




Understanding the Contributing Factors of School Violence and Intervention Strategies Used in the SADC Region: A Scoping Review Protocol



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ABSTRACT

Access to quality education, as per the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) vision is essential for improving the overall economic growth and development of the region. However, this vision is severely hindered by school violence, a pervasive contextual issue across multiple SADC countries. Guided by Arksey and O'Malley's five-step framework, this proposed scoping review sought to explore the contextual factors that contribute to school violence and examine intervention strategies that have been used to mitigate school violence. Six databases will be used to search for empirical articles, including ProQuest, PubMed, Web of Science, Academic Search Ultimate, PsycINFO and MEDLINE Ultimate. Screening at the abstract, title and full-text level will be conducted by all authors, with further articles being searched on the research list of the final included full-text publications. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) will be used to report on the scoping review processes. It is hoped that this scoping review will contribute to the overall understanding of the contextual factors that contribute to school violence in the context of SADC and the intervention strategies used to curb this phenomenon. The scoping review will also identify gaps in knowledge in literature and gaps in the current intervention practices, as well as influence future research on school violence in the SADC region.

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INTRODUCTION

“Universal access to quality education is key to attaining the vision of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to improve economic growth and development, alleviate poverty and enhance the quality of life of the people in the region, support the socially disadvantaged through deeper regional cooperation and integration, and achieve political stability, regional peace, and security.”¹ This access to quality education is hampered by various barriers to learning that learners experience, particularly school violence, which cuts across multiple psychosocial challenges experienced by the learners.² As such, school violence has emerged as one of the primary educational challenges in schools on a region-

¹ Miet Africa, “SADC Policy Framework on Care and Support for Teaching and Learning,” *Miet Africa*, 2015.

² Rudzani Israel Lumadi, “Impact of School Violence on Learner Participation in South African Secondary Schools: A Qualitative Study,” *Perspectives in Education* 42, no. 1 (March 29, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.38140/pie.v42i1.7255>; Mamolibeli Vitalina Ngakane, Nithi

al scale, with reports coming in from a number of SADC nations. For instance, in South Africa, the South African Council for Educators estimates that 68% of teachers and 49% of learners reported experiencing or witnessing physical violence at their schools.³ In Zimbabwe, Dodo and Muzenje express that it has become a cultural norm for pupils, who are also classified as youth, to frequently engage in violence as a means of resolving grievances.⁴ In Lesotho, Ngakane et al. reported on the manifestation of violence in which learners were exposed to complex patterns of violence.⁵ In Tanzania, a report by Elimu revealed that 67.4 to 75 % of learners had encountered acts of violence in the school setting by their teachers.⁶

School-based violence refers to the varied forms of violence found in schools, which include three major types (i.e., sexual, physical, and psychological/emotional).⁷ According to Lamudi, school violence is detrimental to the school environment, teachers, and learners, as it fosters an unequal school environment where fear and intimidation are prevalent.⁸ Within the context of SADC, these types of violence are evident. For instance, psychological and emotional violence is evident through teachers negatively treating their learners by bad-mouthing and name-shaming them.⁹ This violence may be peer-to-peer related, as peers would victimise and ridicule each other based on physical appearance, intelligence, interests, queer status and derogatory language.¹⁰ Physical violence includes but is not limited to, aggressive behaviours and corporal punishment towards learners. Aggressive behaviours, also referred to as bullying, are intentional acts carried out repeatedly and over time by a group or an individual against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself.¹¹ Although the use of corporal punishment in school as a method of discipline has been prohibited and banned in most of the SADC countries, this type of violence is still prevalent, with many learners reporting that they experience it.¹² The (WHO) defines sexual abuse as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic or otherwise directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.”¹³ Sexual violence is prevalent in the context of SADC as it is perpetuated by peers, teachers, and school staff members such as coaches, and scholar transport drivers.¹⁴ This form of violence takes place in multiple ways such as sexual harassment, sexual abuse, stalking, etc. In Eswatini, a report indicated that 13% of girls in secondary school (aged 13-17 years) reported that their first sexual experience was coerced.¹⁵ Sexual abuse is linked to the phenomenon of gender-based violence in schools which has been reported by previous literature in the SADC context.¹⁶

Muthukrishna, and Jabulani Edward Ngcobo, “Experiencing Violence in Schools: Voices of Learners in the Lesotho Context,” *The Anthropologist* 14, no. 1 (January 17, 2012): 39–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09720073.2012.11891218>.

