

The views of experts on hazing in South African schools: a media analysis

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Abstract

In 2002 regulations were promulgated prohibiting hazing in South African schools and school hostels. Yet, research has found that hazing is still a fairly common practice in some South African schools and school hostels. This article reports on findings emanating from a qualitative content analysis of 13 in-depth newspaper articles written by or based on interviews with experts, as well as three editorials commenting on hazing. This paper draws on the theories of cognitive dissonance and male dominance. Findings from the study shed light on the nature and extent of hazing in South African schools; the possible consequences of hazing for the hazee, hazer and bystanders; as well as the overt and oblique reasons for hazing. The study highlights the role parents, educators and, to a lesser extent, the media should play in the reduction or eradication of abusive hazing practices. It is concluded that schools should develop unity and loyalty through acceptable forms of initiation, rather than physical, sexual and emotional abusive and humiliating activities that perpetuate the cycle of violence, disrespect and abuse of power in the name of 'tradition'.

Key concepts: cognitive dissonance theory, educators, hazing, initiation, male dominance theory, orientation, parents

Opsomming

Die siening van kundiges oor ontgroening in Suid-Afrikaanse skole en skoolkoshuise: 'n media-analise

In 2002 is regulasies wat 'n verbod op ontgroeningspraktyke in Suid-Afrikaanse skole en skoolkoshuise plaas, aanvaar. Desnieteenstaande toon navorsing dat ontgroening 'n redelik algemene verskynsel in Suid-Afrikaanse skole en skoolkoshuise is. Die artikel doen verslag oor bevindinge voortspruitend uit 'n kwalitatiewe inhoudanalise van 13 in-diepte koerantartikels wat óf deur kundiges geskryf is óf gebaseer is op onderhoude met kundiges, asook drie redaksionele kommentare. Die kognitiewe dissonansie en manlike oorheersingsteorieë dien as teoretiese raamwerk vir hierdie studie. Bevindinge van die studie werp lig op die aard en omvang van ontgroeningspraktyke in Suid-Afrikaanse skole; moontlike gevolge van ontgroening vir diegene wat ontgroen word, diegene wat vir die ontgroening verantwoordelik is en die waarnemers; asook die direkte en indirekte redes vir ontgroening. Die studie beklemtoon die rol van ouers, opvoeders en tot 'n mindere mate die media in die vermindering en beëindiging van vernederende ontgroeningspraktyke. Daar word gekonkludeer dat eenheid en lojaliteit deur positiewe inisiasiepraktyke eerder as deur fisiese, seksuele en emosioneel afbrekende en vernederende praktyke gevestig word. Laasgenoemde hou onder die dekmantel van 'tradisie' 'n siklus van geweld, respekloosheid en magsmisbruik in stand.

Sleutelbegrippe: kognitiewe dissonansie-teorie, inisiasie, manlike dominansie-teorie, ontgroening, opvoeders, oriëntering, ouers,

1. Introduction

Orientation or initiation programmes for new Grade 8 learners or other groups of junior learners are often conducted in South African secondary schools (Jardine, 2009:13). The original purpose of these programmes was to help prepare newcomers psychologically, physically and symbolically for the new environment in which they were to live (Ancer, 2011:9). Ancer (2011:9) warns that “out of context, and taken too far [these practices] constitute ritualised group abuse and institutionalised bullying”. The seriousness and commonness of such abusive practices in South African schools and school hostels led to the promulgation of *Regulations to Prohibit Initiation Practices in Schools* (Department of Education, 2002:2). These regulations prohibit

... any act which in the process of initiation, admission into, or affiliation with, or as condition for continued membership of a school, a group, intramural or extramural activities, interschool's sports team or organisation endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a person; seeks to undermine the intrinsic worth of human beings by treating some as inferior to others; subject individuals to humiliating or violent acts which undermine the constitutional guarantee to dignity in the Bill of Rights; undermines the fundamental rights and values that underpin the Constitution; impedes the development of a true democratic culture that entitles an individual to be treated as worthy of respect and concern; or impedes the development of a true democratic culture that entitles an individual to be treated as worthy of respect and concern; or destroys public or private property (Department of Education, 2002:2).

The regulations (Department of Education, 2002:4), however, do not prohibit “positive orientation which involves a process of induction that seeks to introduce learners to their new academic environment in a manner where dignity is enhanced as learners are advised, guided and mentored”. Huysamer and Lemmer (2013:2) found that well planned and well intended institutionalised sanctioned orientation programmes “frequently degenerate into hazing or, at least, accommodate elements of hazing”. Despite the banning of hazing in South Africa and the efforts of some schools to introduce orientation programmes that focus on the principles set by the Department of Education, hazing is still a fairly common practice in some South African schools and school hostels (Potgieter, 2012). Hazing, a centuries-old, worldwide phenomenon (Garg, 2009:263; Huysamer, 2013:24-26) has occurred in South African schools for more than a century (Huysamer, 2013:18-24; Huysamer & Lemmer, 2013:3). Yet, an extensive literature search has shown that little research has been done on the topic within the South African context (De Klerk, 2013; Huysamer, 2013; Huysamer & Lemmer, 2013; Potgieter, 2012; Smith, 1950; Soudien, 2010). There is thus a need to investigate hazing in South African schools and school hostels. This study aims to answer the following research questions: (1) What is the nature and extent of hazing in South African schools and school hostels? (2) What are the consequences of hazing? (3) What are the reasons for the perpetuation of hazing? (4) What can be done to reduce/stop hazing practices?

