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The role of the life orientation curriculum in curbing learner behaviour that triggers school violence

Abstract

Violence in South African schools has various negative effects on learners. These effects include loss of concentration, poor academic performance, playing truant, and depression. School violence also affects the psychological well-being of learners, leading to absenteeism and difficulty in paying attention in class. Furthermore, school violence has been linked to substance abuse and sexual violence. The increasing prevalence of violence in South African schools has raised concerns about the safety and security of these educational environments and their impact on the overall development and well-being of learners. The Life Orientation (LO) curriculum plays a crucial role in curbing learner behaviour that triggers school violence through the development of unhealthy social and emotional skills in learners. Preventing and responding to violence in schools can improve educational outcomes and help to achieve educational targets. This study aims to answer the following question:

How effective is the LO curriculum in reducing school violence?

Ubuntu was adopted as the theory in this study. Ubuntu is a Southern African philosophy that places emphasis on the community rather than the individual. A qualitative systematic literature review through thematic analysis revealed that the Life Orientation curriculum teaches life skills such as communication, managing emotions, and conflict resolution, which are essential for the prevention of violence. Furthermore, by enhancing educational possibilities and offering life skills instruction, the school-based Life Orientation curriculum can contribute to the prevention of school violence. Life Orientation curriculum practice may provide a safe and encouraging environment for learners to express their emotions, learn conflict-resolution techniques, and develop healthy relationships. The study concludes that school violence harms the future of learners, as they may be potential future criminals if their behaviour is not corrected.

Keywords: *learner behaviour, Life Orientation curriculum, qualitative research, school violence, systematic review, ubuntu*



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1. Introduction

Violence in South African schools affects learners negatively in various ways, including missing classes, affecting their ability to focus that results in a decline in their grades, and

frustration. Chauke, Khashane and Mphahlele (2021) posit that the psychological health of learners is also affected by school violence, which increases truancy and makes it difficult for learners to pay attention in class. Kumalo (2019) discovered a connection between sexual assault, drug abuse and school violence.

Wolhuter and Van der Walt (2020) caution that the rising prevalence of violence in South African schools has raised concerns about the safety and security of these learning environments and how they may have an impact on learners' overall development and well-being. Studies by Kutwayo *et al.* (2022) and Hochfeld, Schmid and Errington (2022) reveal that approximately 22% of learners in South African schools between the ages of 12 and 19 years have been victimised or experienced some form of violence while on the school premises. Hochfeld *et al.* (2022) further identified hotspots where school violence is reported, including inside the classroom when the teacher struggles to manage the classroom effectively, when learners are left unsupervised, and on the school sports grounds. Kutwayo *et al.* (2022) also identified the toilets and the way to and from the school as hotspots for violence against learners. Surprisingly, teacher-led actions such as spanking may also lead to school violence (Jacobs, 2014).

School violence has been a relentless problem in countless countries worldwide. It manifests itself in various forms, including verbal abuse, physical violence and bullying (Lets'opha & Jacobs, 2017). Studies conducted by Dan Olweus over a period of five decades (from 1970 to 2020) in several countries, including Norway and the United States of America (USA), revealed how bullying exacerbates school violence (Limber, Breivik & Smith, 2021). Additionally, scholars argue that learners who experience violence in schools can suffer academically and emotionally (Nyawo & Govender, 2022; Hendricks & Tanga, 2019; Matjokana, 2023). This may contribute to lower academic performance, fewer learners attending school, and more dropouts. Hendricks and Tanga (2019) caution that, at times, school violence may lead to a loss of life. For instance, following severe bullying in school, several Finnish and Norwegian adolescents have committed suicide (Runcan, 2020).

In Africa, especially in Southern Africa, studies revealed a negative impact on learners as a result of violence in the schools (Chauke, 2021; Ngidi, Moletsane & Essack, 2021; Ncontsa & Shumba's 2013). There is a high likelihood that learners who experience violent incidents at school will be absent more and reach lower academic achievement and engagement than those who do not experience this. Providing mental health services and supporting learners are essential for ensuring a safe and secure school environment. Such initiatives should include the implementation of programmes preventing violence, ensuring clear discipline policies, and enforcing such policies. Furthermore, the role of the Life Orientation (LO) curriculum in dealing with bad behaviour by learners in schools should be well expressed and understood by teachers and the school management teams. Beard and Thomson (2021) aver that schools must address school violence to create a safe, supportive environment that promotes academic success and the well-being of all learners and staff.

