

# Managing the disabling environment in the South African secondary schooling to promote safety and security

Ngwako Solomon **Modiba**  
University of Limpopo, South Africa

## Abstract

The objective of this paper is to critique lack of safety and security in public secondary schools. The paper is both conceptual and empirical in nature within the qualitative research paradigm. The question guiding this paper is: *what shall it take to have public secondary school learners stopping to compromise the safety and security measures in their institutions?* Interviewing technique and documents review, were employed to generate data. Out of the population of 17 secondary schools in one of the circuits in Vhembe district, in Limpopo Province, South Africa, three were conveniently sampled. Those were the secondary schools that had safety and security lapses that resulted in disabling or unpleasant schooling environment in their institutions. In each of the three sampled secondary school, a School Principal, a School Governing Body Chairperson and a Chairperson for the Representative Council of Learners became research participants. The total number of research participants amounted to nine. Findings revealed that firstly, secondary schools need to create school safety and security officers. Secondly, secondary schools need to embrace a restorative approach to safety and security. Thirdly, secondary schools need to emphasise reduction and eradication of safety and security threats. Fourthly, secondary schools need to regularly conduct safety and security audits. Fifthly, secondary schools need to avoid learner maltreatment and harassment. Lastly, secondary schools need to perfect their safety and security reporting systems. The researcher recommends for the public secondary schooling environments to be free from fear, intimidation and victimisation. This implies secondary schooling needs to prioritise the achievement of safer and secured schooling environment for the sustainable performance of learners.

**Keywords:** *Audits, Environment, Restorative, Safety, Security, Threats.*

## Introduction

That schooling environments in myriad South African public secondary schools are disabling and experiencing inadequate safety and security are no exaggeration (Makwanazi & Rogers, 2022). Learners need to operate in a schooling environment that exudes safety and security at all times to enable the occurrence of quality teaching and learning (Koka, Dhlamini & Sobuwa, 2022). Countless incidents of aggression, harassment and defiance displayed by learners against school authorities, are a confirmation that something is off the kilter in many of the secondary schools. A disabling or unpleasant schooling environment induced by lack of tried and tested safety and security mechanisms in public secondary schools, remains a threat to quality instructional practices. Public secondary schools without an exception, have a duty to promote safety and security at all times. Without safety and security for all learners, the business of schooling is likely to be compromised apart from being in a state of disarray and being untenable (Sobuwa, 2022). The creation and maintenance of a safe and secured moral schooling environment has to start with public secondary school learners before other stakeholders could extend the helping hands (Makhanya,

2018). Secondary school learners across the globe have been known to be obedient and abiding by instructions of their teachers, but not presently (Ramphela, 2011). What secondary school learners are showcasing in the form of misbehaviour, is bizarre and queer. They have taken their misbehaviour to the next level by even bullying their own teachers. Such a practice was common in the developed countries but it is now prevalent in the developing countries such as South Africa (Lee, 2022). This unbecoming behaviour turns a schooling environment to be disabling to teaching and learning. In such a schooling atmosphere, it could be difficult to produce mouth-watering learner-results. Evidently, there are a host of reasons behind this outlandish and despicable behaviour by pupils. The dawn of democracy in South Africa has a share in this disgraceful and disabling schooling environment characterised by inadequate safety and security as a precondition for the magnificent performance of learners. The problem which this paper pursues is the disabling teaching and learning environments induced by the collapse of safety and security by learners. Impressive learner results are possible in a moral, safe and secured schooling environment (Makwanazi & Rogers, 2022). Clarke

(2007) asserts that sound teaching and learning practices are possible where there is a commensurate enabling schooling environment of safety and security. This suggests that no school ever improves on its teaching and learning enterprise, without operating in a healthy schooling environment. The prevalence of disabling schooling environment which could include defiant and uncontrollable learner-bullying in secondary schools, confirms that a secondary schooling sector is under test and attack. Hence Olivier (2012) remarks that exquisite teaching efforts could be witnessed through brilliant learner outcomes and that where disabling schooling environment in the form of bullying against teachers occurs, mouth-watering learner performance is unlikely.

