

**Exploring barriers to the promotion of children's relational
wellbeing in South African school communities**

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I dedicate this study to my late grandmother, Milly van Coller who always reminded me of the good in people, despite their obvious shortcomings, and the need to strive toward positive relationships with family, friends and all others who may cross my path. She also invested in me to such an extent that I want to invest in others, especially children, in the same way.

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DECLARATION BY RESEARCHER

I hereby declare that this research manuscript, **Exploring barriers to the promotion of children's relational wellbeing in South African school communities**, is my own effort. I furthermore declare that all the sources used in this report have been referenced and acknowledged.

I also declare that this dissertation was edited and proofread by a qualified language editor as prescribed.

Finally, I declare that this research was submitted to *Turn-it-in* and a satisfactory report was received, indicating that no plagiarism was committed.



Hettie Scheppel

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SUMMARY

The importance of promoting the health and wellbeing of children in educational contexts are recognised in national and international policy developments. However, according to international and local research, many challenges regarding the promotion of relational wellbeing prevail, despite various efforts to improve relationships within school communities. The continuous media and research reports on the escalation of violence in schools suggest that there are certain vices that act as barriers to the promotion of relational wellbeing in school communities, restraining relationships between all those involved in the school community.

However, challenges relating to relational wellbeing are often construed as a matter to be addressed by professionals either in the service of the government or in private practice, who are expected to work with individuals who experience relational problems. Limited attention is given to barriers that might arise within the everyday interactions between the members of the school communities. The need to understand what hinders the promotion of wellbeing in school communities as interactive spaces was therefore evident.

The aim of this study, therefore, was to explore perceived barriers to the promotion of relational wellbeing of children in South African school communities. In order to explore such barriers to the promotion of relational wellbeing, a group of postgraduate students, enrolled for a master's or doctoral programme in Psychology and who work in various school contexts, was involved in a World Café event with a focus on relational wellbeing in school contexts.

A combination of theoretical perspectives was applied as a basis for understanding the educational context in which the study was situated. In order to secure the capturing of the complex nature of relationships and relational wellbeing, a qualitative, interpretive descriptive research design was applied. The application of the World Café method created a context suitable to the interpretive and descriptive nature of the research and granted participants the

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opportunity to render rich and vigorous descriptions of how they perceived the relational wellbeing of children in South African school communities.

Twelve postgraduate students were selected through purposive and convenience sampling to take part in the World Café event, hosted in collaboration with a senior research professor on campus. The data gathered during the World Café event was used as the main data source. In addition, three semi-structured Skype interviews were conducted, following the thematic analysis of the data gathered during the World Café event. In order to ensure that the data was trustworthy, crystallization was applied throughout the data collection process. Thematic analysis was conducted and three main themes with subthemes were identified.

Firstly, the participants identified a predominant focus on academics. They perceived this uncontested focus on academic results within the school community as a barrier to the enhancement of relational wellbeing in their places of work. The main concern was that this unequivocal focus on academic results held certain consequences for both teachers and learners. One of the consequences of this focus on academics is the stress that it creates for teachers. The participants indicated that the most attention in their school environments was paid to delivering good academic results and that the development of other needs of learners, such as emotional needs, were not deemed important. In addition, the participants indicated that they were most often appraised and rewarded according to the academic performance of their learners and to the extent to which they reached predetermined departmental goals within their schools. In addition to academic pressures to perform, teachers are often overburdened with additional duties which leave them emotionally drained. As a result of their tapped emotional energy, teachers felt that they could not invest in connecting and caring for learners as they would like to, due to the overwhelming amount of other responsibilities. Furthermore, the participants indicated that, in addition to too little time to connect and care for learners and develop healthy relationships, they also experienced little collegial support.

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The participants also indicated that, in addition to the stress caused by the predominant focus on academic achievement, the consequence of this stance created the following: limited capacity to develop learners' social-emotional skills; situations where harm to learners' self-concept was experienced; and a general problem-focused approach in addressing challenges experienced by learners.

Secondly, adults seemed to have a limited capacity to promote relational wellbeing. The participants indicated that, in the contexts and places where they worked, adults, such as teachers and parents, who were mainly responsible to guide and equip learners to create, develop, and maintain healthy and meaningful relationships, were perceived to lack the necessary skills themselves in order to engage in meaningful relationships with one another. With regard to parents' capacities, the participants argued that the lack of social skills displayed by children in their classrooms might be ascribed to the home environment and the specific contextual challenges that parents and caregivers have to face, in addition to a general limited ability of parents to equip their children with the necessary social and emotional skills to be able to establish healthy and meaningful relationships. Concerning teachers' capacities, the participants indicated that some teachers were not equipped with adequate knowledge to develop healthy relationships with children and therefore lacked skills to promote relational wellbeing of children in general. In addition to inadequate knowledge, the participants felt that teachers' attitudes about relationships also played a role in the lack of promoting healthy relationships. Although inadequate knowledge and negative attitudes by teachers were perceived to compromise the development of healthy relationships, participants indicated that, even if teachers had the desire to develop healthy relationships, there were few or no opportunities created for them by their schools to focus on developing healthy relationships; there was also little opportunity to be models of healthy relational beings, due to a lack of time or system-related support, as well as personal contextual restraints.

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Thirdly, the perception of the participants was that unresolved conflict between role-players often created a barrier to the promotion of healthy relationships. The participants indicated that the conflict between role-players in the school communities were often excessive and remained unresolved, and that the conflict existed on all levels of interrelatedness. The unresolved conflict was perceived as a serious barrier to the promotion of relational wellbeing within their school environments; this conflict was mainly experienced between teachers and learners, teachers and staff, as well as between parents and teachers.

Keywords: relational wellbeing, barriers, school communities, positive psychology, community psychology, World Café method.

OPSOMMING

Die noodsaaklikheid van die bevordering van die gesondheid en welstand van kinders in opvoedkundige kontekste word in nasionale en internasionale beleidsontwikkeling erken. Volgens internasionale en plaaslike navorsing is daar steeds, ten spyte van verskeie pogings om verhoudings binne skoolgemeenskappe te verbeter, spesifieke uitdagings wat die bevordering van verhoudingswelstand benadeel. Die deurlopende media- en navorsingsverslae oor die eskalاسie van geweld in skole suggereer veral dat verhoudings tussen al die betrokke lede van skoolgemeenskappe nie na wense is nie.

Uitdagings met betrekking tot verhoudingswelstand word dikwels vertolk as 'n saak wat deur professionele persone wat óf in diens van die regering, óf in private praktyk staan, aangespreek moet word. Daar word dan van die professionele persone verwag word om slegs met individue wat verhoudingsprobleme ondervind te werk. Beperkte aandag word gegee aan struikelblokke wat binne die alledaagse interaksies tussen die lede van die skoolgemeenskappe mag ontstaan. Daar is derhalwe 'n duidelike behoefte om te verstaan wat presies die bevordering van welstand in skoolgemeenskappe as interaktiewe ruimtes verhinder.

Die doel van hierdie studie is om sodanige hindernisse tot die bevordering van verhoudingswelstand van kinders in Suid-Afrikaanse skoolgemeenskappe te verken. Ten einde sodanige hindernisse te verken, het 'n groep nagraadse studente, wat vir 'n magister- of doktorsale program in Sielkunde geregistreer is en wat in verskillende skoolkontekste werk, aan 'n World Café-gebeurtenis deelgeneem, waartydens daar gefokus is op verhoudingswelstand in skoolkontekste.

'n Kombinasie van teoretiese perspektiewe is gebruik as 'n basis vir die begrip van die opvoedkundige konteks waarin die studie geleë is. Ten einde die vaslegging van die

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komplekse aard van verhoudings en verhoudingswelstand te verseker, is 'n kwalitatiewe, interpretatief-beskrywende benadering toegepas. Die toepassing van die World Café-metode het 'n konteks geskep wat geskik is vir die interpretasie en beskrywende aard van die navorsing en het aan deelnemers die geleentheid gebied om ryk en kragtige beskrywings te lewer van hoe hulle die relasionele welsyn van kinders in Suid-Afrikaanse skoolgemeenskappe ervaar.

Twaalf nagraadse studente is deur doelgerigte en gerieflikheidsteekproefneming gekies om deel te neem aan die World Café-geleentheid, wat in samewerking met 'n senior navorsingsprofessor op die kampus aangebied is. Die data wat ingesamel is tydens die World Café-gebeurtenis is gebruik as die belangrikste bron van data, hoewel datasnitte ingesamel tydens die Skype onderhoude en enkele datasnitte van die World Café-gebeurtenis in die Wes Kaap ook ingesluit is. Daarbenewens is drie semi-gestruktureerde Skype-onderhoude gevoer, na aanleiding van die tematiese analise van die data wat tydens die World Café-geleentheid ingesamel is. Ten einde die betroubaarheid van die data te verseker, is kristallisatie deurlopend tydens die data-insamelingsproses toegepas. Tematiese analise is uitgevoer en drie hooftemas met subtemas is geïdentifiseer.

Eerstens het die deelnemers 'n oorheersende fokus op akademiese werk as hindernis geïdentifiseer. Die grootste bekommernis was dat die byna uitsluitlike fokus op akademiese uitslae sekere gevolge vir onderwysers sowel as leerders inhou. Een van die gevolge van hierdie fokus op akademie is die stres wat dit vir onderwysers skep. Die deelnemers het aangedui dat die meeste aandag in hul skoolomgewing aan die lewering van goeie akademiese uitslae geskenk word en dat die ontwikkeling van ander behoeftes van leerders, soos emosionele behoeftes, nie as belangrik geag word nie. Daarbenewens het die deelnemers aangedui dat hulle grotendeels beoordeel en beloon word volgens die akademiese prestasie van hul leerders en volgens die mate waartoe hulle voorafbepaalde departementele doelwitte

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binne hul skole bereik. Benewens akademiese druk om te presteer, is onderwysers dikwels oorlaai met bykomende pligte wat hulle emosioneel gedreineer laat. As gevolg van die emosionele energie-uitputting voel onderwysers dat hulle nie soveel kan belê in die bou van verhoudings met en omgee vir leerders as wat hulle sou wou nie. Verder het die deelnemers aangedui dat, bykomend tot min tyd om gesonde verhoudings met leerders te bou en vir hulle om te gee, hulle ook baie min ondersteuning van kollegas in hierdie opsig ervaar.

Die deelnemers het ook aangedui dat, benewens die stres wat veroorsaak word deur die oorheersende fokus op akademiese prestasie, die gevolg van hierdie houding tot die volgende lei: beperkte kapasiteit om leerders se sosiaal-emosionele vaardighede te ontwikkel; situasies waar skade aan leerders se selfbeeld ervaar word; en 'n algemene probleem-gefokusde benadering in die hantering van uitdagings wat deur leerders ervaar word.

Tweedens is daar 'n beperkte kapasiteit by volwassenes om verhoudingswelstand bevorder. Die deelnemers het aangedui dat, in die konteks en plekke waar hulle werk, volwassenes, soos onderwysers en ouers, wat hoofsaaklik daarvoor verantwoordelik is om leerders te lei en toe te rus om gesonde en sinvolle verhoudings te skep, te ontwikkel en in stand te hou, sêlf nie oor die nodige vaardighede beskik om betrokke te raak in betekenisvolle verhoudings met mekaar nie. Met betrekking tot die ouers se vermoëns, het die deelnemers aangevoer dat die gebrek aan sosiale vaardighede, soos vertoon deur kinders in hul klaskamers, aan die huislike omgewing en die spesifieke kontekstuele uitdagings wat ouers en versorgers moet trotseer, toegeskryf kan word, tesame met 'n algemene beperkte vermoë van ouers om hul kinders toe te rus met die nodige sosiale en emosionele vaardighede om gesonde en sinvolle verhoudings te vestig. Ten opsigte van onderwysers se vermoëns het die deelnemers aangedui dat sommige onderwysers nie toegerus is met voldoende kennis om gesonde verhoudings met kinders te ontwikkel nie en daarom in gebreke bly om relasionele welstand van kinders in die algemeen te bevorder. Afgesien van onvoldoende kennis, het die

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deelnemers gevoel dat onderwysers se gesindheid ten opsigte van verhoudings ook 'n rol gespeel het in die gebrek aan bevordering van gesonde verhoudings. Hoewel dit wil voorkom asof onvoldoende kennis en negatiewe houdings deur onderwysers die ontwikkeling van gesonde verhoudings in gevaar stel, het deelnemers aangedui dat, selfs as onderwysers die begeerte het om gesonde verhoudings te ontwikkel, daar te min of geen geleentheid vir hulle deur hul skole geskep word om op die ontwikkeling van gesonde verhoudings te fokus. Daar is ook min geleentheid om 'n toonbeeld van gesonde verhoudings te wees, as gevolg van 'n gebrek aan tyd, 'n gebrekkige ondersteuningstelsel en persoonlike kontekstuele beperkings.

Derdens was dit die persepsie van die deelnemers dat onopgeloste konflik tussen rolspelers dikwels 'n hindernis vir die bevordering van gesonde verhoudings daarstel. Die deelnemers het aangedui dat die konflik tussen die rolspelers in die skoolgemeenskappe dikwels buitensporig is en onopgelos bly, en dat die konflik op alle vlakke van die onderlinge verwantskappe bestaan. Die onopgeloste konflik is as 'n ernstige struikelblok vir die bevordering van verhoudingswelstand binne hul skoolomgewings ervaar; hierdie konflik is hoofsaaklik tussen onderwysers en leerders, onderwysers en personeel, sowel as tussen ouers en onderwysers ervaar.

