

City of Johannesburg

An evaluation of the effectiveness of the Silence the Violence programme



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INTRODUCTION

The City of Johannesburg initiated a Youth at Risk project. They commissioned Khulisa Crime Prevention Initiative to implement a Youth at Risk programme in seven schools aimed at strengthening youth development in the city. Khulisa conducted a needs analysis amongst the learners of the seven schools in order to determine the learner's developmental needs. Findings from this study indicated that areas which need attention are aggressive behaviour and victimization as well as responsible decision making.

Silence the Violence, one of Khulisa's programmes which address the identified needs was presented to learners in the targeted schools. Khulisa commissioned Dr. Marelize Schoeman, an independent researcher, to evaluate the effectiveness of *Silence the Violence* as a Youth at Risk programme. The programme evaluation findings will be presented in this report.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In today's society, the rising crime rate and government's apparent inability to curb this escalation in crime is a reality. South Africa is currently battling with a society characterized by the breakdown of family systems, unemployment, high levels of alcohol and drug abuse and widespread violence. Hence, many of South Africa's children are deprived of positive role models and the uplifting influence that a pro-social community could offer.

South Africa's children are born and raised in a society with a legacy of violence. Violence has permeated areas, such as schools, homes, shopping malls and public places, which traditionally were perceived as "safe zones"ⁱ. The sad reality is that young people are more than just mere victims, in many cases they are the perpetrators of violence. Research indicated that young people who are exposed to violence are themselves more likely to get caught up in the cycle of violence, both as victims and/or perpetrators.

In November 2007 statistics indicated that two thousand one hundred and twenty-one (2121) children under the age of 18 were detained in South African Correctional Centres - 45% sentenced and 55% un-sentenced.ⁱⁱ Numerous studies exploring the impact of imprisonment on an inmate's development, unequivocally, concluded that the environment in a correctional centre is not conducive towards development and rehabilitation. These statistics highlight the importance of prevention initiatives aimed at the development of constructive alternatives for at risk children before they are drawn into a delinquent lifestyle.

In this regard The National Crime Prevention Strategy (1996) and The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) emphasis the importance of holistic service rendering on various community levels. The emphasis is furthermore placed on pro-active crime prevention as the ideal instead of reactive crime control which could, according to these two documents, be accomplished through social development programmes.

Young people that are still in a process of social, emotional and cognitive development constitute 40% of South Africa's populationⁱⁱⁱ. Hence, the potential exists to change their anti-social behaviour into pro-social behaviour patterns. Crime prevention initiatives that target South Africa's youth are therefore vital for effective social crime prevention.

Effective prevention strategies need to be based on a sound understanding of the risk factors and social dynamics of the phenomenon and should be backed up by high quality research. The first phase in the development of any crime prevention initiative should be problem identification and planning. An in-depth needs analysis forms the basis of this phase, preventing a situation where service delivery is rooted in a thumb-suck approach.

Project evaluation is a further crucial component and should be incorporated into the project planning and implementation phase. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine:

- The impact of the project – Should we continue with the programme?
- What doesn't work – If the project or parts thereof should be discontinued?
- The effectiveness – How to extend or replicate the project?
- How to modify the project – What are the problems and how should we amend them?

In this regard Cheryl Frank, Open Society Foundation^{iv} stated that organisations, such as NGO's are not committed to evaluating crime prevention initiatives and programmes, and this presents great problems for the construction of learning that can be used by others. Our ability to work with information is a critical factor in driving effective crime prevention in South Africa, and those weaknesses in both the generation and the utilisation of information need to be addressed.

Evaluation results, such as presented in this report, enhance the theoretical knowledge base that can be used by other organisations. It furthermore assists with the identification of best-practices paving the way for the replication of effective interventions and programmes. Lastly, scientific programme evaluations are amongst the most useful tools for advocating the merit of particular services and practices.

METHOD

Aim:

To evaluate the effectiveness of *Silence the Violence* as a Youth at Risk programme in contributing to cognitive development (knowledge), change in attitude and modification in relations to violence and violent behaviour.

