Investigating the application of safety regulations in schools: A case study of two secondary schools in Alfred Nzo West District

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Abstract:

Shortly after the inception of the new South African democracy in 1994, a series of national policies were introduced to overhaul the educational landscape in the country. Joubert (2007) highlighted the optimism placed in the potential of educational policies to reshape the system and drive social change. In 2000, the Safe Schools Project was initiated in South Africa with the goal of establishing secure, well-disciplined learning environments that uphold innocence and prioritize human dignity. This study explores the implementation of school safety policy in two secondary schools in Alfred Nzo West, with a particular focus on the challenges and successes encountered in the process. It employs constructivism paradigm and follows a qualitative research approach. Data was collected through observation/field notes and semi-structured interviews with school principals, school governing bodies and grade 12 learners. The research further uses the theory of change because it provides a framework for understanding and illustrating how a project, policy, strategy, or program, implemented leads to the intended outcome. The finding reveals that school safety policies are implemented in schools through application of rules aligning with the policies and making use of posters and printout that explains the policy to learners, parents and all staff members.

Keywords: Policy implementation, school safety, challenges and successes

1. Introduction

Shortly after the inception of the new South African democracy in 1994, a series of national policies were introduced to overhaul the educational landscape in the country. Joubert (2007) highlighted the optimism placed in the potential of educational policies to reshape the system and drive social change. In 2000, the Safe Schools Project was initiated in South Africa with the goal of establishing secure, well-disciplined learning environments that uphold innocence and prioritize human dignity. Subsequently, in 2001 and 2006, the Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools and the Amendment Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools were published in the Government Gazette No. 22754. The global context recognizes the complexity of policy implementation in the education sector

(Viennet & Pont 2017), and the South African education system reflects challenges in effectively executing policies (Mogale & Modipane 2021). For example, Thajane & Masitsa (2021) identified that teachers encountered difficulties in implementing school policies due to a lack of training. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the implementation of school safety policies to promote safety in secondary schools in the Eastern Cape.

The Department of Basic Education expresses a heightened concern for school safety, emphasizing its priority by implementing various policies and procedures to ensure the well-being of all learners, teachers, and other stakeholders within schools (Thajane & Masitsa, 2021). In light of this, it is imperative that schools diligently execute school safety policies, complete with comprehensive plans and data collection tools, enabling them to effectively address and manage risks to school safety, as outlined in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996. The establishment of safety policies aligns with Section 12 (1) of the South African constitution, which affirms that everyone has the right to freedom and security, encompassing protection from all forms of violence and avoiding torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment (RSA, 1996b).

2. Literature review:

2.1 Safety School Policy Implementation

Every organization worldwide is subject to a set of laws, rules, and policies. Educational leaders in districts and schools grapple with the challenges of interpreting and implementing policies (Naidoo, 2019). In South Africa, educational policies are formulated by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), provincial education ministries, schools, and school governing bodies, with some deriving from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996. Policy implementation, as outlined by Thajane & Masitsa (2021), is the process of putting a policy into effect and achieving its objectives, essentially translating the goals and objectives of a policy into practical actions. The school safety policy

aims to ensure that teachers maintain student discipline both within and outside the classroom, prioritizing the safety of both educators and learners at school. The DBE emphasizes that students should not be subjected to physical punishment and must be continually supervised. According to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, schools are mandated to have a school safety policy. The formulation of the school safety policy also aligns with Section 12(1) of the Constitution, affirming everyone's right to personal protection and freedom from all forms of violence.

Moreover, it is imperative to establish safety committees within schools to oversee and formulate the school safety policy (RSA, 1996). The primary responsibility of the school safety committee is to ensure a sense of safety for everyone within the school community. Additionally, committee members are tasked with designing, implementing, and supervising activities related to safety. The local station commissioner of the South African Police Services (SAPS) should be kept informed about the school safety committee's progress and the support required from the police station to uphold safety protocols. As explained by Biyela (2018), the school safety committee is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate and lawful disciplinary actions are taken against students who misbehave. To effectively implement the school safety policy, schools must monitor students during recess, prohibit the presence of dangerous weapons, and provide a well-equipped sick room with a first aid kit for students in need of medical attention.