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Life Orientation is a comprehensive document that outlines the curriculum and assessment policy for Life Orientation in South African schools (Swarts, 2023). Life Orientation is compulsory in all grades and deals with topics related to health, social relationships and career development. The curriculum is arranged into four phases: the Foundation Phase (Grades R-3), Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6), Senior Phase (Grades 7-9), and Further Education and Training Phase (Grades 10-12)

(Manyonga & Ngubane, 2019). The main goal of the Life Orientation curriculum is to help learners to develop their sense of self in society by assisting them with self-evaluation and decision-making.

The LO curriculum incorporates academic and career planning as well as physical education, social responsibility and personal well-being. The key aspect of LO is to provide learners with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them to lead healthy and productive lives. It also aims to improve learners' critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making abilities so that they can make informed decisions and accept responsibility for their actions. The curriculum includes key topics such as health and wellness, environmental education, social justice, human rights and diversity. Additionally, the curriculum emphasises the importance of developing positive relationships, communication skills and conflict-resolution abilities. The ultimate goal of the LO curriculum is to produce well-rounded, socially responsible individuals who can make a positive contribution to society.

A factor that underlies unbecoming learner behaviour in school, is a society that is broken; the pain emanating from the history of South Africa has still not been remedied. Warner (2020) and Matjokana (2023) are convinced that schools are microcosm of society, and what is happening in a broader society is going to happen in schools. Rhodes *et al.* (2020) maintain that children are imitators, whilst Damirovich, Ibragimjanovich and Ugli (2021) affirm that children will copy what they see in the community as well as experiences in their households or their broader communities that initiate the kind of behaviour that results in school violence. They can express that in the form of anger and aggression. Rhodes *et al.* (2020) further suggest that behaviour is communication and emotions that are conveyed, and that it can be remedied through curriculum practices that will assist the learners to develop a platform for discussions and ultimately self-correct their behaviour.

Investigating learner behaviour that leads to school violence is a continuing concern. The debate on how to curb these behaviours in schools continues as scholars and policymakers seek creative solutions to reduce school violence. Recent findings suggest how policies and strategies can be implemented to reduce school violence among learners by empowering teachers and training them on how to deal with school violence. However, there is very limited research that reports findings on the contribution of Life Orientation as a curriculum practice that can curb the behaviour of learners that contributes to school violence by utilising thinking paradigms. Therefore, this study aims to explore this gap.

2. Research questions

The main research question was intended to explore this gap using the PICo framework based on the recent recommendation of Dr Amina Yonis (2023). The research question was formulated as follows:

What is the role of the Life Orientation curriculum in empowering learners with the social and emotional skills necessary to curb behaviours that lead to school violence?

The PICo Framework for a Qualitative Systematic Review Study (Yonis, 2023) consists of the following key principles:

- Population (P): Learners in South African schools between the ages of 12 and 19 years;
- Interest (I): The implementation of a Life Orientation curriculum; and
- Context (Co): Reduction in learner behaviour that perpetrates school violence.

3. The theoretical perspective: *Ubuntu*

The lens that guided this literature review was based on the *Ubuntu* theory. *Ubuntu* is a Southern African philosophy that emphasises the community over the individual (Ngubane & Makua, 2021). Maluleka (2019) proposes that incorporating ubuntu ideology into the South African educational system could benefit teachers, learners and society at large. Additionally, ubuntu has been associated with promoting peace in classrooms (Brock-Utne, 2016). *Ubuntu* theory is relevant because the Life Orientation curriculum can incorporate ubuntu's key ideals such as humanness, caring, sharing, respect and compassion. This can advance social values and assist learners in the development of communal values and character development.

4. Methodology

4.1 Inclusion criteria

In a systematic literature review, the inclusion criteria refer to the specific characteristics or criteria used to determine which studies or articles should be included in the review. These criteria were set ahead of time to ensure that the review was focused and relevant. The inclusion criteria typically outline the key aspects that are eligible for inclusion, such as the types of studies, participants, interventions/exposures, outcomes, and study designs.

