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INCREASING RESILIENCE, LOWERING RISK: TEACHERS' USE OF THE CIRCLE OF COURAGE IN THE CLASSROOM

ABSTRACT

This explanatory and descriptive quantitative study explored teachers' classroom practices using the Circle of Courage as a guideline with the aim of providing some guidelines that could further improve resilience and prevent challenging behaviour in the classroom. The Circle of Courage provides a framework for understanding behaviour and developing classroom and school-wide strategies to decrease challenging behaviour and increase resilience and self-worth in children. This quantitative research study used a purposive sample (n=211) that consisted of primary and secondary school teachers from 20 schools in the Mangaung and Setsoto municipal areas in the Free State. Results revealed that teachers could improve their teaching strategies linked to the principles of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. It also emerged from the study that teachers have the most difficulty in developing mastery, one of the principles on which education should show excellence. It is recommended that teachers improve their teaching strategies by specifically targeting the four principles of the Circle of Courage since this could help improve learner resilience and academic achievement. This could also lead to the prevention of disciplinary problems in the classroom, especially when used in conjunction with the restorative school model.

Keywords: *Circle of Courage, resilience, restorative practices, self-worth, challenging behaviour*

1. INTRODUCTION

In South African schools, very high dropout rates are experienced (Spaull, 2015:36). Poverty, violence, absence of parents, peer pressure, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and other drug abuse as well as various other social problems are prevalent in schools (Masitsa, 2006:168,183; Mgwangqa & Lawrence, 2008; Reyneke, 2013). If the focus of education is only on teaching the curriculum, and the individual needs and personal development of learners are ignored, especially of those learners who experience some of the abovementioned challenges, it could contribute to high dropout (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2011:3). This would lead to challenging behaviour in the classroom (Anthony, Alter & Jensen, 2009:46; Mestry & Khumalo,

2012:98; Ward, Makusha, & Bray 2015:69). When these children experience emotional pain, they tend to react with troubling behaviour and self-destructive acts. This, in turn, angers adults who then tend to react by increasing punishment and rejection.

Evidently, there is a need to investigate alternative strategies for dealing with the challenging behaviour of learners. Teachers could play a vital role in the development of resilience, primarily through creating a caring educational environment and providing support to learners, especially when they establish good respectful relationships with them (Liebenberg *et al.,* 2016:150). However, some teachers do not always know how to increase resilience and foster positive behaviour in learners. Unfortunately, in some schools, vulnerable learners are oppressed by abusive teachers, making them unruly. Although these experiences with teachers contribute to the development of learners' resilience, the consequences on the school environment and the broader community are quite negative (Motsa, 2017:164–167). The Circle of Courage provides a resilience framework for understanding acting out behaviour and developing classroom and school-wide strategies to decrease such behaviour and increase resilience and self-worth in children. This model consists of four universal values that include the need for belonging, mastery, independence and generosity (Van Wyk, 2020:255–257). Thus, there is a need to explore, through the lens of the Circle of Courage model, what teachers do, to positively develop resilience in children.

The overall pass rate of the National Senior Certificate was 72.5% in 2016 and 75.1% in 2017. Although this does not sound too bad, the bigger picture is dismal. These results do not show the large number of learners who had started school 12 years ago but who did not write the final matric exam and dropped out of school, in many instances because of failing grades (DBE, 2017:44; Child, 2018; Spaull, 2015:36). The fact that learners also have to achieve only 30% to pass, does not indicate a very high standard. Additional support will improve learners' mastery of subject content, keeping them motivated to continue their schooling. This study is important when seen against the background of the high dropout levels and increasing behavioural problems and uncontrollable behaviour in schools (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Research has indicated that the improvement of resilience in learners could help to decrease behavioural problems (Bernard, 2004:65). It is, thus, critical that teachers be made aware of effective strategies to manage uncontrollable behaviour and improve the climate in the classroom. This study will contribute in this regard by determining where teachers can improve.

