



**EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL-RELATED
GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: A CASE STUDY OF
NDEGETHO HIGH SCHOOL IN KWANDENGEZI,
KWAZULU-NATAL**

May 2023



PROJECT BACKGROUND

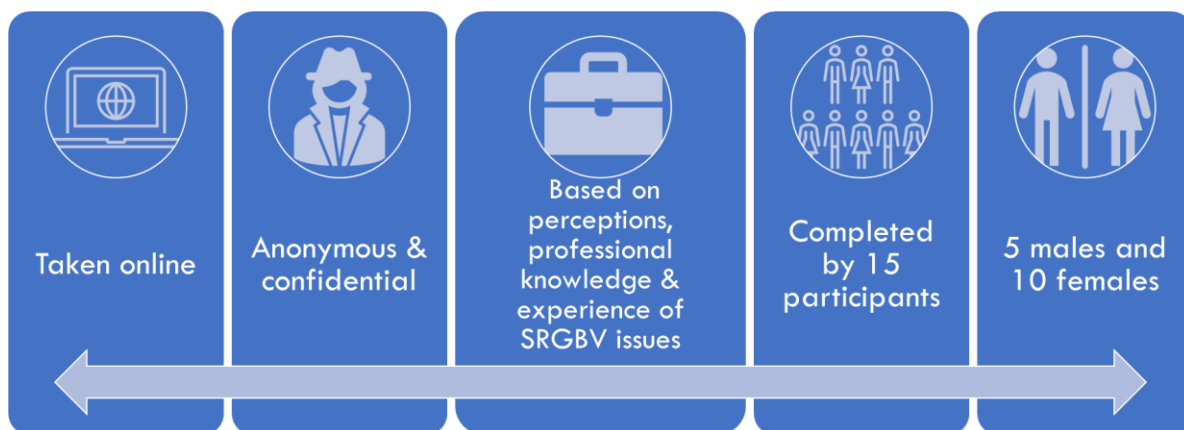
The Masiphephe Network, hereinafter referred to as “the Network”, has been working with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) on the development of local, community-based strategies to address school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) violence in 12 schools in Gauteng (GP), Mpumalanga (MP) and Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN). The Network is funded by the United States Agency for International Agency (USAID) and its implementation is led by the Centre for Communication Impact (CCI). CCI works in partnership with the University of Cape Town’s (UCT) Gender, Health, and Justice Research Unit (GHRJU) as well as six community partner organisations, namely: Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention and Training (ADAPT), Sonke Gender Justice (Sonke), Ethembeni Crisis Care Centre (ECCC), Gugu Dlamini Foundation (GDF) and Project Association Southern Africa (PSASA).

The Gender, Health and Justice Unit (GHJRU) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) conducted a baseline study through a survey in 12 schools, on behalf of the Network. Ndegetho High School, in Pinetown, was one of the schools that participated in the study. A baseline study is the collection of data to analyse an existing situation to identify the starting point for an intervention or a support response. The purpose of the survey was to gain some understanding of the nature of SRGBV in the specific school.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed methods approach. The initial stage of this research involved conducting a survey to gather data from a sample of 15 educators. An educator in the context of this study includes administrative staff, teacher and teacher’s assistant (TA).

Figure 1: Summary of Research Methodology (Survey)



The professional capacities represented were as follows: TA (n=6), teacher (n=6) and administrative staff (n=3). Also, learners did not participate in this survey. In certain cases, the total number of responses in this report may not equate to 15 due to the respondents having the option to select multiple choices. Consequently, the total number of responses could exceed 15. Additionally, for non-mandatory questions, the number of responses may be lower than 15.

The second phase of the research involved conducting a validation workshop with a group of educators, comprising both survey participants and non-participants. A total of 14 educators actively participated in the workshop. The purpose of the validation workshops was for the members of staff/research respondents to authenticate the research findings as a true reflection of the situation at the school.

The next phase of the research involved a review of the code of conduct. The question we aimed at answering through the scoping review of the code of conduct for learners is: *“Does the school code of conduct for learners meet the minimum requirements prescribed by the DBE?”* To answer this question, the schools were requested to submit their current copy of the code of conduct for learners. The documents were evaluated to determine whether they meet the criteria of what a code of conduct for learners should entail as highlighted in the NSSF and the school governing body (SGB) Records Manual. The code of conduct for learners was reviewed and the recommendations derived from the review are integrated into the latter part of this report.