The researcher selected studies that relate to the research question of the review by establishing clear inclusion criteria, ensuring that the review was comprehensive, accurate and reliable. Inclusion criteria for the study were as follows:

- Studies conducted on the effectiveness of the Life Orientation curriculum in curbing violent behaviour among school learners.
- Peer-reviewed journal articles.
- Research on Life Orientation curriculum interventions or programmes.
- Results of studies involving behaviours that reduce school violence among learners.
- Studies conducted on South African school learners aged between 12 and 19.
- Published work on the theory.
- Published work on the methodology.

4.2 Exclusion criteria

In a systematic literature review, the exclusion criteria refer to the specific characteristics or criteria used to determine which studies or articles should be excluded from the review. These criteria were established ahead of time to ensure that studies that do not meet certain criteria were excluded from the analysis. Studies that do not seem likely to provide answers to the research question or objective of the review, as well as those that might introduce bias or have other limitations, are typically excluded using exclusion criteria. The study design, population characteristics, intervention/exposure types, outcome measures, language, publication type and publication date are a few examples of the criteria that may be included.

For a systematic review to be transparent and reproducible, the researcher needed to define and document the exclusion criteria carefully. Researchers can minimise subjective bias by defining which studies are excluded and explaining why.

Exclusion criteria for the study:

- Studies that do not focus on Life Orientation instruction and the prevention of violence among learners.
- Research that is not presented in peer-reviewed publications.
- Studies that do not involve initiatives, or initiatives that are carried out within the curriculum for Life Orientation.
- Studies that do not list results pertaining to the decline in learner actions that cause school violence.

4.3 Search strategy

A comprehensive search of electronic databases was carried out to find relevant studies, including EBSCOHost, ELSEVIER, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and Web of Science. Search terms related to the research question were incorporated into the search keywords, abstracts, and titles. The following search terms were used: 'Life Orientation curriculum', 'nonviolent pedagogy', 'learner behaviour', 'school violence', 'adolescent boys', and 'young men'. The search was restricted to publications between 2013 and 2023, and priority was given to studies conducted in South Africa.

Table 1: Search terms used for the systematic literature review using Boolean operators

Search terms	
Concept	(TITLE-ABS-KEY("life orientation curriculum" AND "school violence" AND "learner behaviour" AND "nonviolent pedagogy" AND ("adolescent boys OR young boys"))
Time of Publication	AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR,2023) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR,2022) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR,2021) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR,2018) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR,2017) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR,2016) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR,2015) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR,2014) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR,2013))
Language	AND (LIMIT- TO (LANGUAGE "English"))
Type of publication	AND (LIMIT-TO ("peer review"))

Table 2: Search strings

Engine	Search Strings	Year Filter
Google Scholar	("life orientation curriculum" AND "school violence" AND "learner behaviour" AND "nonviolent pedagogy" AND ("adolescent boys OR young boys"))	2013-2023
ProQuest	(life orientation curriculum AND school violence AND learner behaviour AND nonviolent pedagogy AND (adolescent boys OR young boys))	2013-2023
ELSEVIER	(life orientation curriculum AND school violence AND learner behaviour AND nonviolent pedagogy AND (adolescent boys OR young boys))	2013-2023
EBSCOhost	(life orientation curriculum AND school violence AND learner behaviour AND nonviolent pedagogy AND (adolescent boys OR young boys))	2013-2023
Web of Science	life orientation curriculum AND school violence AND learner behaviour AND nonviolent pedagogy AND adolescent boys OR young boys	2013-2023

4.4 Study selection

The search yielded a total of 120 248 articles, of which 118 388 were removed due to a lack of relativity to the desired string. The remaining 1 860 articles were screened based on the criteria (peer-reviewed journals, studies conducted in South Africa, and the population [men and boys] between the ages of 12 and 19), and 1 689 articles were excluded. The remaining articles were assessed for eligibility, and 98 were excluded due to their title, abstract, and full text. Ultimately, 20 articles were included in this systematic literature review.