³ Lumadi, “Impact of School Violence on Learner Participation in South African Secondary Schools: A Qualitative Study.”

⁴ Obediah Dodo and Alois Muzenje, “Violence in Schools in Seke District: Influences and Implications for Social Policy,” *African Journal of Social Work* 9, no. 1 (2019).

⁵ Ngakane, Muthukrishna, and Ngcobo, “Experiencing Violence in Schools: Voices of Learners in the Lesotho Context.”

⁶ HakiElimu, “The State of Violence Against School Children in Tanzania Mainland: An Exploratory Study. Dar Es Salaam; 2020,” 2020, <https://www.hakielimu.or.tz/download/the-state-of-violence-against-school-children-in-%09tanzania-mainland-2/?wpdmdl=8348&refresh=6073fc7e437fa1618214014>.

⁷ Amira Y Badri, “School Gender-Based Violence in Africa: Prevalence and Consequences,” *Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 2 (2014): 1–20.

⁸ Lumadi, “Impact of School Violence on Learner Participation in South African Secondary Schools: A Qualitative Study.”

⁹ Gift Khumalo, “Exploring the Psychosocial Challenges of Adolescent Learners: Opportunities for School-Based Psychosocial Support in Public Schools,” *The International Journal of Health, Wellness, and Society* 14, no. 2 (2024): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.18848/2156-8960/CGP/v14i02/1-19>.

¹⁰ Daniel Sekitla Makhasane and Pinkie Mthembu. “Exploring School Violence Misconceptions and Professional Development of Teachers.” *African Renaissance* 16, no. 3 (2019): 49–66. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-1830d94480>.

¹¹ Ersilia Menesini and Christina Salmivalli, “Bullying in Schools: The State of Knowledge and Effective Interventions,” *Psychology, Health & Medicine* 22, no. sup1 (2017): 240–53.

¹² Alison Breen, Karen Daniels, and Mark Tomlinson, “Children’s Experiences of Corporal Punishment: A Qualitative Study in an Urban Township of South Africa,” *Child Abuse & Neglect* 48 (October 2015): 131–39, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2015.04.022>.

¹³ Etienne G Krug, James A. Mercy, Linda L. Dahlberg, and Anthony B. Zwi. “The World Report on Violence and Health.” *Lancet (London, England)* 360, no. 9339 (2002): 1083–1088, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(02\)11133-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(02)11133-0).

¹⁴ Corene De Wet, “What Newspapers Tell Us about Teacher-on-Learner Violence in South African Schools,” *African Journal of Teacher Education* 13, no. 1 (January 24, 2024): 1–27, <https://doi.org/10.21083/ajote.v13i1.7589>.

¹⁵ Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse., *Effectiveness of a Comprehensive Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Prevention Project for in-School Girls in Swaziland* (Manzini, Eswatini: SWAGAA, 2013).

¹⁶ Khumalo, “Exploring the Psychosocial Challenges of Adolescent Learners: Opportunities for School-Based Psychosocial Support in Public Schools”; Krug et al., “World Report on Violence and Health”; Jennifer Velloza et al., “Cycles of Violence Among Young Women

The consequence of school violence experiences on learners is dire as their psychosocial development is often impacted. Similar to arguments put forth by Khumalo and Pretorius, learners in Low-Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), like SADC countries, are exposed to multifaceted struggles related to socioeconomic and structural disparities, which are compounded by experiences such as school violence.¹⁷ Further affecting their development, school experiences, self-esteem and motivation to participate completely in school life. Evidently, school violence contributes to school dropout, missing or bunking school days, classroom chaos and overall low academic performance or lack of academic motivation among those affected.¹⁸ Moreover, the learners affected are prone to mental health-related difficulties such as experiencing depression, anxiety, stress and trauma, or post-traumatic stress disorder.¹⁹ As a result of understanding the SADC socioeconomic standing, contextual and structural disparities, and the need to enhance educational access and quality for vulnerable children and youth, the majority of SADC region countries developed the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) policy framework.