Against the background of the findings by Huysamer and Lemmer (2013:12), as well as Potgieter (2011:39) that hazing is still fairly common in some South African schools more than ten years after it was deemed illegal, I will argue

that parents and educators should be at the forefront in eradicating hazing in our schools. This argument is firstly supported by a legal perspective, namely that the document prohibiting hazing emphasises the “co-extensive rights and responsibilities that they (educators) share with parents/caregivers to care for, to manage and to control learners fairly while they form part of school events” (De Waal, 2011:183), and secondly, by the Christian perspective that the school and family should cohere in a distinctive way in the education system (Lemmer, 2009:89).

2. A Christian perspective on hazing

In my quest to create an awareness of this practice in South African schools from a Christian perspective I support De Klerk’s (2013:88) argument that the tendency to be lenient and dismiss hazing activities as harmless fun, or to condone them, has the potentially dangerous result of entrenching attitudes and beliefs that hazing practices are normal. Holmes (2012:2) writes that hazing contradicts the Biblical principles of “bringing up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it”. He argues that hazing causes children to deviate from their upbringing, despite the fact that hazing is illegal. Holmes (2013a:23) furthermore argues that hazing disregards God, ridicules others and condones disrespect for oneself when one allows oneself to be hazed. Hazing is in contravention to the Christian values of tolerance, neighbourly love, care and respect for others, patience, kindness and trust. Hazing is motivated by the hazer’s abuse of power at the detriment of the hazee (Venter & Du Plessis, 2012:3).

Holmes (2013a:23) further avers that the basis for the response against hazing can be found in the commandment to love God and “to love your neighbour as yourself” (Matthew 28:18-20). Laws alone cannot eradicate hazing; it is therefore imperative for parents and educators to take a stand against hazing, otherwise they will deny “the mercy and compassion to neighbours that we would not want denied to ourselves” (Holmes, 2013a:23).

Parents are their children’s primary educators and entrust the formal aspects of their children’s education to the school. However, the family should never be excluded from the child’s education. Christian parents are obliged to educate and care for their children according to Biblical guidelines and, as a result of the promise they made to God to do so (Oosthuizen, 1992:123). Lemmer (2013:28) additionally writes that Christian parents are obliged to participate in and support all aspects of a child’s schooling and thereby ensure that the spirit and character, aims, content, teaching methods and

management thereof are reconcilable with their Christian principles. This implies that Christian parents are obliged to speak out and act against any humiliating, degrading, abusive, disruptive and deadly acts observed, committed or suffered by their children.

From a Christian perspective, as I have already mentioned, the school and family cohere in a distinctive way in the education system. The family may make certain demands on the school, such as that the education should not clash with the philosophy of the family (Lemmer, 2009:89). While the curriculum and teaching methods should be according to true pedagogic principles and the community's life view (Lemmer, 2009:89), the principles of a school's Code of Conduct should be embedded in Matthew 28:18-20 (Holmes, 2013a:23). Venter and Du Plessis (2012:2) believe that learners should be guided by their educators to treat their fellow learners humanely and with respect, because

Jesus came into this world, not as an imposter of humanity, nor as a dim reflection of humanity ... but as a living, fully functional and holistic representative of humanity. (Iselin & Meteyard, in Venter & Du Plessis, 2012:2)

These Christian principles are supported by the judicial principle of *in loco parentis*. Literally translated, the expression means 'in the place of the parent' (Oosthuizen, 1992:127). Claassen (1976, in Oosthuizen, 1992:126) defines *in loco parentis* as "in the place of the parent. Those who have been entrusted by the parents with the custody and control of children under the age are said to stand *in loco parentis* to the children". People who are acting *in loco parentis* are educators and hostel staff. This implies that educators and hostel staff are under the obligation to provide custody for the learners as minors for the time they are entrusted to them. There is thus a duty of care on educators and hostel staff for the physical and mental protection of learners (Oosthuizen, 1992:127). From a Christian perspective this implies that educators are not only obliged to guide learners towards a caring relationship with their peers (cf. Holmes, 2013a:23), but also to enter into a loving, caring, serving, guiding and 'disciplining' relationship with learners (Oosthuizen, Roux & Van der Walt, 2003:388).

Practical guidelines on how parents and educators, as primary and secondary educators, can fulfil their responsibilities in protecting children against hazing and to prevent hazing, will be presented at the end of this article (cf. Section 7).