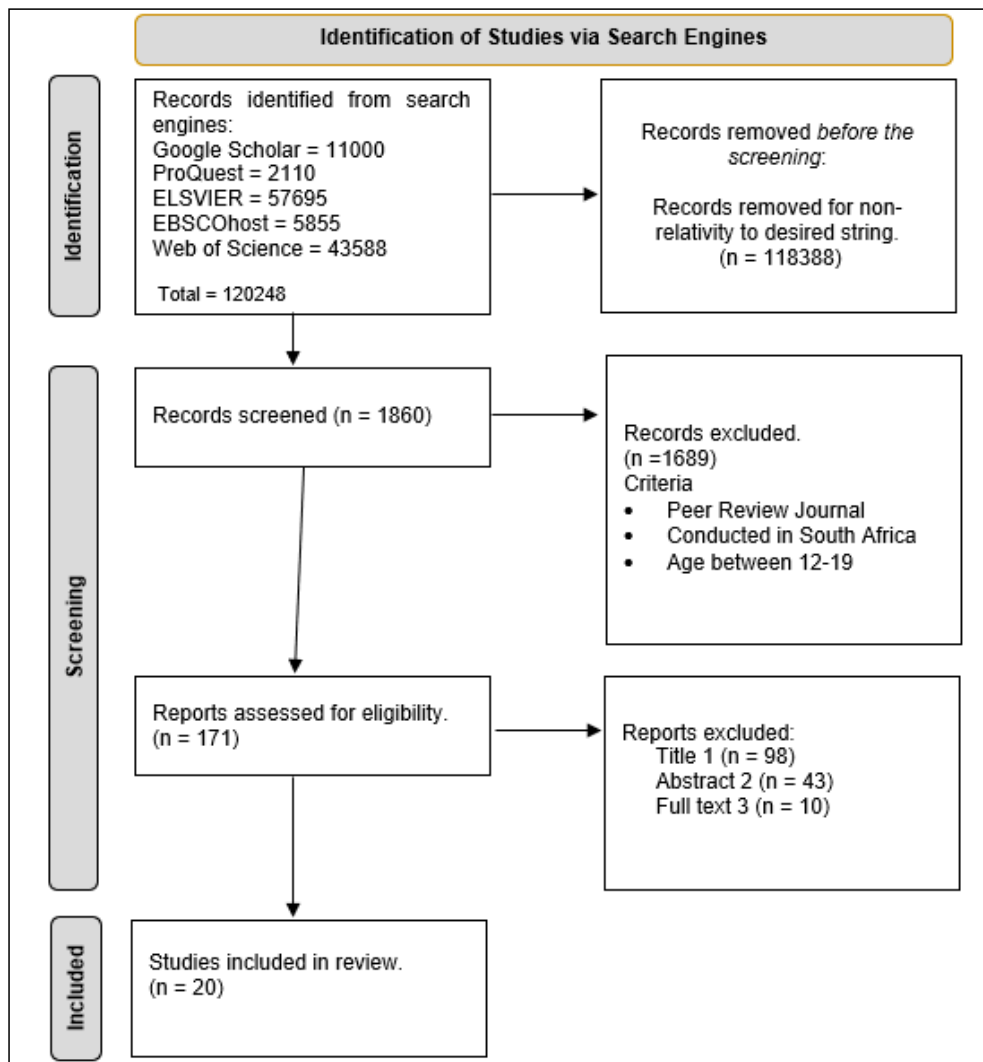


Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram (Yonis, 2023)

4.5 Limitations

This systematic literature review excluded studies published prior to 2013 and those conducted outside of South Africa. Furthermore, the review only considered learners in between ages of 12 and 19 which restricts the applicability of the findings to other populations. Moreover, only

English-language studies were included, and the language of the studies may have limited the scope of the review. Studies using qualitative methods may be represented higher in the findings than those using quantitative methods. Finally, owing to time restrictions, only a small number of search engines were searched for pertinent studies. Despite these drawbacks, this systematic literature review offers a thorough summary of the state of advancement in research on the Life Orientation curriculum, learner behaviour, and violence in South African schools.

4.6 Ethical considerations

A comprehensive literature review fundamentally observes ethical constraints, despite the absence of primary data collection and direct involvement of human subjects that typically diminish the necessity for ethical approval. It remains an obligation for a researcher to maintain ethical standards, including confidentiality and anonymity, precision in citations, prevention of plagiarism, and ensuring objectivity throughout the review process. Consequently, since the systematic review does not necessitate ethical clearance due to its nature, the researcher did not seek ethics approval. Nevertheless, adherence to ethics principles was meticulously observed by the researcher.