2.2 Challenges in the Implementation of School Safety Policies

Despite the Department of Basic Education's efforts to empower educators and principals through workshops, there are apparent difficulties in effectively implementing school policies related to education and training (SACE, 2000). Research conducted by Mabasa (2014) reveals varying stakeholder opinions on challenges in the implementation of Safe Schools Policies. The

community's lack of support, insufficient safety-related training, and the proximity of beer halls and pubs to schools are identified as obstacles to successful implementation. Thajane & Masitsa (2021) further identify issues such as inadequate funds and resources, a shortage of security personnel at school gates, the presence of illegal drugs, uncooperative community members, and a lack of awareness about Safe Schools Programs as additional challenges to enforcing safety regulations. Bipath (2017) contends that many schools formulate safety rules without using a baseline provided by the Department of Basic Education, and insufficient funding further hampers the effective execution of safety policies. Tshatshu (2016) adds that the lack of prioritization of safety regulations and procedures by district officials and school administration results in both staff members and students being unfamiliar with them. Additionally, schools lack regular safety drills and clear emergency procedures, contributing to challenges in implementing safety policies. Despite these challenges, it remains crucial for schools to implement and prioritize safety policies.

2.3 Significance of School Safety Policy Implementation

Astor & Benbenishty (2022) assert that a notable advantage of policy interventions in school safety is their capacity to impact both organizational procedures within schools and the conduct of administrators, teachers, and students. For example, school safety guidelines often proscribe specific behaviors such as making threats, harassing peers, or seeking retaliation against those who report bullying incidents. As outlined by Mubita (2021), regulations may mandate specific actions, such as requiring teachers to report bullying incidents to authorities and compelling administrators to investigate complaints. Moreover, by clearly defining expectations for student behavior, regulations can either promote or discourage certain actions, delineating the consequences for engaging in aggressive behavior. Astor & Benbenishty (2022) further emphasize that at the school level, policies

can steer organizational practices, including the establishment of procedures for reporting harassment incidents and the formation of school safety teams tasked with devising and implementing school safety plans.

In addition, strategies employed in school safety policy interventions include a zero-tolerance policy prohibiting involvement in school violence, gang activities, and drug use (Hart & Nash, 2020). These policies also advocate for all concerned parties to promptly report incidents of bullying, gang affiliation, substance abuse, or violence to the police. The policy directs those involved in preventing secondary abuse to ensure that the victim receives necessary support, and that the handling of the abuse is conducted discreetly, gently, and with care. Additionally, as noted by Sprague & Walker (2021), school safety policies prohibit the possession of dangerous weapons and substances on school premises and encourage individuals to undergo searches before entering school premises.

Ensuring the safety of schools creates an environment where children can envision a nurturing setting conducive to their social and intellectual development. Moreover, the promotion of safety in schools enhances social and creative learning, providing students and staff with a compelling reason to anticipate being in a supportive atmosphere (Mubita, 2021). Additionally, as highlighted by Hanaya et al. (2020), the absence of attention to the safety of both staff and students poses a potential risk, potentially leading to increased truancy and dropout rates. Advocacy for safe schools involves protecting all individuals within the school community from violence, exposure to weapons and threats, theft, harassment and bullying, substance use on school property, and other unforeseen circumstances.

The link between school safety and improved student and school outcomes is evident, particularly in the context of emotional and physical safety correlating with academic performance. School management bears the

responsibility and obligation to ensure the protection of all individuals within the school environment at all times and during all events. Regardless of the school's location, it is essential that no one ever feels unsafe or insecure when going to school. For parents and teachers, prioritizing the security and safety of learners should be their foremost concern. While learners may face various distractions at school, feeling safe and secure in classrooms, dormitories, and playgrounds significantly enhances their ability to concentrate on academic activities.

3. Theoretical framework: Theory of Change:

The study is grounded in the theory of change, a model developed by Weiss in 1995 to illustrate how a project, policy, strategy, program, or other endeavor leads to the intended outcome through a sequence of early and intermediate outcomes (Goldsworthy, 2021). Adom, Agyem & Hussein (2018) define a theoretical framework as a theory that elucidates the course of a study and establishes theoretical structures as its foundation. The primary objective of frameworks is to enhance the significance and acceptance of research findings within the theoretical context of the field. In this study, a theoretical framework is viewed as a tool aligning theoretical assumptions with the research topic. The theory of change establishes a pathway of change, or a series of interconnected outcomes, utilizing backward mapping (Rhodes, 2020).