3. Concept clarification

The most common term used in South African schools and universities to denote processes in which newcomers are admitted to the community is called 'initiation', also popularly known as '*ontgroening*' in Afrikaans (Huysamer & Lemmer, 2013:2). The term initiation in the South African context often refers to cultural practices in which boys of certain cultural groups participate in rites-of-passage to mark their entry into the community as adult men. Initiation may also refer to religious ceremonies regulated by orthodox rituals (Huysamer & Lemmer, 2013:2). To avoid ambiguity, I decided to follow Huysamer and Lemmer's (2013:2) example and use the American term, hazing. The term hazing has been taken from the old American West practice of controlling stock animals. The word hazing was later appropriated in the West to ridicule and tell rough jokes to newcomers, who were called 'greenhorns' (Garg, 2009:264). The term hazing should not be confused with the term orientation, i.e. the positive introduction of learners to their new academic environment (Department of Education, 2002:4).

Allan and Madden (2008:2) define hazing as "any activity accepted of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them regardless of a person's willingness to participate". This definition makes mention of two main ideas: firstly, the implied negative consequences, such as humiliation, degradation, abuse and any form of endangerment which includes psychological, physical and sexual consequences. Secondly, the definition refers to the participant participating willingly or unwillingly. The latter is an important part of the definition, as the individual being hazed is always in favour of the ultimate outcome, namely of becoming an accepted member of the group, but not necessarily as part of the process (Huysamer, 2013:15).

4. Theoretical framework

To provide a theoretical framework for the phenomenon of hazing, this paper draws on the theories of cognitive dissonance and male dominance. Cognitive dissonance occurs when a person holds two opposing views concurrently. This causes tension within the individual and, as a result, the individual adapts or changes one of his/her views in an attempt to reduce the internal tension caused by the opposing view. When a victim of hazing is, for example, forced into a degrading act during hazing, he/she rationalises the experience by convincing him/herself that 'it was not so bad', thus reducing the conflicting tension between his/her identity as an intelligent person and

his/her participation in a demeaning act. He/she consequently regards the group with which he/she seeks affiliation positively (Cimino, 2011:243; Huysamer & Lemmer, 2013:4). In contrast to the cognitive dissonance theory that suggests that hazing promotes group solidarity is the male dominance theory. Dominant expectations of heterosexual masculinity have long dictated that 'real men' should be tough, aggressive, courageous and able to withstand pain. Such beliefs, combined with the desires by heterosexual men to demonstrate that they do not possess qualities associated with gay men, may contribute to the perpetuation of hazing (Anderson, McCormac & Lee, 2011:428; Cimino, 2011:243).

5. Research methodology

5.1 Data

My decision to utilise newspaper articles rather than conducting an empirical investigation to answer the research questions was firstly motivated by Potgieter's (2012:19) findings that principals often reject the notion that hazing is practised in their school and/or are unwilling to allow researchers to conduct research on the topic in their schools. Secondly, newspaper reports on hazing have been instrumental in creating an awareness of the commonness and seriousness of hazing practices. This awareness led to the passing of legislation prohibiting hazing in South Africa (Potgieter, 2012:18; SAHRC, 2001:3), India (CURE, 2001:8) and in most states in the USA (Edelman, 2004:16). Thirdly, Van Raalte, Cornelius, Linder and Brewer (2008:492) found that people are unwilling to take part in studies on hazing because participants are asked questions on their involvement in what may be illegal activities. Van Raalte *et al.* (2008:492) therefore recommend utilising the news media as an alternative data source to an empirical study on the topic.

In order to convey an extensive picture of hazing in South African schools, news and in-depth informative articles, editorials, and letters to the editor related to hazing in South African schools and school hostels that were published in South African newspapers since the publication of the regulations prohibiting hazing were retrieved from the SAMedia database (<http://www.samedia.uovs.ac.za/>). On 1 November 2013 full-text keyword searches ('hazing', 'initiation', 'education' and 'schools'), yielded 84 items related to hazing within a school and/or a school hostel context that were published in South African newspapers between 1 December 2002 and 31 December 2012.

Among the 84 items, 13 were either in-depth informative articles aimed at disseminating information regarding the passing of the regulations prohibiting initiation practices in schools or articles written by experts on hazing per se or on a specific incident of hazing. The data search also identified three editorials. The primary function of editorials is to interpret and articulate the significance of specific events to readers (Helleinger & Szuchewycz, 1997:118). In line with the aim of this study, my data set was the above-mentioned 13 articles and three editorials. Table 1 gives a summary of information on the experts and community/education leaders whose writings and interviews reported on by journalists were analysed.

Table 1: Information on the experts and community/education leaders whose writings or interviews form the core of the data set

Author of article or interviewee	Position	Contribution	Newspaper in which the article was published
Judith Ancer	Johannesburg-based psychologist	Author of the article	<i>Sunday Times</i>
David Balt	Deputy-president of the National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa	Interviewed and quoted by Rademeyer (2002a) *	<i>Beeld</i>
Huw Davies	Executive officer of the South African Teachers' Union	Interviewed and quoted by Van Eeden (2002)	<i>Rapport</i>
Julia Grey	Editor of The Teacher	Author of the article	<i>The Teacher</i>

* Articles by Rademeyer in which she refers to her interviews with Lorgat and Balt are published in *Beeld* (2002a), *Volksblad* (2002b) and *Burger* (2002c). The core of three of these articles is the same. I therefore analysed only the article published in *Beeld* (Rademeyer, 2002a).