Khumalo (2011) reasons that the exclusion of learners as trouble-makers who contribute to the disabling schooling environment may not yield much fruitful results. This is to imply that learner involvement to the safety and security of their schooling environment is very necessary. A restorative approach to safety and security threats engulfing secondary schooling, is recommended to reform and rehabilitate offenders other than resorting to punitive measures.

Where learners in secondary schooling contribute to the existence of a disabling schooling environment, there could be something wrong with regard to how safety and security threats are being approached and dealt with in that school. For instance, where a schooling environment is largely toxic in the form of enabling massive lack of safety and security, there could be a need to create school safety and security officers (Ramothwala, 2022). Their role will be to pay special attention to what is behind the experienced lack of safety and security which lead to disabling schooling environment known to be unpleasant to yielding world-class learner results. This is the case because sustainable and efficacious teaching is possible where a schooling environment emphasises the reduction and eradication of safety and security threats to pave way for learning in a sober and healthy schooling environment. This is in view of the reliance of teaching and learning in an enabling moral schooling environment (Flurry, 1999, Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge & Ngcobo, 2012). In view of this aspect of a safe and a secured schooling environment being a bedrock of a schooling performance, there is a need for the conduction of regular safety audits. The purpose thereof, will be to

ascertain that an appropriate and impactful schooling environment is created and maintained to give schools the requisite learner results. Safety and security threats have to be put under control due to polluting the requisite enabling moral schooling environment. In every secondary school, adequately moral learners who do not threaten the safety and security of a secondary school, are a great asset to the teaching enterprise (Sobuwa & Mahlangu, 2022). At times pupils create an immoral schooling environment as a confirmation of the absence of safety and security policies and committees in secondary schools. In addition, the absence of safety plans could create a space for the emergence and the resurgence of a disabling schooling environment. All stakeholders in a school, under the direction of professional teachers, shoulder the responsibility for the prevalence of a moral schooling environment characterised by sufficient safety and security for everyone. That is why Ramphele (2011) notes that how teachers are being prepared, is the lynchpin for the survival of every education system. Secondary schools need to avoid ongoing ill-treatment and harassment of learners for fear of worsening those pupils to be rebellious and thus poison the schooling

environment and lead it to encourage safety and security threats. The gravity of lack of safety and security in secondary schools as witnessed through the disabling schooling environment, requires that schools perfect their safety reporting systems (Ramothwala, 2022b). This will enable the prioritisation of dealing with safety and security issues to avoid the contamination of the schooling environment (Olivier, 2012).

The existing disabling schooling environment manifested through learner-bullying in secondary schools, calls for the rethinking of the child-friendly schooling environment. For instance, the pervasive learner-bullying against teachers, which confirms safety and security lapses, was not so rife in the past and it currently, poses a challenge worth critiquing, to arrive at its genesis and to ultimately overcome it. Multiple factors are behind the cause of this safety and security lapses in public secondary schools. For instance maltreatment and perpetual harassment of learners could worsen them into becoming safety and security threats for everyone at school. The nucleus of this paper centres around critiquing the lack of safety and security in a disabling schooling environment evinced amongst others through

perpetual ruinous behaviour by learners, a perfect indicator and confirmation of safety and security lapses in public secondary schools. Khumalo (2018) articulates that, these days the missing element in public secondary schooling, is a tough and good people to get things back to normal not the usage of clever words to hide fear of stopping the rot, namely, the absence of a safe and secured schooling environment displayed through unabated safety and security threats turning myriad public secondary schools, especially in Limpopo, Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga Provinces into underachieving and dysfunctional educational learning sites (Memela, 2018 & Mampane, 2022).