This pathway of change visually represents the change process, serving as the framework around which other elements of the theory are constructed. In the study, the investigation into the implementation of school safety policy to enhance school safety follows the following pathway: firstly, the policy program or implementation strategy (input); secondly, the policy program or project implementation phase, where resources are transformed through various activities and processes into tangible products or outputs; and lastly, the consequences (outcomes) of the policy program, examining medium-term sectorial outcomes and/or long-term integrated impact.

4. Methodology:

Jilcha (2019) explain that research methodology illustrates the steps taken by researchers to specify their goal and problem before presenting their conclusions based on the data they have obtained throughout the course of the investigation. The research design and technique chapter also explain how the research output at the end of the study would fulfil the study's objective. We employed a qualitative phenomenon to accomplish this purpose. Aspers & Corte (2019) assert that qualitative research is descriptive, non-numerical, and use language. Its objective is to communicate the significance, feeling, and description of the circumstance. The aim of qualitative research is to understand the social reality of individuals, group, and cultures as nearly as possible as its participants feel or live it (Shalaby, 2011). We have opted for a qualitative approach as we seek to explore my research participants experience from their own frame of reference in the context of school safety policy implementation to enhance safety in schools.

The research employed purposive sampling technique as it aims to recruit participants who can provide in-depth and detailed information regarding the phenomenon under investigation. The population sampling in this study were two senior secondary schools from the Eastern Cape province. From these secondary schools the following population were used: one principal from each school, two members of School Governing Bodies and two grade 12 learners per school.

This study employs a qualitative research approach. Data was collected through field notes/observations and semi-structured interviews with school principals, school governing bodies and grade 12 learners. Date was then analysed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes related to school safety policies and their implementation.

Data was analysed by creating themes from the data that was collected during interviews and field notes. In qualitative research data analysis is

known as the process of carefully looking through and arranging observation notes, interview transcripts, and other non-textual information the researcher gathers to further their comprehension of the phenomenon (Fazlina, Prayogo, Mardhia, Safitri, & Fidiyanti, 2017). Qualitative data is rich, confusing, and composed of detailed information that is usually communicated orally, and it is not easily categorized. Wong (2008) contends that reading a large number of transcripts and comparing or contrasting them is necessary for qualitative data analysis before themes and categories can be identified. In order to analyse data, the study developed themes using official documents, interviews, and notes from the questionnaire used to collect the qualitative data for this study. Thematic analysis is a technique for locating, analysing, organizing, characterizing, and reporting themes identified in documents (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017).

5. Presentation of Findings and Discussions:

This section presents and discusses the data generated from two secondary school principals, School Governing Bodies and four grade learners to answer the objective of this study. The researchers employed semi-structured interviews and observation/filed notes strategy aimed at answering the following questions:

The research questions were twofold:

(i)   How effective is the implementation of school safety policies in secondary schools?

(ii)   Which strategies are used to promote safety in secondary schools?

(iii)   Based on your experience as a school governing body/principal/learner do you think school safety policy implementation help in promoting safety in your school? Yes/no (explain)

5.1 Presentation of Semi- Structured Interview Questions

5.1.1 Question 1: How are the school safety policies communicated and implemented in your school?

The principal from Blue Secondary School asserted:

''School safety policies are communicated during our meetings and briefings that we usually have as the staff and parents. We implement them as collective of teachers and individually, during class and break time our learners are always monitored to make sure that they do not injure or fight with each other''.

The principal from Purply Secondary School asserted:

''School safety policies as all other school policies are usually communicated during/on our staff meetings and morning briefings with the recent updated task. We also constantly conduct orientation programs, parents-teacher meetings, and distribute written materials that outline the policies''.

The SGB members were also asked: How are the school safety policies communicated and implemented in your school?

The SGB 1 and 2 from Bluey Secondary School stated:

SGB1 ''Safety school policies are retabulated in a form of written pamphlets and are given to learners and all staff members. They are communicated during assembling and in a form of awareness campaigns that emphases all that is written in our policy''.

SGB2 ''Firstly, let me start by saying we know that a policy is statement of principles and goals embodying the school commitment to held safety. So! Our school safety policies are communicated and implemented through holding of regular safety drills to make sure everyone is familiar with procedures. We also make use of posters and announcement to communicate important safety information to all stakeholders''.