Lastly, a DBE provincial validation workshop was held on 19 April 2023 where forty-two (42) individuals attended the workshop. The delegates represented the DBE (district, provincial and national); the schools (i.e., Ohlange, Dick Ndlovu, JE Ndlovu and Ndengetho), South African Council for Educators (SACE) and the Masiphephe Network.

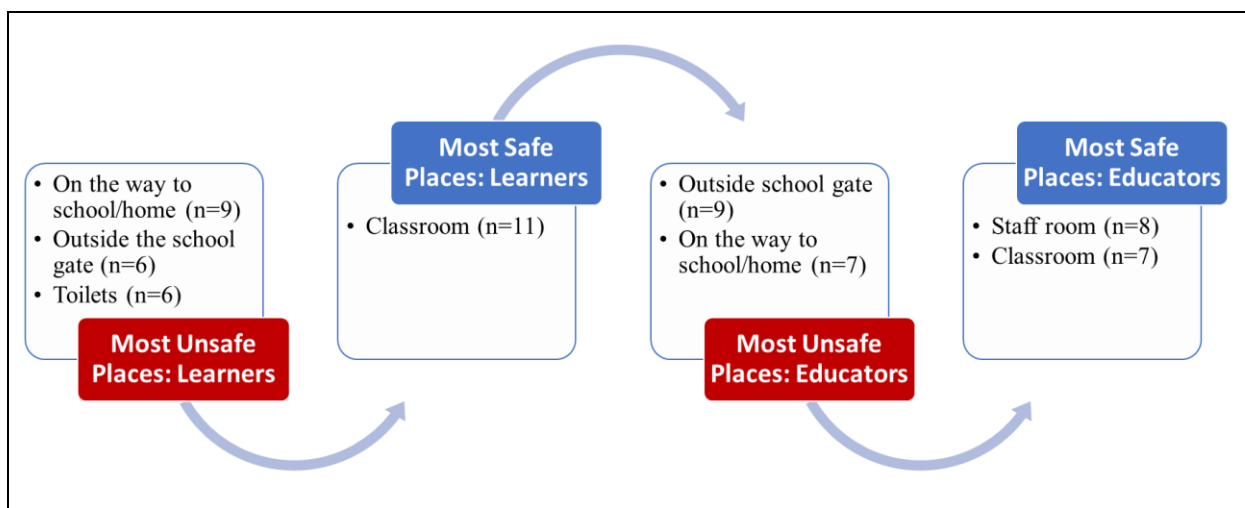
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The numbers and percentages, throughout this report, refer to the number of times a specific option was selected by the respondents who took the survey. This report should be read in conjunction with the provincial report which provides a detailed discussion of the findings.

1. MOST COMMON TYPES OF SRGBV

Learner-on-learner violence	Learner-on-educator violence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal abuse (n=12) • Physical abuse (n=11) • Bullying (n=9) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal abuse (n=14)
Educator-on-learner violence	Educator-on-educator violence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal abuse (n=9) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal abuse (n=8)

2. VIEWS OF SAFETY



3. SRGBV ROOT CAUSES

- Child poverty (n=9)
- Low educational ambition (n=9)
- Alcohol or substance abuse by learners (n=8)
- Peer pressure (n=8)
- Access to alcohol and other substances in the community (n=7)
- Overcrowded classes (n=7)

3.1 WEAPONS

- Weapons are brought to school by learners (n=7).
- The most common types of weapons brought to school by learners are knives (n=7).
- In-school weapons used by learners during acts of violence are school desks and chairs (n=6) and pens, pencils and rulers (n=6).
- Learners bring weapons to school due to peer pressure (n=4).
- Weapons are mostly confiscated following reports by fellow learners (n=5) or educators (n=4).

3.2 THE USE OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER SUBSTANCES BY LEARNERS

- Learners are more likely than educators to attend school intoxicated or use substances on school premises (n=12). It was revealed that some educators drink excessively over the weekend, especially during “*Iweekend enkulu*” (long weekend) and they report for work drunk.
- Types of substances used by learners are marijuana (n=10), tobacco products (n=9), incika (n=7) and alcohol (n=7). It was reported that Xanax (prescription medication/tablets used to treat anxiety, panic disorders and insomnia) is also abused by the school learners.

