

Leadership Practices to Mitigate Violence and Promote Social Justice in South African Schools

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ABSTRACT

Due to the repeal of apartheid laws (Bantu Education Act of 1953 and the Education and Training Act of 1979) that segregate learners on the basis of their skin colour, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 was enacted to place all learners on an equal footing. The latter gave learners freedom of speech, equality and human dignity. However, the introduction of this system presented new difficulties in the instructional domain. One of these issues is school violence between learners and educators, which has led some authors to question whether the idea of in loco parentis is still applicable in educational settings. School violence not only brought headaches for teachers, but also for principals in the leadership and management domain. Principals are rendered incapable of instilling discipline in schools due to school violence. For education to flourish, respect for one another is paramount, but is often lacking when violence is present. This conceptual article seeks to present leadership practices to provide social justice in schools which have been negatively affected by violence.

KEYWORDS

Teachers; schools; in loco parentis; principals; school violence; restorative justice.

INTRODUCTION

This article will discuss school violence, a problem that has a negative impact on school communities globally. Safety is a major concern in South African schools, according to Qwabe et al. (2022). Despite the measures that were put in place by the Department of Basic Education and the schools themselves, they and other academics believe that many deaths and injuries have been documented in some schools in Kwazulu-Natal (Ngidi & Kaye, 2022). As mentioned previously, school-based violence is an international crisis rather than merely a South African issue (Qwabe et al., 2022). For instance, each year in the United States, 127,500 instructors are physically assaulted by students and 253,000 teachers receive injury threats. In terms of lost wages, missed workdays, teacher replacement and retraining, medical and psychological care, learner disciplinary actions, increased workers' compensation claims, and legal action against perpetrators, violence against teachers costs the USA more than \$2 billion (or R31 trillion) annually (Qwabe et al., 2022).

According to a survey by the National Schools Violence Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention [CJCP] in South Africa, 52% of teachers there have experienced verbal abuse from learners. This study also reveals that 3% of teachers were subjected to sexual violence committed by learners, while 12% of teachers were exposed to physical assault. The study also shows that teachers do not want to be remembered as the ones who failed to punish a learner and kept silent about the violence. The idea that violent behavior from impoverished individuals is expected given their socioeconomic level is a topic of discussion about school violence. There is evidence that schools in underprivileged neighborhoods and those that were formerly only open to white students (known as former Model C schools) have vastly different organizational and structural structures (Ngidi & Kaye, 2022). Former Model C schools have historically benefited from top-notch facilities and resources, high standards for academic achievement, and managed student populations. The enduring infrastructure disparity in South Africa's public school system is highlighted by the comparison of schools without classrooms or basic services to former Model C schools with their Olympic-size swimming pools, numerous sports fields, and well-equipped laboratories and libraries (Ngidi & Kaye, 2022). There is a wide range of schools between these two extremes, from conventional mud buildings and township schools to urban and suburban schools. Additionally, Ngidi & Kaye (2022) discover a link between a school's affluence and its violent behavior: the least wealthy schools, which are typically black, are more open to neighborhood criminal elements due to weak security measures such as unfenced school grounds. The authors contend that the social and physical climate of a school affects the level of violence that occurs there and assert that student perceptions of the security of their school are directly related to disorder, a rise in drug use and graffiti, and an increase in school violence. Teachers and learners no longer feel secure and many are afraid for their lives. As a result, learning and teaching are hampered, since teachers must first address learners' undesirable behaviour in order to prevent significant instances of assault and violence. It becomes challenging for teachers to fulfil their *in loco parentis* responsibilities when they themselves

suffer violence from the learners they are supposed to be protecting. A positive school atmosphere requires everyone to treat one another with respect, trust and care, but it has become evident that school violence has significantly disrupted this climate. According to Ncontsa and Shumba (2013), the state of affairs in schools is becoming an issue of national concern. It is clear that leadership practices are necessary to mitigate the negative effects of school violence in school communities.

Background and Problem Statement

Legislation, such as the Constitution of South Africa (1996) and the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996), place a lawful duty on schools to ensure that learners are not hurt, but participate in classroom learning in a protected environment. However, school violence persists, notwithstanding the legislation that has been put in place. The alleged gang rape of a 13-year-old student by Grade 12 students at the Maria Louw High School in Komani, Eastern Cape was reported to the South African Human Rights Commission Eastern Cape provincial office on July 2, 2022 (SAHRC, 2022). The commission is aware of the danger that many young girls face at school, where there is an upsurge in sexual harassment and violence committed by other pupils and occasionally by teachers.