### **Literature review**

The review of literature attests that safety and security in a moral schooling environment could enhance learning outcomes (Pabalelo, 2018). The implication is that public secondary schools which are serious about turning a tide as regards their unabated poor learner results, need to prioritise removing the existing safety and security threats. This could be done through a remedial and a preventative interventions whose focus is ascertaining the safety and security of everyone for the

facilitation of healthy teaching and learning activities. The review of literature emphasises the need for all efforts in the secondary schooling sector being directed at avoiding disruption of the normal functioning of any schooling system. Through such efforts, schools are likely to desist from being places where pupils learn fear and distrust (Honwane, 2022 & Makunga, 2022a). Literature study emphasises that safety in a moral schooling environment is a prerequisite for quality learning. Teacher-caring attitude is very essential for the occurrence of safety and security in a moral schooling environment. Literature review advises about the significance of learner-voice in safety and security issues of a school. The relevance of learner-voice is anchored on the reality that there can never be safety and security in secondary schools without the involvement of learners. This makes sense given that it is learners who compromise the safety and security measures in place in schools. It makes absolute logic that it be the very same learners who are involved in the revival and restoration of safety and security measures. The review of literature attests that what triggers the absence of safety and security in schools within the moral schooling environment could be lack of cogent

safety plans which are stressing the reduction and the eradication of safety threats (Sekhonyane, 2018).

Literature review accentuates a need for public secondary schooling to apply safety and security interventions that complement rather than duplicate each other (Khumalo 2018 & Van der Walt, 2018). The review of literature further stresses for secondary schools experiencing safety and security threats of the worst order, to create multi-safety teams that will be able to recommend for the restorative and rehabilitative interventions. These are the interventions aiming to contain the continuation of safety and security threats that could prevent schools from being functional and high performing institutions. The complexity of an enterprise of teaching and learning especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is such that a safe and secured school environment becomes central to learners' academic performance and holistic development. As such an unpleasant environment in a compromised safe and secured schooling, becomes a barrier to world-class learning and performance (Makunga, 2022b & Nkanjeni, 2022). The review of literature emphasises that a learner who displays unbecoming behaviour in the form of

bullying even teachers, is not likely to learn and could serve as a hurdle to an enterprise of quality teaching and learning. Such learners seriously compromise the safety and security of the bullied teachers and that of their fellow pupils, if not of every educational stakeholder who is connected to the secondary schooling sector. Makhanya (2018) understands lack of safety and security in the secondary schooling sector to be attributable to the collapse of morality in a society. The implication is that a society exports lack of safety and security to its schooling sectors through the creation of a disabling schooling environments that are anti-prosperous to schooling results. The review of literature reveals that 20% of South African teachers believe that schools are violent places and suspect that learners could be coming to school armed (Koka & Modipa, 2022). Literature review divulges that there are more safety and security threats incidents occurring in South African secondary schools that go unreported. For instance, the Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FEDSAS) contends that teachers are ashamed to report and admit that safety and security threats are directed to them when in service in secondary schools. In an African culture, it is a taboo that a

learner holds a sway over a teacher (Modiba, 2019). That could be one of the reasons, why safety and security threats directed to teachers are at times difficult to go public (Makunga, 2022a). Literature review notes that as part of keeping their professional dignity and integrity intact, some South African teachers opt to remain silent with regard to the experienced institutional safety and security threats. One other contributory factor to that decision by some teachers not reporting the experienced disabling schooling environment of lack of safety and security, is as a result of the level of individualism that currently characterises the teaching profession. A teacher who divulges that security issues are in the hands of pupils when in the classroom, is likely to be viewed to be a weakling, by fellow teachers. So, to hide that, the option is to remain silent about the prevailing lack of safety and security and to continue to conduct lessons in a disabling schooling environment (Makunga, 2022b).