Research approach

Evaluation research tracks the efficacy of social programmes in terms of human and social development. Programme evaluation has a retrospective focus, and establishes the

outcomes, effect or impact of the programme by observation or measurement. ^v For the purpose of this evaluation a qualitative approach with a pre-test multiple post-test design was followed. The design is similar to the one-group pre-test – post-test design with the exception that more than one post-test was conducted. The pre-test was conducted before the group commenced followed by a post-test after each of the ten sessions.

Data collection took place by means of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed to evaluate cognitive development (knowledge), attitude changes and behaviour modification during the course of the programme. Respondents were asked to rate their perception, attitude and behaviour by means of a self-anchored rating scale. ^{vi} The SPSS statistical programme was used for data capturing and analysis.

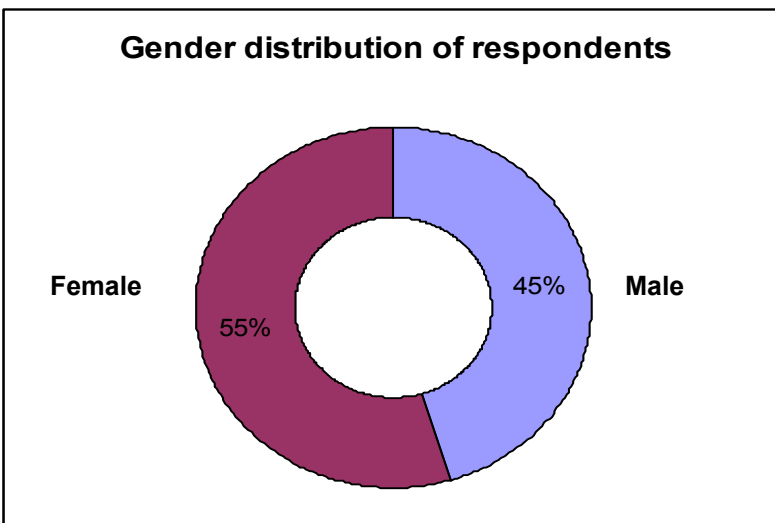
Sample:

Educators from the various schools identified learners to participate in the programme. A purposive sampling method was followed. The sample consisted of secondary school children between the ages of 13 and 20 years. The children came from seven schools in Johannesburg and surrounding areas as identified by The City of Johannesburg.

Analysis of the research sample:

SCHOOL	RESPONDENTS: LEARNERS
*Ferndale High School	0
East Bank High	61
Mokgome High School	68
Barnato Park High School	22
New Nation School	41
Vorentoe High School	40
Tsietsi Mashinini Lobone Secondary School	46
Total	278

*Ferndale High School was included in the Youth at Risk project but services were discontinued due to operational problems.



Fifty five percent (55%) of the respondents were female and 45% male.

Programme Summary - *Silence the Violence*

Silence the Violence takes participants on a journey of self-discovery in which they become aware of the extent and origins of their own violence, and introduces effective, non-violent alternatives. The programme illustrates how violence (physical, emotional and verbal) is ingrained in culture and belief systems and how it emerges in daily interactions. Participants learn practical ways to minimise violent behaviour. It aims to empower participants to restore themselves and develop the skills to restore other relationships. As part of this programme, participants confront their violent self and discover their original or true self through a series of facilitated therapeutic techniques. For a programme overview – See Annexure 1.

Research findings

As stated previously, the research consisted of a pre-test which was completed before the group commenced followed by a post-test after each session. The pre-test acted as the baseline against which findings from the other questionnaires were compared. The findings from pre-test and session 1 and 2 post-test will henceforth be discussed.

PRE-TEST AND SESSION 1&2:

Attitude towards violence and violent behaviour

The statement measuring respondent's attitude towards violence and violent behaviour were divided into four categories. Category one measured social value perspectives. The second category measured personal attitudes, the third attitude towards life and future perspective and the last category the respondent's attitude and perception relating to personal violence.

Session 1 and 2 aims to develop knowledge pertaining to the three levels of violence (verbal, emotional and physical). The theory of violence and the effects of violence were furthermore discussed, thereby creating awareness of behaviour patterns which are violent or leads to violence. Specific attention was given to the cycle of violence and various types of violence, such as gender, religious and socio-economic violence. Participants are motivated during the sessions to accept responsibility for their own violent behaviour, thus minimizing the opportunity for them to blame others. The questionnaire aimed to evaluate if cognitive development took place in the areas stipulated above, as well as if respondents' succeeded in accepting responsibility for their own violent .