In conducting this review, several ethical principles were paramount to ensure the integrity and reliability of the scholarly work. Accurate citation is crucial; it involves giving proper credit to the original sources of information, thereby avoiding plagiarism and honouring the intellectual contributions of others. The review should also present a balanced overview of the available literature, representing all relevant perspectives and findings, including those that might contradict the reviewer's hypotheses or interpretations. Transparency about any potential conflict of interest is essential to maintain the trust of readers and the academic community. Additionally, the ethical use of information encompasses respecting the privacy and intellectual property rights of the individuals and organisations whose work is being reviewed. Adhering to these principles ensures that a literature review not only contributes valuable insights to the field but does so in a manner that upholds the standards of academic honesty and integrity.

5. Results

Table 3: Data extraction and analysis

No	Author	Publication year	Topic	Summary
1	Adewumi & Adendorff	2014	Learners' perceptions of the Life Orientation curriculum in Fort Beaufort district, Eastern Cape, South Africa.	The LO curriculum appears to have accomplished more in terms of awareness creation than behavioural changes.
2	Mgijima	2014	Violence in South African schools: perceptions of communities about a persistent problem.	Learners' academic performance and holistic development are affected by violence in South African schools.
3	Lamb & Snodgrass	2017	A non-violent pedagogical approach for Life Orientation teacher development: the alternatives to violence project.	Supporting LO teachers through workshops provided by Alternatives to Violence Project1 (AVP), which aims to empower and manage conflict creatively through non-violent methods.

No	Author	Publication year	Topic	Summary
4	Christian & Nhlanhla	2018	Exploring teachers' experiences of implementing a high school curriculum: a South African view.	Teachers are not sufficiently trained to effectively maximise the potential of the curriculum including the Life Orientation curriculum.
5	Maphalala & Mpofo	2018	Embedding values in the South African curriculum: by design or default?	A descriptive case study finds that the Life Orientation curriculum teaches about values that can be incorporated and correct the behaviour of learners.
6	Ramhurry & Judeel	2018	Perceptions regarding the role of social support in academic achievement of adolescents exposed to violence.	Adolescents who have experienced violence benefit greatly from social support.
7	Swarts, Rens & De Sousa	2018	(Re)connect social and environmental responsibility to learners' living environments: curriculum challenges and possible solutions for teaching-learning in Life Orientation.	The Life Orientation curriculum may work in correcting social ills but will not be effective if not incorporated with other support systems.
8	Dube	2019	School violence, mafiarisation, and curriculum trajectories: a need for a pedagogy of disarmament.	In the paper, curriculum changes are advocated for schools by engaging the pedagogy of disarmament to deal with school violence, which has rendered some schools ungovernable and therefore unsuitable for teaching and learning.
9	Gumbi & Nkoane	2019	Sustaining a safe and secure learning environment: a case study of a selected school in Newcastle.	A sustainable learning environment against violent behaviour is possible through the support of parents and the community.
10	Ofana	2019	Rethinking the problem of gender-based violence in South Africa: A conversational perspective.	Morals play a role in dealing with violent behaviours.
11	Schutte	2019	Epistemic violence: a case for the decolonisation of South African business school curricula.	Decolonising the curriculum including Life Orientation is a need in South African business schools.
12	Chinyama, Rembe & Sibanda	2020	Strategies used by peer-led groups in the provision of psychosocial social support in schools.	A lack of supporting resources may derail the effectiveness of the LO curriculum.
13	Makgoke & Mofokeng	2020	Strategies for policing alcohol and illicit substance abuse amongst learners of selected secondary schools within the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality.	Issues of school violence are on the increase in the school and there is a need for strategies to curb school violence.