The Circle of Courage has been used to determine the therapeutic use of a value-based level system that makes it "healing" or "curing" for learners with emotional disturbances (Harper, 2005), using it as a model to change the culture of a school (Espiner & Guild, 2010) and as a decolonisation model of youth development in an environmental stewardship programme (Wenger-Schulman & Hoffman, 2018). Although resilience research is more common, it is not clear how teachers use the Circle of Courage principles in their daily encounters with learners. The first aim of this quantitative study was to fill a gap in the literature and determine whether teachers use the Circle of Courage principles of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity in the classroom. The second aim was then to make recommendations to further improve resilience in the classroom. It is argued that the Circle of Courage resilience model is suitable for developing resilience in children and, in doing so, could help prevent behavioural problems in school communities and decrease dropout.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This article is embedded in the philosophy of restorative justice and argues that, to effectively discipline children, a restorative approach should be used. Restorative practices involve a process of restoration in which connection among role-players in the school environment is cultivated, communication improved, affect explored, collaboration and understanding enhanced and relationships improved or restored after misconduct (Carter, 2013:36). This restorative approach emphasises good relationships among people in the school environment, that contributes to the development of resilience in learners (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013; Liebenberg *et al.,* 2016:142). When learners present with behavioural problems, relationships are damaged for different reasons. For example, poor behaviour in the classroom makes teaching difficult, sometimes impossible, and conflict is not only created between learner and teacher, but also among learners. The Circle of Courage explains why learners misbehave and how their social functioning can be improved. Furthermore, it plays a vital role in the prevention of behavioural problems and provides guidelines for changing the school culture on the prevention level of the restorative discipline model (figure 1). The restorative discipline model thus provides a larger framework in which the Circle of Courage could be used to improve resilience and create a positive school climate.
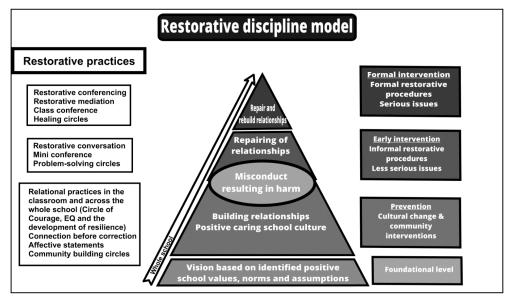

Figure 1: Restorative discipline model (Reyneke & Reyneke, 2020:123)

Strengths-based research indicates that children have an inborn need for attachment, achievement, autonomy and altruism (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 2005:133). The Circle of Courage uses strengths-based techniques to improve resilience in children. This is achieved through the enhancement of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity (Guild & Espiner, 2014:39). These universal growth needs are essential to learning, socialising and positive youth development (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 2014:10). Schools that do not develop these fundamental needs of children are not fulfilling Article 29(1) a of the Convention of the Rights of the Child which states that the development of children's

personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential is one of the aims of education (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2001). This model also transcends different cultures and aims to develop cultures of respect (Peterson & Taylor, n.d.:26, Brendtro et al., 2014:10–16).

In the next part of the discussion, attention will be paid to these principles as Brendtro and Brokenleg originally described them in their work with Native American philosophies of child rearing (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 2019).

2.1 Belonging

Children who do not experience belonging feel rejected and look for artificial methods to compensate. Gang affiliation, attention-seeking, hypervigilance, being unattached, loneliness and distrustfulness are all ways in which children attempt to fill the need for belonging (Brendtro et al., 2019:29). In order for children to experience a sense of belonging, feeling loved and accepted, they need to build trusting relationships with caring adults and positive peers (Brendtro et al., 2014:12). Developments in the field of neuroscience indicate that children who do not experience belonging could develop deficits in the development of the limbic system, which regulates emotions, as well as in the pre-frontal cortex. In turn, this could negatively influence the development of ethical and moral behaviour, leading to dysfunctional social behaviour. Also, children with no sense of belonging struggle to manage their impulses, maintain intimate relationships with others, show empathy, accept differences in others and show respect to people they encounter (Brown, 2005:2). This, again, could lead to challenging behaviour and disciplinary problems in the school environment.

2.2 Mastery

Learners who feel unsuccessful could become unmotivated, feel like giving up, experience feelings of inadequacy, are unmotivated, are manipulative and develop delinquent skills (Brendtro et al., 2019:29). The high dropout levels in South African schools and poor academic results seem to indicate that many children do not experience mastery. The General Household Survey of 2015 showed that some of the main reasons learners drop out of school are because of poor academic performance (17.1%) and seeing education as not being useful (9.4%) (Statistics South Africa, 2016:2). For mastery to develop, learners need opportunities to explore, develop their abilities and talents and learn things that would help them lead a successful adult life (Brendtro et al., 2014:12). According to Brendtro et al. (2019:28), the best way to remedy this problem is to ensure that children have abundant opportunities to excel.

