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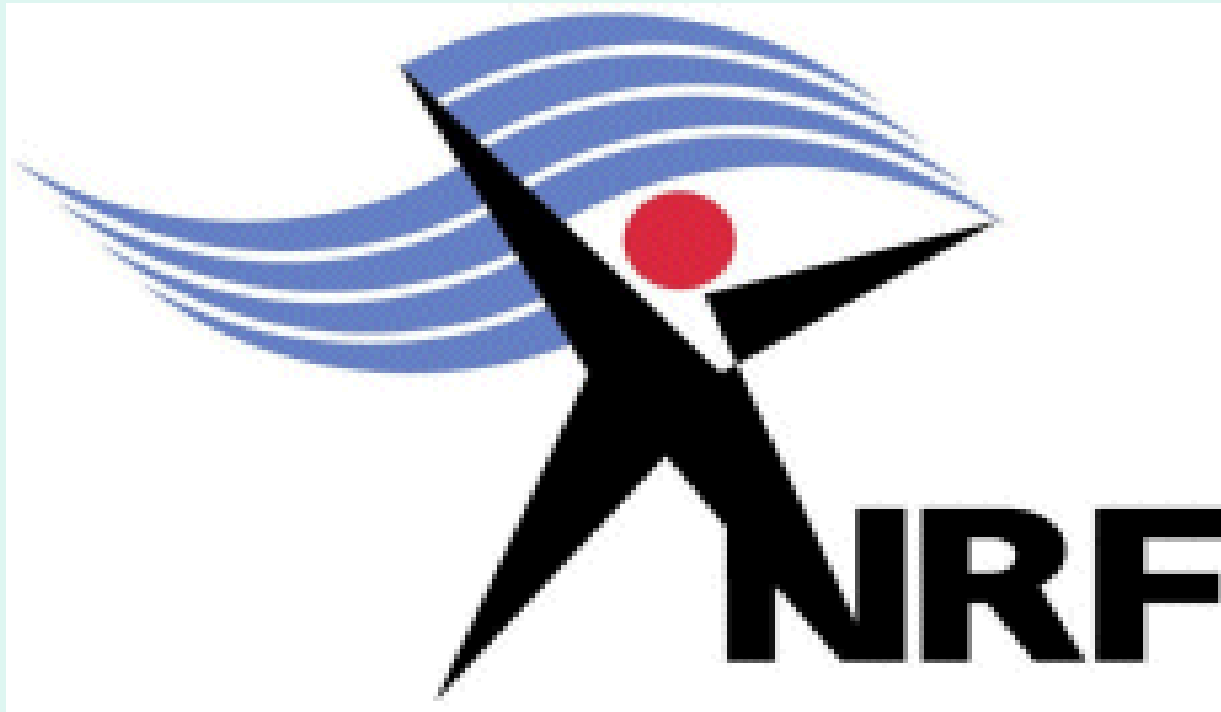
GUIDELINES TO MANAGE AGGRESSION AND FACILITATE MENTAL HEALTH OF EDUCATORS IN THE WORKPLACE

**MARIE POGGENPOEL & CHRIS MYBURGH
UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG
SOUTH AFRICA**

mariep@uj.ac.za & chrism@uj.ac.za

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Rationale

Educators often exposed to aggression in workplace:

- learners;**
- colleagues &**
- parents**

Aggression in workplace can include

- physical aggressive behaviour, screaming & yelling

Can also be covert - destruction or disappearance of educators' possessions or work materials

Rationale (Continue)

Results of aggressive behaviour can be educators experiencing psychological & physical challenges to their health, like:

- anxiety,**
- depression,**
- lower back pain &**
- sleep disorders**

harmful effects of educators' experience of aggression

- reduce efficiency & productivity;**
- increased absenteeism &**
- increased staff turnover**

Problem statement

Literature demonstrates harmful effect aggression can have on educators in workplace

Research questions are:

- **What are educators' experience of aggression in secondary schools in South Africa ? &**
- **What can be done to facilitate these educators' mental health?**

Purpose

- **To describe an emerging meta synthesis of research conducted on educators' lived-experiences of aggression in the workplace in South Africa &**
- **To derive guidelines to manage aggression and facilitate the mental health of these educators**

Research design and Method

Emerging meta synthesis consisted of five research studies:

- **Botha, 2004**
- **Steyn, 2006**
- **Poggenpoel & Myburgh; 2006**
- **Evangelides, 2007**
- **Peter, 2007**

Research conducted within a National Research Foundation Project

Research design and Method (Continue)

- **Qualitative phenomenological interviews,**
 - **observation &**
 - **field notes**
- ⇒ **Utilised to collect data from purposefully sampled educators**

The question pose to the participants was:

“How is aggression for you in this school?”