According to DeVries et al. (2022), one billion children worldwide face some kind of physical, sexual or emotional abuse each year. The majority of these learners reside in low- and middle-income nations, and a large portion of the violence takes place in and around schools. Violence may be more prevalent at school than at home for the 90% of learners who are enrolled in primary school. Approximately 60% of children aged six to 10 report recent physical and emotional abuse at school from peers, while 46% to 85% of primary-school pupils report receiving corporal punishment from teachers, even in nations where it is forbidden by law. A UNESCO report claims that over 10% of learners in 96 countries have suffered sexual abuse or harassment. However, some populations are considerably more at risk. In Uganda, for instance, 20% of primary-school girls with disabilities aged 11 to 14 reported experiencing sexual abuse, mostly from peers, but also from teachers, compared to 10% of primary-school girls of the same age without disabilities (DeVries et al., 2022). The factors that lead to school violence are interconnected (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). Recent studies concurred with DeVries et al., emphasising the multi-dimensional nature of violence, with acts of physical, sexual and emotional force embedded within everyday interactions, and rooted in the structural violence of inequitable socio-economic and political structures and institutions. Inequalities relating to gender, generation, socio-economic conditions, race and sexuality intersect in underpinning violence, as found in studies in which extreme poverty was associated with increased risk of harsh forms of corporal punishment for boys in Ethiopia and sexual coercion by teachers or older men in exchange for food, good grades or school fees among Zambian girls.

The South African Constitution, specifically Section 28(1)(b), states that every child requires protection when removed from the family home. In this sense, pupils' human rights should not be violated when they enter the school grounds or on their way to or from school.

Article 16 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) offers similar protection for learners (Mampane, 2018). However, the inverse appears to be true as well. Teachers, according to Wilson et al. (2010), are also on the receiving end of the violence continuum. They claimed that data collected from 731 teachers were used to explore the consequences of workplace violence directed at them. According to the results, the majority of participants (n= 585, 80.0%) had experienced school-related violence at some point in their profession (Wilson et al., 2010).

Additionally, a study done in Turkish schools revealed that emotional (24% of the total number of respondents), verbal (15%), physical (6%), and sexual (5%) violence was commonly directed against teachers (Ozdemir, 2012). The research also showed that physical abuse against male teachers occurred frequently, whereas verbal and emotional abuse against female teachers predominated. In addition, it was shown that teachers in high schools experienced more violent harassment than those in primary schools (Ozdemir, 2012). On the other hand, teachers frequently use physical and emotional violence against children (Ardestani et al., 2022). At times, school violence is more subtle and is associated with teachers' disengagement, turnover or emotional well-being (Ardestani et al., 2022; Makhasane & Majong, 2023).

Female learners are the most at risk of being sexually assaulted by male teachers at school, according to Nako and Muthukrishna (2018). In their research, Ferrara et al. (2019) show that violence by teachers against learners is centred on sexual and gender-based assault, teacher aggressiveness against learners and physical punishment by teachers. Despite the fact that corporal punishment was outlawed in South African schools in 1997, a recent report found that some teachers still practise it, making it the most frequent form of violence children experience (Statistics South Africa, 2021). According to the Statistics SA report (2021), in 2019, more than one million of the 13 million school-age children (aged five to 17) reported having experienced violence of some kind. Nearly 84% of learners who reported violence at school suffered corporal punishment from teachers, which was followed by verbal abuse (14%) and physical assault from teachers (11%).