4. MOST COMMON IMPACT OF SRGBV ON VICTIMS

4.1 Impact on Learners

Emotional/Psychological Impact	Physical Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having low self-esteem (n=9)• Feeling sad and hurt (n=9)• Feeling anxious and afraid (n=8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical fighting at school (n=9)
Sexual Impact	School-related Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unwanted pregnancy (n=7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Missing school (i.e. truancy) (n=11)• Failing or doing poorly at school (n=11)• Experiencing difficulties concentrating in class (n=8)

4.2 Impact on Educators

Emotional/Psychological Impact	Work-related Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feeling sad and hurt (n=6)• Having low self-esteem (n=5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Absenteeism (n=9)

5. DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS

- Temporary suspension from class or school pending disciplinary hearing (n=7) is the common type of action taken in the school against learner perpetrators of SRGBV.
- A significant number of 12 respondents reported that they do not know what disciplinary measures are taken against educators who commit acts of SRGBV, two (2) said no disciplinary actions are taken and one (1) said final warning is instituted.
- It was reported during the validation workshop that educators who took the survey may have not had knowledge of the disciplinary measures because the school has not had orientation in a long time due to Covid-restrictions.

6. REPORTING PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

- Seven (7) respondents reported that the school does have a formal SRGBV reporting process in place.
- Learners report mostly to educators (n=7) whereas educators report mostly to the principal (n=7).

7. SUPPORT

7.1 AVAILABILITY OF SOCIAL WORKER

- Eleven (11) respondents reported that there is no social worker available to the school while one (1) reported that there is a full-time social worker and three (3) reported that there is a social worker that assists when requested by the school.

7.2 STAKEHOLDERS OFFERING SUPPORT TO VICTIMS

- The SAPS (n=9), peer educators (n=7) and school social worker (n=5) are the main stakeholders that offer support to the school.
- The social worker from ECCC offers life skills programmes, risky behaviour and HIV testing to name a few.

- Victims are referred for SRGBV services through the SMT (n=9) or the SGB (n=5).

8. CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING

8.1 EDUCATORS AND SGB TRAINED TO DEAL WITH SRGBV

- It is concerning to note that when the respondents were asked if educators and SGB have been trained on how to deal with SRGBV issues, only four (4) respondents out of 15 said yes.
- It is also a matter of concern that educators have not been trained on the mandatory reporting of child abuse and maltreatment. For details on mandatory reporting, please refer to the recommendations section in this report. For a more comprehensive discussion, consult the provincial report.
- Educators reported that they are not capacitated on issues of SRGBV because only the SMT is workshopped on these issues and the information is not cascaded down to them.

8.2 LEARNERS EDUCATED ON ISSUES OF SRGBV

8.2.1 Issues of SRGBV Included in the School Curriculum

- Eleven (11) respondents reported that SRGBV issues are included in the school curriculum through Life Orientation (LO).
- Workshop participants felt that learners receive basic knowledge of GBV through LO because Grade 9 covers all types of violence and the Grade 11 and 12 syllabus covers SRGBV. The Grade 9 comprehensive sexual education syllabus covers related topics such as sexual health, risky behaviours and teenage pregnancy.

8.2.2 Existence of Peer Educator Programmes: Girls/Boys Empowerment Movement (GBEM)

- It could not be established if GBEM clubs exist in the school.
- “The aim of GBEM is to encourage girls and boys to work together as equals and to foster respect for the human dignity and rights of both sexes. This is to foster gender equality values and promote positive gender norms through peer education and life skills” (DBE, 2021, n.p.). Peer education is one of effective ways of learning in that through teaching each other students are able to solidify their knowledge and spread it within their community (Western Governors University, 2022).

9. LAWS AND POLICIES THAT ADDRESS SRGBV

- In general knowledge of primary policies and frameworks that deal with issues of violence and GBV was very low among the respondents. Educators expressed that policies are there, but the problem is implementation.
- The school has a separate educators’ policy in addition to the SACE Code of Professional Ethics. However, not all educators were trained on the educators’ policy.
- The school has no separate policies on bullying and harassment (general and sexual). Issues of bullying and harassment are imbedded in the code of conduct for learners.
- Most of the educators who participated in this study were not aware of the National Schools Safety Framework (NSSF). It, therefore, could not be established if the NSSF is implemented fully in the school.