Neil Jardine	Former principal of Michaelhouse, Kingswood College, Grayston Prep and the International School of South Africa	Author of the article	<i>Daily News</i>
Prof. Rika Joubert	Head of the interuniversity centre for Education Law and Policy at the University of Pretoria	Interviewed and quoted by Van Eeden (2002)	<i>Rapport</i>
Hassan Lorgat	Spokesperson for the South African Teachers' Union	Interviewed and quoted by Rademeyer (2002a)	<i>Beeld</i>
Janine Moolman	Editor of Agenda	Author of the article	<i>Star</i>
Delene Ritter	Regional director of Child-welfare South Africa (Eastern Cape)	Author of the article	<i>Weekend Post</i>
Dr. Charles Stofberg	Community leader (Erasmuskloof)	Author of the article	<i>Beeld</i>
Edmund van Vuuren	Former principal and member of the Eastern Cape legislature's provincial education committee	Author of the article	<i>Weekend Post</i>
Dr. Erika Wakeford	Clinical psychologist (Pretoria)	Interviewed and quoted by Van Eeden (2002)	<i>Rapport</i>

5.2 Analysis of data

Content analysis, a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis, was used to identify and summarise the content of the newspaper articles and editorials. According to MacNamara (2006:15), the precise method best used for qualitative content analysis is poorly defined and lacks specific guidelines. MacNamara (2006:15) accordingly, suggests that researchers use the research procedures given by established qualitative researchers. Consequently, I followed Nieuwenhuis's (2007:106-115) guidelines for qualitative content analysis in order to reduce, condense and group the content of the 13 in-depth articles and three editorials. A coding frame was drawn up, also providing for verbatim reporting where applicable. I used preset codes (a priori coding) that I identified whilst doing the literature review for my study. I worked through all my data sources (newspaper articles and editorials) and coded all the data. Related codes were thereafter organised into preset categories (cf. research questions). These preset categories were identified whilst doing my literature review. After I had completed my categorisation, I reread the newspaper articles and editorials to check whether I had captured all the important insights that emerged from the data. From the categories, patterns and themes which could be linked to the research questions were identified and described. The identification of emergent themes allowed the information to be analysed and related to the literature. To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, I described the research process in relatively in-depth detail, linked the data to the existing literature on the topic and gave rich, thick descriptions to allow transferability.

6. Findings and discussion

Newspapers move beyond the mere dissemination of information. They inadvertently strive to educate their readers about important social issues, such as hazing. In the next section attention will be given to themes identified in the space created by newspapers for experts, community leaders and newspaper editors to share their thoughts on hazing with their readers. I will integrate my findings with prior research and theory as viewed in the literature. The practice of concurrently presenting findings from prior and current research is an accepted mode of reporting in qualitative research, and a technique often used to enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative research findings (cf. Lemmer, 2009:94; Nieuwenhuis, 2007:110).

6.1 Nature and extent of hazing

A wide variety of ways to haze has been documented by researchers. The following is not an exhaustive list, but merely illustrative of activities “developed by young minds” (Huysamer, 2013:36) to ‘welcome’ newcomers into their midst: striking (beating, paddling, whipping) and kicking; scarring (leaving a permanent mark and includes branding, tattooing, cigarette burns and burning); drowning and near drowning (newcomers are forced to swim in inappropriate attire, during unsuitable weather conditions or swim in, for example, mud); excessive physical exercise; personal servitude; restrictions on personal hygiene; consumption of vile substances or smearing such substances on one’s skin or hair; yelling, swearing and insulting new members; sexual simulation or abuse; humiliating performance in public; sleep deprivation; and excessive alcohol consumption (Finkel, 2002:229-232; Huysamer, 2013:36-42; Johnson, 2011:200).

The informative articles show that the different types of hazing that newcomers were subjected to range from the time-consuming, rather ridiculous activities such as barking like a dog to life-threatening physical abuse where newcomers were severely kicked and beaten or forced to drink what they perceive to be urine and emotionally abusive activities, such as forced to kick and kill an animal. The following two humiliating activities that may not be life threatening were identified by Grey (2004:11): newcomers were required to get on their knees and bark like a dog at the bidding of their seniors, and Grade 8s are called “slaves” and Grade 12s their “bosses” in ordinary conversations. Other time-consuming and/or ridiculous activities include forcing newcomers to clean the pavement with a toothbrush (Stofberg, 2011:11); hazing going to the tuck-shop for seniors; or being seen with their thumbs in their mouths for a week or longer (Van Vuuren, 2010:11). Some of the activities were, however, brutal and sadistic (Jardine, 2009:13). Mention was made for example, of older boys in school hostels beating younger boys with various utensils (Van Eeden, 2009:9; Van Vuuren, 2010:11); newcomers standing as targets while seniors boot footballs at their heads (Grey, 2004:11); newcomers being forced to crawl naked over concrete, rub Deep Heat over their genitals and forced to drink what they thought was urine (Ancer, 2011:9). Van Eeden (2002:9) refers to a traumatic incident where newcomers were forced to kick to death three jumping-hares, which were set free on a sports field. Jardine (2009:13) lists the following three “uncivilised refinements”: “throw boys into dams ... at midnight, piss in their tea [and] jacklift them up the arse with sharp-pointed shoes”.

