



REVIEWER REPORT

Manuscript Title:	Who Protects The Teacher? Rethinking Respect And Authority through Legal Framework
Type of Article:	Original Article

FIRST ROUND

Editor

General Comments and Recommendations

Both reviewers recognize the potential of the manuscript and suggest revisions to further enhance its quality. The authors are encouraged to carefully consider and address all comments and recommendations provided by the reviewers to improve the clarity, coherence, and overall strength of the paper. Additionally, it is important to ensure that all revisions are clearly reflected in the manuscript and that any changes made are consistent throughout the document.

Reviewer 1

General Comments and Recommendations

The paper is timely, meaningful, and very relevant, especially because it raises an important concern about teacher dignity, authority, and protection in schools. The topic has strong social and policy value, and the manuscript already has a good direction. The central framing is interesting and can attract readers. I also appreciate that the authors tried to connect legal frameworks, policy issues, and school realities. With revision, I believe this paper can become much stronger and more credible.

Specific Comments and Recommendations

The manuscript mentions thematic content analysis and cites Braun and Clarke (2006), but Braun and Clarke is for thematic analysis, not thematic content analysis. Also, Braun and Clarke is known for the six-step framework but the paper does not clearly follow and report the six phases. This needs correction because it affects methodological accuracy. I suggest the authors rename this as thematic analysis if they are really using Braun and Clarke, then clearly present the six steps in the method and show how they applied each step in the study. If they want to use content analysis, then they need to justify that approach and cite the correct source for content analysis, not only Braun and Clarke.

Another important issue is the use of primary sources. The manuscript says primary sources for documents, but the way it is written is confusing and in some parts seems incorrect. Legal documents and policies may be treated as primary legal sources in legal analysis but the paper must clearly separate these from scholarly articles and media reports, which are secondary sources. Right now, the source classification is mixed and can confuse the reader. The authors



need to state exactly what the primary sources were, what secondary sources were used, and what role each source type played in the analysis. This is important because the findings should be grounded in a transparent corpus of documents.

The data collection statements are not yet comprehensive and not reproducible. The paper says documents were collected systematically but the procedure is still too general. A reader cannot repeat the same process based on the current description. The authors need to provide more detail such as where they searched, what websites or databases were used, what search terms were used, what dates they searched, what inclusion and exclusion criteria they used, what years of documents were covered, and how many documents were finally analyzed. They should also clarify how they handled revised versions of laws or policies, and whether they included only national documents or also local/provincial ones.

I also noticed inconsistency between the design and the way the results are presented. In the results, the paper refers to verbatim quotations from participants but in the methodology the study is described as a document-based analysis. If there were no direct participants recruited in this study, then the term participants should not be used. If there were actual participants, then the manuscript must clearly explain the participant recruitment, data collection, ethics, and analysis procedures. At present, the wording gives the impression of a mismatch in the research design.

Validity and trustworthiness are also questionable in the current version, not because the study cannot be trustworthy, but because the manuscript mostly gives general claims instead of showing concrete steps. The paper mentions credibility, dependability, confirmability, triangulation, and reflexivity, but these are stated in a broad way and not demonstrated enough. The authors need to explain exactly how they ensured trustworthiness. For example, what kind of triangulation was used, how coding decisions were checked, whether there was peer debriefing, whether they kept an audit trail, how they handled contradictory evidence, and how reflexivity was practiced during interpretation. Without these details, the trustworthiness section reads more like a checklist than a documented procedure.

The authors may also wish to refer more carefully to established criteria in qualitative and interpretive research (<https://doi.org/10.1177/107780049500100301>). This can help them improve the reporting standards of the study. But I suggest they do not only cite it; they should use it to strengthen the actual method description, trustworthiness procedures, and limits of interpretation. This will improve the credibility of the manuscript and make it easier for readers to evaluate the rigor.

Another concern is that the limitations were not adequately handled in the way the manuscript presents its claims. The paper needs a clear and explicit limitations section if not yet fully developed. The authors should acknowledge the limits of document-based interpretation, the absence of direct empirical field data if none were collected, possible selection bias in document inclusion, interpretive bias in coding and theme development, and the limits of generalizing from legal/policy texts to actual school-level practice. A good limitations section will not weaken the paper; it will actually strengthen it because it shows the authors understand the boundaries of their conclusions.



Minor comments

1. The final three sentences of the abstract are repetitive, beginning with "This study affirms...", "The study emphasises...", and "The study emphasises...". The authors should synthesize these concluding thoughts to improve the academic flow.
2. Under introduction, the reliance on lengthy, direct block quotes from media outlets like the Cape Argus and The Citizen disrupts the academic tone. The authors should paraphrase these news reports to succinctly illustrate the real-world consequences of these policy gaps.
3. The reference list contains several exact duplicates that must be removed prior to publication:
The Bardach, Klassen, & Perry (2021) citation is listed twice.
The Longobardi et al. (2019) citation is listed twice.
The Segalo & Rambuda (2018) citation is listed twice.

Please indicate your recommendation by checking the appropriate box below.

<u>Decision</u>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Accept the manuscript for publication.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reconsider the manuscript after the authors have satisfactorily addressed and complied with the reviewers' comments and recommendations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reject the manuscript, as it is not suitable for publication.



Reviewer 2

General Comments and Recommendations

The manuscript addresses a highly relevant and timely issue in the South African educational landscape: the perceived lack of legal protection for teachers facing school-based violence. The study's strength lies in its rigorous thematic analysis of legal texts, which reveals a significant "asymmetry" between the well-defined rights of learners and the more abstract, universal rights of teachers.

Specific Comments and Recommendations

- Explicitly list examples of what constitutes "serious misconduct" for a teacher versus the disciplinary options for a learner who commits a similar act of violence to further illustrate the "asymmetrical governance".
- Provide a more critical discussion on the capacity of SGBs.
- The conclusion suggests legislative reform but could be more specific.
- The study uses Critical Theory to analyze power relations, but the results section remains largely descriptive of the legal text.
- In the Discussion, more explicitly link the "asymmetrical governance" to the critical theory framework. For example, explain how the law *functions* as a tool that maintains a specific power dynamic where the teacher is an "accountable servant" of the state rather than a "protected professional."

Please indicate your recommendation by checking the appropriate box below.

<u>Decision</u>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Accept the manuscript for publication.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reconsider the manuscript after the authors have satisfactorily addressed and complied with the reviewers' comments and recommendations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reject the manuscript, as it is not suitable for publication.



SECOND ROUND

<u>Decision</u>	<u>Editor</u>	<u>Reviewer 1</u>	<u>Reviewer 2</u>
Accept the manuscript for publication.	/	/	/
Reconsider the manuscript after the authors have satisfactorily addressed and complied with the reviewers' comments and recommendations.			
Reject the manuscript, as it is not suitable for publication.			