- Not all educators who participated in this study had knowledge of the Protocol for the Management and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Harassment. Therefore, the protocol may not be fully implemented in the school. This means that not all staff may be aware of the process to be followed when reporting offences that are sexual in nature as outlined in the protocol.
- One educator indicated that he's been teaching in the school for eight (8) years, but he has never heard of these.
- It was expressed, during the validation workshop that there are gaps in policies and that the policies are not practical or cannot be applied effectively in the school context.

9.1 EXISTING SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LEARNERS

- The school has a code of conduct.
- Five (5) educators reported that parents do sign the school code of conduct. It was reported that parents sign the code of conduct without reading it which creates challenges as they will then react when a problem occurs (i.e., when their child has transgressed, and the disciplinary measures highlighted in the code of conduct must be applied).
- Six (6) educators reported that learners do sign the school code of conduct. Learners are given the code of conduct with the application form, but they are not trained or taken through it.
- When asked if issues of SRGBV are included in the school code of conduct only six (6) respondents said yes.

9.1.1 Review of the Code of Conduct

The code of conduct provided is inadequate and falls short of expectations, as it omits key elements that are necessary for a comprehensive code of conduct. However, we have provided some recommendations to improve the code of conduct.

A tick (✓) means that the specific section of the code of conduct is included in the copy submitted for review, while a cross means (✗) that the section in question is missing from the reviewed code of conduct.

a) *Common elements of a school's code of conduct*

1. Introduction ✓
2. Aim of the code of conduct ✓
3. Rights of learners (educators) ✓ - The rights of the educators are not reflected in this document.
4. Responsibilities of learners ✓ - This is combined with the rights of the learners.
5. Responsibility of educators regarding learners ✗
6. Responsibility of parents regarding learners ✗
7. School rules, regulations and procedures ✗
8. Scope of the code of conduct and its legal implications ✗
9. Disciplinary procedures ✗

- b) *School rules, regulations and procedures: elements 7 for codes of conduct.*
1. School hours-✓
 2. Absence and leaving the premises ✓
 3. Dress code and appearance✓
 4. Rules promoting safety ✓
 5. Rules promoting healthy relationships- **X** No clear rules on this. Number 12 under the subtopic for “Rules for learners” does mention that learners should respect other pupils in the position of authority.
 6. Rules that promote responsibility towards school property **X**
 7. Medical treatment and emergencies- **X** Section C item number 7 stipulates that if there is no water, the duration of the lessons will be reduced.
 8. Communication and meetings-**X**
 9. Textbooks and stationery (caring for) **X**
 10. Reports/assessments on academic progress **X**
- c) *Guidelines for misconduct and disciplinary procedures - element 9 for codes of conduct*
- No statement that corporal punishment has been outlawed.
 - Types, levels and manners of dealing with misconduct **X**
 - Reporting misconduct **X**
 - Who deals with misconduct and referral system for who deals with different levels of misconduct- **X**
 - Recording misconduct. **X**

Recommendations Based on the Reviewed Code of Conduct

1. Guidelines for misconduct and disciplinary procedures - element 9 for codes of conduct.
 - i) Misconduct- the policy document should outline the types of misconduct that may result in disciplinary action, such as bullying, harassment, cheating, and other behaviours that violate the code of conduct.
 - ii) Disciplinary procedures- the policy document should include clear and consistent procedures for addressing misconduct and administering disciplinary action. This may include a step-by-step process for investigating allegations of misconduct, providing notice and opportunity for the accused to respond, and determining an appropriate level of disciplinary action.
 - iii) Disciplinary actions- the policy document should provide guidelines for the types of disciplinary actions that may be taken in response to misconduct, including warnings, suspension, expulsion, and other consequences. The document should also outline the factors that may be considered in determining the appropriate level of disciplinary action, such as the severity of the misconduct, the impact on the school community, and the learner's past behaviour and disciplinary record.
 - iv) Appeals process- the policy document should provide guidelines for appealing disciplinary action, including the process for filing an appeal, the individuals responsible for reviewing the appeal, and the grounds on which an appeal may be granted.