According to a recent analysis, physical violence against learners in schools – often referred to as maltreatment or corporal punishment – happens often. It occurs in both high- and low-income countries and is still legal in 64 countries (Baumgarten et al., 2022). However, despite the enactment of legislation outlawing it, this kind of abuse endures. For instance, regardless of the fact that physical abuse by teachers is prohibited in Cameroonian schools, 41% of learners in one survey reported having experienced it (Baumgarten et al., 2022). Moreover 90% of 409 learners in Tanzania, according to another study, were physically assaulted by a teacher (insert reference or footnote). In Jamaica, more than 80% of Grade 5 learners endure various forms of physical abuse at the hands of a teacher (Baumgarten et al., 2022). In a study of primary-school learners in Cyprus, it was shown that more than a third had been subjected to emotional abuse by a teacher and more than half had been neglected (Baumgarten et al., 2022). Fewer research has been done on the prevalence of sexual violence perpetrated by

teachers, but a study from Benin found that half of girls in primary schools and 70% of girls in high schools have experienced unwanted sexual advances and other types of sexual violence from teachers (Baumgarten et al., 2022). From the above evidence, it is clear that school violence is a problem globally and that South Africa is not excluded.

De Wet (2021) studied 57 newspapers and found that the violence perpetrated by learners against teachers can be of a physical, verbal, sexual and psychological nature. In analysing the newspapers, it became clear that the nature of attacks against teachers is abusive and humiliating. The reasons for this situation can be ascribed to the breakdown of the authority-bearer and authority-seeker relationship. She contended that the humiliation of the private and professional lives of teachers has serious damaging effects on the relationship between teachers and learners in schools. Her analysis suggests that teachers are disempowered, humiliated and vulnerable individuals. It appears that the rights of pupils take precedence over the rights of teachers (De Wet, 2021). The presence of violence in schools has implications for the application of the *in loco parentis* principle. Teachers who should stand in a position of trust and care towards their learners are, in some instances, the culprits of violence and, in other instances, on the receiving end.

Several scholars have identified school violence as an issue of urgent concern (Botha & Zwane, 2021). They claim that learner-on-educator violence has emerged as a global phenomenon and that no school is immune. Chauke (2021) concurs, adding that all countries should be concerned about school violence. He argues, however, that in developing countries like South Africa, it remains more of an issue than in developed countries. Sibisi's study from 2021 suggests that in order to reduce school violence, there should be collaboration between the police, the community and the schools. Additionally, parents and guardians must accept responsibility for the anti-social behaviour of their children and should be actively involved in their education (Sibisi, 2021). South African schools have typically utilised two main strategies to decrease violence: punitive measures and security measures. The Department of Basic Education has launched a number of campaigns to address the increase in school violence, including Stop Rape and School-Based Crime Prevention.

The establishment of school safety committees and the Hlayiseka early warning system, which offers instructions for adhering to school safety, are two more government initiatives (Ngidi & Kaye, 2022). Principals, school governing bodies (SGBs), and educators can use the Hlayiseka early warning system as a management tool to identify, stop, and deal with the threat of violence in schools. It includes classroom management, positive reinforcement, and learner conduct codes. However, as they only have an effect after a violent act has been committed, the majority of these are post-violence techniques. If treatments only concentrate on violence-prevention methods rather than educating students on how to resolve conflicts in a constructive and non-violent way, they will be ineffective (Ngidi & Kaye, 2022).

None of these measures, however, provide workable methods to reduce the harm brought about by learner-on-educator violence (Botha & Zwane, 2021). The situation facing

teachers and school officials is difficult. In addition to needing to pay attention to ineffective schools and learner underachievement, teachers are under pressure to find a manner of responding to violence committed against them and to make schools once again a safe haven (Botha & Zwane, 2021). The reality of school violence highlights the urgent need to give staff and learners the necessary support in an effort to eradicate or reduce school-based violence (Ndwandwe & Adigun, 2023). As managers and leaders of schools, principals should settle school violence in a way that is both just and beneficial to communities.

Regarding the causes of school violence, Ayala et al. argue (2011) that it has its origin in social injustice and oppression. They mention that poverty, domestic and neighbourhood violence, and dysfunctional families influence the behaviour of the perpetrator. This dysfunction at home puts the perpetrator on an unequal footing with their peers, which later plays out in negative behaviour on the school grounds and in classrooms. Ayala et al. believe that both the perpetrator and victim need assistance (2011). It is against this background that the theoretical framework, to be explained in more detail later, advocates a more holistic approach for both individuals.

According to Qwabe et al. (2022), South African schools do not have an inadequate number of counsellors. Nonetheless, these counsellors are not assigned with the task of preventing school violence and promoting the social, personal and academic growth of learners. They argue that the need for counsellors is great and that, if everyone involved does their part, there is little doubt that their services will result in favourable outcomes. Schools can be the safe havens where learners can flourish with the help of parents, community members, teachers, local and national government, and others (Qwabe et al., 2022).