**Data analysed: open coding
thereafter re-contextualised within the literature**

Research design and Method (Continue)

Measures to ensure trustworthiness strategies

- credibility**
- transferability**
- dependability &**
- confirmability**

Research design and Method (Continue)

Ethical principles applied

- autonomy**
- non-maleficence**
- beneficence &**
- justice**

Results: Demographics:

Sample: 37 educators participated in 5 research projects

Participants: 25 - 60 years

Experience in education: 2 - 35 years

Gender: 22 females & 15 males

Experiences:

- **Educators experience aggression on a personal level as expressed in negative emotions like anger, fear and sadness**
- **The educators also expressed that their locus of control in experiencing aggression as internal and external**
- **Educators also experience aggression interpersonally as expressed in experiencing learners being physically aggressive towards each other in class, and disrespectful behaviour from learners, parent and educators**

Theme 1: Aggression on personal level

Negative emotions like anger, fear and sadness

Anger: “I mean things irritate me and I have an explosion! I’ll get uptight, raise my voice and ... um ... whoever happens to be standing there, I’ll say ‘This is ridiculous, I can’t handle this!’ I feel that’s necessary because if something stews for months, I’m milling over it cause I’m irritated about it.”

“If the child has a problem, you think, go bugger you.”

Frustration: “... teaching is one big frustration as you do not have discipline in your class.”

Theme 2: Locus of control in experiencing aggression: internal and external

Internal: “You yourself don’t know when you will get angry and where it might end. So self-control is important.”

“ you make the choice to be aggressive!”

External: “But I smack both although I know it is wrong, but it is how I cope mostly at this stage.”

“There is a lot of friction, clashes, aggression between teachers and learners. Then I always ask why? We sit with big classes and to be honest, many teachers cannot handle it.”

Theme 3: Experiencing learners being physically aggressive towards each other

“Most learners from grade R we can say that they are violent, always we take learners to the clinic that fought with each other in class... “

“ ... they don't respect each other like the boy who just pulled up the girl's tunic and then pour water in her underwear and I don't understand why and he was laughing saying: 'I was playing with her.'”

Disrespectful behaviour from learners, parents and educators:

Parents:

“ ... writing letters filled with accusations.”

“ ... and said I was lying and all sorts of things ... you know the way she spoke to me and the way she has twisted it all, and the way she wouldn't accept the rules.”

“Uhm ... but she wouldn't see me, and she snubbed me for about four weeks ... “

Educators:

“A little tense now and again and there can be aggressive behaviour in terms of tone of voice or a bit of body language, the rolling of eyes ... it’s when people are outspoken or about what they feel about something that aggression actually manifests itself and there is a difference of opinion ... I think in a lot of cases there is more teacher aggression than student aggression.”

“I believe that the moment that you are annoyed and begin to shout, then you have lost the situation.”

Learners:

“ ... something which irritates me immensely, you cannot, there is no mutual respect between children and adults.”

“ ... it’s fighting, I’ve mentioned fighting, answering back ... disrespect ...”

Identified Challenges

Aim

Intrapersonal challenges :

- Experience aggression negatively – feelings of anger, fear and sadness
- Experience locus of control- experiencing aggression – internal and external

Facilitation of mindfulness

Interpersonal challenges:

Challenges in establishing and maintaining constructive interpersonal relationships as evidenced by:

- A lack of understanding colleagues, management, learners and parents
- Lack of support from parents
- Lack of communication between stakeholders

Facilitating practicing of constructive interpersonal skills:

- **Communication**
- **Assertiveness**
- **Conflict management**

Guidelines to manage experienced aggression

- Intrapersonal guidelines**
- Interpersonal guidelines**

Intrapersonal guidelines Practice

mindfulness: Skills are - Awareness:

- **Before an educator can help other persons, they have to discover themselves**
- **Educators thus need to know themselves and understand own thoughts, feelings and actions**
- **Self-awareness can lead to educators behaving pro-actively as well as responsibly in choosing constructive manners of behaviour**

Intrapersonal guidelines Practice

mindfulness: Skills are - Awareness: (proceed)

- **Educators need to perceive their experiences non-judgementally by not labelling their experiences**
- **Need to be compassionate towards themselves**
- **Educators need to learn to live in present moment & accept they are an active participant and can choose how to respond to learners' aggressive behaviour**
- **Educators need to be open to new possibilities & see own experiences as opportunity to learn & grow**

Interpersonal guidelines


to master aggression in workplace => practice interpersonal skills

- practice empathy towards learners who are aggressive
- listen respectfully &
- hear what learners say



try to identify & understand learners' point of views
question feelings as well as facts

Interpersonal guidelines (proceed)

- **need to share own feelings of frustration with learners**
- **learn to manage own feelings towards learners &**
- **even leave the situation for a while to take control of own emotions**

 **Educators responding with anger to aggression from learners are not addressing the learners' aggressive behaviour in a constructive way**

Conclusion

-  **Aggression experienced by educators demonstrates challenges to educators' mental health**
-  **Described guidelines can be utilised to facilitate educators' mindfulness & constructive interpersonal skills to manage aggression as integral part of mental health**