2.3 Independence

Learners who do not experience independence could become bullies themselves or victims of bullying. These learners get into power struggles with teachers, become rebellious and aggressive, defy authority, are undisciplined and are easily led by negative peer groups (Brendtro et al., 2019:29). When children have developed self-regulation and the ability to cope effectively with life challenges – and in the process of problem solving make responsible decisions – they develop independence. When they experience power over their environment, they develop self-efficacy (Brendtro et al., 2014:12). When classroom practices emphasise self-efficacy, independence, confidence and self-understanding, learners' self-concept will improve (Larson, 2007:326). An improved self-concept also leads to more ethical and positive behaviour in one's environment (Van Zyl & Boshoff, 2010:40). When adults are confronted

with learners with behavioural problems, they try to control them using punitive measures. The ensuing power struggle only fuels the conflict and makes them even more rebellious, which in turn, fuels the adults' aggression (Seita & Brendtro, 2005:77). This cycle of conflict cannot be good for the learner nor the teacher and should be broken (Long, 2015).

2.4 Generosity

A generous person is altruistic, caring and loyal, shows empathy towards others and demonstrates supportive and prosocial behaviour in the classroom. However, when generosity is absent, behaviour is characterised by selfishness, no affection, disloyalty, antisocial, hardened behaviour and the exploitation of others (Brendtro *et al.,* 2014:12; Brendtro *et al.,* 2019:29). Generosity is developed by providing opportunities in which learners could experience the joy of helping others.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research question that directed this study was to determine teachers' usage of the Circle of Courage principles to improve and prevent challenging behaviour in the classroom. A quantitative research approach in the form of a survey was followed in this descriptive study (Creswell, 2014). The target population consisted of available teachers from primary and secondary schools of any age, race or gender in the Mangaung and Setsoto municipal areas in the Free State, South Africa. Teachers were recruited that participated in the Free State Restorative Practices pilot project in the Motheo and Setsoto districts. To increase the number of participants, teachers from schools in the Mangaung district where fourth-year social-work students provide services as part of their practical work also took part in the study. None of these teachers received any training in the Circle of Courage model before completing the questionnaires. The population consisted of 20 schools and between four and 18 participants from each school. Non-probability sampling in the form of purposive sampling was applied, since these respondents were easily available and willing to participate in the study (Alston & Bowles, 2009:89). In total 211 teachers participated (Table 1). The questionnaires were handed to the principals of the schools who distributed them to teachers. They were asked to complete the questionnaire during break or outside of school hours.

Table 1:   Information on participating schools

	Number of schools	District	Percent	Participants	Percent	Min	Max
Restorative practices pilot schools	8	Mangaung – 2 Setsotho – 6	40	104	49.30	7	18
Other schools	12	Mangaung – 12	60	107	50.70	4	15
Total	20		100	211	100		

The data were collected through the self-administered questionnaire, which consisted of two parts, namely biographical information and the four elements of the Circle of Courage. This questionnaire had to be self-constructed, since no questionnaire was available that could measure the use of the Circle of Courage in the classroom. The questionnaire was developed with a five-point Likert scale and consisted of 13 items for each of the four elements of the Circle of Courage. The responses were coded as never = 1; seldom = 2; about half the time = 3; usually = 4; and always = 5. For construct validity an expert from an overseas university

evaluated the items and made some suggestions. These recommendations had been included in the questionnaire before a pilot study was performed to ensure that the questionnaire was user friendly. Using SPSS, a statistician determined the Cronbach Coefficient Alpha. This was used to determine the questionnaire's reliability and internal consistency of the four Circle of Courage elements. This coefficient ranges between 0 and 1, where 0 signifies minimum and 1 maximum. The Cronbach Alpha scores were: belonging = 0.83; mastery = 0.74; independence = 0.84 and generosity = 0.85. Acceptable ranges for the Cronbach Alpha are seen as between 0.70 and 0.95 (see tables 4–7) (Pietersen & Maree, 2016b:239; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011:54). Since all the scores for the subscales were in this range, it was concluded that the instrument is reliable.

The primary method of analysis of the research was descriptive. Distributions of the sample across a wide range of variables are reported on in the article. Descriptive statistics was applied to organise, summarise and interpret the sample data (Pietersen & Maree, 2016a).