To reduce violence in schools, South Africa has mostly used security and punitive measures (Ngidi & Kaye, 2022). According to Botha and Zwane (2021), punitive tactics fail to teach socially acceptable behaviour and are least effective for learners with difficult behavioural problems. Indeed, these solutions are insufficient if one focuses simply on violence-control measures rather than teaching learners to handle problems in a constructive and non-violent way (Ngidi & Kaye, 2022).

The importance of schools building a positive relationship with the larger community in which they operate is emphasised by Botha and Zwane (2021). They contend that solid, healthy connections can significantly improve learners' attitudes toward teachers. Additionally, connections between schools and their neighbouring communities foster a strong sense of unity (Botha & Zwane, 2021). Healthy relationships between learners and their parents, as well as between the school and its surrounding community, will foster an atmosphere where aggression against teachers is discouraged (Botha & Zwane, 2021), which could result in a more stable and peaceful learning environment.

In South Africa, learners have a legal right to the greatest protection that is reasonably attainable. However, it appears that the readiness to teach learners how to execute both their human rights and duties is routinely disregarded (Botha & Zwane, 2021). It is essential to

remember that all human rights are subject to specific restrictions and that no one else's rights may be violated or disregarded. The development of learner self-discipline is ensured by tight parent-teacher communication and collaborative activities, which also lessen the workload of teachers and the amount of time spent on learner punishment (Botha & Zwane, 2021). Thus, limiting the harmful consequences of harsh disciplinary measures requires involving parents and promoting accountability in sustaining educators' efforts. The behaviour of learners toward teachers can be favourably impacted by strong, healthy connections. The most important thing to keep in mind is that everyone who has a direct interest in educational matters, including parents, should communicate a commitment to stop violence against school staff members. (Botha & Zwane, 2021). This highlights the necessity of collaboration between learners, educators and other stakeholders in order to establish an atmosphere in which everyone feels safe socially, emotionally and physically (Botha & Zwane, 2021). Building harmonious stakeholder relationships is crucial to prevent violence against educators and improve school discipline, particularly between educators and learners (Botha & Zwane, 2021).

Purpose of the Research

The study's goal was to determine what leadership practices can be applied to mitigate school violence for social justice in schools of South Africa.

Type of research

This research is a conceptual paper, consisting of recent scholarly articles and books.

Data-collection method

Data were collected from peer-reviewed articles and books from Google Scholar and the EBSCO host database.

CONCEPTUAL and THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

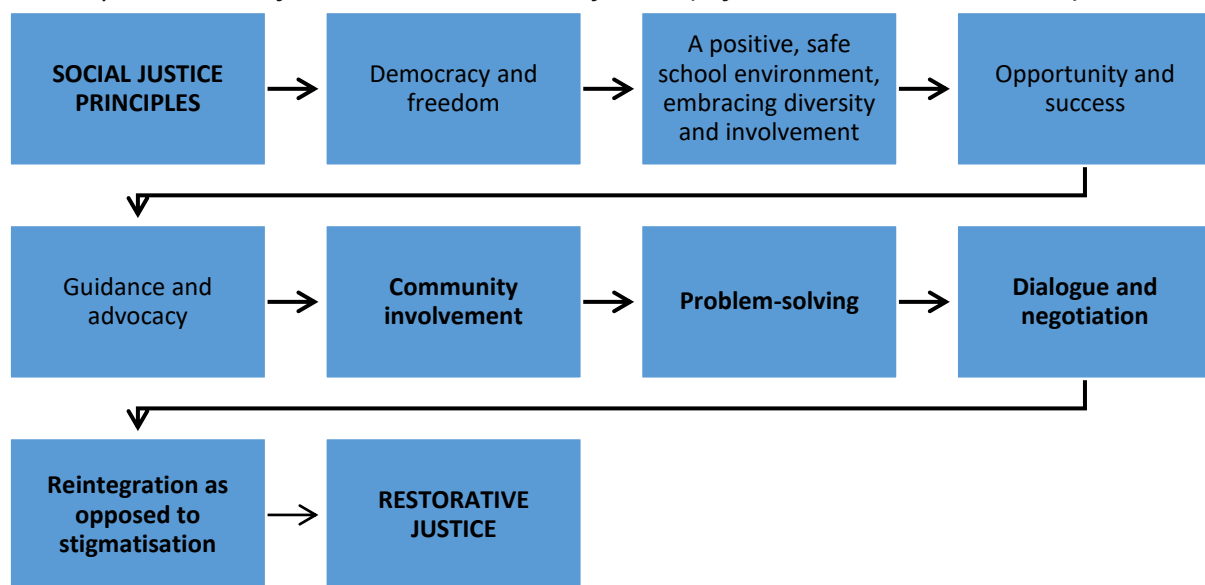
The lens through which this research was viewed is social and restorative justice leadership practices. As Ngidi and Kaye explain (2022), South Africa has mostly used punitive measures to curb school violence. Punitive measures fail to instil more socially acceptable behaviours and are the least effective method of correction for learners with difficult behavioural issues (Ngidi & Kaye, 2022). In addition, these solutions are insufficient if one focuses simply on violence-control measures, rather than teaching learners to handle problems in a constructive and non-violent way (Ngidi & Kaye, 2022). Regarding social just practices, Berkovich (2013) indicates that there is no broad agreement as to what constitutes social justice. Instead, social justice can be defined as the beliefs that people hold about the unbalanced life opportunities of some groups compared with others in a given society and how these opportunities are negatively affected by existing social conditions. Furthermore, Alfattal (2015), Ayala et al. (2011) advocate that certain principles should be in place in schools to enhance its social-justice fabric.