- v) Records- the policy document should provide guidelines for maintaining records of disciplinary actions and protecting the privacy of learners involved in disciplinary proceedings.
2. Rules promoting safety- Considering the current incidents of violence in schools, it is imperative to establish clear guidelines for ensuring the safety of students and staff on campus. There is no section in the code of conduct we reviewed on the various levels of misconduct and manner which each will be dealt with. This is an imperative section in the code of conduct and needs to be attended to. The following also need to be included:
- i) *Bullying prevention* - a subsection outlining the school's stance on bullying, including its clear definition. Additionally, the document should provide information on resources and support systems available to students who have been affected by bullying. It is also important for a bullying policy to be developed as a standalone policy.
 - ii) *Drug and substance abuse prevention* - even though a section has been added on illegal drugs and substances, more information needs to be added, especially definitions and consequences for those who bring and abuse illegal drugs/substances on the school premises. This can be dealt with under the section on the level of offences when it is added to the code of conduct.
 - iii) *Dangerous weapons* - even though a section has been added on dangerous weapons, more information needs to be added especially definitions and on consequences for those who bring them. This can be dealt with under the section on the level of offences when it is added to the code of conduct.
2. *Regular communication with parents/guardians* - The policy document should outline the school's approach to regular communication with parents/guardians, including the use of newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, and other forms of communication. The policy document should include guidelines for student-led meetings, such as the purpose, frequency, and responsibilities of the student leaders. Furthermore, the policy document should outline the school's emergency response plan, including procedures for communication and evacuation, as well as the responsibilities of all parties involved.
3. *Medical treatment and emergencies* - An outline the procedures for responding to medical emergencies, including the role of the school nurse or medical personnel, the protocol for calling emergency services, and the procedures for obtaining consent for medical treatment.
- i) Some students may require medication or medical treatment while they are at school. The policy document should outline the procedures for administering medication and medical treatment, including the requirements for obtaining consent, the storage and disposal of medications, and the responsibilities of the school nurse or designated medical personnel.
 - ii) In order to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, it is important for schools to have a clear plan for responding to outbreaks. Provisions for the reporting, investigation, and response to cases of communicable diseases, as well as guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting affected areas should also be included.
 - iii) First aid - schools should have adequate supplies and personnel trained in first aid to respond to emergencies and injuries. An outline of procedures for providing first aid, including the responsibilities of faculty and staff, the availability of first aid supplies, and the training requirements for first aid providers.

4. Statement on corporal punishment being outlawed: The school's policy on corporal punishment should be clearly communicated to all members of the school community, including parents and guardians. The policy should be included in the school's code of conduct and made available to all students and their families. The school should also provide education and training on positive discipline strategies and alternatives to physical punishment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(i) General Code of Conduct Recommendations

- Workshop the entire school community – learners, educators, administrators, parents, and other community stakeholders. The school needs to, through advocacy, ensure that everyone knows and understand the content of the code of conduct.
- Review the code of conduct annually and ensure that learners are part of the process.
- Ensure that the code of conduct meets the criteria stipulated by the DBE as per above recommendations.
- Includes sections that deal specifically with SRGBV.
- Align the code of conduct to the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act Amendment Act 13 of 2021.

Moreover, even though it was revealed that issues of bullying and harassment (general and sexual harassment) are included in the code of conduct, the school needs to develop standalone policies dealing with these issues.

(ii) Safety and Security

It was noted during the validation workshop that the school does not have formal security. Therefore, we recommend that the SMT and SGB prioritise the hiring of official security officers in the schools' annual budget. The SGB should also be trained and capacitated on fund raising so that they can raise funds for security if the school budget is limited.

(iii) Training and Capacity Building on SRGBV Issues and Important Policies

The findings reveal that educators and the SGB have not been trained on SRGBV issues or related policies. The educators further revealed that the SMT members are trained but they do not cascade the information down to them. It is, therefore, recommended for the SMT to train or arrange with the DBE district department responsible for training to train educators and the SGB on important policies such as the NSSF, and the Protocol for the Management and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Harassment in Schools, and Alternatives to Corporal Punishment: A Practical Guide for Educators, to name a few. The SMT should ensure that the safety and disciplinary committees as well as the SBST are also well trained and capacitated. The educators who attended the validation workshop highlighted the impracticality of the policies, which makes their implementation challenging. Therefore, it is crucial that educators receive comprehensive training that includes guidance on adapting the policies to their specific school context. This will enable them to effectively localise and implement the policies.