Van Deventer and Kruger (2010) suggest that the long lasting way of dealing with the collapse of safety and security in secondary schooling, is through raising children to be respectful and kind in dealing with other people. This suggests

bringing up children whose morality level is never in doubt. Learner bullying and other forms of unbecoming behaviour by pupils makes schooling distasteful for fellow stakeholders (Makwanazi & Rogers, 2022). In view of the rife of lack of safety and security in schooling, even the Minister of Basic Education in South Africa has called on the law enforcement agencies to assist in quelling down the spate of violence rocketing South African secondary schooling. Sekhonyane (2018) emphasises that to reduce and eradicate safety threats in secondary schooling "let's fix society first and then schools". This signifies that the moral environment in a safe and secured schooling has to be created first in a society before being expected in the secondary schooling sector. Eliciting the involvement of the law enforcement agencies in dealing with school violence as part of safety and security threats, is a confirmation of the magnitude of the challenge (Mahlangu, 2022). Literature review uncovers that safety and security threats in a disabling schooling environment, is not only a uniquely South African challenge but a world one although various countries term it differently. There is no single cause for lack of safety and security in schooling, but rather several intersecting variables.

Among others, unbridled pupils could be the cause, just like teachers who perpetually administer the banned corporal punishment (Oxford, 2018). Delinquent pupils who bully fellow learners and teachers in secondary schools, require psycho-social support to relieve them of the pressure that makes them to display anti-social behaviour when at school. Secondary school pupils showcasing queer behaviour such as bullying, aggressive and being defiant of school authorities, could be having something that they lack, which upon getting that, they could behave like the rest (Makunga, 2022a & Malinga, 2022). Immoral and bullying learners, as part of safety and security threats, could be attention-seekers which upon getting that attention, could change and contribute to the creation of a moral schooling environment characterised by safe and secured schooling atmosphere for all institutional incumbents (Manake, 2018).

### **Theoretical perspective**

The Learning Organisation Philosophy underpins this paper. This is in view of the research question such as: *what shall it take to have public secondary school learners stopping to compromise the safety and security measures in their*

*schools?* The Learning Organisation Philosophy enabled the researcher to frame the paper and to make meaning from the whole notion of learners turning a schooling environment to disable teaching and learning through collapsing the schooling safety and security aspects (Mueller, 2011, Makwanazi & Rogers, 2022). The Learning Organisation Philosophy enables all to be learners, questioning, investigating and seeking solutions for the improvement of schools from their unsafe and unsecured schooling environments. Acknowledging that teaching is an intentional and interventional human activity, directed at the capacitation of learners, the Learning Organisation Philosophy was found to be relevant to undergird this paper. It accentuates the significance of understanding and validating interpretations in their own contextual terms, instead of emphasising the need to verify interpretations against an "objective" reality (Feinberg & Soltis, 1985 & Mueller, 2011). Khanare (2008) asserts that these days, teaching is about touching souls of learners. This signifies that whoever teaches without reaching out at the souls of learners under his or her tutelage, could face confrontations and antagonisms such as learner defiance and bullying that impact negatively on

the schooling safety and security. For the successful creation and maintenance of a moral, safe and secured schooling environment, teachers need to value the individuality of every pupil as a precondition for quality teaching and learning that touches a learner's soul and which rehabilitates a pupil to rescind unbecoming behaviour that collapses safety and security arrangements of a school (Davidoff & Lazarus, 1997). Lehlaha (2011) emphasises that the essence of the Learning Organisation Philosophy is the creation of an enabling teaching and learning environment that propels all learners to work to their fullest potential. The Learning Organisation Philosophy could assist teachers to get into the world of the antagonistic schooling environment which could lack the requisite schooling safety and security arrangements. The Learning Organisation Philosophy cautions that for schools to cope in converting learners from unbecoming behaviour to becoming behaviour, they have to be agents of change, which incessantly operate in a schooling environment that exudes the requisite safety and security for everyone (Hord & Sommers, 2008, Wood, 2008). The Learning Organisation Philosophy is able to reposition and transform the entire