The analysed articles give no clear indication on the extent of hazing in South African schools and school hostels. That it may have been a pervasive practice before the banning of hazing in 2002 can be deduced from Lorgat (in Rademeyer, 2002a:4), Balt (in Rademeyer, 2002a:4) and Davies's (in Van Eeden, 2009:9) comments. All three said that the commonness and serious nature of hazing practices necessitated the promulgation of the regulations. As is the case with the views of the aforementioned three teachers' union leaders (cf. Table 1), post-2002 articles are also vague when referring to the extent of the problem (Jardine, 2009:13; Van Vuuren, 2010:11). This vagueness is understandable: Finkel (2002:229) believes that due to the "massive underreporting of incidents, defining the prevalence of hazing is extremely difficult". The only indication on whether or not hazing practices have declined after the passing of the regulations was found in Ritter's (2010:11) article. She writes:

There seems to be some light at the end of the tunnel. I have seen the prevalence of initiation decreased over the last few years and I believe it has a lot to do with the fact that the negative aspects of initiation far exceed the positive.

Although the above quoted comment should not be seen as irrefutable evidence of the decline of hazing practices in schools, it can be assumed that Ritter has some insight into the prevalence of the problem, particularly in the Eastern Cape: she is regional director of Child Welfare South Africa (Eastern Cape) (cf. Table 1). It should be noted that she ascribes the decline of hazing not to the 2002 regulations, but to a greater awareness of role-players to the negative impact of hazing.

Studies by Huysamer and Lemmer (2013:12) and Potgieter (2012:39) shed some light on the prevalence of hazing in three boys-only schools in Gauteng Province and three secondary schools (boys-only, girls-only and mixed gender schools) in the Free State respectively. The Grade 12 learners who took part in Huysamer and Lemmer's (2013:12) study disagreed that the following took place in their respective schools: striking a Grade 8 with the fist (70.4%); sleep deprivation (64.4%); and consuming strange food (69.2%) or alcohol (80.4%). Respondents agreed that Grade 8s are required to do excessive exercise (68.2%) and that Grade 12s shouted at Grade 8s (58.5%). Potgieter (2012:50) found that hazing is infrequent in the three schools which took part in the study. Menial tasks, such as carrying a senior's bag, cleaning seniors' shoes and bringing water to a senior were the three most common hazing tasks. Yet, less than half of the hazingees were doing these boring tasks

for Grade 12s: carrying a bag (35.9%); carrying water (28.5%); and cleaning shoes (27.6%). Huysamer and Lemmer (2013:12) and Potgieter's (2012:50) findings cannot be generalised due to the limited nature of the two studies.

An analysis of the newspaper articles thus reveal that newcomers in South African schools and school hostels are subjected to a wide variety of humiliating, abusive, crude, uncivilised, emotionally traumatic and even life-threatening acts of hazing. Some acts were nevertheless non-threatening, time-consuming and ridiculous. Ancer (2011:9) succinctly summarises hazing practices as "brutal, bizarre and wholly irrelevant". Owing to the vagueness of available information in the newspaper articles on the prevalence of hazing, it was not possible to ascertain the extent of hazing in South Africa schools and school hostels. Attempts to answer my research question by utilising existing research, is hindered by the limited nature of existing research on the topic.

6.2 Possible consequences of hazing on hazers, hazingees and bystanders

Hoover and Pollard (2000:10) identify the following negative consequences of hazing: getting into fights; committing a crime; getting injured; considering suicide; fighting with parents; doing poorly at school; discontinuing socialising with friends; missing a prior commitment; getting into trouble with the police; hurting someone else; being convicted of a crime; experiencing difficulty sleeping, eating or concentrating; being depressed; crying all the time; suffering low self-esteem; or experiencing an emotional breakdown. De Klerk (2013:88) concurs with the foregoing consequences of hazing on the hazingees, but adds that hazing may lead to negative publicity for the school.

In the following discussion of the findings emanating from newspaper articles on the consequences of hazing, I will firstly focus on hazingees; thereafter, attention will be given to the possible negative impact of hazing on the hazers.

In an article by Moolman (2003:8) she reflects on the "damaging school rites [that] still rule our adult lives". She writes that "certain initiation rites at schools serve no purpose except to instil fear. For some boys, these practices results in a deep sense of inadequacy and the need to prove they are 'real' men". She warns that many young boys carry this emotional baggage into adulthood. Ritter (2010:11) also believes, depending on the severity of the hazing, that it could have a lasting negative effect on a child's personality. Wakeford (in Van Eeden, 2009:9) is especially worried about the negative effects of hazing practices on children with a lack of self-worth.

After briefly explaining the original aim of initiation practices, namely to prepare individuals to become part of a new group, Ancer (2011:9) warns that

... out of context, and taken too far, they constitute ritualised group abuse and institutionalised bullying. Once they take hold of a group, harsh initiation practices become part of that culture and can be difficult to uproot. More than one school head has discovered that their attempts to moderate initiation practises is actively resisted by pupils, who wishes to pass on the same trial by fire they underwent.