Sleutelwoorde: verhoudingswelstand, hindernisse, skoolgemeenskappe, positiewe sielkunde, gemeenskapsielkunde, Wêreld Café-metode

LETTER OF PERMISSION TO SUBMIT ARTICLE FOR EXAMINATION

PURPOSES

I, the supervisor of this study, declare that the input and effort of Hettie Scheppel in writing the dissertation reflects the research done by her. I therefore give permission that she may submit the dissertation for examination purposes in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Magister Artium in Psychology.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Kitching', written over a horizontal line.

Dr Ansie Elizabeth Kitching

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Relationships are at the heart of the development of human beings in various contexts (Gergen, 2009; Mizzoni, 2009; Nowak & Highfield, 2011). In school contexts, children and teachers relate and interact with each other on a daily basis (WHO, Information Series on School Health, 2000). Moreover, the relational dimension of schooling includes relationships with parents and members from the larger community. Relationships evidently play a significant role in the development of children's affinity towards school, positive academic output, and positive development of a sense of identity, as established in research conducted over the past sixteen years (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; Roffey, 2012). The significant impact of relationships within school communities was demonstrated in a review article of 133 research articles on relationships in schools by Mchlaughlin and Clarke (2010), who concluded that relationships influenced academic outcomes, especially because they contributed to student motivation and engagement.

More recent research (McCormick, O'Connor, Cappella, & McClowry, 2013; Roffey, 2012), confirmed that, when healthy relationships between all role-players in school communities were fostered, children experienced a stronger bond with teachers and peers and, in general, experienced a more positive connection to their school. The success of these relationships, according to these authors, translated into relational success later in middle school and adolescence. In addition to the support experienced from relationships with adults and peers, the promotion of relational wellbeing in the broader school community could facilitate academic achievement and served as a key asset for many students (Hughes, Luo, Kwok, & Loyd, 2008; Roffey, 2012).

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In view of the important role that relational wellbeing has in the facilitation of a positive experience of schooling for children, it is evident that restrained relationships will deprive children of the opportunities to develop their full potential and experience positive connections to their school (WHO, 2000). School should therefore be aware of and equipped to identify barriers to relational wellbeing in their contexts. The purpose of this study was to contribute to the promotion of relational wellbeing in South African schools, by focusing on the identification of perceived barriers to relational wellbeing that contributed to the restrained relationships in South African school communities.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Gittins (2011) pointed out that adults were more likely to recall a particular incident in class, an embarrassing moment on the sports field, or a special bond between a teacher or friend, than they were to recall a particular scientific experiment learnt in class. In concurrence with the above-stated, Prilleltensky (2000; 2005) found, from studies of adults' reflections on experiences of their school years, that relationships in school communities significantly supported individuals to develop resiliency for challenges they might encounter later in life. Prilleltensky (2005) furthermore indicated that the quality of relationships experienced by individuals might facilitate the holistic wellbeing of those individuals, not only on an individual level, but also on collective levels. The implication was that if an individual experienced good quality relationships with other individuals, the quality of their relationships on a collective level would contribute to their holistic wellbeing (Prilleltensky, 2005: 45). It seemed evident therefore that attending to the relational wellbeing of children in school communities was imperative in our efforts to ensure that, when they left school, they would be equipped to deal with life challenges and contribute to the wellbeing of others, as well as of their communities.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The benefits of promoting relational wellbeing for children were evident in recent research and included the provision of a safe learning environment, the enhancement of social-emotional learning, a focus on strengths and assets, as well as the fostering of a sense of meaning and purpose, and encouragement to live a healthy lifestyle (Diamond, 2010; Roffey, 2012). Nurturing relationships, especially within the school context, furthermore consistently impacted on children's ability to navigate everyday life and affected their resiliency in later life (Hughes et al., 2008). In concurrence with this, Hughes et al. (2008) mentioned that children who experienced warm, caring, close relationships with teachers were more likely to comply with the expectations and demands of their teachers, and, as a result, should be more capable and motivated to conform to rules within the school environment. The positive implications of warm, caring relationships between children and teachers seemed to be especially relevant for children who were from lower income and racial/ethnic minority groups (Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder, 2011). Children from these disadvantaged groups may be more vulnerable to educational failure and higher dropout rates may occur (Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004). McCormick et al. (2013) argued that these quality relationships between learners and teachers might build academic resilience in these learners who were "at risk for poor achievement". Resnick (2005: 398) argued that relational wellbeing emerged from an intentional and deliberative process of providing support, relationships, experience, and opportunities that would promote positive outcomes for children. The implication was that pleasurable, satisfying social experiences and opportunities should be provided in school communities if we intended to build and maintain meaningful relationships. Previous research, undertaken by Gittens (2011), Gilligan (2000), and Resnick (2005), urged schools to become spaces where relational wellbeing was envisioned, created, promoted, and maintained.

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However, current research conducted in South African school contexts (Kitching, Roos, & Ferreira, 2011; Olivier & Wood, 2007) on creating enabling, conducive spaces in South African school communities, suggested that relationships were restrained on various levels. The ability of children to engage in relationship-promoting behaviour was furthermore severely hampered by the restrained nature of relationships (Ladd & Burgess, 2001).

Research in the South African context indicated that violence in schools was a key concern in South Africa (Modisaotsile, 2012). The impact of violence on relationships threatened the wellbeing of all involved in school communities. Indeed, incidences of this nature pointed to restrained relationships between people in schools, as confirmed in research conducted by Aboud and Miller (2007). Besides more extreme forms of restraining interactions, Kitching, Roos, and Ferreira (2011) indicated that relationships were often also restrained by stereotyping, favouring, harming people's integrity and reputation, humiliating people through teasing and ridicule, and excluding people from involvement. Kirsten, Van der Walt, and Viljoen (2009) aptly stated that the absence of role-players concerned with health and wellbeing in the school environment, who could take responsibility for these restrained relationships of incidences of violence in their school environments, suggested a state of "un-wellness" that was indicative of a need for the promotion of wellbeing.

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In addition to the above-stated restraints, it was reported that many classrooms in South African public schools were extremely crowded (Modisaotsile, 2012). Compounding the pressures and stress that teachers experienced within crowded classrooms, were poor teacher training, lack of commitment by teachers, poor learner support, especially at home, and a general shortage of resources in education (Jansen & Taylor, 2003; Modisaotsile, 2012).

In view of the afore-stated problems, relational wellbeing is compromised in South African school communities. The Department of Basic Education recognised the need to support learners, teachers, and schools in more ways than only by providing the necessities of formal schooling. In order to bridge the divide between addressing the “other contexts of learning” (Education White Paper 6, 2001), a support services plan, with the aim of supporting teachers and children within the South African schooling system, was instituted in 2008 (Mashau, Van der Walt, & Wolhuter, 2008). The support services plan acknowledged that teachers should be supported by a wide range of professionals in the execution of their professional duties, including their relationships with their learners. Yet, due to human resource restraints, this intended support did not reach fruition within the South African Schooling system (Mashau et al., 2008). It is thus evident that South African schools still did not enjoy the needed support to establish relational wellbeing as envisioned by the policies and statures of the Department of Basic Education. Thus, with mounting pressures to keep a reasonable level of healthy functioning at school, teachers battled to focus on establishing and improving their relationships with learners. These compounding pressures that teachers faced within the school environment, necessitated a clearer understanding of possible reasons why the promotion of children’s wellbeing seemed restrained in the South African contexts. Such knowledge would allow us to better understand what was needed to be done to promote relational wellbeing in a sustainable manner, as we gained more insight into that which limited the promotion of children’s relational wellbeing in the schools in which the students

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work. Awareness about the effect of restrained relationships within the school environment was outlined in research by Hamre and Pianta (2011) and Kirsten et al. (2009). Yet, very limited research has been conducted in this regard. This gap in research knowledge would be addressed in this study by exploring what the possible barriers were that existed in schools in South Africa, as perceived by a group of postgraduate students who worked in school contexts and who were involved in a research project on relational wellbeing. The research question that guided the study was: *What are the perceived barriers to the promotion of relational wellbeing in the South African school communities?*

1.4 PURPOSE AND AIM OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to contribute to the promotion of relational wellbeing in South African school communities by gaining a deeper understanding of possible barriers to the promotion of relational wellbeing in these school communities. The aim of this study was to explore what postgraduate students, who were employed in various positions in school communities in South Africa, perceived as the barriers to the relational wellbeing of children in their specific school communities and to describe these identified barriers to relational wellbeing.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

To ensure that the complex nature of the phenomenon relational wellbeing was captured, a qualitative, interpretive descriptive research design was applied (Lal, 2008). By utilising this approach, the researcher had the opportunity to capture various nuances of the participants' perceptions that could enrich and illuminate our understanding of the barriers to relational wellbeing (Elliot & Timulak, 2005: 157). In this study, the collection of rich,

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illuminating nuances of the participants' experiences was secured by conducting the research according to three key aspects, as described by Elliot and Timulak (2005):

- Firstly, the focus during data collection during the World Café process and the Skype interviews remained on the barriers to the promotion of relational wellbeing in schools (Addendum F).
- Secondly, participants were allowed the opportunity to share the important facets of the phenomenon of relational wellbeing as they experienced it (Addendum G).
- Thirdly, although the method of triangulation, as mentioned by Elliot and Timulak (2005), was observed, the researcher endeavoured to further strengthen and validate the findings on the phenomenon of barriers to relational wellbeing by applying crystallization methods, as described by Richardson and Adams St Pierre (2002) in order to validate the findings.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the South African context, with specific reference to a heterogeneous group of school communities across five provinces, represented by postgraduate students who were employed in these contexts either as teachers, counsellors or social workers. The schools range from small-sized private schools to very large public schools, in excess of 1000 learners, and were representative of high-income areas to very deprived, low-income areas. The various participants and contexts are described in more detail in Chapter 3, paragraph 3 of this study.

1.6.1 Population.

The population for this study was 130 postgraduate magister students enrolled at the Centre for Child Youth and Family Studies at the North-West University.

1.6.2 Participants.

Twelve postgraduate students were purposively selected to participate in this study. De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, and Delport (2011) stated that, during purposive sampling, the researcher selected participants for the study who could contribute constructively to serve the purpose of the study, which, in this case, was to gain deeper insight into the perceptions regarding barriers to the promotion of children's relational wellbeing in the specific South African communities in which they were employed.

The study comprised two phases: In the first phase of the study, twelve postgraduate master's degree students were purposively selected, based on the following criteria:

- They were professionally trained to work with children, either as teachers, counsellors, social workers, or youth workers;
- they had at least two years of experience in working with children in school contexts in their professional capacity; and
- they were enrolled for an academic master's degree in Psychology or a master's degree in Social work at the time that the research was conducted. The focus of their studies was relational wellbeing.

In the second phase of the study, three participants were conveniently selected to take part in semi-structured Skype interviews, based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study.

1.6.3 Data gathering.

The data for this study was obtained during a World Café event that involved all twelve participants, held during a research colloquium on the Potchefstroom campus of the North-West University. Selected data was also obtained from a World Café event held at the Center

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for Child Youth and Family Studies in the Western Cape was also used in this study. In addition three semi-structured Skype interviews was conducted with three participants as well as selected data obtained from a World Café event held at the Center for Child Youth and Family Studies in the Western Cape. (Addendum B, D, F, G).

The World Café event, according to Brown and Isaacs, was described as “small groups exploring important questions – and connecting with other groups that are doing the same” (2001: 1). In this study participants were divided into four groups of three each. In these groups the participants shared knowledge, meaning, values, and even imagined the future together. In the second phase of the research, after the data-analysis was completed, semi-structured individual Skype interviews were conducted with selected participants who were available (Addendum B). The principle of data saturation was applied to decide on the number of participants involved in this second phase. Data saturation was reached after three Skype interviews. An extensive discussion of the data gathering process is presented in Chapter 3, paragraph 3.

1.6.4 Data analysis.

In order to bring meaning, structure, and order to the media used to collect the data (De Vos et al., 2011), the researcher organised the rough data into files, tagged notes, transcribed audio recordings into verbatim transcripts (Addendum D), and then initiated the process of reducing data into categories. The purpose of this process was to identify emerging information, concepts, and ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A similar approach was used to process the rough data obtained from the Skype interviews. A comprehensive description of the data analysis process is presented in Chapter 3, paragraph 3.

1.6.5 Trustworthiness.

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To ensure trustworthiness within the research process and the resulting interpretation of the findings, the following principles, as described by Ellingson (2009) and Tracy (2010), were applied and utilised during the research process: rich rigor and rich descriptions of data, sincerity, self-reflexivity, transparency, crystallization, multi-vocality, member reflections, and meaningful coherence. According to Ellingson (2009), crystallization, as opposed to triangulation, is a more effective way to gain a deepened, multifaceted understanding of people's lived experiences. Trustworthiness will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, paragraph 3.

1.6.6 Ethical considerations.

While conducting the research, the researcher applied the ethical code and guidelines prescribed for Registered Counsellors, as determined by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), and applied for ethical permission from the Ethics Committee of the North-West University, as part of the broader research project on Relational Wellbeing in Schools and this permission was granted. The ethical clearance number obtained is: NWU-00060-12-A1. The following considerations, as described by Bryman (2012), Flick (2009), Babbie (2009), and Hammersley and Traianou (2012), were adhered to in this study: voluntary participation, no harm to participants, informed consent, confidentiality, non-invasion of privacy, honesty, transparency, and appropriate feedback. Ethical considerations such as procedural ethics, relational ethics, situational ethics, and exiting ethics, as described by Tracy (2010), were adhered to during the process of the study as well. Ethical considerations will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3, paragraph 3.

1.7 KEY CONSTRUCTS

1.7.1 Relational wellbeing.

Relational wellbeing, according to Benson (2012) and White (2008), **is** understood to encompass the association between wellness and being in a relationship, but also involves the quality of the relationship and the resultant effects on the overall quality of experience within the said relationship, including the expected feelings of wellbeing in life, in general.