Social value perspectives towards violence and violent behaviour

The following questions measured the respondent's social value perspectives towards violence and violent behaviour. Social value perspectives reflect value judgements based on what is acceptable and unacceptable in a society. These perceptions are often rooted in cultural-, gender- and/or community-based beliefs.

It is OK for the poor to steal from the rich

	Pre-test	Post-test Session 1
Never	70.8	71.6
Sometimes	20.1	20.2
Half of the time	4.5	4.6
Often	1.3	1.8
Always	3.2	1.8

The majority of the respondents 70.8% (pre-test) and 71.6% (session 1 post-test) indicated that it is “never” acceptable for the poor to steal from the rich. Nearly 20% were of the opinion that it is “sometimes” acceptable for the poor to steal from the rich. Even though in the minority, it is concerning to note that approximately 30% of the respondents indicated that it is (“sometimes” to “always”) acceptable for the poor to steal from the rich. This reflects an attitude of self entitlement and disrespect for other people’s rights. It should be noted that a slight change in attitude can be noted between the pre-test and session 1 post-test. Even though this change is minor it should be taken into consideration that it is only the first session of the programme.

It is OK for a man to hit his girlfriend or wife if she doesn't listen to him

	Pre-test	Post-test Session 1
Never	74.8	75.0
Sometimes	17.0	17.0
Half of the time	3.1	3.6
Often	4.4	4.5
Always	.6	0

In this question nearly a quarter (25% pre- and post-test) of the respondents indicated that it is acceptable for a man to hit his girlfriend or wife if she does not listen to him. This perception is alarming against the background of South Africa’s high rate of gender-

based and domestic violence. Similar to the previous questions, a slight positive change in attitude can be observed amongst the respondents.

Personal attitudes towards violence and violent behaviour

The following questions measured the respondent’s personal perspectives and attitude in relation to violence and violent behaviour.

It is OK to play music loudly late at night

	Pre-test	Post test Session 1
Never	47.5	52.7
Sometimes	35.4	32.7
Half of the time	8.2	5.5
Often	1.9	3.6
Always	7.0	5.5

Even though the majority of respondents, in both the pre- and post-test, were of the opinion that it is never acceptable to play music loudly late at night, it is interesting to note the statistical difference between the pre-test (47.5%) and the post-test (52.7%). General findings from the post-test indicated that the programme’s content contributed to cognitive development. A discussion of the three levels of violence made respondents aware that it is disrespectful and inconsiderate (thus a form of violent behavior) to play music loudly late at night.

It is OK to use force or violence to get what you want

	Pre-test	Post test Session 1
Never	72.0	75.9
Sometimes	18.6	18.8
Half of the time	3.1	3.6
Often	3.7	1.8
Always	2.5	0.0

The majority of respondents (72% pre-test and 75.9% session 1 post-test) indicated that it is “never” acceptable to use force or violence to get what you want. A significant change

in attitude can be noted between the pre-test and session 1 post-test. Notwithstanding this, it is still concerning to note that nearly 25% (session 1 post-test) of the respondents are of the opinion that it is “sometimes” to “always” acceptable to use violence to get what you want. This reflects an attitude of entitlement and disregard for other people’s human rights. This substantiates the need for programmes, such as Silence the Violence, to address these violent cognitions, attitudes and behaviour amongst the youth.

People who do not fight back if someone threatens or hurts them are sissies and weak

	Pre-test	Post test session 1
Never	54.7	63.1
Sometimes	25.2	26.1
Half of the time	8.8	6.3
Often	6.3	3.6
Always	5.0	.9

Findings from this question are evenly distributed as can be seen in the graph above. A small majority of respondents (54.7%) indicated that people who do not retaliate after a threat or violence are “sissies” or weak. In contrast 44.3% were of the opinion that not retaliating if you are threatened or victimized is a sign of weakness. Research^{vii} conducted on peer victimisation in schools found that the reasons for school violence were predominantly of an egocentric nature, namely the aggressors’ desire to show their dominance, for the fun of it and as retaliatory behaviour. Large number of participants in this study indicated that victims are victimised because they are seen as “wimps”. This is an example of a stereotype belief that could contribute to violence.

