**Abstract**

This systematic review examines youth and adolescents' perceptions of violence in post-apartheid South Africa. Drawing from 34 empirical studies, we identify three key themes: exposure to violence, gender and sexual-based violence, and interpersonal and school violence. Our findings suggest that violence is deeply ingrained in South African society, affecting youth in multiple domains. We discuss contributing factors, including low socio-economic conditions and gender norms, and propose a collaborative approach for violence prevention and intervention.

**Introduction**

South Africa's history is intertwined with violence, particularly during the apartheid era. While the end of apartheid marked a significant milestone, violence continues to plague South African society, particularly among youth and adolescents. Children, adolescents, and young people in this context are consistently exposed to various forms of violence, having negative implications on their lives and overall quality of life. However, much of the research and discourse on violence in South Africa has been centered on adult perspectives, overlooking the views and experiences of youth themselves. This systematic review aims to address this gap by synthesizing empirical studies focusing on youth and adolescents' perceptions of violence in post-apartheid South Africa.

**Materials & Methods**

A comprehensive search of the literature was conducted to identify relevant empirical studies on youth and adolescents' perceptions of violence in post-apartheid South Africa. Studies were selected based on predefined inclusion criteria, resulting in a final review of 34 articles. Thematic analysis was used to categorize and analyze the findings from the included studies. Three overarching themes emerged: exposure to violence, gender and sexual-based violence, and interpersonal and school violence.

**Results**

The articles included in the review were categorized into three themes based on the study focus, namely:

• Theme 1: Exposure to violence

• Theme 2: Gender and sexual-based violence

• Theme 3: Interpersonal and school violence

The studies included in the review were synthesized and are discussed under the key headings of: Content – aims and objectives; Method and data analysis; Sample size and age cohort; and Key findings.

**Discussion**

This study aimed to systematically review and synthesize existing empirical research examining how youth and adolescents perceive violence in post-apartheid South Africa. The keyword searches and reference mining yielded 457 articles, of which 34 were included in the review. The articles included in this review confirmed a paucity of empirical work in this area in South Africa, with over 60% of research conducted in the last decade. The articles focused on three themes: exposure to violence; gender and sexual-based violence; and interpersonal and school violence. The most important and prominent implication that emerged from the review was that violence occurs in multiple settings, such as the home, school, neighborhood (community), and within social relationships.