The SGB 1 and 2 from the Purply Secondary School asserted:

SGB 1 '' we communicate and implement school safety policies through staff meetings with all teachers and learners, and by putting notice boards of safety measures all around the school''.

SGB 2 We makes the school safety policy available to all stakeholders and reminds each other of the responsibilities we each of us has in making our school safe to everyone.

The Grade 12 learners were also asked: How are the school safety policies communicated and implemented in your school?

Grade 12 learners from Bluey Secondary School asserted:

Learner1. Our principal and teachers communicate about the school policies during school meetings.

Learner2. ''The school safety policies are communicated during school meetings and implemented through teacher and learner engagement''.

Grade 12 learners from Purply Secondary School asserted:

Learner1. ''I would say mostly, teachers as well as the principal communicate and implement such policies as rules that we learners have to follow''.

Learner2. Teachers and principal constantly remind us learners to maintain good discipline all the time. There are also posters putting awareness on things that are not needed around the school. Our school also have rules that we are told to follow.

Discussion

The principals of Blue Secondary School and Purply Secondary School agreed that staff meetings, briefings, and observation during class and recess are the best times to communicate school safety policies. They added that in order to convey and promote such regulations, they hold meetings with parents and teachers, conduct

orientation programs, and hand out printed papers describing the policies.

Whereas the two SGBs from Bluey Secondary School stated that written pamphlets, awareness campaigns, and routine safety drills are effective ways to communicate and implement safety policies. While the SGBs from Purply Secondary School claimed that policies are implemented and communicated through staff meetings, notice boards, and public awareness.

Finally, learners in grades 12 at Bluey Secondary School and Purply Secondary School reported that the principal and teachers communicate and implement school safety policies during meetings, as well as encouraging good discipline through posters and class rules.

5.1.2 Question 2

How does your school promote the implementation and enforcement of school safety policies?

Principal from Bluey SS stated:

"We promote the school safety policy by constantly reminding each other about the fact that we should always align our actions with what the policy requires and also through modelling ways and behaviour that our school safety policy promote to learners. We also make enforcement of these policies throughcreating class rules that each class teacher must but in class and constantly remind learners to follow. Such rules are rules that align with the policy because they outline things such as zero tolerance for violence and bullying in our school and more."

Principal of Purply SS answered:

''To promote the implementation and enforcement of the policy we make it a point that after the articulation and introspection of the policy, the staff sign as to acknowledge the program of action that is drafted and followed. Throughout the process we encourage working together with learners and their parents''.

Similar question was asked to school governing bodies:

How does your school promote the implementation and enforcement of school safety policies?

SGBs from Bluey SS answered:

> *SGB1- ''This also has to do with use of awareness campaigns and also, we involve parents of learners to be part of our school safety policy implementation. We were so lucky to also be given the social worker who herself also helps the school in enforcing of such policies by teaching and supporting our learners on overcoming of challenges such as teenage pregnancy, substance abuse and more which sometimes becomes barriers of effective implementation of the policy. There are also workshops where learners and staff are trained and taught about safety issues.*

> *SGB2- Learners and staff must feel safe at all times and to promote and enforce the implementation of school safety policy we encourage learners to speak up and to report threatening behaviours. We also limit and monitor access point, manage visitor access and promote school community partnership.*

SGBs from Purply SS asserted:

> *SGB1-The school promote the implementation and enforcement of the policies by constantly reminding learners about good behaviour and danger of violence and bullying. We also involve parents to take part in learner disciplining and put in place the security personnel to play the role.*

> *SGB2- We promote the implementation and enforcement of such policies by making it a point that we elect SGB members and committee who are responsible and able to communicate such policies to all teachers and learners. We also make use of visible poster to remind*

learners and staff of things that should not be done around the school such as smoking, drug taking and alcohol drinking. In some schools' policies are attached on the school notice board for everyone to see and read.

Discussion

The Bluey SS principal stresses that in order to promote safety school policies they model conduct, coordinate actions with the school safety policy, and establish classroom guidelines that support a zero-tolerance policy for bullying and violence. On the other hand, the Purply SS principal stated that they encourage employees to recognize the policy and foster cooperation with students and parents in order to guarantee its implementation and adherence.