In order to mitigate the educational consequences of violence, abuse, neglect, and economic and domestic exploitation of children, the CSTL policy framework encourages SADC member states to establish policies, supporting partnerships, and coordination arrangements that ensure the delivery of support and services to children by other relevant sectors and Ministries. These initiatives should take into consideration the geographical context, such as the occurrences of violence within urban areas as compared to rural areas. The policy framework underpins this study as it acts as a road map for thorough, well-coordinated, and sustained multi-sectoral initiatives to tackle challenges such as school violence. The framework reports that these initiatives may include protection interventions, which are designed to mitigate vulnerabilities resulting from power imbalances between men and boys, women and girls, and the fear or experience of violence and abuse. Additionally, they aim to ensure the general safety and protection of children and youth from any form of abuse and violence.²⁰

Despite the recognised challenges of school violence in SADC and the development of the policy framework, the authors of this current review argue that there exist unavoidable issues of school violence within this context and as a result of this, the intervention strategies currently used in the different member states need to be explored in depth to examine their ability to respond to the need of protecting learners and ensuring that SADC schools are safe from any form of violence. To the authors' knowledge, this proposed scoping review focused on the SADC context is the first of its kind. A previously proposed scoping review protocol suggested a review of violence in the broader sub-Saharan African schools without a specific policy framework underpinning the study.²¹ Hence, a comprehensive scoping review is proposed in this protocol to map out the literature on contextual contributing factors to school violence, and the intervention strategies currently used to mitigate it, specifically in the SADC context.

METHODOLOGY

This proposed scoping review will be guided by Arksey and O'Malley's five-stage framework.²² This framework includes the following steps: 1) identifying the research question, 2) identifying relevant

in Namibia: Exploring the Links Between Childhood Violence and Adult Intimate Partner Violence From the Violence Against Children and Youth Survey," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 37, no. 23–24 (December 13, 2022): NP22992–14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605211073107>.

¹⁷ Gift Khumalo and Edmarie Pretorius, "Teachers and School Social Workers Collaborating to Support South African Adolescents with Psychosocial Challenges," *The International Journal of Learner Diversity and Identities* 32, no. 1 (2024): 1–25.

¹⁸ Lumadi, "Impact of School Violence on Learner Participation in South African Secondary Schools: A Qualitative Study"; Dodo and Muzenje, "Violence in Schools in Seke District: Influences and Implications for Social Policy"; Khumalo, "Exploring the Psychosocial Challenges of Adolescent Learners: Opportunities for School-Based Psychosocial Support in Public Schools."

¹⁹ Badri, "School Gender-Based Violence in Africa: Prevalence and Consequences"; Ji-Kang Chen et al., "An Investigation of Longitudinal Associations Between Psychological Distress and Student Victimization by Teachers," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 38, no. 3–4 (February 6, 2023): 3279–97, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605221106134>.

²⁰ Lynn Van der Elst, Lomthandazo Mavimbela, Manasa Dzirikure, Mhle Mthimkhulu, King Maureen, Main Michael, and Eva Schiermeyer. "Care and Support for Teaching and Learning: A SADC Response for Ensuring the Education Rights of Vulnerable Children and Youth Are Realized." *Association for the Development of Education in Africa*, 2012, 1–3.

²¹ Delarise Maud Mulqueeney, Senzelokuhle Mpumelelo Nkabini, and Sabelo Abednego Nxumalo, "Violence in Sub-Saharan African Schools: A Scoping Review Protocol," April 24, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-24101/v1>.