The Free State Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the principals from participating schools permitted the study. Questionnaires were delivered to these schools and the principals requested volunteers to take part in the study. Informed and voluntary consent was attained from all potential participants. Participants received a copy of the informed consent form with an explanation of the study and the contact details of the researcher for enquiries. The principals did not coerce any person to take part in the study. Participation in the study did not pose any risks to the participants or their schools. Confidentiality was maintained by completing the survey anonymously and omitting the names of the schools in the results. Participants knew that the results of the study would be published and made available to the DBE. Lastly, no participant received any compensation for participating in the research (Rubin & Babbie, 2011:75–84). The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Free State provided the required ethical clearance (Clearance number: UFS-HSD2016/0709).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Biographical information

The participants consisted of 64 male and 146 female teachers. One teacher did not indicate his/her gender. The median age was 40 years, with the youngest respondent being 20 and the oldest 64 years. Most of the respondents represented the black population group (67.3%), followed by white (20.85%), coloured (11.37%) and Asian (0.47%). This study was done in the Free State province, where the dominant languages are Sesotho (64.2%) and Afrikaans (12.7%) (Statistics South Africa, 2014:32). As expected, the home language of most of the participants was Sesotho (52.61%), followed by Afrikaans (28.86%).

On average, the teachers had 12 years' teaching experience. Most of the participants had a BEd degree (36.10%), followed by 28.29% with an educational diploma. Twenty-eight participants (13.66%) had qualifications other than in education, such as BSc and BA degrees, and nine participants (4.39%) had no formal higher qualification (table 2). Many of the participants (18.05%) had not received formal training in methods of child development. However, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) does provide continuous training for teachers, meaning that there was a high possibility that they had been exposed to training regarding classroom management, discipline, school safety etc. (Department of Basic Education & Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention. 2015:4).

Table 2:   Highest education levels of participants

	Frequency (N=205)	Per cent	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative per cent
Grade 12	9	4.39	9	4.39
Education diploma	58	28.29	67	32.68
BEd degree	74	36.10	141	68.78
Honours degree in education	31	15.12	172	83.90
Master's degree in education	3	1.46	175	85.37
PhD in education	2	0.98	177	86.34
Other	28	13.66	205	100

Table 3 indicates a good distribution of respondents among all the phases. Most of the participants represented the FET Phase (31.71%), followed by the Intermediate Phase (25.37%). The average number of learners in a class was 45 learners with a minimum of three and a maximum of 60 learners.

Table 3:   Phases taught by respondents

	Frequency (N=205)	Per cent	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative percent
Foundation Phase	40	19.51	40	19.51
Intermediate Phase	52	25.37	92	44.88
Senior Phase	41	20.00	133	64.88
FET Phase	65	31.71	198	96.59
Intermediate and Senior Phase	3	1.46	201	98.05
Senior and FET Phase	4	1.95	205	100

4.2 Belonging

The elements of the belonging scale (table 4) that measured the lowest included teachers using shouting and yelling to discipline learners (3.20); not making a specific effort to help learners to get to know one another (4.12); not encouraging relationship building in the classroom (4.21); not using values to regulate behaviour (4.42), and not modelling sensitivity towards others' feelings in the classroom (4.44). It, thus, seems that teachers could help to develop belonging by changing some of their practices.

Shouting may stop some misbehaviour in the short term, but it does not change negative behaviour in the long term (Tate, 2007:102). Teachers need to be calm when disciplining learners and show respect to learners and themselves. Shouting does not show respect to others, nor does it help to develop and strengthen relationships, one of the core ways in which people can achieve a sense of belonging. Community building and school connectedness is, therefore, important in order to cultivate belonging and a positive school climate (Glynn *et al.,* 2011:46; Kumari & Dhull, 2017:134). To create a sense of community and belonging in the classroom, a concerted effort is needed to ensure that learners get to know one another. The possible reason why teachers have difficulty in providing belonging in the classroom might be that they are so focused on getting through the curriculum that they do not realise the importance of ensuring belonging in the classroom.

Table 4:   Belonging scores of respondents

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max	Cronbach Alpha
I greet my learners as they enter the classroom	210	4.52	0.83	1.00	5.00	0.834835
I encourage learners to come to me when they need help	211	4.70	0.60	2.00	5.00	0.826615
I demonstrate acceptance towards learners in my classroom	207	4.60	0.60	2.00	5.00	0.834737
I model sensitivity towards learners' feelings in the classroom	209	4.44	0.77	1.00	5.00	0.811707
I create a safe environment in my classroom	211	4.80	0.43	3.00	5.00	0.820301
I encourage learners in my classroom to be non-judgmental towards one another	209	4.65	0.65	2.00	5.00	0.821946
I allow interaction of learners in the classroom	206	4.44	0.80	2.00	5.00	0.817875
I use values for regulation of behaviour in the classroom	207	4.42	0.83	1.00	5.00	0.818019
I help learners to get to know one another	207	4.12	1.04	1.00	5.00	0.814082
I encourage learners to form relationships within the classroom	209	4.21	1.06	1.00	5.00	0.811192
I create an environment where each learner can feel important	210	4.62	0.61	2.00	5.00	0.807947
I have a caring relationship with my learners	211	4.72	0.49	3.00	5.00	0.814203
I discipline my learners in the class by screaming/yelling at them*	211	3.20	1.26	1.00	5.00	0.843797
Overall Belonging score	211	4.42	0.43	2.77	5.00	0.833163