Prilleltensky defined wellbeing as a positive state of being which is affected by a concurrent and balanced satisfaction of “diverse objective and subjective needs” (2012:2) of human beings, relationships, communities, and organizations.

1.7.2 School communities.

The great Schools Partnership’s Glossary of Education Reform (2013) indicated that the term “school community” was used by educators to refer to “the various individuals, groups, businesses, and institutions that are invested in the welfare and vitality of a public school and its community—i.e., the neighbourhoods and municipalities served by the school”. However, in this study the term was used to indicate that schools should be perceived as communities due to the interdependence between all those involved within the school context, including teachers, learners, and parents, as suggested by Sarason (1974). Concurring with Sarason (1974), Sergiovanni (1994) argued that, based on the ways people were bonded together in schools, these contexts should be perceived as communities rather than organisations. According to Liebenberg and Roos (2008), a school community could therefore be defined as a “micro community”, which is a representation of a much broader community.

1.7.3 Children.

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The term “children” may be understood to be the plural form of the term “child” (Encarta Dictionary, UK). The term “child” may be defined as “(a) young human being below the age of puberty or below the legal age of majority” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). The Children’s Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa), defined a child as “a person under the age of 18 years”.

1.7.4 Barriers to relational wellbeing.

Barriers to relational wellbeing could be described as “processes” that hindered the development of interpersonal “closeness” between role-players in the school environment (McHugh, Horner, Colditz, & Wallace 2013: 10). The processes identified by McHugh et al. (2013) were rooted in different spheres of the school environment, such as teacher, learner, and school. The Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and coordinating Centre (EPPI) defined barriers as those factors which hindered the general wellbeing of young people and classified these barriers according to the areas in which they might occur, such as individual, community, or societal barriers. They further cautioned that barriers should not be understood to be individual concepts, but rather interrelated concepts that factored into the general wellbeing of relationships. For the purpose of this study, barriers to relational wellbeing were those barriers that hampered the promotion of relational wellbeing within schools.

1.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter the topic was introduced and the problem that led to the research questions was presented. This was followed by a brief explanation of the research design and

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methodology, which would be explained in more detail in Chapter 3. Finally the key terms used in the study were explained.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR EXPLORING BARRIERS TO RELATIONAL WELLBEING IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the conceptual framework that provided the basis for this study is presented. The conceptual framework comprised of relevant theoretical perspectives, as well as references to previous studies and relevant literature that informed our understanding of the promotion of wellbeing in general and the promotion of relational wellbeing in particular. The conceptual framework provided a point of reference for discussing the findings and contribution of this study. The research literature was derived from various sources, including policy documents, journal articles, and books referring to national and international contexts.

2.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In order to gain an understanding of and insight into barriers to relational wellbeing in schools, a community psychology perspective was applied as a basis for understanding these barriers within an ecological backdrop within the community psychology perspective. A community psychology perspective has the promotion of people's wellbeing as a goal (Duffy & Wong, 2000; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; Visser, 2007). According to Reich, Riemer, Prilleltensky, and Montero (2007), the aim of community psychology was to explore the social constructions or social interactions within social systems, with the purpose of understanding the dynamics within these systems, and the needs of people within these systems sufficiently to establish which resources were needed to meet their needs (Reich et al., 2007). Applying a community psychology perspective therefore held a shift in focus from a traditional individual and problem-focused approach to a focus on the interactive dynamics

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between all involved in the system. The application of a community psychology perspective in school communities implied that school communities should be understood as contexts where continuous interactions among individuals, as well as between individuals and their environments as outlined by an ecological perspective to community psychology, should be considered in our efforts to contribute to the development of schools as enabling spaces.

In order to understand the functioning of children within schools perceived as communities and not merely as organisations (Sergiovanni, 1994; Strike, 2004), the bio-ecological systems theory, developed by Bronfenbrenner (1975), was applied. The application of an eco-systemic approach to the understanding of individuals within the school environment acknowledged the “symbolical environments, philosophy, personal life view, ideology, religion and culture” (Kirsten et al., 2009: 4). The theory introduced the idea that all the structures in which the child as an individual was embedded, such as family, economy, and political structures, had an influence on the development of a child and therefore had resultant implications into adulthood (Härkönen, 2007).

Contexts, or nested structures, according to Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994), included microsystems (immediate environment where proximal processes were played out, for example home, school, and community), mesosystems (interrelationship between home, school, peer groups, and the community), macrosystems (attitudes and ideologies of the South African society, such as gender and racial discrimination, as well as religious and cultural practises), and the exosystem (for example the educational system and parental work stress). These systems all interacted with the chronosystem (time dimension) in an attempt to maintain a dynamic balance (Swart & Pettipher, 2011).

The functioning of these systems were considered instrumental in understanding the development of a child and also for understanding and exploring the reasons why a child may not be developing as expected, within the system (Ahuja, 2012). The classroom or “neighbourhood”, peer groups, and family were identified as the microsystem, which could

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be defined as the primary unit that surrounded the child and which influenced the development of the child directly. The child's development was strongly affected by the experiences within these settings. The proximal processes that a child experienced within these settings drove the child's development and were hence referred to as "primary engines of human development" (Bronfenbrenner & Morrison in Lerner, 2006). The quantity and quality of the relations within the settings in which the child spent time had important developmental implications for the child's development.

The most significant setting for the young child was the family setting, as the child spent most of the time with family or within the family context; however, other important settings included the extended family, community settings, healthcare and education settings, neighbourhoods, libraries, and playgrounds. When children were viewed within the school context, the application of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems approach was relevant because the school environment comprises crucial elements that secured the psychosocial wellbeing of children within the school community. McLaughlin and Clarke (2010) emphasized that schools, as part of the microsystem in which the child functioned on a daily basis, were critically important, not only to the development of a child in general, but for the child's mental health as well.

Nelson, Kloos, and Ornelas (2014) suggested a "contextual" ecological perspective that did not only focus on the individual and how the individual adjusted within a system, but also on the resources, the expansion of social networks, and the importance of social values within the system (Nelson et al., 2014). This approach might facilitate an understanding of the functioning of a school community as "a series of interrelated systems" in which the persons and systems were considered to be part of a multilevel, multidimensional social context. The implication was that a clearer understanding of the systems and role-players within these systems could be obtained and could lead to an in-depth understanding of what

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was needed in order to promote healthy relationships within these multilevel, multidimensional school communities.

2.2.1 Wellbeing and the promotion of wellbeing.

A clear understanding of the promotion of wellbeing was considered an essential part of the conceptual framework, since the way in which the construct was defined and understood had important implications for the research (Maddux, 2008; Watson, 2012).

The WHO's definition of health or wellbeing as "a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 1948), has been widely accepted in the research literature since 1948 and has not been amended since (WHO, 1948). However, Kirsten et al. (2009: 2) cautioned that the statement by the WHO definition of wellbeing neglected to mention the spiritual dimension of human functioning (Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000). The definition of wellbeing as a satisfactory state of affairs that encompassed more than the mere absence of disease (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010), was accepted for the purpose of this study. Prilleltensky (2005) distinguished between individual, relational, and collective wellbeing. He proposed that relational wellbeing mediated between personal and collective wellbeing in as such that the holistic wellbeing of an individual relied on the wellbeing of that individual's relationships and the wellbeing of the community in which the individual and the relationships resided.

In concurrence with this holistic conceptualisation of wellbeing, Negovan (2010) identified three dimensions of wellbeing, namely a subjective, a psychological, and a social dimension. With reference to subjective wellbeing, two streams could be distinguished, namely the hedonic approach, concerned with happiness, the presence of pleasure, and the absence of pain, as well as the eudemonic approach, concerned with the realisation of human potential. Keyes, Shmotkin, and Ryff (2002) defined psychological wellbeing as one's perception of engagement and thriving, with regards to the existential challenges of life that

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included aspects such as personal growth and purpose in life, positive interpersonal relationships, and self-acceptance. According to Negovan (2010), psychosocial wellbeing included mental, emotional, social, physical, economic, cultural, and spiritual health. Social wellbeing was defined as “the appraisal of one's circumstance and functioning in society” (Keyes, 1998: 122) and included social integration, social acceptance, social contribution, social actualisation, and social coherence. In concurrence with Negovan (2010) and Keyes (1998), Kelly (2006) mentioned that social wellbeing, which involved a healthy socialization process within the school environment, was pivotal in creating spaces where children could learn how to establish, maintain, and promote healthy relationships. Thus, if the social wellbeing of children was explored and established, the efforts to promote relational wellbeing within the school environment could be promoted.

Shek (2008) and Fisher (2013) agreed that wellbeing might be understood as a multi-dimensional system, but added to these three levels by mentioning that there were different domains (Shek, 2008) within the multidimensionality of wellbeing: reflecting material wellbeing, physical wellbeing, social wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, and productive wellbeing. These levels or domains of wellbeing contributed to the feeling of mastery, life satisfaction, and self-esteem which was evidently related to a feeling of general wellbeing, related to positive psychology (Carr & Finnegan, 2014; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Shek, 2008). Kirsten et al. (2009), in turn, referred to and concurred with Shek (2008), Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), and Carr and Finnegan (2014), that domains of wellbeing might be understood as different facets of holistic wellness and health.

Bradshaw, Keuning, Rees, and Goswami (2010) added a further level to the dimensions of wellbeing by focusing on cognitive components as well as affective components of wellbeing. They mentioned that wellbeing had positive and negative affect components. Positive affect components included pleasant experiences. Negative affect components included experiences of negative emotions. Together, positive and negative

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affects translated into overall life satisfaction or satisfaction within a specific domain. Ben-Zur (2003), in Bradshaw et al. (2010: 549), cautioned that positive and negative affect components should not be understood as “bipolar opposites”, but that life satisfaction and happiness was a result of a balance between these components.

To get a clear understanding of this holistic construct, three sites of wellbeing distinguished in the work of Prilleltensky (2005) was discussed separately with reference to concurrent literature.

2.2.2 Individual wellbeing.

Individual wellbeing, according to Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010), entailed personal control, self-esteem, choice, competence, independence, political rights, and a positive identity. Keyes (1998: 121) stated that wellbeing on an individual level, was the prominent presence of positive feelings over a lesser degree or presence of negative feelings. Watson (2012) extrapolated on the general positive and negative feelings, and mentioned that individual wellbeing might be measured according to three specific domains: emotional (“happiness, confidence and not feeling depressed”); psychological (“feelings of autonomy, control over one’s life, problem solving skills, attentiveness, sense of involvement with others”); and social wellbeing (“good relationships with others, avoiding disruptive behaviour, delinquency, violence and bullying”) (Watson, 2012: 2)

2.2.3 Relational wellbeing.

At the relational level, wellbeing was described by Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010) as embedded in supportive relationships and participation in social networks. McCubbin, McCubbin, Zhang, Kehl, and Strom (2013: 355), who defined wellbeing as the extent to which the positive effects in a child’s life outweighed the negative effects, concurred with Prilleltensky on the importance of relational wellbeing. They argued that the balance between

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positive and negative effects hinged on the relational nature of wellbeing. According to these authors, the relational nature of wellbeing encompassed the individual, the family system, the environment, the community and the world as interdependent and relational, suggesting that wellbeing could not be enhanced or even exist without the aforementioned constituents (McCubbin et al., 2013). Furthermore, Zhang, Chen, McCubbin, McCubbin, and Foley (2010: 238) concurred that an individual's ability to "create a positive perception of society, community, family and interpersonal relationships" was also influenced by educational wellbeing in general. In addition, McCubbin et al. (2013) cautioned that, in order to maintain healthy patterns of functioning in general and on a relational level and to regulate adjustments in functioning, wellbeing was a critical element. Diener and Seligman (2004) agreed and stated that the quality of a person's relationships was crucial to their wellbeing in general. They (Diener & Seligman, 2004) mentioned that not only did a person need relationships, but the relationships needed to be fulfilling and supportive in order to sustain wellbeing.

2.2.4 Collective wellbeing.

Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010) argued that the ability to gain access to valued resources created opportunities for wellbeing at the collective level. Keyes (1998) stated that although wellbeing was an individual feeling of positive personal growth and to a large extent a "personal phenomenon", individuals were, however, enmeshed in social systems and therefore affected by the positive or negative functionality of these social systems.

Furthermore, based on research by Prilleltensky (2005), holistic wellbeing was paramount to collective wellbeing, as relational wellbeing mediated between individual and collective wellbeing. Thus, a holistic approach to the promotion of individual and collective wellbeing was paramount in order to establish healthy relationships. Wellbeing was achieved through simultaneous balance between personal, relational, and collective needs in individuals, families, settings, communities, macro-level structures, and policies (Nelson &

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Prilleltensky, 2010). Understanding wellbeing from an ecosystemic approach helped us to understand that wellbeing was impacted upon by the multiple layers of existence conceptualized by Bronfenbrenner (1975), where the individual was part of many different layers of the ecosystem; thereby concurring with Nelson and Prilleltensky's (2005) conceptualization that wellbeing was achieved by balance between personal, relational, and collective needs.

Within the South African context, a Western-European view, as noted by Mcubbin et al. (2013: 362), might not be adequate in determining or promoting the wellbeing of individuals and families, due to the amplified roots into indigenous cultures that valued “ancestors, cultural traditions, spirits, harmony with nature, managing resources one has, cultural preservation, language preservation and collectivism”. Furthermore, it was argued that, in order to have a true relationship-promoting perspective, it was necessary to assume the interconnected and inseparable nature of individual, family, and community.