Furthermore, Padayachee and Gcelu (2022), Reynecke (2011) and Katic et al. (2020) are of the view that a restorative-justice approach should be followed in schools during times of school violence. Reynecke (2011) believes that there is no exact definition of restorative justice.

Nevertheless, he explains that there is a growing social movement that advocates for peaceful solutions to harm, problem-solving and abuses of legal and human rights. It is assumed that a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning in schools is possible when certain social-justice principles are in place at schools. However, if the latter is contested due to the violent activities of learners, other avenues should be explored. In this regard, the notion of restorative justice should be applied. The figure below is a depiction of the principles of social justice, as well as aspects of restorative justice, that can be explored in schools.

Figure 1.

An adapted model of social and restorative justice (Alfattal, 2015; Venter, 2011)



From the literature, the following findings on school violence were extrapolated.

LITERATURE FINDINGS

Despite the Department of Basic Education's and the schools' own actions, Qwabe et al. (2022) claim that there have been numerous recorded deaths and injuries in Kwazulu-Natal schools. It was found that school violence is not only a challenge for South Africa, but a problem around the world. In this regard, it was mentioned that teachers were subjected to learners' abusive language. This study also reveals that 3% of teachers were subjected to sexual violence committed by learners, while 12% of teachers were exposed to physical assault. Wilson et al. (2010) claim that data collected from 731 teachers was used to explore the consequences of workplace violence directed at them. As previously stated, it was found that violence by learners against teachers is of a physical, verbal, sexual and psychological nature. The reasons for this situation can be ascribed to the breakdown of the authority-bearer and authority-seeker relationship (De Wet, 2021).

On the other hand, teachers frequently use physical and emotional violence against learners. Inequalities relating to gender, generation, socio-economic conditions, race and sexuality intersect in underpinning violence. It was found in studies that extreme poverty was associated with an increased risk of harsh forms of corporal punishment for boys in Ethiopia and

sexual coercion in exchange for food, grades or school fees among Zambian girls (Ardestani et al., 2022). The same can be said about South Africa, where female learners are at a significantly higher risk than boys of being sexually assaulted by male teachers at school, according to Nako and Muthukrishna (2018). Research has shown that violence by teachers against learners is centred on sexual and gender-based assault, teacher aggressiveness against learners and physical punishment by teachers (Ferrara et al., 2019). Despite the fact that corporal punishment was outlawed in South African schools in 1997, a Stats SA report published in 2023 found that teachers still use it on learners, making it the most frequent form of violence children experienced.