*Negative questions scores reversed

Values are universal principles that should be part of a responsible school culture. In the learning environment, values such as respect for others, valuing relationships and individuals, Ubuntu, democracy and social justice could be beneficial (Macready, 2009:219; Du Preez & Roux, 2010:16). The Federation for School Governing Bodies (FEDSAS) has launched a successful project to guide schools in becoming value driven (Northern News, 2014). Values represent how we think about things and what is important to us in how we live our lives (Deacon, 2016). They are seen as our ethical compass that determines how we interact with the environment and the people in our environment. Thus, when teachers manage discipline in the classroom through a set of agreed-upon values, they do not fall back on rules that are easily broken, but instead connect to and develop the ethical compass of the learners. Creating a sense of belonging could ensure that this compass indicates true north. Learners with a sense of belonging to the school will also be more willing to conform to the school culture and support the school values (Kumari & Dhull, 2017:132).

The last element to be improved is the emotional intelligence (EQ) of teachers. Teachers with high EQ have positive relationships with others, they lead others with empathy, are mentally more stable and can manage conflict effectively (Miller, 2014). Not only will they be positive role models, but they will have the ability to manage their own emotions when learners with behavioural problems provoke them (Bloom, 2015:60). When learners effectively master their emotions and relationships, they become better learners (Lantieri & Coleman, 2008:3). Teachers should model sensitivity towards the feelings of others because this will teach

learners the critical EQ skills for social and emotional competency. Furthermore, being sensitive towards others' feelings could improve their social and emotional development. This is vital because learners are becoming more violent, aggressive, disobedient, impulsive, lonely and sadder than ever before (Mersky, Topitzes & Reynolds, 2013:919; Sciaraffa, Zeanah & Zeanah, 2018:344). When learners are connected positively, chances for positive social interactions improve, which in turn calm them down. Lower levels of negative feelings such as anxiety and fear correlate positively with improved learning (Lantieri & Coleman, 2008:12, 17). Teachers who connect with their learners and have good relationships with them will find that they do better academically and behaviourally in their classes (Baker, 2006:223).

4.3 Mastery

Table 5:   Mastery scores of respondents

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max	Cronbach Alpha (Standardised)
I set high expectations for my learners in the classroom to excel academically	211	4.44	0.80	1.00	5.00	0.745021
Except for teaching in the classroom I provide support classes to help my learners excel academically	211	3.93	1.01	1.00	5.00	0.714644
I reward good behaviour	210	4.20	0.94	1.00	5.00	0.714505
I help my learners to be cognitively competent	208	4.37	0.68	2.00	5.00	0.712574
I allocate seats according to learners' grades*	203	2.98	1.57	1.00	5.00	0.708561
I make sure each learner experiences success in the classroom	208	4.42	0.71	2.00	5.00	0.697372
I help my learners to be emotionally competent	206	4.15	0.98	1.00	5.00	0.717527
I believe that learners who do not excel in the classroom should be restricted from taking part in sports, or any other extra-mural activities*	206	3.95	1.46	1.00	5.00	0.736381
I help learners set realistic goals	206	4.26	0.79	2.00	5.00	0.713268
I help my learners to be spiritually competent	201	4.12	0.91	1.00	5.00	0.702828
Competition amongst learners in the classroom is not encouraged	203	2.87	1.51	1.00	5.00	0.753284
I believe that learners who do not excel in the classroom should be punished*	204	4.29	1.13	1.00	5.00	0.732682
I help my learners to be physically competent	206	3.77	1.21	1.00	5.00	0.720467
Overall Mastery score	211	3.98	0.38	2.46	4.85	0.737198

*Negative questions scores reversed

When it comes to the development of mastery in the classroom (table 5), the element that scored the lowest was the belief of teachers that competition in the classroom should

be encouraged (2.87). Competition is supposed to motivate learners to do better. However, when learners do not have the capability to achieve good results, this could have the opposite effect. Learners without a sense of mastery will avoid risks, feel inadequate and give up easily. Lacking mastery could also lead to behavioural problems such as cheating or being arrogant (Brendtro *et al.,* 2019:19). Competition could, in fact, stimulate unruly behaviour, as the learner attempts to draw away the attention of the teacher and other learners from his/her incompetence.