2.2.5 The promotion of relational wellbeing in South African school communities.

International policymakers and reform organizations which focused on the development of wellbeing of children across the world (Ministry of Health New Zealand, 2014; UNICEF, 2007; United Kingdom Faculty of Public Health, 2010; WHO: Global School Health Initiative, 2014; WHO: Information Series on School Health, 2000) have made uncontested advances in the promotion of wellbeing of children in general. The School Health initiatives undertaken by the WHO (2000, 2014) and UNICEF (2007) were aimed at the promotion and strengthening of education related activities on local, national and global levels. The design of the School Health initiatives focused on improving the general health of children, educators, families, and community members involved within the school community. In addition, the United Kingdom's Faculty of Public Health (2010) focused on creating opportunities for positive interactions between children in the classroom and other

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significant role-players, such as teachers and parents. In concurrence with the endeavours of the WHO and the United Kingdom's Faculty of Public Health to promote the general health and wellbeing of children and school communities in general, the New Zealand Ministry of Health developed the Health Promoting Schools (HPS) programme. This programme was based on the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (1986) which aimed to promote physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual wellbeing of children and school communities in general

However, the notion of promoting wellbeing of children in school communities was still a matter of on-going disagreement and uncharted territory (Watson, 2012; Weare & Gray, 2003). It was argued that although the concept of the promotion of wellbeing has been explored, very limited effort was actually made to implement the suggested initiatives (Weare & Gray, 2003) that have been explored thus far.

The relational wellbeing of children was implied in the process of reform that involved the shift towards an inclusive education system. The shift towards an inclusive education system within South Africa was realised through the development of the Education White Paper 6 of 2001 that was conceptualised in 1996. The initial movement toward inclusive education was reviewed and concluded in 2001, through the release of the official Education White Paper 6 (2001). However, research conducted in the South African context (Mashau, Steyn, Van der Walt, & Wolhuter, 2008; Van der Merwe, 2004) suggested that, despite efforts to improve relationships within schools, the majority of stakeholders perceived these efforts as limited. In accordance, research focused on the need to improve relationships between teachers and children, mentioned that although there was a shift toward improving the wellbeing of children and teachers in schools in South Africa, the education system was still neglecting some schools in rendering effective support services to teachers and children (Mashau et al., 2008).

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In accord with the findings by Mashau et al. (2008), the National Department of Health stated, in the National School Health Policy and Implementation Guidelines (2002), which were developed in collaboration with the Department of Education and the Department of Welfare, that there should be insistence on “the creation of teaching and learning through the holistic development of the school and other sites” (South African Department of Health National guidelines, 2000; WHO, 2013). However, Kirsten et al. (2009) cautioned that although advances in the development of wellbeing-promoting policies and the implementation strategies have been made, wellbeing in schools was still perceived to be the responsibility of the Department of Health and, as such, intersectoral collaboration was not promoted (Kirsten et al., 2009; Wissing, 2000).

Shepherd (2013) agreed with the notion by Mashau et al. (2008) that school communities in South Africa at the time were not functioning to the advantage of teachers, learners, parents, or the community. The author stated that, almost 20 years after the end of Apartheid in South Africa, only 10% of schools in South Africa could be regarded as functional. She further mentioned that this status of dysfunction in the schools prevailed despite the fact that education received the largest part of the country’s budget and that the amount of expenditure per learner in South Africa greatly exceeded that of most African countries. This meant that, although priority was given to ensure that adequate funding was available as a means to support school communities, the money was not invested in support systems or not reaching the envisioned end goal (Shepherd, 2013).

Evans, Hanlin, and Prilleltensky (2007) mentioned that the promotion of relational wellbeing within “the collective”, such as school communities, would only come to fruition if there was a definite focus on the promotion of individual wellbeing in general and that individual wellbeing was influenced by the promotion of relational wellbeing. Thus, Evans et al. (2007) argued that, in order to promote wellbeing in general, it was pivotal to explore individual (personal), relational, and collective wellbeing. They added that it was imperative,

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in order to truly promote wellbeing, that the contextual fields in which individual, relational, and collective wellbeing was found be explored when strategies to explore or improve wellbeing in general were undertaken (Evans et al., 2007). During this review, the following contexts were explored: teachers, parents and primary caregivers, environments/context, and specific aspects in the South African context.

2.2.6 The role of teachers in the promotion of relational wellbeing.

The research literature indicated that teachers played a pivotal role in a child's wellbeing, not only on an academic level, but in the development of wellbeing in all other areas of the child's life. Gilligan (2000: 42) mentioned that teachers had a significant role to play as "potential confidant, mentors and guarantors of a child's welfare". McCormick et al. (2013) and Furlong, Gilman, and Huebner (2014) agreed that children were able and more likely to function optimally in the school environment when they experienced close, supporting relationships with their teachers. The contribution of such positive relationships might include the following benefits:

➤ *Shape a positive attitude towards schooling.*

The research literature indicated that these supportive relationships could contribute significantly to a positive attitude towards schooling. Palsdottir, Asgeirsdottir, and Sigfusdottir (2012) found that teachers shaped children's feelings about school and therefore argued that the teacher-learner relationship might very well be the most important mediating factor in the promotion of relational wellbeing in schools. Gilligan (2000) stated that a seemingly insignificant, but positive relationship, however short-lived, especially with an influential figure such as a teacher, might be a turning point in a child's life (Gilligan 2000).

Van Maele and Van Houtte (2011) postulated that teachers were key actors in the social integration of learners in the school context. In their research they found that when learners

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perceived support from their teachers, they were more inclined to become positively attached to their school. They therefore argued that students' perceptions of their relationships with their teachers contributed to student outcomes within the school system. Consequently, an adequate support system within the school, particularly with regard to learner-teacher relationships, might facilitate enabling relationships, which might contribute to the promotion of relational wellbeing within schools. Teachers' attitudes might be a contributing factor to the development of barriers toward the promotion of healthy relationships between learners and teachers. Mashau et al. (2008) agreed with this idea and stated that learners were less likely to learn from a teacher who did not value a positive relationship with the learner. In order for learners to learn more effectively, teachers might need to focus more on developing these "unobservables", which directly influenced the relational climate within the classroom. The ability of the teacher to connect with the learner on a relational level would influence the learning capacity of the learner positively and, in turn, might influence the teacher to enhance learning through a positive relationship with the learner (Diamond, 2010; Mashau et al., 2008).

Mashau et al. (2008) also stated that "good teachers" would recognise that the quality of pedagogy would affect their relationships with their learners, and would therefore maintain effort levels as they strove to enhance their relationships with their learners and elevated learning outcomes, which ultimately bound teachers and learners in a common purpose.

➤ *Provide a sense of security and care.*

The classroom context provided a natural opportunity for teachers to contribute to children's feelings of wellbeing and security when engaging a child. According to Gilligan (2000), this was achieved through careful consideration to the layout and management of the classroom, and the facilitation of a warm and caring relationship. Such a secure relationship,

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according to McCormick et al. (2013), might have a significant impact on positive educational outcomes.

A critical aspect in the development of a secure and caring environment such as this, was the level of trust that existed within the relationships between teachers and learners. It was postulated that the significance of trust as an indicator of positive teacher-learner relationships might have a favourable outcome for the learners' ability to learn and the teacher's ability to function effectively within the school environment (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011).

In a situation where learners did not experience trust within their relationships with teachers, they were less likely to engage in the learning process (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, cited in Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). Thus, in order for children to engage in the learning process, to experience positive interactions at school, for teachers to function effectively within the school environment, and to develop positive school outcomes for both teachers and learners, a healthy level of trust should be fostered between teachers, learners, and the school environment. The presence or absence of mutual respect could also be regarded as a reciprocal dynamic of relationships (Kitching, Roos, & Ferreira, 2012).

2.2.7 Challenges to teacher-learner relationships in the South African school context.

Considering the role of teacher-learner relationships, it seemed important to establish which challenges existed in this regard in the South African context at the time. Research conducted by Van der Merwe (2004) and Kitching (2010) suggested that teachers were not well equipped to develop nurturing relationships with children. In concurrence, Kirsten et al. (2009: 2) stated that teachers, educationists, and educators have been led to believe that school was mainly for learning and teaching purposes, and that the general wellbeing of children and, for that matter, all parties involved in the schooling environment, was not of

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significant importance. Consequently teachers in South Africa schools still viewed themselves as incompetent and inexperienced in the creation of solutions to barriers in education, including the creation of solutions to and the development of healthy, learning-conducive relationships, as found by Magare (2008).

Furthermore, Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaul, and Armstrong (2011) argued that low teacher effort might be one of the most serious problems in South African education and might even be a more serious problem than low content knowledge and inadequate pedagogical skills. It might be reasoned that low teacher effort might be related to low teacher motivation, often associated with low remuneration (Van der Berg et al., 2011). Low teacher motivation, which was linked to low teacher-effort levels, might create a situation where the relational wellbeing of children in schools was not recognised by teachers as pivotal to positive educational outcomes for both teachers and children.

According to Kramer and Kramer (as cited in Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011: 89) ethnic composition was a very important factor in the promotion, development, and understanding of healthy relationships within schools. The author hypothesised that relationships and levels of trust between teachers and learners were strengthened when the perception existed that all were from similar backgrounds. He further proposed that if teachers and learners were from more or less the same racial-ethnic background, teachers might be inclined to have more positive perceptions about their learners, and this occurrence might even translate from individual teacher-learner relationships into school level relationships as well. In addition, he proposed that a match be constructed between the racial-ethnic composition of learners and teaching body, in order to enhance student-learner relationships and the resultant level of trust.

2.2.8 The role of parent and primary caregivers' involvement in the promotion of relational wellbeing in school communities.

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Parental involvement in children's schooling and school-related activities were pivotal to children's ability to experience success at school. Modisaotsile (2012: 3) considered parents' involvement in children's educational experience as a very important resource that should be utilised by teachers as co-educators, advocates, and decision-makers in the process of enhancing academic outcomes. Research by Venter and Rambau (2011) concurred that parental involvement in children's schooling and their involvement in school activities in general, would result in better behaviour by children in the school environment, as well as in children being more industrious and hardworking in the school environment. They furthermore mentioned that the involvement of parents in activities such as helping their children with homework, might result in better performance at school. Children who experienced unhealthy relationships with their parents were negatively affected and, as a result, their scholastic performance would in turn be negatively affected (Venter & Rambau, 2011).

The Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Center (EPPI Centre report, 2002) informed policy makers, health authorities, and health and education partnerships on an international level. The EPPI Centre stated that children directly mentioned the need to experience emotional support from their parents (and significant others) and that children might experience parents to be a direct barrier to their experiencing positive educational output. Parents therefore needed to play an active, engaging, and supportive role in the development and maintenance of their children's emotional and relational wellbeing.

In the South African context, Bester (2010), in accordance with the findings by the EPPI Centre, stated that parents played a pivotal role in children's relational wellbeing within the school environment, as children's ego-development mainly took place at home but manifested in the school environment. Venter and Rambau (2011) added that, as such,

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children's relationships with self, peers, and teachers might be positive or negative, depending on the quality and nature of the relationships with the parents.

In situations where parents were not actively involved in creating and maintaining an alliance between teacher, school and child, and where children who experienced adversity and challenges in other areas of their lives, especially home life, these children might find valuable relief in a positive, encouraging school setting (Gilligan, 2000).

Venter and Rambau (2011) argued that many children in South Africa found themselves in "latchkey situations", in which they were without parental supervision before and after school hours and therefore had to take care of themselves. They postulated that, especially for primary school children, this might impact negatively on their educational output. Modisaotsile (2012) also found that parental availability and unavailability influenced a child's school achievement.

It is further noted by Lemmer (2007) that, although parent involvement was linked to school success, school communities seldom promoted and established strong bonds or links between parents and teachers. Home, school, and parent alliance seemed to be non-existent or rare, even where parents were actively invited to be part of the alliance. In other words, while schools were constituted by relationships, there were many challenges which they might face in this regard. It is important to keep in mind that many parents who had school-going children in the South African educational context, never had the opportunity to attend school and thus struggled to support their children in daily learning activities. As a result of this, parents struggled to motivate and to support their children with homework. Yet a study by Feinstein and Symons (1999) clearly indicated that low parental interest in school resulted in lower learner achievement (Modisaotsile, 2012). Thus, as the supporting relationship that children required in order to secure positive educational output was lacking in the South African context, lower academic results could be expected.

2.2.9 The role of the context in the promotion of relational wellbeing in school communities.

An important role-player in the wellbeing of children in general, was the social and economic context/environment in which children found themselves on a daily basis.

Shek (2008) mentioned that poverty and quality of life could be related to children's sense of wellbeing. He stated that economic pressure and poverty negatively influenced children's relationships with their parents and that the negative relationships resulted in a decline in children's sense of life satisfaction and self efficacy, and thus resulted in a decline in children's sense of wellbeing. Bradshaw et al. (2010: 548) disagreed with this finding and stated that variations in children's feelings of general wellbeing could not be ascribed directly to variations in social and economic circumstances of such children and their families, but they did, however, find that children's feelings of subjective wellbeing dwindled as they grew older.

School climate played an invaluable role in children's general feelings of wellbeing (Gilligan, 2000). The commitment to the school community was grounded in the perception of school climate, which might be perceived as a sense of healthy and accepting relationships which translated into a sense of belonging that contributed positively to educational outcomes, motivation, and emotional wellbeing. Gilligan (2000) further stated that an encouraging and positive school environment might help encourage a sense of mastery and success in life and combat a sense of failure, especially if the sense of failure was present in other spheres of the child's life, such as home life: "Schools and spare time activities may be two contexts rich with possible opportunities for tastes of such success" (Gilligan, 2000).

