me fight for it. Let me also stand up for myself in a way, I feel anger inside me, because their anger is, makes me feels angry. Umm, it's almost like they don't understand me, they don't understand what is going on inside. People, people may also have emotional problems at home that cause them to be dropping their school work and do these things and then people say, the teachers would say 'why are you not doing well at school?' 'why are you doing this?'... and they would think you are out partying, you are not studying, mean time you have issues, lots of issues at home, and you just can't deal with your school work on top of those emotional issues at home.

Researcher: With the aggression experience, can you tell me more about your relationship with your teachers?

Participant Umm, I feel with my teachers there is no communication, I feel with teachers showing aggression towards me, the relationship is...we don't talk. I don't have a good relationship with my teachers. So that leads us to not want to do work, not want to talk to them, not want to listen to them, umm also because they upset you. That relationship, it's almost as if you would try and build on that relationship, again and again... with your teacher to get to that level, where you understand her and she understands you and you work together and listen to each other. There is no trust in it it's almost as if always when something goes wrong, they would look at you because there is no trust you see. She doesn't trust that you can work, she thinks you wouldn't do homework and you wouldn't do well at school.

Researcher: Can you give me examples of how your teacher acts in a situation where he or she gets aggressive?

Participant

Umm, it's different for some teachers. I know male teachers more, there is a lot more aggression in them, like physical aggression. They'll grab their stationery or they'll clench their fists. With female teachers, they'll get very red and flustered. They'll walk up and down getting very upset, they'll start speaking a lot... sometimes even walking out of the classroom, maybe slamming the door, going to the office, calling the deputy head in. Sometimes the, the emotions go through so much, they can't deal with it themselves.

Researcher:

Thank you.

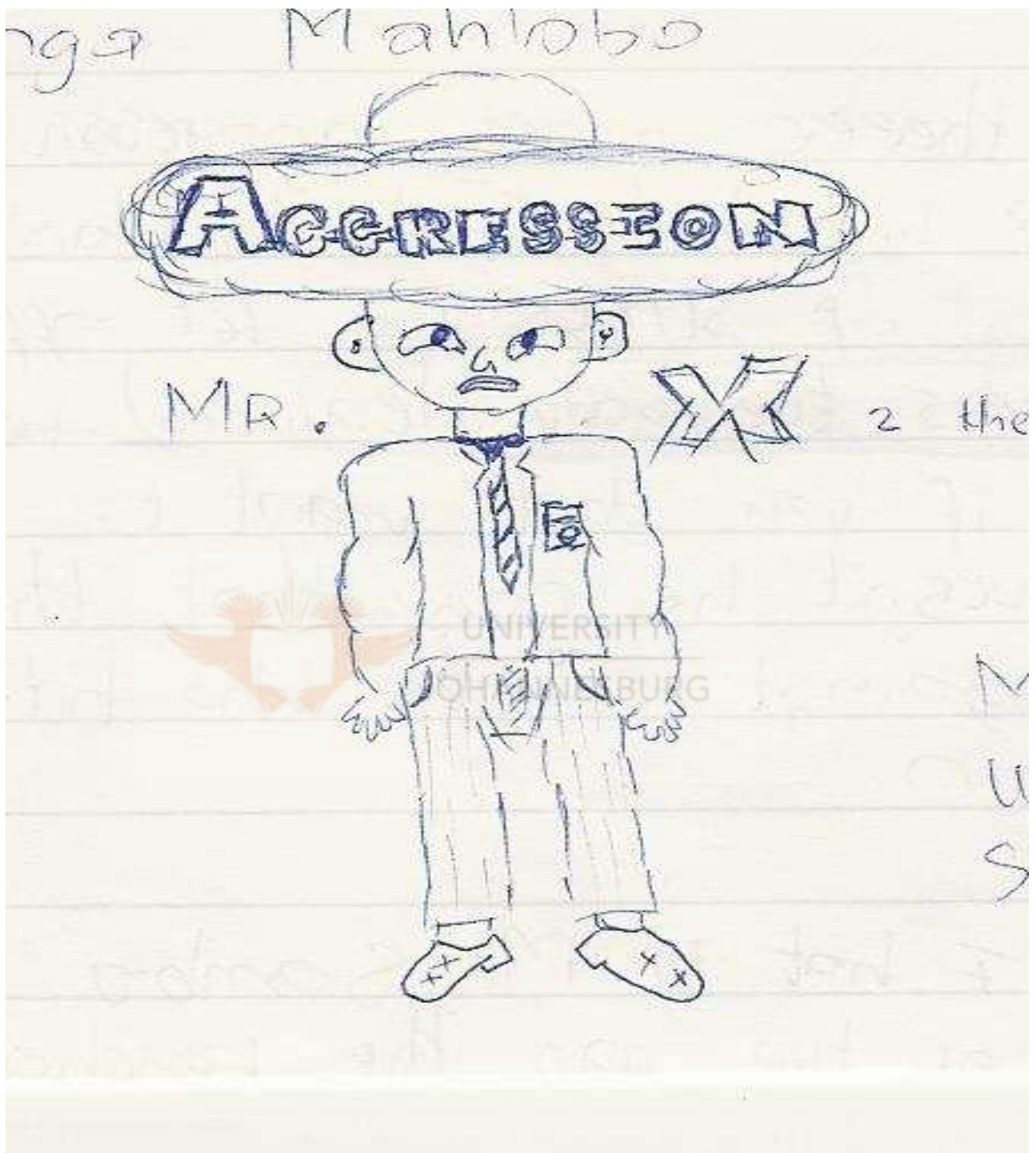
Participant

Thank you.





Annexure 4



Drawing of a learners interpretation of educator aggression in a Secondary school in Gauteng