When learners are allocated seats according to their grades (2.98), those who have not mastered the content and do poorly in tests will be labelled. They will not receive positive social recognition and will also not experience inner satisfaction, but frustration and shame instead. Furthermore, children who expect failure will try to escape further embarrassment by doing their best to avoid work, to challenge the teacher, to endure punishment and to even drop out of school or not attend class because they feel incompetent (Brendtro *et al.,* 2019:11, 33). However, this practice only exacerbates their feelings of failure and intensify feelings of shame.

Additional academic support is not regularly provided to learners (3.93) yet additional support will improve learners' mastery of subject content, keeping them motivated to continue their schooling. In turn, this might help to improve the general matric results and keep learners in school for a longer period (DBE, 2017:44).

Many participants indicated that learners who do not excel academically should be excluded from extra-mural activities (3.95), and they also do not help learners to be physically competent (3.77). Learners who do not experience mastery tend to rebel and become risk-seekers (Brendtro *et al.,* 2019:19, 42). Risk-seeking behaviour could lead to substance abuse and other behavioural problems. Extra-mural activities do not only have the benefit of providing mastery in other areas of life, but they also help to prevent alcohol and drug abuse, especially when included in prevention programmes (DBE, 2013:21). Furthermore, a lack of extra-mural activities could contribute to school dropout. Learners who are not good in academics need other environments where they can achieve (Mgwangqa & Lawrence, 2008:26). Preventing them from taking part in other activities where they may experience mastery will demotivate them and increase behavioural problems and their chances of dropping out.

4.4 Independence

The element that scored the lowest on the Independence scale (table 6) is having methods in place where learners could make suggestions or give their opinions (3.39). This is followed by the belief that learners could not make responsible decisions (4.01), not seeing it as important to involve learners in decision making (4.11), not involving them in the creation of classroom rules and (4.15), lastly, not encouraging them to be assertive (4.19). These results seem to indicate that the participants wanted to control learners (punitive approach) and did not want to empower learners to make responsible decisions, giving them responsibility and providing opportunities to take initiative and solve problems (positive discipline) (Oosthuizen, Wolhuter & Du Toit, 2003). It may be that teachers are afraid that learners with behavioural problems would use such opportunities to make the school even more unruly and that they as teachers would lose control of the classroom. No research could be found to corroborate this idea, but what we do know is that power struggles fuel conflict and lead to even more rebellion and behavioural problems, and that excessive control and punitive measures do not decrease behavioural problems in the long term (Seita & Brendtro, 2005).

Table 6: Independence scores of respondents

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max	Cronbach Alpha (Standardised)
It is important to me to involve learners in decision making in the classroom	209	4.11	0.94	1.00	5.00	0.829409
It is important for me to have a method in place that learners can use if they feel the need to give opinions or suggestions (e.g., suggestion boxes or out-of-class meetings)	208	3.39	1.38	1.00	5.00	0.841226
I involve learners in the development of the classroom rules	209	4.15	1.10	1.00	5.00	0.833841
I encourage the learners in my classroom to be leaders	209	4.47	0.75	2.00	5.00	0.830292
I reinforce the value of taking responsibility in my classroom	209	4.60	0.65	2.00	5.00	0.840313
When a learner has wronged someone else, I motivate him/her to make things right	209	4.65	0.65	2.00	5.00	0.839342
When a learner did something that is not acceptable, I calmly make them aware of the consequences of the behaviour	210	4.32	0.87	1.00	5.00	0.836734
I give learners certain responsibilities in the class (e.g., tidying the classroom, cleaning the blackboard, being class leader for the day)	210	4.50	0.81	1.00	5.00	0.839082
I provide opportunities where learners can contribute to the learning environment	209	4.33	0.83	2.00	5.00	0.824803
I encourage my learners to believe in their ability to do their schoolwork	210	4.72	0.49	3.00	5.00	0.828667
I believe that my learners can make responsible decisions	210	4.01	0.98	1.00	5.00	0.837194
I encourage the learners in my classroom to be assertive	208	4.19	0.81	2.00	5.00	0.830066
I motivate learners to voluntarily engage in class activities	210	4.64	0.60	2.00	5.00	0.828784
Overall Independence score	211	4.31	0.49	2.85	5.00	0.844724