According to SGB1 from Bluey SS, they use family involvement, social worker help, and awareness campaigns to put school safety regulations into practice. Additionally, they provide workshops for support and training. SGB2 from the same school claimed that in order to increase safety, they urge students to report threatening activities, restrict entry points, control visitor access, and foster community partnerships. Both SGBs from Purply SS asserted that the school promotes policy implementation and enforcement by reminding learners about good behaviour and the danger of violence and bullying.

Learners from both schools asserted that the school encourages policy implementation and enforcement by reminding learners to follow school roles, providing orientations, and encouraging positive learner-teacher relationships. They further explained that teachers monitor student behaviour and enforce school safety policies by implementing rules and regulations, and encourage learners to report incidents of bullying and violence.

Learners were also asked:
How does your school promote the implementation and enforcement of school safety policies?

Grade 12 learners from Bluey SS explained:

> *Learner 1. The school promote the implementation and enforcement of policies by always reminding learners to behave and follow the school roles. Our school also provide us with orientations were guidelines and information regarding safety is shared.*

> *Learner2. The school promote the implementation and enforcement of policies by encouraging positive learner and teacher relationship. As learners we are able to discuss issues that are prevalent to our life with our teachers and social worker.*

Grade 12 learners of Purply SS answered:

> *Learner1- To promote the implementation and enforcement of school safety policies teachers monitor our behaviour and constantly remind us of what is required from us as learners.*

> *Learnber2- To promote and enforce the implementation of school safety policy the school has but in place rules and regulations that learners follow such as reporting incidence of bullying and violence.*

5.1.3 Question 3: Based on your experience as a school governing body/principal/learner do you think school safety policy implementation help in promoting safety in your school? Yes/no (explain)

Principal from Bluey SS stated:

> *''As the principals of the school, safety of learners and staff is our priority and we discuss a lot about ways to make our school a safe environment where learning take place. Having these school safety policies of cause plays a measure role in promoting safety in our school. Ever since we have been trying with our limited resources to implement these policies we have seen less and less cases of*

misconduct in the school, and unwanted interference from the outside community. Now because of such improvements or changes within the school yes! Indeed, the school safety policies promote safety in our school''.

The principal from Purply SS asserted:

> *''Yes, the school safety policies are very powerful tool that help in bring us in line with our school's mission and vision. They serve as a guide to maintain good behaviour and discipline around the school and they help in promoting teaching and learning in a safe environment full of respect and good relations.''*

School governing bodies were asked:

Based on your experience as an SGB member, do you think school safety policy implementation help in promoting safety in your school? Yes/no (explain)

SGBs from Bluey SS answered:

> *SGB1- Yes! It does because we now have put in place measures regarding violence, bullying and all unwanted behaviour to stop through the use of the policy and it is helping. Also, the learners as well as teachers know what is expected of them. We also have learner representatives as well as social worker which make it easier for learners to communicate their problems as well as insecurities and complain they might have in school.*

> *SGB2- ''Oh! Yes, based on my experience as a teacher and also an SGB member I would say school safety is linked to improve learners and staff safety as it reduces incidence of harassment and bullying around our school''.*

SGB 1 and 2 from Purply SS stated:

> *SGB- ''Yes, School safety policies do promote safety in our schools because they serve as a guide and constantly remind us*

on how certain things should be done, for example how learners should be treated, this also include learner super visioning, monitoring and avoiding use of corporal punishment which was used before. As a result, teaching and learning is taking place quite smooth".

SGB2- ''Yes, it does. In our school learners and teachers acting against the laws and policies of the school are dealt with accordingly and those affected are taken care of by taking them to counselling. This can be teachers who still make use of corporal punishment or a learner who threatens teachers or bullying other learners. The policy gives us an authority to have zero tolerance when it comes so such incidences around the school thus promote safety in our school".

Learners were also asked:

Based on your past experience as a learner do you think school safety policy implementation help in promoting safety in your school?

Yes/no (explain)

Grade 12 learners from Bluey SS stated:

Learner1- 'Yes! School safety policies restrict negative behaviours such as violence, bullying and stealing in our school thus promote safe school environment".

Learner- Yes, school safety policies help in promoting safety in our school because they promote positive discipline and address issues related to theft, rape, sexual abuse and robbery in our school.

Grade 12 learners from Purply SS answered:

Learner1- ''Yes, as a learner I think they do because they help us to behave and avoid doing things that would later on harm our well-being or finding ourselves in jail such as attacking of teachers or even fighting with classmates".