Lemmer (2007) agreed and pointed out that healthy partnerships between school, parents, and community might lead to improved learner output, school attendance, social behaviour, and even enhanced self-esteem. However, Lemmer (2007) cautioned that schools and families seldom shared the same perspectives on what was wanted or needed, especially

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concerning relational wellbeing, within schools; this situation might hamper the promotion of healthy relationships within the school environment.

Within the South African context, Shepherd (2013) found that the lack of aspects such as better teaching opportunities, better quality training, and the opportunity to develop pedagogical skills had a greater influence on learning opportunities for learners than the level of teachers' content knowledge. The resultant lack in these aspects created less opportunity for the promotion of relational wellbeing.

However, she further suggested that the positive effect on school outcome in wealthier areas within South Africa might be due to more teacher un-observables, as opposed to less experienced teachers' un-observables in poorer school communities. This observation suggested that teachers' content knowledge should be augmented with more un-observables, such as teachers' ability to engage with learners, opportunities to "practise" teaching, and greater development of teachers' ability to convey content more meaningfully to learners. These opportunities might be less available to teachers in larger, less affluent communities within South Africa. Shepherd (2013) argued that teachers in less affluent communities might not have access to adequate opportunities to practise relating to their learners in the actual classrooms and might not receive the support needed to hone their skills at teaching.

Furthermore, newly qualified teachers might need to gain more direct exposure to the classroom environment in order to improve their capacity as teachers to deliver the academic content more effectively. The notion of improving teachers' capacity to deliver the academic content implied a relational component to teaching. Shepherd (2013) argued that a lack of exposure to the teaching environment and the lack of exposure to contact with learners in the classroom during a new teacher's training, might lead to newly qualified teachers' focusing more on delivering academic content, than on focusing on "how" they deliver the academic content (Shepherd, 2013). Not knowing "how" to engage with learners in the classroom might adversely affect positive educational outcomes for learners and teachers alike. As a

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result, newly-qualified teachers might feel pressured to focus more on delivering academic content than on building relationships with the children in their classrooms.

South African education reform recognised the importance of reciprocal relationships. School policies, for example, focused on ensuring adequate support for learners and teachers. However, Mashau et al. (2008) and Jansen and Taylor (2003) pointed out that there was a lack of connection between the official policies and the implementation and delivery of policies aimed at raising the standard of wellbeing of children and teachers in schools. The Education Support Services System, for example, was aimed at raising the standard of wellbeing and improving teaching and learning (Mashau et al., 2008). This system aimed to support individual schools in order to experience more effective delivery and implementation of education. Furthermore, Lazarus (1997) and Mashau et al., (2008: 416) mentioned that “educational support services include all human and other resources that provided support to individual learners as well as to other aspects of the education system”. This support system was defined by Mashau et al. (2008: 416) as “specialized functions that are not typically educational themselves, but are aimed at improving teaching and learning”. All human resources to support individual learners implied a relational component.

School sector and school size also seemed to influence the levels of positive school output by both teachers and learners. The level of the socioeconomic environment, especially low socioeconomic environments, affected positive school relationships and school outputs less favourably (Van Maele et al., 2011). School size, especially of larger schools, seemed to contribute to relationships between school system, teachers, and learners, to become more complex. Thus school sector and school size might impact the level of trust developed within the school environment and thus have a less positive impact on the development of positive and healthy relationships within the school environment. School sector and size might have the potential to be a barrier to the promotion of healthy relationships within schools in South Africa (Van Maele et al., 2011)

2.3 SUMMARY

The conceptual framework for this study was based on a community psychology perspective that valued an ecological approach. To explore the promotion of relational schools from an ecological perspective, the bio-ecological systems theory, developed by Bronfenbrenner (1975), was applied to explore barriers to the promotion of children's relational wellbeing in specific school communities as perceived by postgraduate students who were employed in these contexts.

Current research and practices relating to the promotion of relational wellbeing in schools were also explored in this chapter. Despite clear indications of the important role that relationships had in promoting wellbeing in schools, evidence from the research literature suggested that relational wellbeing was not prioritised and that there was a very limited understanding of possible barriers to the promotion of relational wellbeing. Consequently efforts to promote relational wellbeing were limited to general support that did not seem sufficient to contribute sufficiently to addressing the problem of restrained relationships between members of school communities.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research design and methodology of the study are discussed in this chapter. However, before engaging in the implementation of the research, it was important to revisit the research aim of this study. The aim of this study was indicated in Chapter 1, paragraph 4. The aim was to identify and describe the barriers to the promotion of children's relational wellbeing in South African school communities, as perceived by twelve post-graduate students who were employed in heterogeneous contexts in South African school communities.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher applied a qualitative approach, based on a social constructionist view on human beings as constantly engaging in their environment and continuously trying to make sense of their world. Through this process of sense-making, human beings interpreted and derived their own meanings from their daily actions (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). A qualitative, interpretive, descriptive research design (Lal, 2008) was applied to investigate possible barriers to the promotion of wellbeing in South African schools. This specific design was interpretive and descriptive of the features of phenomena such as the barriers to the promotion of children's relational wellbeing.

The perceptions of a group of postgraduate students, understood as the meanings that they derived from their interactions with their contexts, about the relationships between members of the school communities in which they work, were obtained. The interpretive,

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descriptive design focused on interpretively describing what the researcher learned and understood about the meanings of practice situations (St George, 2010). The interpretive, descriptive design furthermore allowed the researcher the opportunity to capture various nuances of the data collected (Elliot & Timulak, 2005).

The application of this design enabled the researcher to understand this specific phenomenon in its own right. By asking exploratory research questions relating to relational wellbeing and the possible barriers to the promotion of healthy relationships, the phenomenon could be explored, while simultaneously providing unlimited, emergent descriptions of the phenomenon (Elliot, 1999).

3.3 RESEARCH CONTEXT

The research for this study was conducted in the South African context. The participants represented a diversity of schools, graded across the spectrum from one to five on the National Quintile system (DoE, 2013). The system was introduced mainly for the purposes of the allocation of financial resources. Quintile one represented the poorest quintile and quintile five represented the least poor. The ranking system was determined on a national level according to the level of poverty of the surrounding community in which the school was located, as well as infrastructural factors surrounding the school. Schools in quintile one, two and three have been declared no-fee schools, while schools in quintiles four and five are fee-paying schools. Two private schools were also represented. Private schools are schools who do not receive any funding from the South African government. Most of these private schools received their funding from parents who paid schools fees.

The schools represented in this study ranged between a small-sized private school with 26 learners, to a very large public school with 1 200 learners. The number of teachers employed by the schools ranged between 17 and 60 teachers, some of whom were performing dual roles such as being learner support teachers, counsellors, and extracurricular facilitators,

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in addition to their normal teaching duties. With the exception of the two private schools, the most prominent challenges facing these schools, as reported by the participants who worked in these contexts, were financial in nature, lack of resources such as learning materials and transport, as well as learning and lack of learner support in the form of help for children suffering from learning disabilities. With the exclusion of two private schools, some of the other schools had feeding schemes to feed children who often only receive one meal per day, which was the meal provided by the school feeding scheme. These schools also had to operate without receiving school fees from most children, as they could not afford to pay school fees.

The demographical information of schools in which the participants were involved could be summarised in the following diagram.

School	Number of learners	Number of teachers	Classification of schools according to the National Quintile System	Geographical area
S1	924	60	Quintile 5	Gauteng
S2	1200	50	Quintile 5	Gauteng
S3	575	17	Quintile 5	Gauteng
S4	680	42	Quintile 5	Gauteng
S5	26	2	Not classified/Home school system	Gauteng
S6	108	7	Not yet updated by Department of Education/Public school	Northwest

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S7	Individual contact	Individual contact	Private practitioner	Gauteng
S8	700	62	Not yet updated by Department of Education/Private school	Gauteng
S9	1200	40	Not yet updated by the Department of Education/Public school	North West
S10	1020	45	Quintile 5	Gauteng
S11	1700	60	Not yet classified by the Department of Education/Public school	Western Cape
S12	520	25	Quintile 5	Gauteng

Diagram 1: Demographical information of schools in which the participants were involved

The diagram above provided an overview of the demographics of the schools represented in this study.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study comprised of two phases. In the first phase a World Café event was conducted with twelve participants. The event was presented under the supervision of a professor in research psychology. In the second phase Skype interviews were conducted with three participants to further explore the themes identified during the first phase of the research.

3.4.1 Selection of participants.

The population for this study was 130 postgraduate students enrolled for a master's degree in Psychology or Social Work at the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies, a division of the African Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research (AUTHeR) at the North-West University. Purposive sampling was applied to select the participants. De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, and Delpont (2011) stated that, during purposive sampling, the researcher selected participants for the study who could contribute constructively to serve the purpose of the study, in this instance to gain deeper insight into the perceptions regarding barriers to the promotion of relational wellbeing in school communities on relational wellbeing of children in these communities.

The participants for this study therefore had to adhere to the following criteria: They had to be professionally trained to work with children, either as teachers, counsellors, social workers, or youth workers; have at least two years of experience in working with children in South African school contexts in their professional capacity; and be enrolled for a Magister degree in Psychology or Social Work, with a focus on relational wellbeing in schools.

In the second phase of the study the participants were conveniently selected, based on their availability to take part in semi-structured individual Skype interviews, since they

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already fulfilled the criteria for selection. Two of the participants were mainly working in the private school sector. The third participant worked in a public school and had additional teaching experience on an international level. The preliminary themes identified in the first phase of the study guided the inquiry in these interviews. The principle of data saturation (Baker, 2012) was applied to decide on the number of participants involved in this second phase. Data saturation was reached after three Skype interviews.

3.4.2 Data gathering.

The data for this study was gathered by means of a World Café event, described by Brown and Isaacs (2001: 1) as “small groups exploring important questions – and connecting with other groups that are doing the same”. They stated that, by being part of a cycle of discussions as was descriptive of a World Café event, the participants shared knowledge, meaning, values and, in some instances, even imagined the future together. Delaney et al. (2006) described a World Café as a specialised form of focus group, where relevant questions were explored through a network of collaborative dialogues around questions that mattered to the participants.

During a World Café event, continuous rounds of small, intimate conversations around tables provided participants with the opportunity to dialogue on a topic, while remaining connected to a single, larger conversation (Schieffer et al., 2004). According to Brown (2005), the World Café method of discussing concepts and ideas addressed a very primal need of humans to gather together to discuss the issues that are important to them. Furthermore, while engaging in a World Café event, the participants might gain access to a “greater wisdom” that was only embedded in the collective.

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A World Café event was organised based on the belief that all participants in the event were capable of contributing to the process and would work together irrespective of who they were, due to the fact that the engagement held meaning for them. The explicit inclusion of a diversity of participants was critically important to ensure that more accurate insight into the complexity of the topic was presented. The diversity was bridged by actively hosting participants during their discussions in the World Café process to ensure that they felt needed and valued in the process. When people engaged in this curious, delightful conversations, they physically responded to each other, by closing their physical proximity to one another, and paying more attention to one another.

During the typical World Café process, people moved from one table to another table. This unseen movement implied that the participants of the World Café “moved” between ideas and opinions and left much of themselves at each table and became bigger by being part of a process of conversation, constructed by more than one participant in the conversation. New ideas, meanings, and concepts were co-created simultaneous to the movement within the World Café process. Within this movement, new awareness and patterns about the concept in discussion emerged. The whole group might witness this new co-creation of meaning.

It was imperative to ask sound questions that participants cared about and had answers to. The exploration of these questions might assist the participants to reconsider their pre-conceived ideas about the answers to these possible questions. Asking these questions brought the participants closer to each other in order to venture into the unknown realm of obtaining new insights. People, according to Brown (2005), gained much from the meaningful conversations that were a product of the World Café process.

The World Café event in this study took place in a conference room on the university campus that provided sufficient space and privacy for such an engagement. The twelve

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participants were informed of the event by a research assistant beforehand. During the World Café event, the participants were divided in four separate groups of three participants each. A hostess was appointed at each of the four tables. The hostesses stayed at their tables when other participants moved, to channel the flow of the conversation to answer specific questions. The participants had the opportunity to share their ideas and understanding of the promotion of relational wellbeing in schools by responding to different questions presented at each of the four tables. In addition to detailed discussions of the topic presented to the participants, at each table, the participants could also draw pictures and diagrams to explain their perceptions.

In the second phase of the research, after the data analysis was completed, semi-structured individual Skype interviews were conducted with three participants, who were available on Skype and agreed to participate in such interviews. Due to the fact that the participants were spread across South Africa, Skype interviews were used to avoid time, physical, and geographical constraints, as suggested by Janghorban, Roudsari, and Taghipour (2014). These authors cautioned that environmental interference and disruptions during the one-on-one interview might hamper effective interviewing and that important non-verbal communication by the interviewee might be lost. However, they postulated that, in order to ensure the inclusion of participants who might be inclined not to partake in one-on-one physical interviews, due to proximity issues related to contextual influences such as being intimidated to not participate, might be side-lined effectively by utilising Skype interviews.

During this study, no interferences were experienced. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and care was taken to eliminate interferences, by selecting a location that was free from external noise, such as the researcher's office, with closed windows and doors in order to effectively minimize environmental noise disturbance and, as such, to ensure clear audio recordings. The researcher collaborated with the participants in

order for them to select a day and time which would be convenient for the participants. In this way they could plan accordingly and eliminate any disturbances in their environment, such as individuals interrupting the interview and by selecting a venue with minimal environmental noise and disturbance.

3.4.3 Data analysis.

The data analysis process served to bring meaning, order, and structure to the different mediums which were used to collect the data (De Vos et al., 2011). The researcher aimed to move within a spiral of data analysis (Creswell as cited in De Vos et al., 2011). This involved entering the spiral by exploring the collected data, visual material, and audio recordings, then proceeding by touching on constructs and concepts, and then circling around and upwards in a spiral motion towards the completion of the process.