teaching and learning environment characterized by ruinous learner behaviour (Holly, 1989, Khumalo, 2011, Mueller, 2011, Memela, 2018 & Sobuwa, 2018). The Learning Organisation Philosophy reveals, no room for the 21<sup>st</sup> century school to operate from her "safe harbour zone" not when faced with the mounting burden of ruinous learners who contaminate the schooling environment to be unpleasant by collapsing the requisite safety and security elements known to be the precondition for the scholastic performance of educational institutions. Schools of consequences and substance attempt efforts to defocus learners from instigating the collapse of safety and security measures that bring about disabling schooling environment which is an antithesis of prosperous teaching and learning environments (Kendall & O'Gara, 2007 & Mabote, 2008). The Learning Organisation Philosophy accentuates for schools to provide emotional and psychological therapies to the current public secondary school learners to desist from aggravating safety and security threats in their schools. Over the expressed point, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (Unicef) (2002) as quoted in Lehlaha (2011) maintains that education systems and schools have a key

role to play in ensuring the protection, care and support of all children in the classrooms and schools to advance scholastic learner performance. This is not possible were safety and security threats have taken root in schooling. Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Roos & Smith (1994) assert that learning schools are characterised by a shared vision and mission for all the institutional incumbents, which instantly jacks up the institutional performance because of adequate sense of safety and security for learners and teachers in an enabling schooling environment.

### **Objectives and the research question**

The objective of this paper is to critique the lack of safety and security in public secondary schools which leads to the presence of disabling schooling environment. The second objective relates to mechanisms to adopt to contain lack of safety and security in a disabling schooling environment. On the basis of the expressed objectives, the research question guiding this paper is: *what shall it take to have public secondary school learners stopping to compromise the safety and security measures in their schools?* The danger of ruinous learner behaviour in the form of subsiding enabling schooling environment through

undermining the safety and security measures in place, is that it could trigger poor learner outcomes (Equal Education, 2018 & Meador, 2019).

### **Research design**

This research is a qualitative case study. The problem which this paper pursues, namely, the disabling instructional schooling environment induced by the collapse of safety and security by learners, necessitated the design of this paper. Furthermore, the objective of this paper which is to critique the lack of safety and security, necessitated that this paper follows a qualitative research paradigm as against the quantitative one. The choice of the qualitative methodology was triggered by the reality that this paper is being underscored by the Learning Organisation Philosophy (Moloi, 2005). The researcher saw a need to create a synergy between the qualitative research paradigm and the Learning Organisation Philosophy. The combination of the two helped immensely in terms of illuminating issues of safety and security in a disabling schooling environment caused by the absence of safety and security measures (Clarke, 2010 & Equal Education, 2018). The researcher utilised the stated theoretical perspective undergirding this

paper, to critique how safety and security threats that are creating a disabling schooling environment could be mitigated and contained. Through the combination of the qualitative research paradigm and the Learning Organisation Philosophy, the researcher was able to make an in-depth understanding of the exact prevalence and spread of the safety and security threats in public secondary schools and their delay to engender exquisite learner performance. Furthermore, an in-depth understanding was also made regarding how encouraging schools to be free from fear, intimidation and victimisation of perpetrators of unsafe and unsecure schooling environment, could be tried as a mechanism to overcome disabling schooling environment and institutional dysfunctionality (Ramrathn, 2017). Such an in-depth understanding is invaluable and necessary in order to operate from an informed position with regard to incessant safety and security threats engulfing myriad public secondary schools of Limpopo Province and South Africa. Safety and security threats in a disabling schooling environment, could create an underperforming and even a dysfunctional educational institution (Leedy, 1993, Hoepft, 1997, Nieuwenhuis, 2007, Lehlabé, 2011 & Dlamini, 2022).

Out of the population of 17 public secondary schools in one circuit in Vhembe district of Limpopo Province, South Africa, three were sampled through the convenient purposive sampling strategy and in each school, a School Principal, an SGB Chairperson and a Chairperson for the Representative Council of Learners, became research participants. Altogether, the number of research participants amounted to nine because it was three per schools. Finally, the interviewing technique and documents review were utilised to generate data for this paper (Mouton, 1996, Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007 & Yukl, 2009). To be precise, views regarding safety and security in a disabling schooling environment caused by safety and security threats by learners, were elicited from the identified nine research participants. In addition, relevant documents containing data about safety and security in a disabling schooling environment, which the researcher accessed, were studied as part of the data generation about the problem pursued in this paper. Documents review as a second data generation method, mainly served to triangulate data gleaned through the interviewing technique. Interview responses were audiotaped for transcription purposes later-on (Maykut

& Morehouse, 1999). Both the interviewing technique and documents reviewed were helpful in terms of accessing information germane to the incessant safety and security threats that adversely affect good learner performance in public secondary schools and ways to overcome them (Kumar, 2005) as quoted by (Lehlaha, 2011). Data were analysed through thematic content analysis.