The SGB plays a very pivotal role in the school, therefore it is important that all members of the SGB, are immediately trained on their roles and responsibilities and on how to deal with issues of SRGBV after being elected to office.

(iv) Mandatory Reporting Training

Educators also need to be trained on mandatory reporting. Educators have an obligation, to report to a relevant authority, any offences against a child (i.e., learner) such as a sexual offence or any form of child abuse or maltreatment if they have knowledge, reasonable belief, or suspicion of it. There are different laws which cover this, as well as who to report to. We provide below examples of the laws which address these issues. The *Protocol for the Management and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Harassment in Schools* (2019) sets out the reporting process for sexual offences.

The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act Amendment Act 13 of 2021 sets out the mandatory reporting of sexual offences, stating that any person:

- ... who has knowledge that a sexual offence has been committed against a *child* must report such knowledge immediately to a police official.
- ... who has knowledge, reasonable belief or suspicion that a sexual offence has been committed against a person who is *mentally disabled* must report such knowledge, reasonable belief or suspicion immediately to a police official.
- A person who in good faith reports such reasonable belief or suspicion shall not be liable to any civil or criminal proceedings by reason of making such report.

The Children’s Act (No. 38 of 2005) also covers reporting of sexual offences against children:

The Children’s Act states that if there is a reasonable suspicion (on the part of particular professionals dealing with a child) that the child is being abused in a way that causes physical injury, sexual abuse or neglect, this must be reported. Persons in this category include a range of professions including legal practitioners, medical practitioners, traditional and religious leaders, psychologists and social workers, teachers and persons working in care facilities, amongst others.

If any person suspects that a child is being abused or in need of care and protection, they must report to a social worker, a designated child protection unit or organisation or to the police.

There are also a number of other mechanisms for child protection:

The *Domestic Violence Act* (1998) and the *Domestic Violence Amendment Act* (2022) allow a child who is experiencing any form of abuse – whether it is physical, sexual, psychological or emotional (amongst other acts of harm including harassment, intimidation or stalking) – to apply for a protection order. This order can be applied for by the child, a parent or legal guardian, or any other person with a ‘material interest’ in the protection of the child. A person with ‘material interest’ can include: a counsellor, a health service provider, a member of the South African Police Service, a social worker or a teacher, who has a material interest in the well-being of a complainant.

(v) Need for an In-House Social Worker

The school does not have its own social worker and we recommend for one to be hired. It is important that one is hired as soon as possible to assist the educators with learners depicting problematic behaviour and or need psychosocial services. As submitted by the National Association of School Workers (NASW), school social workers are vital because they “are an integral link between school, home, and community in helping students achieve academic success. They work directly with school administrations as well as students and families, providing leadership in forming school discipline policies, mental health intervention, crisis management, and support services” (n.d.: np).

(vi) Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH)

The findings show that unwanted pregnancy is very high in the school. Therefore, we recommend that the school make sexual and reproductive health and rights training and awareness for learners a priority. Furthermore, support should be provided to girls who fall pregnant to encourage them to stay in school.

(vii) Collaboration with Stakeholders

It is recommended for the school to collaborate with other statutory (i.e., Department of Social Development, Department of Health, Thuthuzela Care Centre, etc.) and non-statutory stakeholders (i.e., community-based organisation and non-governmental organisations). GBV issues are complex and cannot be handled by the school alone, it is thus important for the school to build relationships with stakeholders offering GBV services for support.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Department of Basic Education. (2021). Presentation to the portfolio committee on Basic Education, 17 August. Retrieved from: [Enter Title here \(pmg.org.za\)](#).

National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (n.d.). School social work. Retrieved from: [School Social Work \(socialworkers.org\)](#).

Western Governors University. (2022). Peer learning: Overview, benefits, and models. Retrieved from: [Peer Learning: Overview, Benefits, and Models \(wgu.edu\)](#).