Learner2- Yes, they do. Learners no longer engage in things such as fighting as they know that it is against the rules and everyone around the school feel protected.

Discussion

The Bluey SS principals agreed that the policy promote safety and emphasized the value of safety for students and staff and concurred that putting school safety rules into place had decreased instances of misbehaviour and outside interference. The Purply SS principal also agreed that the policy promote safety and claims that these regulations support the mission and vision of the school by encouraging excellent conduct, order, and respect within the school.

The SGBs from both schools agreed that the safety school policy promote safety and emphasized that school safety measures had been put in place to deal with bullying, violence, and other undesirable behaviour. Implementation of policies help students and instructors understand expectations and offer support. Additionally, they lessen cases of bullying and harassment. In order to ensure effective teaching and learning, school safety regulations also act as a guide for educators and students.

Additionally, Grade 12 learners from Bluey SS and Purply SS agree that school safety policies promote a safe learning environment by limiting negative behaviours like fighting and bullying, ensuring everyone feels safe and protected around the school.

5.2 Presentation Data from Field Notes

Field notes data analysis was done in two participating schools as presented below.

5.2.1 Field notes for Bluey Secondary School

Bluey is a Secondary School in a rural area, this school is one of the schools that still experience many challenges such as poor classrooms with some broken windows, and lack of proper resources. According to Lavally (2018) most rural schools experience Issues range from inadequate financial support to the time learners spend

travelling to school, a quarter of learners have daily bus rides over one hour in length, and about 85% have rides of at least 30 minutes. The school is also one of the schools located in an area where it is difficult for emergency responders to reach the school quickly in case of an incidence. Additionally, transportation to and from school by learners is limited, which sometimes impact their access to safety training or drills.

The school also experience lack of funds which affects the proper implementation of the school safety policy. As a result, the school has no security guard at the gate and also the school has no cameras installed but were able to install alarms to keep the property and school safe. Furthermore, the school has a proper fence and the gate that is always locked. Prine & Ballard (2019) mentioned that creating safe schools involves designing various safety awareness programmes and strategies, as well as mobilising school support networks. The most frequently mentioned benefit of rural school communities is their tight relationships to the local community (Bauch 2001).

Purply secondary schools seem to be one of those rural schools experiencing good relations with the community. As school work hand in hand with the community members in promoting the safety of their learners and staff. Parents take part in cleaning of the school environment through volunteering to clean learners' toilets and keeping good hygiene. Since there is no security, teachers are the ones taking turns in controlling access to the school premises. There is also an allocated social worker who works with the school to teach learners about bullying, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy and more. The social worker also provides counselling to learners when needed

Discussion

Field notes from Bluey secondary school correlate with the participants voices as most of the given answers were observed during the observation sessions. In their answers the principal and some SGB members explained that they have no security at the gate as a results teachers are the one

controlling access to the school premises. The school also explained that they have a running spaza shop within the school premises this was also what was able to identify as well as lights and alarms installed to promote safety of staff and learners.

5.2.2 Field notes for Purply Secondary School

Purply Secondary School is one of the secondary schools in the township. There seem to be high incidences of drug selling in the community and this affects the school as a whole. The school has a proper fence with well-built classroom, security at the gate, and cameras installed to help manage access to the school premises. Murungi, Nyakwara & Mwoma (2021) asserted that in order to prevent children from going out unknowingly, the school compound needs to be fenced with a gate that can be locked. ONUORAH & EZIAMAKA (2020) added that physical security management practices in schools ensure the safety of lives and property. There are also posters restricting use of drugs, alcohol, knives and all other dangerous objects around the school. According to the principal and teachers, this is done to promote their safety policy implementation and to enhance the safety of staff and learners.

Furthermore, the school has fire drills to ensure that learners and staff are familiar with emergency procedures and can respond effectively in case of such an emergency. Learners from this school are between the ages 14 to 21. Teachers in this school seem to be dedicated in teaching their learners while also making it a point that their school environment is safe for everyone. When it comes to the implementation of policies, they seem to be team work within teachers and learner however; some of the community members around this area seem to destroy such implementation through selling of drugs to learners. According to Warren, Smalley & Barefoot (2017) drugs are widespread among young people in South Africa, including those who are enrolled in school and those who are not. Hendricks (2018) added that youth substance usage trends differ between urban and rural youth, with substance use among urban

students being higher than that of rural students. Most learners in this school face various socio-economic challenges and are influenced by the community to engage in wrong doings which impact their well-being and contribute to behavioural issues. The school is getting support from the police and other departments such as social development to help them promote safe learning environment.