No	Author	Publication year	Topic	Summary
14	Moosa	2020	From learner to teacher: personal experiences, beliefs, and attitudes about bullying victimisation.	Bullying has a negative effect on learners and the pre-service teachers.
15	Ngobese, Mabusela & Nzima	2020	The role of Life Orientation teachers in preparing Further Education and Training phase learners for post-school education in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa.	Teachers should be trained to effectively implement the Life Orientation curriculum.
16	Chauke	2021	Exploration of youth behaviour: a response to learners' violence in South Africa.	Substance abuse is related to behaviour that may result in school violence.
17	Chauke <i>et al.</i>	2021	Intersectional factors contributing to learner violent behaviour in one high school of Malamulele Circuit.	A qualitative study through thematic analysis reveals that social factors outside the school environment affect the behaviour of learners, which in turn may lead to school violence.
18	Van Zyl, Webb & Wolvaardt	2021	Striving for equity: Life Orientation resources in South African high schools.	A lack of resources in the classroom may hinder the Life Orientation curriculum's goal of improving learner well-being.
19	Marsay	2022	Educators' perspectives on the relevance of social and emotional learning skills in South Africa.	Social and life skills have a positive impact on the learning environment.
20	Nyawo & Govender	2022	Intervention strategies used by teachers to reduce bullying behaviour amongst learners.	The teachers initiated non-violent pedagogies to reduce school bullying which includes reporting procedures.

5.1 Summary of themes

Common themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the systematic literature synthesis seem to suggest that Life Orientation as a South African curriculum may play a role in correcting the behaviour of learners whose behaviour allegedly triggers violence. However, these themes are not without their limitations. While the systematic literature synthesis highlights the potential impact of Life Orientation as a tool for addressing learner behaviour, it also raises questions about the effectiveness and implementation of the curriculum. Additionally, there is a lack of consensus on what exactly constitutes 'violence' by learners and how it should be addressed within the context of Life Orientation. These factors indicate a need for further research and open dialogue to fully understand and utilise the role of Life Orientation in promoting positive behaviour among learners.

On the other hand, Life Orientation curriculum practice in the hands of a capable teacher may be a powerful tool to improve the social skills of learners and increase their performance in the classroom. Attending Life Orientation classes with a skilled and passionate teacher can be a transformative experience for students. Not only can they learn valuable social skills, but they can also develop a positive mindset towards personal growth and self-improvement. A dedicated teacher in this subject can create a safe and nurturing environment for students

to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences, fostering open and honest communication among peers. With this type of support and guidance, students may feel more confident in themselves and their abilities, leading to improved performance in all areas of their lives. The review also indicates that stakeholders such as parents and the community have an important role to play to empower children with morals that will withstand the behaviours that perpetrate violence. In this following section the review will analyse thematically, the challenges of effectively implementing the Life Orientation's effectiveness. The review will also focus on recommendations and later on the conclusion. The following themes emerged from the systematic analysis.

5.2 Life orientation curriculum practice

School-based Life Orientation curricula can play a key role in preventing school violence by improving learning opportunities and providing life skills training. Life Orientation curriculum practice may additionally offer a secure and supportive atmosphere for learners to express their emotions, learn conflict resolution skills, and learn how to form healthy relationships. It can help to foster open communication between learners, teachers and administrators, allowing everyone to be heard. Mutual respect may help to avoid potentially dangerous situations from developing. Furthermore, Life Orientation curriculum practice can provide learners with access to resources, such as mental-health services and support groups, which may be required by learners struggling with challenging feelings or experiences.

5.3 Non-violent pedagogical approaches

Studies show that Life Orientation curricula should emphasise non-violent pedagogies. Rather than utilising punitive measures, these initiatives try to foster positive conduct and dispute-resolution skills among learners. Non-violent pedagogical practices can be effective when used in classrooms. This is because such techniques enable learners to acquire problem-solving skills and resilience, both of which are crucial characteristics for long-term success. Furthermore, Kutywayo *et al.* (2022) and Mayeza, Bhana and Mulqueeny (2022) maintain that these tactics develop beneficial relationships between teachers and learners as well as among learners, which can contribute to a healthier learning environment. Hochfeld *et al.* (2022) also assert that non-violent instructional practices can assist learners in minimising tension and anxiety by providing an environment of safety and acceptance.

5.4 Identification of learner behaviours

Specific learner behaviours associated with school violence that the Life Orientation curriculum attempts to address can vary based on the curriculum's goals and objectives. However, these studies identified general guidelines and characteristics that exemplify behaviours that contribute to school violence. This review describes the following behavioural patterns that are often targeted by the Life Orientation curriculum within the context of addressing school violence.

Bullying

Bullying is a common problem in schools, and can take many different forms, including physical, verbal and relational aggression. As a subject in curriculum practice, Life Orientation may combat bullying behaviour among learners by teaching empathy, respect and constructive connections. This can include teaching conflict-resolution skills, nurturing socio-emotional growth, and promoting an inclusive and accepting society.