The above quoted view is supported by Johnson (2011:203) who opines that hazing ceremonies are “cycled and recycled from year to year [and] offer few opportunities for new members to opt out or question the often abusive nature of the rites of passage”.

Joubert (in Van Eeden, 2009:9) and Jardine (2009:13) reflect on the possible impact of hazing on the hazzee. From a legal perspective, Joubert (in Van Eeden, 2009:9) warns that hazzees are breaking the law by exerting power over newcomers in an abusive manner. Jardine (2009:13) on the other hand, looks at the impact from a more personal perspective:

A relative of mine says he still feels shame at how he humiliated another boy to the point of desperate and ineffectual rage; crying out, tears flowing, fists beating the air. Today the perpetrator would like to expunge his guilt by finding the boy and apologise to him. But of course, now it's too late. Damage has been done. Life's moved on.

Jardine's (2009:13) contention is supported by previous research. Edelman (2004:18) found that “even though hazing perpetrators expect to feel *schadenfreuden* (enjoyment derived from the misfortune of others) ... hazers themselves suffer from guilt associated with their wrongdoing”.

Whereas none of the newspaper articles reflected on the possible impact of hazing on the bystanders, studies by Edelman (2004:18) found that bystanders may suffer emotional harm, because of “their fear of confronting hazers”.

This study thus found that hazing may result in the need for victims to prove their masculinity and to deal with their experiences of fear, inadequacy and a sense of vindication. The data furthermore reveal that hazing may have legal

and emotional consequences for the hazers. These findings are supported by previous research (De Klerk, 2013:88; Edelman, 2004:18; Hoover & Pollard, 2000:10).

6.3 The reasons for hazing

The reasons offered by experts whose newspaper articles were analysed feeds into the theories underlying this study, namely the male dominance and cognitive dissonance theories. While the male dominance theory is supported by arguments that hazing is character building and teaches newcomers to become 'real men', the cognitive dissonance theory links up with the argument that hazing is a key factor in creating pride and solidarity in a school. It should be noted that none of the experts supports hazing. On the contrary, the main objective of their articles was to repudiate arguments in favour of hazing.

Grey (2004:11) believes that the culture and ethos of boys' schools with a "rich history" are rooted in "military, authoritarian values, often with a colonial flavour for good measure". According to her so-called initiation practices at schools which humiliate and terrify newcomers "gets down to a perverse interpretation of masculinity. It's all about socialising boys to become rough 'n ready jocks, demoting qualities like sensitivity and gentleness to the bottom of the male food chain". Ancer (2011:9) likewise sees hazing as a pretext to "force [boys] into a stereotypical mould of masculinity". Jardin (2009:13) concurs with Grey and Ancer, and rejects the argument of pro-hazing proponents that hazing "made a man of me". He argues that hazing ignores the influence of the home, friends, family and other beneficial experiences beyond the school in character building. Grey, Ancer and Jardin's argument that the underlying reason for hazing is a culturally constructed notion of what it means to be 'a real man' supports the social dominance theory that underpins this study. Huysamer and Lemmer (2013:18) argue in this regard that activities aimed to prepare juniors to conform to the codes of behaviour by the stronger (senior boys) construct a "regime of masculinity". Adults – parents and educators alike – who openly or surreptitiously support male dominance and power often turn a blind eye to and support hazing when it occurs (cf. Huysamer & Lemmer, 2013:18; Johnson, 2011:203).

Huysamer's (2013:32) contention that hazers justify hazing because it serves them well in achieving a sense of belonging and that it is perceived to be character building is corroborated by the editor of the *Star* (2009:16), Ancer (2011:9) and Van Vuuren (2010:11). All three reject the claim by pro-hazing groups that hazing is character building. Ancer (2011:9) writes in this regard:

Often initiations are defended as arduous tests of strength and character, teaching humility and toughening up or weeding out the weak, the argument goes. However, most of us school our children to prepare them for the 21st century workplace, not the rigours of the battlefield or a survivalist lifestyle.

The suggestion by Grey (2004:11) that hazing is perpetuated by the notion that it is the “duty” of senior learners to pass on the traditions of the school is supported by previous research (Huysamer, 2013:32). According to Van Vuuren (2010:11) the only “tradition” displayed when older boys beat younger boys with various utensils, is one of violence in society.

The essence of the cognitive dissonance theory is captured in Van Vuuren’s (2010:11) article. He writes that: “Kids do not often speak out because [of their] ... fear [of] being rejected by the rest of the learner corps”. The argument of pro-hazing groups that group solidarity is a positive outcome of hazing is rejected by Jardine (2009:13). Jardine (2009:13) calls hazing a “harmful and unnecessary practice” and argues that it is not possible to create school spirit “by robbing pupils of every shred of their dignity”. The view of this retired principal is supported by members of academe. Johnson (2011:218) writes that camaraderie does not develop when individuals feel “violated, harassed or disparate to other members of the group”. Findings from Van Raalte *et al.*’s (2008:492) study also reject the notion that hazing increases cohesion.