It is positive to note that cognitive development and a change in attitude took place between the pre-test and session 1 post-test.

As mentioned earlier session 1 and 2 furthermore aimed to motivate participants to accept responsibility for their own violent behaviour. The following findings substantiate the effectiveness of Silence the Violence in this regard;

Have you ever read other people's stuff without their permission?

	Pre-test	Post test Session 1
Never	41.9	42.9
Sometimes	41.3	45.5
Half of the time	9.4	9.8
Often	5.0	1.8
Always	2.5	0

In general, a significant change can be noted in the number of respondents who acknowledged that they read people's stuff without their permission.

I act in a violent manner (e.g. cursing, hitting, shouting and breaking things)

	Pre-test	Post test Session 1
Never	58.9	55.5
Sometimes	29.1	33.6
Half of the time	3.8	4.5
Often	6.3	6.4
Always	1.9	0

A similar trend can be noted in this question as in the previous one, namely that respondents acknowledge their violent behaviour. This could be ascribed to the fact that respondents were made aware that it is important to be accountable for your own violent behaviour and not to blame it on someone else.

I have a violent side

	Pre-test	Post-test Session 1
Never	49.4	40.5
Sometimes	26.9	36.0
Half of the time	11.9	13.5
Often	6.3	5.4
Always	5.6	4.5

The term “violent side” was explained to the respondents. It was explained to them that a person’s violent side includes attitudes and behaviour that might result in physical, emotional and/or verbal violence. The majority of respondents (49.4% pretest and 40.5% session 1 post-test) indicated that they “never” have a violent side. A significant change can be noted between the pre-test and the session 1 post-test where a substantial number of respondents developed insight regarding their violent behaviour. Findings from other questions (session 2 post-test) support this assumption, namely the majority of respondents (70.2%) acknowledged that they “sometimes” to “always” use excuses to justify their violence and that they would like to change (69%) their violent behaviour.

Attitude towards life and future perspective

The last category measures respondents’ attitude towards their own life and future perspective. A positive future perspective is important for the development of a person’s self-concept. It is furthermore an essential attribute for personal development. In contrast, people with a pessimistic future perspective often find it difficult to cope with negative elements in their circumstances. They tend to feel helpless and not in control of their lives and circumstances.^{viii}

What I want in life is outside of my reach

	Pre-test	Post test Session 1
Never	33.8	44.7
Sometimes	30.4	25.2
Half of the time	12.8	7.8
Often	10.8	9.7
Always	12.2	12.6

Findings from this question indicated that respondents generally have a more pessimistic future perspective. Sixty-six percent (66.2%) of the respondents are of the opinion that what they want in life is “sometimes” to “always” out of their reach. In contrast, nearly eleven percent (10.9%) of the respondents displayed a more positive attitude towards the future after they have completed session 1 of the programme.

It is easy for other people to get what they want

		Pre-test	Post-test Session 1
Valid	Never	13.8	11.2
	Sometimes	46.1	60.7
	Half of the time	16.4	12.1
	Often	11.2	8.4
	Always	12.5	7.5

According to findings from the pre-test 40.1% of the respondents were of the opinion that it is “half of the time” to “always” easier for other people to get what they want. A significant decline in this percentage can be noted in the session 1 post-test where only 28% of the respondents indicated that it is “half of the time” to “always” easier for other people to get what they want.

Notwithstanding findings from the previous two questions, it is still concerning to note that a large number of respondents are of the opinion that what they want in life is “sometimes” to “always” outside of their reach (55.3% session 1 post-test) and that it is “sometimes” to “always” (88.8% session 1 post-test) easier for other people to get what they want. This attitude could be caused by an external locus of control.

A person’s locus of control refers to their generalised expectancy for internal as opposed to external control of reinforcements. Persons with an internal locus of control tend to attribute outcomes of events as within their own control, whilst persons with an external locus of control attribute outcomes of events to external circumstances. Studies indicated that persons with an external locus of control are less willing to take risks or to work on self-improvement and development. For example, studies with high school students have shown that an external locus of control correlated to lower academic achievement and higher dropout rates.^{ix}

Attitude and perception relating to personal violence

One of the aims of the Silence the Violence programme is to teach respondents about violent behaviour towards themselves, such as when they use drugs or abuse alcohol.