Aggression and violence

Life Orientation may focus on learners' violent and aggressive behaviour. These actions may involve physical altercations, assaults, the possession of weapons, or participation in activities linked to gangs. To address these behaviours, the Life Orientation curriculum may emphasise the teaching of non-violent conflict-resolution procedures, anger management practices, and the promotion of constructive communication skills.

Substance abuse

Learners' use of substances can contribute to school violence and disruptive behaviour in the classroom (Qwabe, Maluleke & Olutola, 2022). The Life Orientation curriculum may be incorporated into lesson plan tools to increase learners' understanding of the dangers and effects of drug and alcohol use. This may place a strong emphasis on the value of making good lifestyle choices, assertiveness training, and decision-making abilities.

Discrimination and prejudice

Learners engaging in discriminatory behaviour such as racism, sexism or homophobia can contribute to a hostile school environment and potential violence (Lamb & Snodgrass, 2017). Life Orientation curricula may aim to promote diversity, equality and tolerance by fostering understanding, respect and appreciation for different cultures, identities and backgrounds.

5.5 Enhancing parental involvement and community support

The effective implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum depends heavily on parental involvement and community support (Grant & Ray, 2019). Swarts (2022) argues that Life Orientation is a crucial subject in many educational systems because it strives to provide learners with the abilities and understanding they need to live happy, morally upright lives. The support of the community and parental involvement can greatly increase the impact and efficacy of this programme. Rattenborg *et al.* (2019) and Seedat *et al.* (2021) affirm that the learning environment is more supportive and motivating when parents are actively involved in their children's education. Learners do better in class and feel more appreciated because of this increased motivation. Furthermore, support from the community can offer learners useful tools and chances to use what they learn in practical settings.

5.6 Learners' perceptions of school violence and the Life Orientation curriculum

Approximately 22% of the learners reported experiencing violence in schools in South Africa, making it a major issue in the education system. Bullying, corporal punishment, vandalism, gangsterism and sexual harassment were seen as the most common types of school violence by learners in South Africa. They also believe that academic tension, a lack of punishment for misbehaving and aggression are the primary causes of teacher-centred school violence. Multiple episodes of violence in South African schools have escalated the problem to be of national concern. Violence in South African classrooms is becoming more worrisome, with ramifications for socially just education. South African schools have become places of violence, where violence is perpetuated not only among learners, but also between learners and teachers, and between teachers and learners.

Despite learners' perceptions that the curriculum was relevant to their lives, they also suggested that improvements could be made to the content and the teaching methods. Taken together, these thematic results suggest that learners and teachers in South Africa perceive school violence as an ongoing issue that must be addressed immediately. The Life Orientation curriculum may play a significant role in curbing learner behaviour that leads to violence in schools.

5.7 Discussion

The results of this comprehensive literature review point to the possibility that a Life Orientation curriculum can significantly reduce the likelihood of learners engaging in violent behaviour in the classroom. The review emphasises the value of non-violent educational methods in the Life Orientation curriculum and the demand for thorough violence prevention guidelines that address the entire spectrum of potential violent acts in schools. The interesting point of this review is that it highlights the importance of teacher preparation, parental involvement, and community support in implementing Life Orientation curricular programmes.

These findings are encouraging and have several implications for practice and policy. To increase the effectiveness of the Life Orientation curriculum in reducing classroom violence, it is firstly suggested that more time and resources be allocated to schools to include important aspects such as school violence prevention guidelines in their teaching of the Life Orientation curriculum, investing in the training of teachers, and to improve teaching methods and tools used in the classroom. Secondly, it emphasises the necessity of teachers attending teacher preparation courses with a focus on the application of non-violent pedagogical strategies and life skills instruction. Thirdly, it highlights the value of community support and parental involvement in implementing Life Orientation initiatives. The assessment also emphasises the necessity of government agencies, communities and schools working together to ensure the sustainability and success of Life Orientation initiatives.

The findings in the review greatly corroborate the findings of previous studies by Hochfeld *et al.* (2022), who report that both learners and communities are concerned about the risk of school violence on academic success. In addition, the findings of Ncontsa and Shumba's (2013) paper titled, 'The nature, causes and effects of school violence in South African high schools', report that learners' ill behaviour contributes to school violence. Likewise, the findings in the MEd dissertation by Gelderbloem (2014) affirm that Life Orientation plays a role in curbing behaviour that leads to violence in schools.

