



EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL-RELATED GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: A CASE STUDY OF OHLANGE HIGH SCHOOL IN INANDA, KWAZULU- NATAL

May 2023



PROJECT BACKGROUND

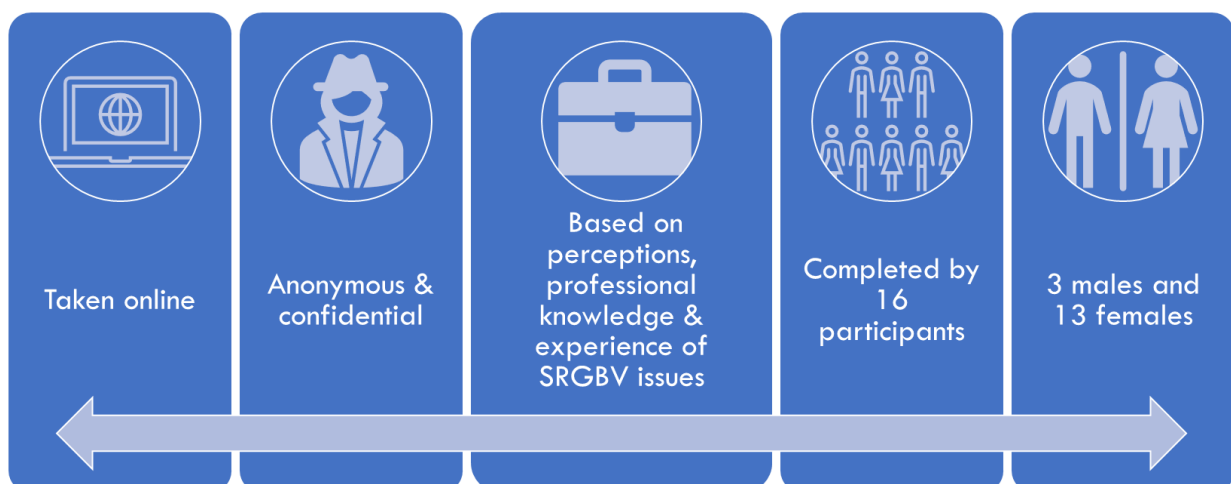
The Masiphephe Network, hereinafter referred to as “the Network”, has been working with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) on the development of local, community-based strategies to address school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) violence in 12 schools in Gauteng (GP), Mpumalanga (MP) and Kwa-Zulu 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. Ohlange High School, in Inanda, 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 16 educators. An educator in the context of this study includes administrative staff, learner support agent (LSA), school-based support team (SBST), teacher, teacher’s assistant (TA) and member of the school management team (SMT).

Figure 1: Summary of Research Methodology (Survey)



The professional capacities represented were as follows: TA (n=6), teacher (n=6) and administrative staff (n=1), school management team (SMT) (n=1) and learner support agent (LA) (n=2). Also, learners did not participate in this survey. In certain cases, the total number of responses in this report may not equate to 16 due to the respondents having the option to select multiple choices. Consequently, the total

number of responses could exceed 16. Additionally, for non-mandatory questions, the number of responses may be lower than 16.

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 nine (9) educators actively participated in the workshop. The purpose of the validation workshop 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 the recommendations derived from the review are integrated into the latter part 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.