A safe school is one whose climate allows teachers, learners and other stakeholders to talk and listen to one another in a non-threatening manner (Barnes, Brynard & De Wet, 2012:72). The results of the study, however, indicate that many teachers still believe that learners should not have a voice and cannot fully participate in decision making when it comes to matters that directly or indirectly impact them. The South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 2011) recognises the voice of learners in that they should be represented both in the school governing body (Section 23(1)(d)) and by a representative council of learners (Section 11). This article also argues for their voices to be heard in the classroom. Teachers cannot expect learners to acquire the skill of responsible decision making when they never get the opportunity to practise it. It is not that learners would want to rule, rather that they have the inherent need to be recognised. Independence is about creating opportunities for learners to take part in

decision making; even primary school learners should experience an age-appropriate sense of power over their lives (Brendtro & Larson, 2006:108; Brendtro *et al.,* 2019:22). Learners who are not heard and feel powerless will rebel and assert themselves in aggressive ways, leading to unsafe schools, for example, when learners from Pretoria Girls High protested against what they saw as an unfair school hair policy (Deacon, 2016; Henderson, 2016). To prevent these types of unruly behaviour, teachers should proactively ensure that learners have the opportunity to assert themselves in a respectful manner. The only way teachers could teach learners to make responsible decisions is to provide opportunities where they could take responsibility for their actions and to make things right. Using restorative practices to discipline learners would be a good start, since these practices ensure that learners actively take part in decisions regarding misconduct. These practices also ensure that learners make responsible choices about personal and social behaviour (Ashley & Burke, 2009; Thorsborne & Blood, 2013).

4.5 Generosity

Although generosity scores (table 7) were, in general, the highest, there were elements that stood out. These include not encouraging learners to help one another outside the classroom (4.07), not using a positive, warm tone of voice in the classroom (4.21), not teaching learners about the value of people in the community (4.32) and not teaching learners to understand what others are feeling and experiencing (EQ) (4.39).

A generous person is loyal and caring (Brendtro *et al.,* 2014:12). To teach children the value of caring, learners need to be encouraged to help others, not just in the classroom, but also outside in the larger community. People need to care for one another, and showing care and concern is something that needs to be taught and modelled to learners.

A negative tone of voice does not show respect or caring. A positive tone, on the other hand, shows caring and helps to build awareness of behaviour that will in turn help learners improve their EQ (Kanoy, 2013). This result also relates to teachers who scream and yell in the classroom (belonging). Frustration or low EQ might be the leading reasons for this behaviour (Miller, 2014; Bloom, 2015:59). Helping teachers to improve their self-awareness could help them to better control their emotions and to improve their connection with learners. This could, then, improve learners' ability to understand the concept of generosity.

Teachers need to make learners aware of the valuable contributions that people in their community make since these selfless contributions show generosity. These community members could become their role models and ensure that they also start contributing to the growth of their school and the larger community (Phaswana, 2010:116). This, again, emphasises the need for teachers to be good role models to the learners.

Lastly, it is important to help learners to understand what others are feeling and experiencing, which links directly to the development of EQ. The development of EQ can enhance learners' ability to recognise, use and manage emotions in a positive manner. This enhances communication, empathy with others and defuse conflict (Miller, 2014). When people have the ability to empathise with others, they excel in developing others and have a stronger service orientation (Miller, 2014).

Table 7:   Generosity scores of respondents

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max	Cronbach Alpha (Standar-dised)
I provide children in my class with opportunities to help one another	210	4.44	0.70	2.00	5.00	0.840964
I motivate learners to share their resources	210	4.44	0.80	2.00	5.00	0.850559
I have a classroom environment that encourages helping others outside of the classroom	210	4.07	0.95	1.00	5.00	0.845841
I teach learners how valuable people in the community are	210	4.32	0.85	1.00	5.00	0.843586
I teach learners insight into what others are feeling and experiencing	211	4.39	0.79	2.00	5.00	0.844958
I teach children to be empathetic to others	209	4.60	0.68	1.00	5.00	0.849291
The teaching and development of high morals are important in my class	211	4.69	0.60	1.00	5.00	0.841240
It is easy for me to forgive learners when they did something wrong	208	4.55	0.74	1.00	5.00	0.847790
I create hope for the future in my class	209	4.72	0.48	3.00	5.00	0.839350
I try to ensure that my learners understand that they can contribute positively to the lives of others	207	4.63	0.60	2.00	5.00	0.835786
I use a positive warm tone of voice in my classroom	210	4.21	0.82	1.00	5.00	0.849895
I show respect to the feelings of learners	211	4.62	0.59	2.00	5.00	0.837634
I model positive values in the classroom	211	4.71	0.56	2.00	5.00	0.836173
Overall Generosity score	211	4.49	0.42	2.69	5.00	0.853697