Other studies emphasise the multi-dimensionality of violence, with acts of physical, sexual and emotional force embedded within everyday interactions and rooted in the structural violence of inequitable socio-economic and political structures and institutions (Ferrara et al., 2019). Everyone who has a direct interest in educational matters, including parents, should communicate a commitment to stop violence against school staff members (Botha & Zwane, 2021). Collaboration between learners, educators and other stakeholders is needed in order to establish an atmosphere in which everyone feels safe socially, emotionally and physically (Botha & Zwane, 2021). The authors contend that building harmonious stakeholder relationships is crucial to prevent violence against educators and improve school discipline, particularly between educators and learners (Botha & Zwane, 2021).

DISCUSSION

The principles of social justice will be discussed in the next session, with the South African context in mind.

Democracy and freedom

According to this concept, all learners should receive equal services from their schools. Additionally, it is recommended that vulnerable learners receive extra assistance, such as support services (Alfattal, 2015; Markides, 2022; Martinez & Tadeu, 2018). This principle implies that educational institutions must operate democratically (Mncube, 2008). As long as participation is promoted, freedom of expression is allowed and there is a general sense of justice and fairness. It is believed that democracy can best be realised under these conditions. However, in the case of South Africa, school violence is hampering the principles of democracy and freedom. This is due to the fact that learners violate the rights of fellow learners and teachers with physical, sexual and emotional violence. Teachers, on the other hand, are also guilty of similar offences. It can thus be said that democracy and freedom are not realised in some South African schools.

A positive, safe school environment, embracing diversity and involvement

Learners and teachers who embrace and practice acceptance, respect and tolerance of those who are different from themselves create a welcoming and secure learning environment (2015). Alfattal. Hanaya et al. (2020) believe that creating unsafe conditions in and around schools is a

barrier to providing “inclusive and equitable quality education” for everyone. In this context, diversity is crucial. It is important to emphasise that since 1994, South African schools have been required to enroll learners from all backgrounds and include them in all facets of school life. According to the findings of this research, it is evident that some South African schools are unsafe due to school violence. Violence is perpetrated by learners and teachers alike. Learners experience violence from teachers and each other, while teachers are often abused by learners. In such a violent atmosphere, it becomes unthinkable that diversity, respect and tolerance towards others can be achieved.

Opportunity and success

Building trust between teachers and learners is important. Learners must be able to receive appropriate, effective support of a personal nature, as well as having access to knowledge and advice (Alfattal, 2015). In this regard, Oskarsdottir et al. (2020) mention that school leadership practices are both directly and indirectly related to favourable outcomes for learners. They are essential in any change process that aims to improve the academic achievement of learners in schools. In order for successful teaching and learning to take place, trust towards others is essential. However, trust and success cannot develop spontaneously in a hostile school environment.

Guidance and advocacy

Every child should have a supporter – an adult who encourages them to succeed, expects them to give their all and ultimately never gives up on them (Alfattal, 2015). Teachers are in a good position to act in this capacity for their learners. They are in a unique position to recognise and comprehend the specific needs of the learners they are responsible for (Finck, 2020). However, it seems untenable for teachers to support and guide learners in a hostile environment in which violence disturbs the relationship between teachers and learners.

The aforementioned principles serve as the cornerstone for creating and sustaining a socially just school. However, in South Africa a social-justice approach is not always possible due to school violence. As previously mentioned, the absence of school violence is not a given in a social-justice environment. Authors like Reyneke (2011), Katic et al., (2020), among others, believe that a more comprehensive strategy involving restorative justice is called for. They suggest that both the victim and the offender should be involved in the processes of the victim’s recovery and the offender’s integration into the school community.

The guidelines in the following section can help schools restore well-being to the victim and reintegrate the offender into the school community. The success rate of restorative-justice procedures in schools is described in the figures shown below. The results of restorative-justice procedures covered in these descriptive studies can differ, according to Fronius et al. (2016). For instance, some reports claim that restorative justice has enhanced the classroom environment. According to other findings, restorative justice has enhanced learner academic achievement, increased community and parent participation, learner connectivity and teacher support for learners. A number of descriptive reports also emphasise how a restorative-justice

programme has reduced violence, bullying, discipline discrepancies and suspensions. Once more, these descriptive reports don't follow a systematic evaluation procedure. Instead, they present observations made by those who participated in restorative justice. Restorative justice is becoming increasingly popular, but thorough empirical studies examining its effects on climate, discipline and related outcomes have not yet been conducted (Fronius et al., 2016). Below are the results of a South African study of a Catholic Institute of Education programme to mitigate school violence.