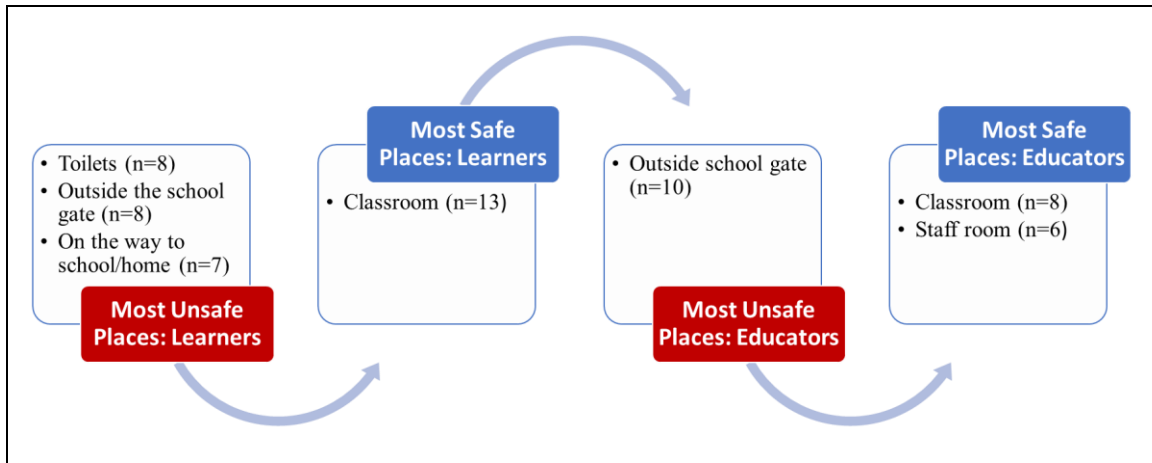
1. MOST COMMON TYPES OF SRGBV

Learner-on-learner violence	Learner-on-educator violence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical abuse (n=15) Verbal abuse (n=5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbal abuse (n=15)
Educator-on-learner violence	Educator-on-educator violence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbal abuse (n=13) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbal abuse (n=12)

It was stated during the validation workshop that the number of selections for verbal abuse, bullying and sexual harassment between learners should have been higher as these types of SRGBV are very common in the school. Moreover, it was revealed that sexual violence also takes place between learners as they touch each others' private parts.

Also reported during the validation workshop was that educators are sexually harassed by learners. It was further revealed that male educators are sexually harassed by learners, but they do not view it as harassment (i.e., learners licking lips when talking to educators, asking to take educators out for lunch, etc.). *“Some girls date older men and that is why they treat the male educators as though they are their boyfriends.”*

2. VIEWS OF SAFETY



3. SRGBV ROOT CAUSES

- Alcohol or substance abuse by learners (n=12)
- Violence in the home (n=7)
- Low educational ambition (n=7)
- Inappropriate discipline by parents or caregivers (n=7)
- Peer pressure (6)

3.1 WEAPONS

- Weapons are brought to school by learners (n=9).
- The most common weapons brought to school by learners are knives (n=10).
- In-school weapons used by learners during acts of violence are pens, pencils and rulers (n=13). It was reported during the validation workshop that learners also utilise the metal spoons they use for their lunch from the feeding scheme as weapons. It was emphasised that anything can be turned into a weapon.
- Learners bring weapons due to peer pressure, to look cool (n=6) and to feel in control (n=6).
- Weapons are mostly confiscated during searches at the gate (n=9) and during fights between learners (n=6).

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=8).
- Types of substances used by learners are alcohol (n=11), tobacco products (n=11) and incika (n=10).

4. MOST COMMON IMPACT OF SRGBV ON VICTIMS

4.1 Impact on Learners

Emotional/Psychological Impact	Physical Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling sad and hurt (n=13) • Having low self-esteem (n=11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor to mild wounds (n=8) • Physical fighting at school (n=9)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling angry (n=8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical harm to self (n=7)
Sexual Impact	School-related Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwanted pregnancy (n=12) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing school (i.e., truancy) (n=11) • Failing or doing poorly at school (n=9) • Experiencing difficulties concentrating in class (n=8) • Being mean towards others (n=8)

4.2 Impact on Educators

Emotional/Psychological Impact	Work-related Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling embarrassed (n=9) • Feeling helpless and demoralised (n=6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absenteeism (n=12) • Ineffective teaching (n=9)

5. DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS

- Disciplinary hearing (n=9), temporary suspension from class or school pending disciplinary hearing (n=6), reporting to parent (n=5), removal from class (n=5) and detention (n=5).
- Educators who attended the validation workshop expressed that they do not use detention as a form of discipline as having a learner stay behind after school is also punishment for the educator.
- Even though it was reported during the validation workshop that corporal punishment is not used in the school, it is important to remember that corporal punishment has been abolished and anyone who administers it as a form of discipline is guilty of crime.
- One educator expressed that it seems as though the rights of the learners who perpetrate SRGBV are elevated over the rights of everyone else in the school community.
- Nine (9) respondents reported that written warning is the predominant disciplinary measure used to discipline educators who commit acts of SRGBV.

6. REPORTING PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

- Eleven (11) respondents reported that the school does have a formal SRGBV reporting process in place.
- Learners report mostly to educators (n=8) whereas educators report mostly to their colleagues (n=6).

7. SUPPORT

7.1 AVAILABILITY OF SOCIAL WORKER

- Four (4) respondents reported that there is no social worker available to the school while nine (9) reported that there is a full-time social worker and three (3) said that there is a part-time social worker.
- It was confirmed during the workshop that there is a full-time social worker who is also a LSA.

7.2 STAKEHOLDERS OFFERING SUPPORT TO VICTIMS

- The school social worker (n=8) and the SAPS (n=7) are the main stakeholders that offer support to the school.
- Victims are referred for SRGBV services directly via telephone, email or referral form (n=7), through the school counsellor/social worker (n=6), through the SGB (n=6) or the SMT (n=6).

8. CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING

8.1 EDUCATORS AND SGB TRAINED TO DEAL WITH SRGBV

- It is concerning 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 16 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.

8.2 LEARNERS EDUCATED ON ISSUES OF SRGBV

8.2.1 Issues of SRGBV Included in the School Curriculum

- Fourteen (14) respondents reported that SRGBV issues are included in the school curriculum through Life Orientation (LO).
- However, it was revealed during the validation workshop with the school that LO does not cover issues of SRGBV sufficiently.

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

- It was not confirmed that the school had GBEM clubs.
- “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.
- 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.

9.1 EXISTING SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LEARNERS

- The school has a code of conduct.
- Eight (8) educators reported that parents do sign the school code of conduct.
- Seven (7) educators reported that learners do sign the school code of conduct.
- When asked if issues of SRGBV are included in the school code of conduct 10 respondents said yes.

9.1.1 Review of 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 (and of educators) ✗
4. Responsibilities of learners ✓ (These are stated as broad principles, without much detail on page 1.)
5. Responsibility of educators with regard to learners ✗ (There is only one bullet point included on page 6 that states that educators are responsible for, and therefore have the authority to, discipline learners)
6. Responsibility of parents with regard to learners ✗
7. School rules, regulations and procedures ✓ (This is primarily made up of rules and procedures wrt attendance, uniform, and general appearance of learners on pages 2 -4. Page 5-6 also contains a more specific list of rules about behaviour.)
8. Scope of the code of conduct and its legal implications ✗
9. Disciplinary procedures ✓ (Pages 7 – 8. There is no detail provided about what constitutes a grade 1, 2, 3, or 4 offence – I am not sure if this has just been omitted from the Code provided.)

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 ✓ (This is quite broad, but there are rules about prohibited behaviour on pages 5 and 6).
5. Rules promoting healthy relationships ✓ (This is also quite broad, but there are rules that pertain to respect of other learners' beliefs, safety, privacy, etc. on page 6).
6. Rules that promote responsibility towards school property ✓ (There is a rule about litter, one about damage to property and one about theft of school property on page 5 – more could be included though).