The first step in this process was to organise the raw data into files and apply name tags to all parts of the written material in order to avoid written notes being misplaced. The audio recordings were transcribed, verbatim. Following the initial organization of the data, the researcher began the process of reducing the data into categories and coding the data according emerging information, concepts and ideas. Thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), was used to discover and describe patterns across the collected data, which implied the following process:

Firstly, the researcher familiarised herself with the content of the data by repeat-reading of the data collected, as well as reading the data in an active manner, meaning that the researcher searched for patterns as she read and re-read the material. Secondly, the researcher, having familiarised herself with the content of the data, developed an initial list of ideas contained in the data or concepts that were found to be interesting. Thirdly, data was coded and different codes were sorted into themes and subthemes. Fourthly, the identified

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themes were refined – some themes merged and some themes “collapsed” since there was no substantial data to support those themes on their own. At the end of this phase it was important for the researcher to clearly define themes in terms of what they were, and what they were not. The researcher also ensured that themes fitted together and gave a general view of the data “story”. Finally, the researcher focused on finalising the themes identified in the previous phase by describing the essence of each theme in relation to the data that the particular theme represented. All this was done in continuous consultation with the supervisor and the assistance of an independent peer reviewer who conducted a critical review of the themes and subthemes.

3.4.4 Trustworthiness.

In qualitative and phenomenological research, knowledge was believed to be situated within a context and subjectively constructed through the lived experiences of a group. In order to effectively explore these subjective meaning-making experiences, crystallization was employed during the study, and thus a deepened, multifaceted understanding of people’s lived experiences was obtained (Ellingson, 2009). In this study, crystallization was therefore utilized in order to gather the lived experiences of the group that took part in the study. Ellingson (2009) mentioned that the principles of crystallization were based on ontological assumptions and could be applied to ensure the trustworthiness of the research process and the resulting interpretation of the findings. Through the utilization of crystallization in this way, trustworthiness was established in this study.

Although crystallization was used as a method to establish trustworthiness in the study, Ellingson (2009) and Tracy (2010) further argued that, despite the resistance that revolved around the recognition of qualitative research as research with integral “markers of quality” (Tracey, 2010: 839), much has recently been done in the qualitative research arena to

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justify the “markers” of good qualitative research. The researcher aimed to ensure that the “markers of quality”, identified by Tracy (2010: 839), were incorporated to ensure trustworthiness.

In addition to capturing these “markers of quality” (Tracy, 2010), the topic itself could be considered relevant if one took into account that school communities within South Africa accommodated around 15 0000 children (CENSUS 2011) and that the relational wellbeing of these children were essential for the construction of schools as enabling spaces in which these children could flourish and be facilitated.

The researcher also set out to achieve rich rigor, which might be understood as deep, thickly described, complexly rendered interpretations of meanings about a phenomenon or group” (Tracey, 2010: 10). This was achieved by including participants who were knowledgeable enough to sensibly engage in a discussion about the barriers they experienced in practice in the exploration of possible barriers to the relational wellbeing of children. Moreover, contextual appropriateness of the sample was achieved by selecting participants who represented different contexts in South Africa. The researcher furthermore ensured that ample data was collected in order to properly answer the research questions.

A suitable research method which could capture the aforementioned subjective, lived experiences in a deep, thickly described, and complex manner, was identified, namely the World Cafe method. In order to attain the goal of participants rendering and sharing the complexities of their experiences, the World Café method was chosen as a suitable method of gathering the data.

The World Café method, which was well-established as a research method, and which has been used in many research projects within the educational context, was selected as a suitable vehicle to the attainment of this goal. In addition, the World Café event was chosen

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because it allowed the participants from various contexts to share and provide a rich and deeply integrated understanding of the promotion of relational wellbeing.

After the execution of the World Cafe during the colloquium with the post graduate students, the researcher paid attention to the appropriate processes for data collection, coding, and thematic analysis, by utilising the procedures for data collection, coding, and thematic analysis as prescribed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

During and after the data collection process and during the coding and thematic analysis, the sincerity of the study was ensured by referring to the “authenticity and genuineness” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 841) of the research, which implied a certain level of honesty and transparency. This level of sincerity, honesty and transparency was obtained by attending to the following:

➤ ***Self-reflexivity.***

The researcher assumed a self-referential stance about possible subjective values, biases, and inclinations towards the research, by asking questions about the rationale for choosing this topic, as proposed by Richardson and Adams St Pierre (2000). In answering the questions, the researcher was able to reflect on her own experiences from her workplace, which included school-going children, both in and out of the school environment, and her desire to understand how these children could experience optimal relational wellbeing.

➤ ***Transparency.***

A clear account of all documentation and actions undertaken during the research was presented. In addition to a detailed account of the processes and procedures employed during the research process, the researcher gave credit where it was due, such as

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acknowledging participants, research assistants, supervisors, and supportive colleagues.

➤ ***Credibility.***

Clear descriptions of the specific context and circumstantiality of the data were of utmost importance in securing the credibility of the study. In this study the specific context and circumstantiality of the data obtained were considered, by allowing participants to discuss their perceptions with specific reference to the contexts in which they worked.

➤ ***Multivocality.***

Multivocality was ensured through the inclusion of participants from heterogeneous contexts to ensure that various perspectives were brought to the discussion. The participants voices were considered from their position to and presented in the best possible way to ensure that the meaning of their experiences was authentic.

Furthermore, the researcher endeavoured to convey an empathic, understanding, and attentive attitude, by attending to those view points and experiences that diverged with the majority of experiences and viewpoints throughout the research process. The researcher was also attentive to cultural, class, and age differences applicable to the population of the participants, as these differences might create a basis for the creation of different meanings in the data collected (Tracy, 2010). By being cogniscent of naturalistic generalizations, as described by Tracy (2010), the researcher was mindful of the idea that knowledge obtained through qualitative research could not be generalized to other contexts.

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However, the knowledge gained through qualitative research could be transferable to and of use in other settings, populations, and contexts or circumstances if the findings resonated within that specific context. The transferability of qualitative research was therefore achieved when the readers of the research experienced the research as overlapping with their own experiential contexts.

In addition to naturalistic generalizations, Tracy (2010) mentioned that meaningful coherence and meaning of a study, which were crucial to the trustworthiness of a study, were achieved by ensuring that the study adhered to the following aspects:

- The study should achieve its stated purpose – the purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of educators on the health of relationships within school communities and the possible barriers to the promotion of relational wellbeing, by exploring the perceptions of applicable participants within the educational environment in South Africa.
- The study should accomplish what it proposed to be about – the study accomplished the goal to explore the health of relationships within South African school communities, as well as the possible barriers that may exist in the promotion of healthy relationships within school communities within South Africa.
- Methods and representation practices that partner well with espoused theories and paradigms should be used in the study – the study utilised the interpretive, descriptive research design, which focused on practice questions of inquiry and interpretively described what the researcher learned and understood about the meanings of practice situations (St George, 2010). This approach to researching humans viewed human beings as constantly engaging in their environment and continuously trying to make

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sense of their world. This research approach partnered well with the exploration of perceptions and contextual experiences of participants.

- The study should endeavour to attentively interconnect literature reviewed with research foci, methods, and findings – the research literature was grounded in meaningfully coherent literature related to the context of the study. The literature was connected with the aim of the study, the methods employed in exploring the data collected, and the ultimate clarification of the research findings.

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations were of paramount importance in qualitative research and addressing ethical issues; the protection of participants and sound research practices in qualitative research were continually on the foreground (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter 2006; Flick, 2009). Babbie (2012) agreed that research into social concepts continually raised ethical concerns and that ethics in social research should be thoroughly considered. In addition to using the below-mentioned ethical guidelines to guide and evaluate her professional and ethical behaviour, the researcher applied the ethical code and guidelines as prescribed by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (Health Professions Act 56 of 1974) while conducting the research. The researcher also obtained permission from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University under the ethical clearance number NWU-00060-12-A1.

The following ethical considerations described by authors such as Bryman (2012), Flick (2009), Babbie (2009), Hammersley and Traianou (2012), and Tracy (2010) were adhered to in this study:

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Voluntary participation: Participation in research should be voluntary and no participant should feel obliged to participate in any research procedure (Babbie, 2009; Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). Tracy (2010) referred to the concept of voluntary participation as procedural ethics that implied the execution of ethical actions that were dictated as universal necessities by larger organizations, institutions, or governing bodies. Procedural ethics held that the participants were informed about the consequences and nature of the research in which they intended to participate and entailed that it was necessary for the participants to understand that their participation was voluntary.

The researcher endeavoured to ensure that participants did not feel obliged to participate in this study, by informing them in advance that a World Café would be conducted during the time they attended the cohort supervision on campus. On their arrival on campus, all participants were once again informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could choose to opt out of the research at any time without compromising their position as a student in any way.

Informed consent: Participants needed to be fully informed of the research process and should be informed of the possible risks associated with the research process (Babbie, 2009; Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). The consent forms provided to all willing participants explained the research process clearly. Before signing the form, participants were informed about the process by the research professor responsible for the informed consent forms, which all participants willingly signed (see Addendum A).

Harm to participants: Babbie (2009) cautioned that researchers should avoid any harm to participants, either in the form of physical or emotional harm, but also psychological harm. Hammersley and Traianou (2012) mentioned that, at the least, the potential to do harm should be judged. Due to the context in which the research was conducted, and the nature of the research, the possibility of any emotional or physical harm to the participants was limited.

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However, the students were given the number of the Institute for Psychotherapy on campus, in case they felt the need to discuss any issues regarding their personal or professional career that arose in the event of the discussions. With reference to relational ethics, Tracy (2010: 845) suggested that researchers should engage in an attitude of reciprocity with participants and should guard against “co-opting” with participants in order to secure a “great story”. The researcher has previously established professional relationships with some of the participants and, as a result, the participants entered into a trusted relationship with the researcher. As a result the relational ethics and a “no harm” stance were secured and observed at all times in terms of caring for and valuing the contexts and communities in which the participants worked and from which they brought their emotional experiences into the research.

Maintaining confidentiality: Due to the nature of the method used in this study anonymity and confidentiality could not be promised since the participants knew who said what in the World Café. Participants were however assured that their identities would be protected as far as the dissemination of the data was concerned, by using pseudonyms in the research report. The group members were furthermore requested to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, and agreed on it in the consent forms (see Addendum A). The researcher, complying to the procedural ethics of the study, also avoided undue exposure of the personal data of participants by securing the data collected in a locked office and password-protected computer. In addition to securing the data and the electronic data collections, the researcher attributed an electronic identification code to each participant in order to secure privacy and personal identifiable bodies of data.

Invasion of privacy: The protection of participants’ privacy, according to Babbie (2009), should be a main concern for the researcher. He further advised that special care should be taken in order to protect the privacy of participants. In this study the researcher respected, protected, and upheld the privacy of all participants, by communicating to each

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participant that the information they shared would be accepted in a non- judgemental way and that they would not be obliged to provide any answers to questions that they experienced as intrusive of their privacy.

Dissemination of the findings: The participants would receive individual feedback via an electronic report once the study was completed. The data would be stored in a password-protected safe at the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies (CCYF) for the required period of seven years.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the results of the study are discussed with reference to the themes that emerged from the data gathered in the World Café event. The themes were identified through the process of data analysis as described in Chapter 3. Three main themes were identified. An overview of the main themes and the subthemes is presented in the diagram below:

- | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ <i>Theme 1: A predominant focus on academic results</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Subtheme 1.1 Academic results are expected from teachers</i>▪ <i>Subtheme 1.2 Perceived consequences of the overarching focus on academic results for learners</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ <i>Theme 2: Limited capacity to promote relational wellbeing</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Subtheme 2.1 Limited capacity of parents to equip their children with skills</i>▪ <i>Subtheme 2.2 Limited capacity of teachers to equip learners with skills</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ <i>Theme 3: Unresolved conflict between the various role-players</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Subtheme 3.1 Conflict between teachers and learners</i>▪ <i>Subtheme 3.2 Conflict amongst staff members</i>▪ <i>Subtheme 3.3 Conflict between teachers and parents</i> |

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The following acronyms were used to refer to the data sources and World Café event, as well as the participants of the Skype interviews:

- *NWGr1- 5 referred to groups in which the Potchefstroom students participated during the World Café*
- *WCG 1-4 referred to the group of students who participated in a World Café event in the Western Cape*
- *S1 – 3 referred to the Skype Interview Participants*

4.2. THEME 1: A PREDOMINANT FOCUS ON ACADEMIC RESULTS

The theme referred to the participants' perception about the predominant focus placed on academic results in the school communities where they worked. This unequivocal focus on the academic achievement of learners was perceived as a possible barrier to the enhancement of relational wellbeing, due to the consequences that it held for teachers and learners.

4.2.1 Subtheme 1.1. Academic results are expected from teachers.

The participants indicated that the teachers were mainly expected to deliver academic results and that attention to other aspects of learners' development were not necessarily considered as an equally important part of their work. The participants reported that they were most often appraised and rewarded based on the level of academic performance displayed by their learners in accordance with the relevant departmental goals as stated below:

...It is your good work and all that you have to is done, your obligations are fulfilled and to ensure that you keep your job you have to show good results... (NWGr1)

...So the relational wellbeing is not so important anymore... the relationship is lost. (NWGr4).

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The focus is mostly on the academic work. It is the way how your performance can be measured and how schools can then compete with each other... (S1).