Looking at the overall average scores, generosity (4.49) is the strongest, followed by belonging (4.42), independence (4.31) and, lastly, mastery (3.98) (out of a possible 5). These scores are generally high, but it does indicate the elements that need work in the education sector when it comes to building resilience in learners. What is worrying is that mastery measures the lowest where one would have expected it to be the highest. This could also contribute to low-quality education and the understanding of the high dropout levels in our schools (Spaull, 2015:36). Learners seem to not only fail at mastering the academic content, but their other intelligences are not developed adequately. This leads to feelings of hopelessness which make it much easier to give up.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

All teachers, but especially younger teachers, need to be made aware of the importance of improving learner resilience. The Circle of Courage model could be useful to explain the strengthening of resilience and to create an understanding of why certain learners present with behavioural problems. In table 8, recommendations on how to further strengthen the Circle of Courage within the context of the restorative philosophy are made.

Table 8: Recommendations for the strengthening of the Circle of Courage principles in the classroom

Circle of courage value	Recommendations for improvement
Belonging	Introduce community building circles into the classroom where role-players could get to know and respect one another Ensure connection with learners, e.g., know their names and use them respectfully, greet them at the door, compliment them, show appreciation, establish predictable rules, incorporate fun in activities Establish caring classroom practices that model sensitivity towards one another, e.g., honour diversity, use positive language Change to a value-driven school to create a safe school environment Give learners responsibilities in the classroom, e.g., cleaning of the classroom Develop EQ in order to help with the mastery of emotions
Mastery	Provide opportunities to excel, not just academically, e.g., training of peer mediators, ensuring opportunities for the development of cultural, sports and other skills Provide additional support for learners outside normal class hours, could also use peer mentors and peer mediators Challenge learners, set high but reasonable expectations Beware of teaching that is boring or overwhelming Use class activities that will relate to multiple intelligences Be careful when using competition, it can be counterproductive when it comes to learners who struggle academically Do not label learners when they do not do well academically
Independence	Provide opportunities for problem solving and making responsible decisions; solve problems with them, not for them Use a restorative approach to discipline that does not lead to power struggles Ensure full participation of learners in decision-making processes, e.g., school values and matters that directly influence them Encourage respectful assertiveness Introduce ways in which learners could voice their opinions
Generosity	Develop the EQ of learners and staff Provide opportunities to help others in the classroom and in the form of community outreach programmes Introduce school values that emphasise generosity Improve relationships among learners and between learners and teachers Be aware of the role model that you are, ensure that you show empathy and generosity towards learners

Concerning further research, it is recommended that the same study be conducted, but from the perspective of the learners. It would be interesting to determine how they rate the teachers on the use of the Circle of Courage. A qualitative study on techniques that teachers use to improve resilience could also be useful. Lastly, it is recommended that factor analysis be done on the different questions in order to improve the questionnaire that was used.

6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study shows the perceptions of the teachers when it comes to the use of the Circle of Courage. To determine whether this is a true reflection of what occurs in the classroom, have the learners complete a similar questionnaire evaluating their teachers and then making comparisons. Alternatively, to measure the resilience of the learners and compare that with the teachers' scores. Furthermore, it seemed that some of the participants might not have

understood the scale since some answers were sometimes omitted. Improving the scale should be considered through further research. This study was also limited to a small number of participants in a restricted area of two municipal districts and a small sample of schools. Additionally, non-probability sampling in the form of a purposive sample was used, making it difficult to generalise the results.

7. CONCLUSION

Teachers do contribute to the development of resilience in the classroom. However, it seems that they could do more to develop the mastery of learners. This could be done by focusing not only on academic outcomes but also on other activities such as culture and sport. It also seems that teachers use teaching and class management strategies that are not conducive to a safe learning environment. Training in the Circle of Courage and the restorative discipline model could contribute to lower levels of dropout among learners, less behavioural problems and the creation of schools where learners and teachers feel at home.

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