7. Medical treatment and emergencies **X**
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*

- Statement that corporal punishment has been outlawed **X**
- Types, levels and manners of dealing with misconduct **✓/X** (Yes and no – the level/grades of the offences and how they are to be dealt with are specified. The types of behaviour and how they are graded is not specified).
- Reporting misconduct **X**
- Who deals with misconduct and referral system for who deals with different levels of misconduct **✓/X** (Yes and no – the two types of commissions/committees that are defined, and under each grade of offence it states which commission it goes to. The powers of the committees and the difference in their roles are not specified).
- Recording misconduct. **X**

Recommendations Based on the Reviewed Code of Conduct

1. The general rules on pages 5 – 6 refer to rules/expectations of learners with respect to other learners, as opposed to including educators and other members of staff as well.
2. Rights of learners and educators should be included.
3. There is no introduction to the Code of Conduct that includes some of the values and principles that the school tries to espouse. This could be a helpful inclusion.
4. A section that speaks to the responsibilities of parents with respect to learners has not been included, and the section that speaks about educators' responsibilities is one bullet point and says that educators are responsible for the discipline of learners. Sections on both of these topics should be included.
5. A section on the scope of the code of conduct and its legal implications needs to be included.
6. There is a section (on page 7) on who the Disciplinary Hearing Commission and the Tribunal Hearing Commission are to be comprised of. It is not made clear what the function or powers of these two commissions are though. This should be included. The Code only states under the section that speaks to different grades of offences, when an offence is heard by either commission. It does not state why or what the different commissions do.
7. I am not sure if the rest of the Code of Conduct has been omitted, but there is no clear definition of what constitutes a grade 1, 2, 3 or 4 offence – only what the sanction would be for each of these offences. A definition or general principles for how behaviour would be graded as one of the four grades should be included.
8. Processes for reporting misconduct and how misconducted is to be recorded are crucial. Reporting should include if the report is coming from another learner, a parent or an educator.
9. Sections on medical treatment/emergencies, textbooks and stationery, communication and meetings, and reports/assessments need to be included.
10. A statement on corporal punishment must be included. It would be helpful to include what types of sanction the two committees (disciplinary committee and tribunal committee) can hand down.

11. School uniform – it specifies what girls vs boys must wear on page 3. Is this defined in terms of people’s chosen gender, or biological sex? Would it be a problem if a girl wanted to wear trousers instead of a skirt?
12. While the Code broadly includes most of the elements listed under *a*, *b* and *c* above, more specificity could be included overall, in that the school could include principles/rules that relate to issues it has specifically faced.

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

This is the only school out of the 12 that took part in the study that has official security officers guarding the premises. The school is, therefore, commended for prioritising safety and security of the learners, its staff members, and other stakeholders. However, it was explained that the school had five security officers but two passed away and they were never replaced. The workshop delegates, therefore, recommended that the two security officers should be replaced.

(iii) Hiring of an Additional Social Worker

Even though the school has an in-house social worker, who is also the LSA, she expressed that she cannot handle the extensive caseload by herself. She reported that she refers some cases to DSD, however, does not prefer doing so as they take long to handle cases. Therefore, it is recommended to hire an additional social worker to support with the workload.

(iv) Refurbishing of the School Fence

It was revealed in the validation workshop that the school is very old and the boundary fence, for example, is falling which is a safety and security hazard. It is, thus, recommended for the fence and other parts of the school building needing maintenance to be attended to.

(v) *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.

(vi) *Training and Capacity Building on SRGBV Issues and Important Policies*

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 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.

Learners could learn issues of SRGBV through peer learning activities such as GBEM. It is therefore important for the school to encourage learners to form these clubs. The LSA plays a crucial role in this context particularly in facilitating peer learning activities.

Based on the concern that rights of learner perpetrators are protected more than everyone else's rights, we recommend for learners to be workshopped on the balance of rights with responsibility.

(vii) *Mandatory Reporting Training*

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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.

(viii) Collaboration with Stakeholders

Even though the workshop delegates shared that there are two Non-profit organisations that frequent the school and provide SRGBV interventions, 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.

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