In reaction to an incident of abusive hazing at a boy’s school in Inanda, Johannesburg, the editor of the *Star* (2012:12) slams pro-hazing proponents who “write off initiation in its milder forms as youthful exuberance and harmless stupidity” and writes that “mild initiation can graduate to fully-fledged assault or death. Sexual violence, of any sort, can never be condoned, not in a country with an egregious record such as ours”.

Media analysis reveals that educators often play a role in maintaining hazing. Jardine (2009:13) writes in this regard that some schools that “still persist in a paradigm of these harmful and unnecessary practices”, do not have “their priorities right” and turn a blind eye to “so-called traditions”. This stance is supported by Garg (2009:268). He writes that a lack of supervision and a lack of implementation of anti-hazing measures by education authorities may be reasons for the perpetuation of hazing.

Findings from this study, as well as previous research are in agreement with claims that hazing is character building, part of a school’s ‘tradition’, advances group solidarity and is nothing more than youthful exuberance and

fun, are not only flawed, but perpetuates the cycle of abuse. Another finding of this study on the continuation of hazing; namely that newcomers take part in hazing activities because of their desire to be accepted as part of a group, can be explained within the context of the cognitive dissonance theory. The findings also highlight the role of alumni, learners and educators in the perpetuation of hazing practices.

6.4 Experts' suggestions on how to prevent or reduce hazing practices

Researchers (Finkel; 2002:232; Garg, 2009:266) and the regulations prohibiting hazing (Department of Education, 2002:5) hold educators responsible for the protection of the dignity and rights of learners. The regulations (Department of Education, 2002:5) indisputably state that

Every educator has a duty to control the actions of learners when such actions may inflict harm to others or to the learner, or violate the rights of other learners or educators. Educators must take reasonable measures where necessary to prevent a learner from harming himself or herself or others.

Ritter (2010:11) similarly places the responsibility for the prevention of unacceptable initiation practices (hazing) on the school:

I believe strongly that if a school or pupils feel it necessary to do initiations, it should be heavily supervised and the right precautions should be put in place to prevent any serious incidents. It is the duty of the school's governing body to ensure that newcomers will not be at risk.

Jardine (2009:13) furthermore emphasises the need for parents and educators to work together to address hazing. He gives the following advice to parents and schools:

Parents and schools [should] combine in a mission which ensures that initiation into school communities is a memorable and lasting experience for all the right reasons, that the school is truly great because of the way it develops people, not only for the much-touted sports and exam results.

Ancer (2011:9) appeals to parents to speak up against hazing practices from a position of knowledge and self-knowledge:

Parents must make up their own minds about initiation, but must do so from a position of knowledge. Your child is ultimately your responsibility, so insist that a school is transparent about initiation practices and that you will not tolerate mindless hazing.

Jardine (2009:13) likewise emphasises the involvement of parents in the eradication of abusive hazing practices in schools. He writes that parents should “demand clarification of initiation procedures” and notes that parents should not “fall for feeble rationalisations which tacitly condone bullying”.

It is thus the findings of this study that parents and educators are legally and morally obliged to campaign against abusive learner-on-learner practices, and that they should form an alliance in the interest of learners are supported by previous research (Holmes, 2013b:3; Lemmer, 2009:89; Venter & Du Plessis, 2012:3). It can also be argued that there is a duty on Christian parents and educators to work together against any humiliation, degradation, abuse, disruption and violent acts observed, committed or suffered by their children or learners placed in their care. Parents and educators who ignore or condone acts of hazing are acting in contravention of Matthew 28:18-20. Educators who ignore or condone acts of hazing are moreover in breach of the principle of *in loco parentis*. Educators are liable to provide a safe environment for the learners under their care.

7. Recommendations

In accord with my main argument, as well as the findings from this study, namely that educators and parents should play a leading role in addressing abusive hazing practices in schools, my recommendations on how to reduce hazing in schools and school hostels will focus on the role of schools and parents. Parents and educators, as primary and secondary educators of children, have a legal and ethical responsibility to act against abusive hazing practices.

The regulations for prohibiting hazing in schools (Department of Education, 2002:4) place the responsibility for complying with these regulations on educators and the school governing body. The following should be taken into consideration by school management and educators in their efforts to

eradicate hazing practices in their schools:

