

High school learners experiences of gangsterism in Hanover Park

Mufaro Magidi, Rinie Schenk and Charlene Erasmus

Abstract

The culture of gang violence has become deeply entrenched in South Africa. The present study explored the experiences of non-gang school-going adolescents regarding gangs and gangsterism in Hanover Park in the Western Cape. A qualitative exploratory approach was used. Data collection instruments were focus group discussions supported by qualitative semi-structured interviews involving 18 adolescents between the ages of 16 and 18 from two secondary schools in Hanover Park, Cape Town. The data were thematically analysed. The results have shown that the presence of gangs affects the learners' school attendance, restricts their mobility, increases bullying at school and seriously disrupts family and community life.

“Once found principally in large cities, violent street gangs now affect public safety, community image, and quality of life in communities of all sizes in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Gangs affect society at all levels, causing heightened fears for safety, violence, and economic costs”. (National Gang Threat Assessment, 2005:139).

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

An increase of gang-related crimes and illegal activities is being experienced by communities in South Africa. In the Daily Maverick of 26 May 2014 it was stated that gang related murders in South Africa increased by 86% between 2012-2014. Gang membership is no longer limited to people of a minority but has evolved into accommodating people from all psychosocial structures such as race, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and culture (Egley and Howell, 2011). The culture of gang violence has become deeply entrenched in South Africa and is worse in the Western Cape Province in certain areas such as Manenberg and Hanover Park (South African History Online, 2011). This can be noted in an increase in televised and newsprint articles displaying children and community members shot, injured and in some cases killed by gang violence.

In communities where gangs are prevalent, one cannot overlook the experiences and the effects of gangs on non-gang-affiliated residents. Lindsay (2012), Marcovitz (2010), Kelly (2008) and Kemp (2007) acknowledged that gangs have an effect on societies which inevitably lead to responses in members of society such as fear, and vulnerability.

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