I use drugs

	Pre-test	Post-test Session 1
Never	89.4	88.9
Sometimes	7.5	8.3
Half of the time	.6	.9
Often	.6	1.9
Always	1.9	0

I drink alcohol

	Pre-test	Post-test Session 1
Never	52.8	57.1
Sometimes	32.1	28.6
Half of the time	5.0	5.4
Often	8.2	6.3
Always	1.9	2.7

A comparison between the finding from the pre-test and session 1 post-test indicated that respondents more readily acknowledge their abuse of alcohol and drugs in the pre-test than the post-test. As stated previously one of the aims of these sessions were to motivate respondents to accept responsibility for their own behaviour. It could therefore be assumed that respondents developed insight and acknowledged that their abuse of drugs and alcohol equals violence towards themselves.

In conclusion, findings indicated that cognitive development took place during the first two sessions of the *Silence the Violence* programme. The knowledge which respondent's acquired positively influenced their development of pro-social and non-violent attitudes.

SESSION 3 to 10:

Session 3 to 10 focuses on the respondent's personal and inter-personal violence as well as victimisation. For the purpose of this study a comparative analysis was done between findings from the pre-test and the other sessions (session 3 to 10) to explore changes in the respondent's cognitions, attitude and behaviour.

	Pretest I hit/bullied someone before	Session 10 I am still violent/ abusive towards other people
Never	48.1	42.9
Sometimes	31.3	37.1
Half of the time	7.5	1.4
Often	7.5	14.3
Always	5.6	4.3

The majority of the respondents (pre-test and session 10 post-test) were of the opinion that they were “never” physically violent or abusive to another person before. In contrast, a higher number of respondents in session 10 acknowledge that they are still “sometimes” to “always” violent/abusive towards other people.

It is difficult for me to control my temper

	Pretest	Post-test Session 1	Post-test Session 10
Never	26.6	31.5	19.4
Sometimes	51.3	51.4	58.3
Half of the time	8.2	9.0	8.3
Often	4.4	1.8	8.3
Always	9.5	6.3	5.6

Findings from this question are similar than those in the previous question, namely that a higher number of respondents in session 10 acknowledge that they still find it difficult to control their temper. In both instances this might be ascribed to the fact that respondents are more aware of their own violent behaviour than they were in the past. This viewpoint is supported by findings in the following question.

I thought I was never violent

	Session 10
Never	4.2
Sometimes	35.2
Half of the time	9.9
Often	19.7
Always	31.0

Findings from this question indicated that 35.2% of the respondents never thought they were “sometimes” violent while 50.7% “often” and “always”, did not think that they were violent. This is an indication that cognitive development took place and that respondents are willing to acknowledge their own violent behaviour.

My life is similar to what happens in the cycle of violence

	Session 2
Never	22.8
Sometimes	42.1
Half of the time	19.3
Often	7.0
Always	8.8

The above mentioned question was asked after the second session. The theory of violence, which includes the cycle of violence, were discussed during this session. Seventy-seven percent (77.2 %) of respondents are of the opinion that their lives are “sometimes” to “always” similar to the cycle of violence. In contrast to findings from this question, findings from the following two questions are more positive.

I can break my own cycle of violence

	Session 10
Never	16.9
Sometimes	33.8
Half of the time	5.6
Often	9.9
Always	33.8

Nearly 50% of respondents are of the opinion that they are “half of the time” to “always” able to break their own cycle of violence while 33.8% indicated that they are “sometimes” able to break their own cycle of violence. It is furthermore positive to note that the majority of respondents (96.6%) indicated that they can change the bad things in their lives into good things as can be seen in the following graph.

I can change the bad things in my life into good things

	Session 10
Never	2.7
Sometimes	30.1
Half of the time	4.1
Often	15.1
Always	47.9

Findings from these two questions differ from previous findings where the respondents displayed a pessimistic future perspective. It can therefore be concluded that the programme content assisted respondents to develop a more positive future perspective. This is important because as stated previously, a positive future perspective can be linked to the development of a positive self-concept. It is furthermore essential for personal development.