Discussion

Field notes from Purply secondary school also correlate to what the participants stated. As stated by the SGB members the school indeed has a proper fence with well-built classroom, security at the gate, and cameras installed to help manage access to the school premises. We also spotted some posters on the wall restricting use of drugs, alcohol, knives and all other dangerous objects around the school.

6. Discussion of Emerging Themes:

6.1 Theme 1: Communication and implementation of school safety policies

SGB1 and 2 from Bluey secondary school as well as SGB1 and learner 2 of Purply school stated that they make use of awareness campaigns, use posters and notice board to communicates what is written in their school policies and to implement it. Notice board and posters restricting certain actions such as drug use were also identified during the observations. Thajane & Masitsa (2021) states that meetings are used as method of communicating policy and policy related issues to all the groups in schools. It is also clear from the above discourse that communication and implementation of school safety policies are normally communicated during staff meetings held in school as the principals, SGBs and learners asserted. From what the SGBs from both schools asserted it is clear that staff meetings are important time were discussion of school policies are made. The communication and implementation of the policy through use of posters or written material is in accordance with the theory of change which according to Goldsworthy (2021) includes a visual

representation or written description of the strategies, conditions, and resources that encourage change and produce results. According to theory of change the stage of implementing policies is the first step and it is called the input.

6.2 Theme 2: Promoting, implementation and enforcement of school safety policies

The principal from Bluey SS asserted that they promote school safety policies through aligning their actions with what the policies state. While the principal from Purply school stated that they promote the implementation and enforcement of this policies through introspection of the policy and the staff sign to acknowledge to take actions. SGB1 and 2 from Blue SS asserted that there are workshops where staff and learners are taught about safety related matters and they work with parents and allocated social worker to promote the implementation and enforcement of school safety policy. Both SGB and learners from Purply SS commented that they promote the implementation and enforcement of school safety policies through promoting good behaviour, putting rules and regulations to be followed and by constantly reminding learners and staff of what is expected from them. This also came out during my observation as rules and regulation posted inside some classrooms were identified. SACE's Code of Professional Ethics suggests that interventions to promote equity and build trust rest on groups and individuals acting accountably towards one another and to the intended aims of the policies.

6.3 Theme 3: Sharing experiences about the implementation of school safety policy in regard to promoting safety

Principals, school governing bodies and learners from both the schools agreed that the school safety policies promote safety in their schools. Principal from Bluey gave an example of seeing decrease cases of misconduct in the school due to these policies. On the other hand, principal from Purply explained that safety policies bring them in line with their school's mission and vision. The SGB from the same school stated that safety policies serve as a guide and constantly remind them on

how certain things should be done. While the SGB from Bluey explained that these policies give them an authority to have zero tolerance when it comes to incidences of harassment and bullying.

Learners from both schools explained that the policy is effective because it helps in restricting negative behaviours these incudes, violence, bullying, drug taking and more. This is in line with the pathway of change used in theory of change which explains that If inputs (implementation of the policy) and activities produce outputs (stops incidents of bullying, harassment etc.) this should lead to outcomes (promote safety in school) which will ultimately contribute to goal (safe schools). Furthermore, the Department of Basic Education takes school safety very seriously and as an apex priority the department has put in place various policies and measures to ensure the safety of all learners, educators and relevant stakeholders in schools (Thajane & Masitsa 2021).

7. Recommendations and Conclusion:

In conclusion, it is important for all schools to implement school safety policies as a way to promote safety of their staff and learners. Regardless of challenges faced in the implementation of safety school policies, such policies are seemed to be an effective way of enhancing safety around school. For the sake of students, teachers, non-teaching staff, surrounding communities, educational environments must be secure and safe. In order to avoid accidents and occurrences and to foster an atmosphere that supports social, emotional, and physical well-being, it is recommended that school safety and security are managed effectively. In addition, it is recommended that, prior to directing their efforts into instructing and learning, teachers and learners need to feel safe and secure.

Acknowledgement:

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