### **Findings**

Findings arrived at in this paper, are in relation to the research topic whose focus is: critiquing the lack of safety and security as created by the disabling schooling environment in public secondary schools. The basis of the findings is the analysed data which were generated through the interviewing technique and documents review and analysed through thematic content analysis. Responses of participants were critiqued in relation to lack of safety and security induced by the disabling schooling environments As part of discussing the findings, the nine research participants interviewed in this paper, are being referred to as Respondent A, Respondent B and Respondent C from Schools one, two and School three. In each of the three sampled public

secondary school, Respondent A represents a School Principal, with Respondent B, representing an SGB Chairperson. Respondent C represents an RCL Chairperson. SGB stands for School Governing Body and RCL stands for Representative Council of Learners. Briefly, in each of the sampled schools, a School Principal an SGB Chairperson and an RCL Chairperson were interviewed with regard to the safety and security threats in public secondary schools which lead to disabling schooling environment which is untenable to the production of impressive learner results. Actual identities of research participants were concealed (Cohen Manion & Morrison, 2007 & Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Paying attention only to those sampled research participants, ought not create an impression that their schools were worse off as regards safety and security threats. Suffice to disclose that the choice of those nine research participants, was on the basis of the researcher having familiarised himself with issues of safety and security threats and disabling schooling environment in those institutions. The researcher acquainted himself with such issues during his interaction with the research participants, when he was carrying out his other research projects in the

community where those research participants are members. In some projects, the very same research participants were active members. On the basis of intimacy created, it was easy for the researcher to have a knowledge of participants who were likely to possess a wealth of knowledge on safety and security threats and disabling schooling environments and who were equally ready to share that knowledge with the researcher so that ultimately the problem is surmounted (Manake, 2018, Sekhonyane, 2018 & Khoza, 2022). The Learning Organisation Philosophy and the qualitative research approach have been sufficiently instrumental in assisting in the analysis of data, to ultimately emerge with these findings. Findings and discussions for this paper, are the following: emphasising reduction and eradication of safety threats, regular conduction of safety audits in schools, avoidance of learner maltreatment and harassment and perfection of a schools' safety reporting systems.

## Discussion

### Emphasising reduction and eradication of safety threats

One of the findings in this paper relates to secondary schools prioritising the

reduction and eradication of safety and security threats. That will be part of paving the way for the generation of the enabling schooling environment known to be inducing excellent learner results, something which the prevalence of safety and security threats block (Takalo & Aaltio, 2007, Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016 & Ramothwala, 2022a). Lamenting the obstructive nature of threats within the schooling set-up, research participants voice their concerns in diverse ways. School Principal one of School A reasons that *"there is a need to read the riot act to every admitted learner in a school to ascertain that none brings along from the society, safety and security threats to the school to endanger the lives of fellow pupils and to compromise the instructional enterprise of a school"*. Similar words are being echoed by SGB Chairperson one of the same school who asserts that *"despite safety and security threats being the moral chaos inherited by schools from the society, schools have to be innovative and inventive in mitigating their destructive nature in a schooling environment for prosperous education-provision to occur"*. RCL Chairperson one of the same school emphasises that *"minimisation and complete obliteration of the safety and security threats in secondary schools is possible with the*

*active involvement of learners, the majority of whom are the perpetrators of such threats in schooling*". Quite vividly, safety and security threats, especially against teachers, delay the scholastic performance of scores of current public secondary school pupils (Alpha, 2002, Barman, 2010, Bello, 2012, Branson & Cross, 2014, Manake, 2018, Makunga, 2022b & Malinga, 2022). The researcher concurs that where there is safety and security threats in a schooling set-up, brilliant learner performance is very unlikely.