Table 1.

Results from the monitoring and evaluation survey (%)

Items	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Positive scores					
Pupils caring	86	87	86	87	83
Teachers caring	81	81	81	82	84
Average positive	84	84	84	85	84
Negative scores					
Pupils harming	36	39	35	35	24
Teachers harming	40	43	37	37	26
Average negative	38	41	36	36	25
Other results					
Teacher making a pupil safe	78	80	79	81	82
Teaching hitting a pupil	78	80	79	81	82

Source: Baker et al. (2021)

From the above table, it is clear that the restorative justice practised in this study yielded positive results. The caring atmosphere in this school is positive, while the harming aspects towards pupils and teachers is below average. The safety aspects at the institution are also positive and violence used by teachers against learners is low. However, it is expected of schools that a zero-tolerance approach towards violence should be maintained.

According to Venter (2011), restorative justice works to uphold the rights that are guaranteed by the South African Constitution (1996) for both the victim and the wrongdoer. Additionally, countries such as Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America incorporate restorative-justice concepts in their educational systems. Because the victim has the chance to express the suffering and frustration they have experienced, restorative justice has the benefit of making the victim feel satisfied. It also benefits the offender, such as repairing relationships at school, fostering a sense of belonging and protecting the rights of those learners who suffer as a result of other learners' undesirable behaviour (Ayala et al, 2011; Katic et al., 2020; Padayachee & Gcelu, 2022; Venter, 2011).

Community involvement

It is important to involve everyone who is impacted by violent transgressions, including the offender, victim, parents and the community (Venter, 2011). Those who have been harmed are

crucial in the recovery process. The intention is for the victim and the perpetrator to be surrounded by a community of caring. Restorative circles can be used as community-building activities to foster connections among students, according to Katic et al. (2020). By doing this, learners are given the chance to work together and understand one another. In one of the findings, Qwabe et al. (2022) maintain that schools can become safe havens where learners can grow in all dimensions of life (personal, social and academic) with the help of their parents, community members, teachers, local and national government, and others.

Problem-solving

Here the purpose is that both parties get insight into what happened (Venter, 2011; Katic et al., 2020). In order to do that, it is essential that the parties tell their stories. The aim is that each of the parties can contribute to a workable plan to restore relationships that were damaged during the offence (Padayachee & Gcelu, 2022). Examples can be posters that warn others of the dangers of school violence. It is also the view of Katic et al. (2020) that community-building circles may be used in classrooms to develop an identity that is unique to each classroom and strengthen positive values.

Dialogue and negotiation

Proper dialogue and negotiation are vital if amicable solutions are to be found (Venter, 2011). Everyone should get a chance to indicate how they contributed to the harm that was done and the resulting damaged relationship (Katic et al., 2020). An action plan should be developed for the future to avoid similar incidents (Padayachee & Gcelu, 2022).

Reintegration as opposed to stigmatisation

Stigmatisation is a natural consequence when someone commits an offence (Katic et al., 2020). Restorative justice aims to reintegrate the transgressor into the school community (Venter, 2011). Furthermore, it is important that both the dignity and human rights of the victim and offender are restored and maintained, as enshrined in chapter 2 of the Constitution.

Recommendations

It is recommended that school principals receive training in the application of social and restorative-justice practices. Principals and teachers must have a thorough understanding of the Bill of Rights in order to appreciate the rights of both the victim and the transgressor. Furthermore, the community should always be involved at the school as they form part of the restorative-justice process. The code of conduct of the school should be communicated and be clear to all that have a vested interest in the school. Teachers should communicate with learners on a continual basis where there are instances of undesirable behaviour. It is further recommended that the Department of Basic Education collaborate with the Department of Social Development to refer learners who need urgent counselling.

CONCLUSION

In this research, school violence was discussed. It was indicated that school violence happens in most cases when the perpetrator suffers from injustices in their home environment and in the

community in which they live. The violence becomes part of the offender, who interprets it as a way of living. It was posited that principals should create a school environment that cherishes the Bill of Rights and the Constitution of South Africa. For these reasons, the rights of the victim, as well as the offender, should be protected at all times. Restorative justice is preferred as a remedial approach to school violence as it serves the purpose of reintegrating the offender in the school system.

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