In some instances the focus on academic results, according to the participants, led to competition between teachers at the cost of supportive interactions with one another. This situation worsened in the higher grades as the focus on academic results became even more important, as stated in one of the discussion groups:

...Results in the senior phase is so much more important... [it is] a competition... instead of supporting each other... [it is a matter of] whose class is performing the best... whose results are the highest... (NWGr1)

... when they started out all the teachers had the same goal in eye. But in secondary phase there is a competition between the teachers... (NWGr4)

Besides the academic priorities, teachers were over-burdened with extra duties apart from their academic priorities, which tapped into their emotional reserves. Due to this state of affairs, teachers, irrespective of the contexts in which they worked, experienced that opportunities to care and connect were minimal due to the responsibilities that teachers had, as illustrated by the following statements:

...a teacher's personal coping ability becomes exhausted.... late nights at school, weekends are busy, you become exhausted...(NWGr1)

...I fulfil two roles at school, but even if I had 24 hours to do counselling at school, will I still not be able to help everyone...(NWGr1)

The extent of these limitations to connect and care was such that teachers seemed despondent about the possibilities of addressing the relational needs of children:

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...there is just no time to connect... as for teachers, I think it is the main reason why teachers become despondent... (NWGr1)

...it is such a rush... it was the worst year of my life...there is no time...and the curriculum does not allow that there is a little time for relationship building. There is too much work, it's ridiculous...(S1)

It was evident from the data that the higher the grades, the more stressful the situation became, and the less they could rely on collegial support, as indicated in the statement below:

...for some reason there seems to be a stronger bond between junior personnel or they support each other better than the senior phase. In the senior phase it seems that every one is on their own and there is a lot of friction... (NWGr1)

...I think it is true... the more the focus changes to academic achievement, the more it's true. And teachers try hard to keep up with everything that there is no time for anything else, especially when classes become bigger... (S1)

4.2.2 Subtheme 1.2. Perceived consequences of the overarching focus on academic results for learners.

The perceived consequences of this overarching focus on academic results, as identified by the participants in their specific contexts for learners were: limited attention to the development of social-emotional skills; harm to learners' self-concept; and a problem-orientated approach to the challenges that learners experienced.

Participants indicated that, in view of this the overarching focus on academic results, limited attention was given to the development of social-emotional skills and relationships. Specific reference was made to what happened in the foundation phase:

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... in the foundation phase there are themes [such as] shopping, vegetables, brush your teeth... so you only teach basic skills but not emotional skills... (NWGr1).

... Life orientation is merely considered as a subject and not much is learned about relationships... (NWGr1).

The focus on academic performance and achievement was perceived as harmful to children's self-concept development, due to the tendency to acknowledge only those who achieved academically. Those children who did not achieve were often left alone to find their own way, while they might be the ones who needed to experience a sense of achievement despite their weaker results.

... I don't think it's positive, because only the children who perform or the children who will advance satisfactorily will receive any attention and then the self-concept of the child will go hand in hand with academic achievement... (S1).

Concurrently, children often referred to as "problem children" became the focus of attention in terms of support, while very little attention was given to pro-active interventions to enhance the relational wellbeing of all the children:

The problem children always receive more attention than the children who do their work diligently... you don't bother with them because they just carry on. It is in general problem-focused more than relationship-building...(S2)

...the pressure to get the problem children through and to get them on a certain level is much more than to just nurse the 'okay' kids and to keep them 'okay'... (S2)

Theme 1 indicated that teachers in the contexts represented by the participants might feel stressed and overwhelmed due to the fact that they were merely appraised when they achieved academic results. They found it difficult to maintain meaningful and healthy

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relationships with the children in their class, due to the pressure to reach academic goals as ascertained by the particular school or schooling facility in which they worked. According to the results, some teachers expressed a desire to interact with the learners on a more meaningfully relational level. Concurrently these teachers' experiences were that the functionality of the support systems aimed at the promotion of relational wellbeing was not positive.

The prominent focus on academic results has been challenged since the 1990s. The findings therefore concurred with research by McClellan and Katz (1993), who concluded their research with the statement by Hartup (1991), who said that the best childhood predictor of adult adaptation was the adequacy with which the child got along with other children and not the child's intelligence coefficient. Diamond (2010) concurred that the social and emotional development of the child in the school environment might be the most effective route to the development and maintenance of academic outcomes and that the focus on academics should not be the ultimate priority. She further cautioned that what was assessed in the educational contexts was what was emphasised in the interactions between people. Thus if only academic output was assessed in schools, without monitoring relational wellbeing on a continuous basis, the consequence identified by the participants in this study would be evident.

Schools should rather be re-humanised (Morrison, 2002), by attending more closely to the everyday relating and interacting between all school members across all the levels of relatedness and in all the various activity settings that include classroom, playground, sports, and cultural activities. In line with the work of Hirst and Vadeboncouer (2006), the recommendation entailed that schools should be transformed from economic spaces where all actions and attitudes related to academic achievement into social spaces that recognised the contributions of human beings in the educational endeavour.

4.3 THEME 2: LIMITED CAPACITY OF ADULTS TO PROMOTE RELATIONAL WELLBEING

This theme referred to the limitations that adults who were responsible to guide learners and to equip them with the necessary skills to engage in meaningful relationships with one another, experienced and displayed in the contexts where the participants worked on a daily basis. The participants initially referred to some parents' incapacity to equip their children with the necessary skills to promote relational wellbeing in general. However, some participants concurrently indicated that some teachers also seemed to lack the capacity to equip learners with much needed relational skills.

4.3.1 Subtheme 2.1 Limited capacity of parents to equip their children with skills.

The participants indicated, based on their experiences, that the social and emotional skills needed by children to initiate and develop healthy relationships were limited. They argued that this lack of social skills could be ascribed to the home environment, as they considered this the parents' responsibility.

The perceptions of the participants were informed by their observation that parents in more affluent contexts often invested more time in motivating their children to take part in activities associated with achievement, rather than investing time in building meaningful relationships with their children. They stated:

...The focus is more on academics as well as sports and children get more pressure. So the relational wellbeing is not so important anymore. And the relationships are lost... (NWGr3)

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Due to the image created, the children have to take part in rugby, gymnastics, music, netball and there is just never time... if you ask what they were busy with, it's only things that build their image... (NWGr1)

...Same with the parent-child relationship... if you ask what they were busy with, it's only things that build their image, but there aren't good relationships... (NWGr1)

In schools situated in less affluent contexts the participants perceived that parents were observed to spend limited time with their children due to the fact that they were at work all day, trying to earn a living in order to provide for their families. Consequently they were often less focused on developing relationships with their children or children who were placed in their care. This situation was illustrated by the following statements:

... the parents literally do not have money. They stay in a township... the support structure is not in place (at home)... (NWGr1), ... We assume that relationships exist (at home). Everything, except counselling or relationships come first...(NWGr1)

The participants indicated that the limited focus of parents on the development of relationships with their children was influential in the way in which they related and interacted with people in the school contexts:

...if there is a bad relationship between parent and child at home, then the relationship between teacher and child at school is also bad, because this leads to bad behaviour [at school]. If they are not disciplined at home, then they think they can do as they please at school and then the relationship is affected...(NWGr1)/... the teacher may experience a problem with the child... the child doesn't cooperate... and they [the teachers] don't understand what is happening, but as soon as they know the parents are probably going through a separation, then it's a bit better for everyone in the class...(NWGr1)

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The participants' perceptions were that the difficulties that parents and children might experience in their relationships with one another, directly affected the relationships that children had within the school community, and they specifically indicated that the influence of restrained relationships between parents and children influenced the relationship with children and teachers within the school environment.

4.3.2 Subtheme 2.2. Limited capacity of teachers to equip learners with skills.

In this study, participants perceived the fact that some teachers were ill-equipped with adequate knowledge to develop healthy relationships with children, as a barrier to relational wellbeing, as reflected in the following statements made by individual participants in the Skype interviews:

...I cannot recall that I completed any courses as part of my education degree on any of this... I don't think it was covered...(S1).

...we are never trained or taught to work with children like that [on a relational level]...(S 2)

... if you look at what a teacher has to learn when studying to become a teacher... it is never covered in depth if it is covered at all...(S3)

In addition to teachers mentioning that they did not receive formal, focused training on how to relate to and build meaningful relationships with children, they also indicated that teachers had different ideas about how to relate to children and how to develop relationships with the children in their class, as indicated in the following statements:

...teachers from different walks of life have different ideas about things and then have different ideas on how to work with children...(S1)/...there is also no practical opportunity for a teacher before they start working as a teacher, to practice building relationships with children... it is a "try and see" approach... (S3).

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Due to this lack of knowledge on the promotion of relational wellbeing, teachers tended to still maintain autocratic positions that jeopardised relational wellbeing in schools, as it created relational spaces where the following aspects were experienced:

...teachers, I have noticed, who have been teachers for many years, are very focused on discipline, children should be seen and not heard... like in the old days...(S1)

...There is no respect, or lack of respect, a lack of discipline, a lack of trust, a lack of knowing the child's background, having meaning for that. And also there are a few gaps in (knowledge on) how relationships actually work (WCG3, 4)

... a lot of teachers have been teaching for many years... they follow this view of: "this has worked for 20 years" and that is it. They rely on their past experiences...(S3)

Furthermore, the lack of knowledge and skills of teachers resulted in ignorance about the emotional and relational needs of children or led to their finding it difficult to understand the children's behaviour.

The ignorance and propensity of some teachers not to improve their relationship-building skills, regarding relational and emotional wellbeing, might result in children missing valuable opportunities to learn and practice relational skills. One participant expressed her concern that children might forfeit opportunities to learn valuable skills if teachers were not capable of modelling the skills.

Another participant indicated that there was no opportunity created, either due to a lack of time, contextual restraints or system support, to focus or model the development of healthy relationships, even if the teacher was aware of the importance of establishing and promoting healthy relationships:

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...there are no guidelines given on how to establish, build the relationship. Every time, the child can only come to you if they have a problem. There is no focus on building a positive relationship...they talk about how important it is for children to develop potential but no one ever asks us about relationships...(S2)

Some participants, however, felt strongly that teachers had to take responsibility for their own development of skill to promote the relational wellbeing of children and in the school system in general:

...the children that end up in front of you every year are so different to the children from previous years... you need to sit down every year and learn about how to build those relationships again... (S3)... but then, there should be continuous professional development expected of teachers...as you grow you become more receptive to learning new skills...(S1)

Personal contextual restraints experienced by teachers, such as teacher background and upbringing, were pointed out by the participants as a factor which might hamper teachers in their efforts to contribute to relationships being promoted actively and effectively:

... teachers from different groups and backgrounds will have different ideas about things and they will have different ideas on how to work with children... more people are drawn into teaching that are insecure in other areas ... and then it depends on the teacher who has personal issues...(S1)

... it is so difficult for older teachers who are in this thing for so long... they just do their thing as they go along... they do not have a fresh [perspective]... they are stuck in their ways... it is difficult for them, they are already overworked and now they still have to attend additional training courses (S2)

A particular concern relating to the fact that some teacher were ill-equipped, was the fact that children who might not get the necessary guidance to develop sufficient relational

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skills at home would not acquire these skills at all. The following excerpt from a conversation at one tables referred to this:

...Not at home, because everyone is too busy. Not by yourself, because you do as much as possible. Not at school because teachers are too busy. So nowhere is the child taught how to build relationships...(NWGr1)

Theme 2 presented evidence that adults who were responsible for teaching and modelling of skills that would promote relational wellbeing were not necessarily capable of doing what was expected of them in this regard.

The findings indicated that parents, irrespective of their social or economic status, tended to have a limited focus on relational wellbeing. More affluent parents are seemingly focused on more “image”-related activities, while parents in less affluent areas apparently tended to focus more on the satisfaction of their families’ primary needs and therefore spent long hours at work.

In addition to the parents’ limited focus on their children’s general wellbeing at school, some teachers also displayed limited capacity in this regard. Ignorance regarding the promotion of relational wellbeing and autocratic attitudes of some teachers were evident as barriers to the promotion of relational wellbeing. The participants therefore indicated that the enhancement of teachers’ professional and relational skills to promote healthy relationships had to be in place in order to secure the promotion of relational wellbeing in schools (Lemmer, 2012; Mbokodi & Singh, 2011; Roffey, 2012b; Van Wyk, 2001). Moreover, the well-known and widely applied Epstein model (1987), as cited in Nathans and Revelle (2013) suggested that there was a “sequential” contribution by teachers and parents to equip children with different skills on different levels. It was stated that teachers were responsible for

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capacitating children with basic, essential skills up until 6 years of age, and thereafter teachers might mainly focus on developing children within the educational context.

The participants conclusively indicated that there was a great need for more parent-school collaboration and direct parent involvement in developing relationships with learners. Research conducted by Lemmer (2007) confirmed this notion and mentioned that parent involvement strategies were at the forefront of most national reform agendas and education authorities.

However, she argued that parents and schools seldom agreed on extent and the nature of involvement of parents in the school environment. Furthermore, she mentioned that positive school outcomes and school success were linked, but that the parent involvement was not seen or experienced even when schools formally invited parents to be involved (Lemmer, 2007: 218). In addition, she argued that teachers and parents shared the responsibility to develop the child in a relational context (Lemmer, 2007: 219).

In concurrence with Lemmer (2007), the “Epstein's typology of parent involvement”, as described by Barksdale (1997), dictated that there were major types of involvement: Type 1 involvement entailed that schools assisted families with developing the necessary skills related to parenting, child rearing and family support, as well as an understanding of child and adolescent development and ways to set home conditions to support learning. From this position parents' incapacity to assist their children in developing emotional and social skills relating to healthy relationships might be a direct result of the lack of parent involvement in schools and the low levels of collaboration between schools and parents, as was found by John-Akinola and Gabhainn (2014). They argued that some parents might not share the enthusiasm and optimism required to be actively involved in supporting their children and stated that “some others are incapable of doing so” for different reasons, such as a lack of time due to work responsibilities and other contextual factors.