²² Hilary Arksey and Lisa O'Malley, "Scoping Studies: Towards a Methodological Framework," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 8, no. 1 (February 2005): 19–32, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1364557032000119616>.

studies, 3) selecting relevant studies, 4) charting the data, and 5) collating, summarizing, and reporting the results. Utilizing this framework will assist the researchers in conducting a thorough appraisal of the literature to articulate what is currently known about the contextual factors that contribute to school violence and intervention strategies used in the context of SADC. Moreover, this framework will help identify the research and knowledge gaps and determine the value of conducting a full systematic review. This scoping review has been registered with the open science framework,²³ and the authors have concluded stages 1 and 2 and are about to commence stage 3.

Stage 1: Identifying the research question

This review will investigate the following question: What are the contributing factors to school violence and the intervention strategies used in the SADC region? All researchers have agreed upon this question.

Stage 2: Identifying relevant studies

To answer the review question, the researchers will conduct a comprehensive search of articles reporting on the contributing factors to school violence and the strategies used to intervene in the SADC region. The search will be conducted in the following proposed databases: ProQuest, PubMed, Web of Science, Academic Search Ultimate, PsycINFO and MEDLINE Ultimate. A hand-search strategy will be undertaken to identify further publications that may meet the inclusion criterion of the review. Specifically, the hand search will be conducted only on the final selected full-text publications. Using the PICO framework, the search terms that have been suggested for this proposal are outlined in Table 1. Additionally, preliminary searches have been conducted and an example of the search has been included in Table 2.

Table 1. Key search terms

PICO Framework	Specific focus	Suggested search terms
Problem	“School violence”	(“School violence” OR “school bullying” OR “school aggression”)
Interest	“Contributing factors” and “intervention strategies”	(“contributing factors” OR “risk factors” OR “contextual factors” OR “causes” OR “environmental influences”) AND (“prevention” OR “preventive measures” OR “intervention” OR “intervention strategies”)
Context	“Southern African Developing Community”	(“Southern African Development Community” OR “SADC” OR “Angola” OR “Botswana” OR “Comoros” OR “Democratic Republic of Congo” OR “DRC” OR “Eswatini” OR “Lesotho” OR “Madagascar” OR “Malawi” OR “Mauritius” OR “Mozambique” OR “Namibia” OR “Seychelles” OR “South Africa” OR “Tanzania” OR “Zambia” OR Zimbabwe”)

Table 2. Preliminary search strategy on PubMed

PubMed		
((School violence)) AND ((contributing factors OR contextual factors OR prevention OR intervention OR strategies))) AND ((Southern African Development Community OR SADC))	20 October 2024	3

²³ Nosipho Makhakhe and Gift Khumalo, “School Violence in the SADC Region: A Scoping Intervention Strategies Used,” *OSF* , October 2024.

(((School violence)) AND ((contributing factors OR contextual factors))) AND ((prevention OR intervention OR strategies)) AND ((Southern African Development Community OR SADC))	20 October 2024	13
((School violence OR school bullying OR school aggression) AND (contributing factors OR risk factors OR contextual factors OR causes OR environmental influences AND prevention OR preventive measures OR intervention OR intervention strategies)) AND ((Southern African Development Community))	20 October 2024	17
(((("School violence" OR "school bullying" OR "school aggression")) AND (("contributing factors" OR "risk factors" OR "contextual factors" OR "causes" OR "environmental influences")))) AND (AND ("prevention" OR "preventive measures" OR "intervention" OR "intervention strategies")) AND (("Southern African Development Community" OR "SADC" OR "Angola" OR "Botswana" OR "Comoros" OR "Democratic Republic of Congo" OR "DRC" OR "Eswatini" OR "Lesotho" OR "Madagascar" OR "Malawi" OR "Mauritius" OR "Mozambique" OR "Namibia" OR "Seychelles" OR "South Africa" OR "Tanzania" OR "Zambia" OR "Zimbabwe"))	20 October 2024	1
(((School violence OR school bullying OR school aggression)) AND ((contributing factors OR risk factors OR contextual factors OR causes OR environmental influences)) AND ((prevention OR preventive measures OR intervention OR intervention strategies)) AND ((Southern African Development Community OR SADC OR Angola OR Botswana OR Comoros OR Democratic Republic of Congo OR DRC OR Eswatini OR Lesotho OR Madagascar OR Malawi OR Mauritius OR Mozambique OR Namibia OR Seychelles OR South Africa OR Tanzania OR Zambia OR Zimbabwe))	20 October 2024	858