### **Regular conduction of safety audits in schools**

Mkwanazi and Rogers (2022) emphasise that achievement of a safer and a securer schooling environment, has to be a concern of every educational institution. This could be attained through diverse efforts including the creation of the functional safety and security committee in a school (Bernstein & McCarthy, 2011 & Koka & Modipa, 2022). One of the findings for this paper is about schools conducting regular safety and security audits to avert lapses of safety measures. Expectedly, where an enterprise of teaching and learning is occurring in a schooling environment free from fear, intimidation and victimisation, exquisite

learner performance could be achieved (Sana, 2007, Pabalelo, 2018 & Dlamini, 2022). Pertaining to the above finding, School Principal one of School B admits that "*despite its destructive nature, in a stable schooling environment, very few schools if any do even bother to develop a separate safety and security policy to curb and combat disruptive safety and security threats prevalent in every learning site*". SGB Chairperson one of School B declares that "*public secondary schools hardly audit, the severity and the damaging nature and effect of the existing safety and security threats in their institutions, as an adequate indicator that this challenge of lack of safety and security in secondary schools is likely to overstay for little or no attempts are being thought of for its minimisation and final decimation*". Similar words are echoed by RCL Chairperson one of School C who concedes that "*conduction of regular audits with regard to the destructive nature of safety and security threats in public secondary schooling, is something which was supposed to be mandatory to every school in view of how much lawlessness is in almost every public secondary school especially these days*". Summing up the whole notion of the conduction of safety and security audits by public secondary schools, it is

becoming evident that audits could contribute massively to the reduction of incidents of safety and security threats in the secondary schooling sector (Flurry, 1999, Dion, 2012, Flite & Harman, 2013, Elrich, Harris, Klenowski,, Smeed, Spina, 2015, Memela, 2018, Sobuwa, 2018 & Nkanjeni, 2022). The researcher reasons that the schooling era countries of the world are currently in, requires that safety and security issues are ever prioritised for the sustainable engendering of impressive learner results.

### **Avoidance of learner maltreatment and harassment**

The creation of multi-safety teams in secondary schools could assist in averting the ill-treatment of pupils which is occurring in some secondary schools. Turner (2000). Makhanya (2018) and Modiba (2019) submit that when the severity of safety and security threats are out of control, a school can forget about generating an inspiring schooling environment which could be a precondition for brilliant learner results. Remarking about leaving learner maltreatment and harassment unattended to, Modiba (2012), Honwane (2022) and Nkosi (2022) caution that unless something is speedily done to this alien practice against pupils by some

unprofessional teachers, the nation could wait in perpetuity for the secondary schooling system to deliver world-class learner performance. One of the findings in this paper is that containing the maltreatment and harassment of learners helps in creating a welcoming schooling environment necessary for good learner results. School Principal one of School A recounts that "*secondary schools could be categorised performing or underperforming subject to taking good care of learners in the form of amongst others allowing them to learn in an inviting and welcoming schooling environment free from learner maltreatment and harassment*". SGB Chairperson one of School A adds that "*the only existing serious distinction between top-achieving public secondary schools and the underachieving ones is the amount of protection against learner maltreatment and harassment by secondary schools to keep their pupils learning in a harmonious and healthy schooling environment capable of inducing scintillating learner results*". RCL Chairperson one of School A utters that "*it has been witnessed on several occasions that although educational institutions are not built to under-deliver, they can continuously underperform for the simple reason of ignoring or failing to*

*avert learner maltreatment and harassment in its ranks and schooling environment*". Public secondary school learners experiencing a sense of uneasiness due to existing safety and security concerns could contribute to the decline of learner results (Karakose, & Kocabus, 2009, Khoza, 2012, Memela, 2018, Sobuwa & Mahlangu, 2022 & Mkhwanazi, 2022). The researcher is of the view that treating every learner with dignity and honour could influence the production of excellent learner results at all times.