Sharing my secrets helped me to heal

	Session 10
Never	6.9
Sometimes	27.8
Half of the time	9.7
Often	8.3
Always	47.2

Respondents were motivated to tell their personal “loss of innocence” story during session 7. These stories related to their experience as perpetrators and/or victim of violence. The majority of respondents (65.2%) are of the opinion that sharing their secrets helped them (“half of the time” to “always”) to heal.

I still have secrets that I am scared to tell other people

	Session 9
Never	30.8
Sometime	33.3
Half of the time	10.3
Open	14.1
Always	11.5

Even though the majority of respondents acknowledged that telling their stories helped them to heal, a large number (69.2%) indicated that they still have secrets that they are scared to tell other people. This highlights the importance of aftercare services to act as a support system after programme completion.

I am different from how I was before I started the programme

		Session 10
Valid	Never	11.0
	Sometimes	21.9
	Half of the time	0.0
	Often	21.9
	Always	45.2

Eighty-nine percent (89%) of the respondents are of the opinion that they are “sometimes” to “always” different from how they were before they started the programme. This could act as a motivating factor encouraging respondents to maintain their newly acquired pro-social behaviour patterns.

People tell me I have changed since I started the programme

		Session 6
Valid	Never	9.8
	Sometimes	34.8
	Half of the time	13.0
	Often	18.5
	Always	23.9

Ninety percent (90.2%) of the respondents indicated that other people told them they have changed since they started the programme. Findings from the two previous questions point out that the programme content contributed towards noticeable behaviour modification.

I am committed to wear my original self hat

	Never	1.4
	Sometimes	34.2
	Half of the time	5.5
	Often	8.2
		50.7

Always	
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It is positive to notice that 64.4% of the respondents indicated that they are committed to wear their original self hat. Wearing one's original self hat signifies that you are committed to be your original self and will not use, or hide behind, your violent side mask.

Findings from the following three questions emphasises the importance of having a support structure after the termination of the *Silence the Violence* group.

I still have to repair some of the damage I have done

	Session 10
Never	16.9
Sometimes	42.3
Half of the time	9.9
Often	8.5
Always	22.5

I am still a victim of other people's violence/abuse

	Session 10
Never	40.0
Sometimes	48.6
Often	8.6
Always	2.9

Conclusion

Silence the Violence is effective as a Youth at Risk project to address violence and violent behaviour. The programme content brings about changes in respondents violent attitudes, cognitions and behaviour patterns.

Silence the Violence facilitates cognitive development because it creates opportunities for the participants to be exposed to alternative social learning experiences (theoretical and

practical). Violent cognitions are replaced with pro-social cognitions, thus empowering the respondent with the knowledge on how to make non-violent decisions. This enables respondents to make more responsible decisions as well as establish pro-social (non-violent) behaviour patterns.

Silence the Violence is a labour and cost effective programme because up to 20 participants can be accommodated per group series. The programme is versatile and can be presented to perpetrators and/or victims of violence.

In summary *Silence the Violence* is effective because:

- it is client centered - it simultaneously focuses on the needs of perpetrators and victims of violence
- it is needs directed - it focuses on individual participant's behaviour and developmental needs
- it contributes to the development of responsible decision making skills
- it addresses violent attitudes, cognitions and behaviour patterns
- it facilitates cognitive development - levels of violence, theory of violence etc.
- it offers alternatives to violent behaviour by making use of practical skills development
- it is labour and cost effective

Recommendations

This Youth at Risk project should be replicated in other schools.

Aftercare and support systems should be put in place to facilitate the continued development of participants who attended the programme. It is recommended that schools should form partnerships with social workers, counselors and psychologists to develop support networks. Ubuntu Clubs (Khulisa initiative) and/or other youth clubs can also act as valuable support systems.

Silence the violence should be presented to teachers and parents in order to equip them to deal with violence and violent behaviour in schools, at home, in their community and society in general.

City of Johannesburg's Youth at Risk project should be registered as a best practice and act as an example for other cities, schools and communities.

A longitudinal study should be done to monitor the long term impact of Youth at Risk projects.

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