6. Recommendations

This study aimed to address the question of the effectiveness of the Life Orientation (LO) curriculum in reducing behaviours among learners that perpetrate school violence. It posits that the LO curriculum represents a valuable strategy for diminishing school violence. However, it is essential to understand that this curriculum alone cannot solve the issue. The Life Orientation curriculum is part of a broader, holistic approach necessary for preventing school violence. For the LO curriculum to be an effective tool in decreasing school violence, schools need to implement certain procedures identified in this study. These procedures encompass the development of lesson plans focused on teaching learners conflict resolution skills, empowering learners with empathy and respect for others, fostering healthy relationships between learners, and supporting and promoting a supportive and inclusive school climate.

Despite the potential benefits outlined, the systematic literature analysis revealed several South Africa specific context challenges that are in the effective application of the Life Orientation curriculum to prevent school violence. These challenges include inadequate teacher training, limited resources, and a lack of parental involvement. These factors crucially affect the curriculum's ability to reduce school violence and need to be systematically addressed.

Firstly, many teachers are not sufficiently equipped with the skills necessary to deliver the LO curriculum effectively. They often lack training in non-violent pedagogical methods and strategies for managing diverse and potentially conflict-prone classroom settings. To alleviate this, it is essential to enhance teacher training programmes, incorporating comprehensive modules on conflict resolution, empathy and non-violent communication. Providing regular workshops and ongoing education opportunities will help to keep educators abreast of the latest strategies and enhance their teaching effectiveness.

Secondly, resource limitations significantly hinder the application of the LO curriculum. Schools frequently struggle with a scarcity of essential materials such as textbooks, educational tools, and technology that facilitate engaging and interactive learning. To tackle this issue, increased funding is necessary, specifically earmarked for enhancing Life Orientation resources. Additionally, forming partnerships with non-governmental organisations and the private sector could provide supplementary resources and materials to support the curriculum.

Thirdly, the lack of parental involvement in the educational processes related to Life Orientation poses another major challenge. Parental support is critical for reinforcing the values and skills taught through the curriculum outside of school. Increasing parental engagement through community outreach programs and creating workshops that align with the LO curriculum can bridge the gap between school teachings and home reinforcement.

To address these challenges effectively, several strategic measures are recommended. Developing a National or district-based teacher training initiatives tailored to the unique demands of Life Orientation can provide teachers with the necessary skills. Furthermore, prioritising resource allocation for LO classes within school budgets and through external funding can ensure that schools are well equipped. Enhancing parental and community engagement through active collaboration with parent-teacher associations and community leaders can reinforce the curriculum's objectives and increase its impact. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum's implementation should be conducted to ensure its effectiveness and allow for continuous improvement based on feedback and real-world data.

7. Conclusion

This systematic literature review emphasises the critical importance of a Life Orientation curriculum in reducing learner behaviour that leads to school violence. According to this review, non-violent pedagogical approaches and comprehensive prevention initiatives integrated into the Life Orientation curriculum can help to reduce classroom violence. The effectiveness of Life Orientation programmes in preventing school violence is determined by factors such as teacher training, parental involvement and community support. To ensure the sustainability, success and effectiveness of Life Orientation initiatives, schools, communities and government organisations must work together.

To address learner behaviour that breeds school violence effectively, Gumbi and Nkoane (2019) describe recommendations to augment the implementation of a Life Orientation curriculum, foster collaboration, and partnerships, and promote research and knowledge sharing. By implementing these recommendations, which includes involving parents in the schooling process, schools can create safer and more conducive learning environments for learners, thereby promoting their overall well-being and academic success.

The study concludes that school violence harms the future of learners as they may become potential future criminals if their behaviour is not corrected. School violence is an issue that parents, teachers, administrators, and policymakers must immediately confront. Educational systems should provide a secure atmosphere in which children can study and grow. This could include better conflict-resolution tactics and greater support for learners at risk of becoming violent perpetrators. Furthermore, parents should be more active in their children's lives, assisting them in understanding the significance of good school behaviour. Parents can assist in avoiding future occurrences of school violence by making children aware of the implications of their conduct.

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