### **Perfection of the safety reporting system**

Information-sharing regarding the state of safety and security in secondary school, matters in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Pushina. 2012, Singh & Takalo, 2015). Malefane (2011) and Marishane et al., (2011) caution against hiding information as regards progress on the management of safety and security threats engulfing the secondary schooling sector. This showcases the gravity with which this unfamiliar practice of learner maltreatment and harassment is being taken by all and sundry (Woolfolk & Weinstein, 2006, Southey, 2012, Van Zyl, 2014, Khumalo, 2018, Koka, Dhlamini & Sobuwa, 2022). School Principal three of School C proclaims that "*although the*

*creation of safety officers, the development of safety policies and the generation of multi-safety teams in secondary schooling is a great and laudable idea, but where the secondary school's safety and security reporting system is unperfected, then all the safety and security efforts could be in vain*". SGB Chairperson two of the same school advises that "*to avoid working at cross purposes, safety and security systems of a school require to be well-coordinated to have the systems directing the safety and security information in the right reporting system*". RCL Chairperson three of School C maintains that "*many commendable efforts of preventing safety and security threats in schools from being out of hand, are being frustrated by the absence of perfected or greatly enhanced safety and security reporting systems which myriad public secondary schools lack*". Safety and security threats have no place inside a classroom and schools as they disturb and retard a smooth functioning of a school and delay the conversion of an educational institution into a blessing field of excellent learner outcomes instead of continuing to be a cursed field of poor learner performance (Higgs & Smith, 2006, Mueller, 2011, Mkhabele, 2011, Coetzee, Van Niekerk & Wydeman, 2011 & Mahlangu, 2022). In view of the

responses of the research participants, the research submits that getting the school's reporting systems better coordinated pertaining to the state of safety and security, has to be the way to go for all public secondary schools to place safety and security threats under control.

### **Conclusion**

As displayed in the discussion of findings of this paper, both the review of literature and the theoretical framework, played a critical role in talking to the findings of this paper. For instance, the theoretical framework undergirding this paper, namely, the Learning Organisation Philosophy in tandem with the literature reviewed have shown that when schooling operates as a learning community, it becomes powerful in reversing safety and security threats. Evidently, secondary schools experiencing safety and security concerns that meddle with outstanding learner outcomes, have to manage and eradicate those threats. For instance, conduction of regular safety and security audits is one way of freeing schools from obstructive safety and security concerns. The interviewing technique and documents review, together with the theoretical perspective, provided the better context within which

the entire paper had to be located and comprehended. Findings of this paper have highlighted the safety and security threats in the secondary schooling sector to be too ruinous to be countenanced. Findings further, teach that the promotion of a safe and secured teaching and learning environment, is essential for the ongoing production of excellent academic outcomes by learners. The conclusion arrived at in this paper, is in the context of avoidance of learner maltreatment and harassment together with the perfection of the safety and security reporting systems in secondary schooling sector as an attempt to continue to engender sound educational outcomes in Limpopo Province, South Africa.

### **Recommendations**

The basis of these recommendations is the discussed findings, which are as follow: emphasising reduction and eradication of safety threats, regular conduction of safety audits in schools, avoidance of learner maltreatment and harassment and perfection of the safety reporting system. To sum up the expressed findings, the researcher recommends that public secondary schooling environment needs to be free from fear, intimidation and victimisation.

This could be actualised through the prioritisation of achieving a safer and a securer schooling environment for the healthy execution of quality teaching and learning that lead to brilliant learner results. Finally, it is strongly recommended that where possible a common approach in dealing with safety and security issues be adopted by the secondary schooling sector. This stems from the observation that in the main,

safety and security concerns engulfing the secondary schooling sector are fundamentally similar despite their contexts of occurrence. Entrenched teacher-caring-attitude in a learner-friendly schooling milieu is as well strongly recommended for the containment of safety and security threats that unfortunately block magnificent learner performance.

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