Stage 3: Selecting relevant studies

All citations will be imported into Rayyan software, a web-based app that facilitates the initial screening of articles at abstract and title levels.²⁴ Rayyan will also facilitate the automatic removal of duplicates. Using the pre-determined inclusion and exclusion criterion (Table 2), the selection of relevant articles will be completed in two screening levels, namely 1) title and abstract screening and 2) full-text screening. Independently, two authors will complete the screening process at both levels. Where discrepancies in the selected articles are noted, the third author (BL) will conduct a comprehensive review to resolve and, ultimately, reach a final decision. The selection process of the studies will be documented and presented in a Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) flow chart.

Table 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Articles published between 2014-2024	Studies outside of that period
Articles published in the English language	Articles published in other non-English language
Peer-reviewed articles	Reviews, commentary documents, books, conference paper, and academic thesis

²⁴ Mourad Ouzzani et al., “Rayyan—a Web and Mobile App for Systematic Reviews,” *Systematic Reviews* 5, no. 1 (December 5, 2016): 210, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-016-0384-4>.

Studies focused on school violence and conducted within the SADC region	
Accessible full text	

Stage 4: Data collection and charting

Once the independent screening has been completed, the data will be charted on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet in a standardized format to systematically capture key characteristics of each included full-text study. Specifically, the spreadsheet will include the following details: author name(s), year of publication, context, aims of the research, study settings (rural, urban or peri-urban setting), methodology (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method), participants and sample size, study findings/ results. Two reviewers (GK and NN) will independently perform the data extraction, meet, and discuss any discrepancies.

Stage 5: Collating, summarizing, and reporting the results

Once data charting has been completed, all authors will be engaged in the analysis and summary of key findings based on the extracted data. It is anticipated that this process will be iterative and will involve the identification of descriptive themes related to the contextual factors that contribute to school violence and the intervention strategies used. As such, data from qualitative studies will be analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s inductive thematic approach, while statistical data from the quantitative studies will be synthesized and reported on. It is anticipated that the reporting of the results will be through tables and narratives.²⁵

Ethics and dissemination

Ethical approval is not necessary as this scoping review will exclusively analyse publicly available articles. However, the review will follow all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects. The final scoping review report of this study will be submitted for peer review and publication in this journal. The report will also be shared with key stakeholders within MIET Africa and government departments involved in the development of the CSTL policy framework.

RESULTS /FINDINGS

It is anticipated that this scoping review will be finalized within three months (i.e., the deadline date being 31 January 2025) of the protocol's release. The framework outlined above will be used to present the results.

DISCUSSION

This proposed scoping review is of particular importance as it will map our existing evidence on contextual factors contributing to school violence and examine intervention strategies employed across SADC member states, particularly in light of the CSLT policy framework which advocates for multi-sectoral initiatives to address vulnerabilities learners’ experiences as a result of school violence. By identifying gaps in current initiatives and strategies, this scoping review seeks to inform policymakers, school administrators and social welfare practitioners about the best practices for SADC’s vision of enhancing quality and fostering regional stability. Furthermore, it is anticipated that this review will influence future research on school violence within the region.

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²⁵ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, “Toward Good Practice in Thematic Analysis: Avoiding Common Problems and Becoming a Knowing Researcher,” *International Journal of Transgender Health* 24, no. 1 (January 25, 2023): 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2129597>.

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AUTHOR ROLES

GK conceived the project. GK, NM, and BL designed the study. GK did preliminary searches on all databases. GK, NM, and BL prepared and approved the protocol manuscript for publication.

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