- School management should make a serious commitment to educate learners, parents, alumni, educators and administrative staff about the different types of hazing, the dangers of hazing, the underlying reasons for, and myths about hazing. All role-players should know the difference between positive orientation and abusive, humiliating hazing practices (Department of Education, 2002:2). School management should send out a clear message that hazing will not be tolerated and that those engaging in hazing behaviour or condoning it, will be held accountable (Allan & Madden, 2008:37).
- The promulgation of the regulations banning hazing might have reinforced the secretive character of hazing. Adult supervision of all orientation activities is thus imperative. Schools should, through supervision, try to prevent incidents of hazing under the guise of orientation. School principals who allow the unsupervised orientation of newcomers may face criminal charges. Regulation 3.5.2 (Department of Education, 2002:4) stipulates that it is unlawful for schools to delegate their authority to discipline to fellow learners.
- Learners and educators should know what the policies, procedures and regulations pertaining to hazing are. This information should be transparent, regardless of whether the learners are home-based or reside in school hostels (Holmes, 2013b:2).
- Hazing prevention information should be part of a school's Code of Conduct. Schools should create anti-hazing training, implement a 24-hour anonymous hazing hotline and teach acceptable orientation activities, such as community service and mentoring programmes (Holmes, 2013b:2).
- Schools should keep systematic and accurate records of hazing incidents, appoint an ombudsperson to hear hazing complaints, and reprimand transgressors. The latter should acknowledge restorative practices.
- The heinous nature of some types of hazing (Department of Education, 2002:2) might compel schools to refer these cases for criminal investigation and not simply handle them internally.
- Educators' critical self-reflection is essential. This study has found that some educators, often unintentionally, perpetuate hazing. It is therefore imperative that Christian values of tolerance, neighbourly love, care and respect for others, patience, kindness and trust, as well as the legal principle of *in loco parentis* guide educators' relationships with the learners placed under their care.

The secretive nature of hazing, newcomers' desire to become part of the group despite being subjected to humiliation, and the aspiration of boys to conform to masculine stereotypical images of how 'real men' act, necessitate an open relationship between parents and their children, and a willingness of parents to be involved in the lives of their children and protect them against abusive and humiliating behaviour. InsideHazing.com (2011) gives practical guidelines for parents to protect their children against hazing:

- Parents should protect their children by making the school accountable for their actions or lack thereof by their staff. By keeping quiet, parents are unintentionally condoning hazing.
- It is important that parents model the behaviour they want their children to emulate. This implies critical self-reflection. Parents should refrain from speaking out in favour of uncaring, violent behaviour, thus implying that hazing is "fun" or essential for character/team building.
- Parents should inform their children about the responsibilities and consequences – legal and ethical – of their behaviour in situations without adult supervision.
- Parents should make sure of what kind of adult supervision and rules are in place at the location in which their children will be.
- Parents should support their children when they sense danger or injustice. They should discuss actions that they might do.

The media played an important role in the passing of anti-hazing laws abroad (CURE, 2001:8; Edelman, 2004:16; Garg, 2009:263) and in regulations prohibiting hazing in South Africa (Potgieter, 2012:18; SAHRC, 2001:3). It is therefore important to utilise the media and electronic social platforms to create awareness of the commonness and ill effects of hazing. The media should move beyond sensationalising incidents of hazing, and inform those with an interest in education, including learners, parents and educators, that hazing is illegal in South Africa and may have detrimental effects on the hazer, the hazzee and even on the bystanders.

8. Limitations of the study

My motivation for using newspaper articles and editorials as data to study hazing does not nullify the problems surrounding the use of the media in research; namely, the subjective atypical character of most newspaper articles. The majority of the authors of these articles or quoted experts and editors were forthright in their condemnation of hazing. Most newspapers will, however, not knowingly publish false information, but will use framing to

“cultivate or promote a particular view of social reality” (Du Plooy, 2009:27). I therefore acknowledge that I have analysed data with subjective undertones. This critique, however, holds true for all qualitative research. It is therefore recommended that despite the difficulties surrounding research on the topic, a comprehensive mixed method research project on hazing in South African schools and school hostels should be undertaken.

9. Conclusion

Hazing was banned in December 2002. Yet, a reading of newspaper articles and research conducted reveal that it is a fairly common phenomenon in South African schools and school hostels. An analysis of the data set (newspaper articles written by experts and three editorials) reveals that newcomers to schools and school hostels are subjected to hazing practices ranging from the ridiculous and time-consuming, to life-threatening and crude, emotionally degrading acts that may have serious short- and long-term negative effects on the hazees, hazers, bystanders and the reputation of the school. A desire to belong, to conform to male stereotypes (how to be a ‘real man’), to pass on the ‘rich traditions of the school’ to newcomers and group solidarity seem to be some of the reasons for the perpetuation of hazing. Legal and Biblical principles acknowledge the role parents and educators should play in the elimination of hazing practices in schools and school hostels. The media should play a role in the creation of an awareness of the existence of abusive hazing practices and the need to eradicate these practices.

The banning of hazing, however, does not imply the termination of positive orientation programmes which aim to welcome newcomers (Department of Education, 2002). All schools need continuity and new learners a sense of belonging. Orientation programmes can serve this function, while also reassuring senior learners that the new learners value being part of the rich traditions of the school. Learners who are inducted into the traditions of the school are more likely than non-initiated learners to maintain the school much like the senior learners have left it. New learners will feel intricately bound to and involved in the social fabric of a school which goes to great lengths to educate them about their link to the historical roots of the school (Johnson, 2011:220; Van Raalte *et al.*, 2008:492). A school can develop unity and loyalty through acceptable forms of initiation, such as doing community service and through mentorship programmes. However, new learners who are physically, sexually and emotionally abused and humiliated in the name of tradition will perpetuate the cycle of violence, disrespect and the abuse of power.

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