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Teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools.

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ABSTRACT

Discrimination based on sexual orientation takes place on a regular basis in schools today. A major form of discrimination among learners in secondary schools is homophobic victimisation. South Africa is a democratic society with laws that protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) learners, yet discrimination towards these learners still occurs. The objective of this research is to investigate teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools.

The researcher adopted a phenomenological approach. The research design was qualitative and of an exploratory, descriptive and contextual nature. Information was gathered through questioning participants via an open-ended, structured questionnaire. Teschs's eight step method of data analysis was used. An independent coder, together with the researcher, analysed the data. Three themes (and attendant categories) were identified, discussed and supported with literature.

The first of these themes pertains to the institutional level and the school context, in particular. The categories identified under this theme pertained to teachers' thoughts regarding a culture of acceptance of homosexuality and school policy regarding sexual orientation and homophobic victimisation. The second theme related to the individual level of the teachers and their perceptions regarding, firstly, homosexuality and, secondly, homosexually-oriented learners. The third and final theme identified was that of the individual level of the learners and the difficulties they experience. In particular, these difficulties pertain to social difficulties, acts of verbal, physical and emotional victimisation and the learners' self-concept.