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Thus, it was illustrated that teacher commitment and the involvement of both teachers and parents in the development and promotion of healthy relationships with children were critical in promoting relational wellbeing in schools and that the absence of the aforementioned inputs by teachers and parents alike, might develop into a barrier to the relational wellbeing if absent in the contact that teachers and parents had with children (Epstein, 1987; Epstein, 1997; John-Akinola & Gabhainn, 2014; Lemmer, 2007).

4.4 THEME 3: UNRESOLVED CONFLICT BETWEEN VARIOUS ROLE-PLAYERS

This theme refers to the participants' perceptions that conflict between the members of school communities was often unresolved due to a lack of time to resolve the situation or the lack of interest in the promotion of healthy relationships. The participants indicated that they experienced conflict between teachers and learners, conflict between teachers and staff, as well as conflict between teachers and parents.

4.4.1 Subtheme 3.1. Conflict between teachers and learners.

The participants indicated that many opportunities to establish positive relationships with the children in their class were lost due to continuous conflict between teachers and learners. The participants referred to conflict between teachers and children in the following statements:

...everyone is on their own... there is a lot of friction. There is a lot of friction between teachers and children.... Where the child has a goal and everyone supports each other, the relationships are fine and comfortable, but when everyone works against each other and everyone for himself, there the relationships are not good at all... (NWGr1).

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... bad relationship at school influences all [the] other relationships... the ripple effect... then behavioural problems start influencing the relationship [between the child and] the teacher... (NWGr1)

4.4.2 Subtheme 3.2. Conflict amongst staff members.

In addition to teachers and children experiencing conflict, the participants also indicated that there was conflict between teachers. The conflict seemingly related to the ways in which they interacted with each other in restraining ways, such as refusing to cooperate and working against each other to reach personal and school system established goals. These interactions clearly had a ripple effect on relationships between all the members of the school community. The excerpt below confirmed the above-stated:

...if there are no relationships between teachers, what happens then: No cooperation, backstabbing, negative influences on school and children. One bad relationship at school influences all the others... again, that ripple effect. Then behavioural problems happen, which influences relationships with the teacher...(NWGr2)

The perceptions of the participants was that there was little cooperation between teachers and that the most prominent relationship between teachers was of a competitive nature.

The participants also highlighted the friction that existed between teachers and management in the school in which they worked and indicated the potential of this conflict to hamper the development and promotion of healthy relationships in their schools, as stated in the discussions.

One participant specifically indicated that the person who made the decisions about the focus in the school, for instance an academic focus or a relational focus, or both, was usually the headmaster. This particular participant experienced that the headmaster was often

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not sufficiently in touch with the challenges associated with maintaining healthy relationships with children and other staff. This might lead to conflict with staff as their complaints about these challenges might be interpreted as a lack of compassion by the school management.

Another participant agreed on the influential role of the school management, but indicated that in her context the difficulties were addressed adequately:

...I know what big a role a headmaster plays, because he decides what the focus lies on at school. So yes, if there is not enough compassion... I know the school I went to, the headmaster, there was a lot of infighting between teachers, and it played a role in classrooms so he had to change about that... (NWGr4)

4.4.3 Subtheme 3.3. Conflict between teachers and parents.

The participants also indicated that friction existed between teachers and parents. Relationships between teachers and learners were restrained due to miscommunication and a lack of support between teachers and parents to the extent that some participants felt that:

...there is no relationship between the teacher and parent... (NWGr2).

Yet they insisted that:

...There has to be a connection somewhere..., but that, ...they [parents] don't care... and therefore, ... there is a relationship, but it's a dysfunctional relationship..., since ... They [parents] are not involved at school or with the child.... (NWGr2).

Another serious barrier associated with unresolved conflict was the fact that parents tended to take their children's side when they were involved in incidents at school that were reported to them as stated:

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... Parents condone their children's bad behaviour...(NWGr3).

One participant gave an example of such a situation:

...He has to take his child's side, but he also has to know what his child's faults are. There has to be a degree of fairness. You have to acknowledge your child's faults. Yes, but I told a parent that the child's work is good but just too slow. In the end she ended up completing his work on his behalf and I was wrong... (NWGr3)

Theme 3 presented evidence that the participants perceived the unresolved conflict between different role-players that existed on all levels within the school system, as a barrier to relational wellbeing. It is important to note that much emphasis was placed on the fact that the conflict remained unresolved. They perceived this unresolved state of conflict as a direct barrier to their ability to promote healthy relationships within their contexts. It was highlighted that much conflict existed between teachers and learners for various reasons and that the continuous conflict between teachers and learners detracted from the opportunity to promote healthy relationships with learners.

In addition to conflict between teachers and learners, conflict between staff members was perceived to be restraining relationships and was perceived to have a ripple effect on all members of the school community. Furthermore, participants indicated that the conflict between teachers and parents also had a restraining effect on their relationships with each other and specifically mentioned that miscommunication and a lack of support between the parties became a barrier to the promotion of healthy relationships in general. The participants also raised their concern that parents were sometimes unwilling to accept that their children might be at fault for restraining relationships that developed between teachers and learners.

Research conducted by Drugli (2012: 217) indicated that the presence of “high levels of conflict, negative emotions, discordant interactions and a lack of support” (p. 217)

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suggested that negative relationships existed between teachers and learners. In concurrence with these findings, Howes, Phillipsen, and Peisner-Feinber (2000) as well as Saft and Pianta (2001) mentioned that factors such as student-teacher character, previous relational experiences, and context specific school factors might influence the quality of student-teacher relationships. These research findings concurred with the findings as perceived by the participants that high and unresolved levels of conflict, negative attitudes and emotions, restrained interactions, and a general lack of support were contributing to the development of barriers to the promotion of relational wellbeing.

4.5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The barriers to relational wellbeing perceived by the participants in this study included a predominant focus on academic work within the school environment, limited capacity of adults to promote relational wellbeing, and the presence of unresolved conflict between different role-players involved in the school environment.

The findings suggested that, due to the predominant focus on academic work, limited attention was given to the development of relationships between teachers and learners, and amongst learners. This state of affairs generated concern amongst professionals who assumed responsibility for providing enabling spaces for children, as the research literature emphasised the value of relationships for the enhancement of children's relational wellbeing.

Research, conducted by McCormic et al. (2012), emphasized that there should be an active promotion for the development and maintenance of close relationships in school, especially between teacher and learner, which in turn might increase students' learning by creating an environment in which children were motivated to actively engage in the classroom. Thus children would achieve more positively on academic levels and their educational output would be more successful.

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According to research by Ladd and Burgess (2001), supportive, positive relationships between role-players, especially teachers and learners, might act as a preventative factor for learners at risk for school failure, but the presence of conflict and a presence of disconnection in these relationships might exacerbate the risk for school failure. They further mentioned that children might benefit from establishing positive and lasting relationships with teachers from early on in their school career. The value of relationships for enhancing academic achievement was furthermore emphasised in recent studies by Botha (2014), Abel, Chung-Canine, and Broussard (2013), as well as McCormick et al. (2012) and Al-Yagon (2012). Botha (2014) argued that schools should actively “socialize” children as part of their responsibility to create learning environments conducive to learning. In accordance, Resnick (2005) stated that relational wellbeing emerged from an intentional and deliberate attempt to provide support aimed at achieving positive outcomes for young people.

Evidently the limited attention to the development of caring relationships in schools due to the prioritising of academic work, jeopardised children’s relational wellbeing in schools. This strong focus on academic work at the cost of relationships also seemed to be in contradiction with the emphasis placed on relationships as a key performance indicator in the Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS). In this system, relationships were described as a function that related to growing, learning, and improving teachers’ teaching practices, as well as prioritising learners’ learning experiences in order to reach positive educational outcomes (IQMS, 2001; Report on the IQMS, 2006).

Schools therefore needed to pay serious attention to practising what was recommended in policy, by making time available for teachers and learners to connect on a deeper relational level as a way to promote children’s relational wellbeing and thereby their academic success. Witmer (2005), in agreement with Ahram, Stembridge, Fergus, and Noguera (2011), mentioned that teachers who endeavoured to make teaching more

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meaningful for their students and who were capable of meaningful connection with their students, had students who were more engaging in the classrooms. If the teacher had the time to invest in a learner and to learn something important about that learner, there was a greater opportunity to connect with that learner and, in return, the learner would be more willing to engage in the learning process. Ahram et al. (2011) agreed that negative educational outcomes, behavioural problems, and the incidence of learners who were vulnerable to school failure might even be prevented by establishing strong relationships between all role-players in the school environment.

Teachers' understanding of these concepts might equip them to make the necessary adjustments and proactive decisions in order to promote healthy relationships with their students. The value of having teachers who were capable of recognising the socio-emotional needs of children in schools has been proven pivotal to the development of healthy relationships with them (Van der Merwe, 2004). The findings of this study therefore raised concern, as there were clear indications that teachers who worked in the contexts where the research was conducted, might not be properly equipped to effectively administer to children's wellbeing while teaching them. This concern was aggravated in view of a study conducted by Diamond (2010: 1), suggesting that the capacity of children to initiate, develop, and maintain caring relationships might be related to the teacher's capacity to nurture them in class and build healthy relationships with them. She further mentioned that, if the vision of education was to develop caring citizens, then the teachers should create ample opportunity for children to practice becoming caring individuals. It was argued that if teachers were "too stressed" to have caring relationships with children, they would be unable to adequately model healthy relationships (Diamond, 2010: 2).

In addition to teachers' limitations, the findings also suggested that parents across the socio-economic spectrum did not necessarily equip their children with the relational skills

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necessary to be able to cope with the challenges that they had to deal with in school.

Consequently, some children came to school ill-equipped to respond in appropriate ways to their peers and teachers. Research conducted by Diener, Isabella, and Behunin (2007), indicated that the quality of close relationships experienced between children and parents could be linked to children's positive perceptions of their academic competence and, as a result, more positive educational output. Based on the work of Epstein (2007), the question was raised whether schools should become involved in making parents aware of their role to equip their children with relational skills.

The findings relating to unresolved conflict between role-players confirmed the findings of a study by Botha (2014), indicating that relational aggression displayed as bullying and conflict-ridden relationships were increasing in South African schools at the time. According to the author, these incidences were pervasive in nature, led to less acceptable social interaction, and were detrimental to children's relational wellbeing.

In general, the presence of the perceived barriers to children's relational wellbeing raised concerns about the individual wellbeing of children in these contexts. As indicated in the work of Prilleltensky (2005), relational wellbeing mediated individual wellbeing as well as collective wellbeing. Simultaneously the presence of barriers to relational wellbeing in these school contexts would therefore threaten individual as well as collective wellbeing in these contexts. This might partially explain the current problems experienced with bullying behaviour and violence in school communities. Botha (2014) further argued that the active curtailment of restrained relationships would be needed to turn around the current stance of promoting children's relational wellbeing as a prerequisite for the optimal achievement of their academic potential and positive educational outcomes for all role-players involved in the school environment.

Considering the importance of relationships and relational wellbeing, the concern was that if we did not attend to these barriers to learning, school might become dehumanised, as

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stated by Morrison (2002). Within dehumanised context children were merely viewed as autonomous individuals who should perform academically to serve their own needs for fulfilment and achievement, even at the cost of their relationships with other people.

Prilleltensky (2005) clearly indicated that it was through relational wellbeing that the individual and collective wellbeing was mediated. In concurrence with the notion that the ignorance on the barriers to relational wellbeing would be detrimental to the health of relationships in school environments in general, the pervasiveness of these situations was so intense that schools were failing in creating safe and nurturing environments for children which were conducive to learning and children reaching their academic potential. Furthermore, it was argued and emphasized that “safe and nurturing teaching and learning environments are prerequisites for effective socialization of learners” (Botha, 2014: 2) and, ultimately, the establishment and promotion of relational wellbeing in schools.

Addressing these barriers to relational wellbeing was a complex endeavour due to the multi-faceted nature of the interactions between people in school communities. To address the barriers to relational wellbeing would therefore require that all the role-players, in particular the adults, needed to work together to establish a continual, concerted effort to the establishment, enhancement, and maintenance of healthy relationships in schools. In order to maintain the continual efforts to working towards actively promoting relational wellbeing in schools, all role-players should accept their responsibility in the endeavour. Roffey (2012) argued that developing healthy relationships with children might very well be in the best interest of promoting teachers’ wellbeing.

Thus, the promotion of relational wellbeing in schools hinged on the identification of barriers such as were identified in this study, namely an overarching focus on academics, the limited capacity of the adults involved in the schooling environment to actively promote relational wellbeing, and unresolved conflict and restrained relationships within the school

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environment. Not only was the identification and clarification of the implications of these barriers paramount to the promotion of relational wellbeing in schools, but also the exploration of the reasons for these barriers still existed, after much effort was made by different role-players involved in the development of policies and procedures to support teachers, children, and parents in experiencing wellbeing at school.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conclusions to the study. Following the conclusions, recommendations are made with reference to practice and future research. Finally, the limitations of the study as well as the contribution of the study are discussed.

Before proceeding with the conclusions, a brief summary of the research process is presented. The research question in this study was:

What are the perceived barriers to the promotion of relational wellbeing in the South African school communities?

In order to answer the research question a qualitative, descriptive interpretive approach was followed to gather the data needed for the study. The data was collected during a World Café event in which Magister degree students took part. Following the data generation phase, a thematic analysis was conducted in order to identify emerging themes. The themes were reviewed and refined in order to derive a final three themes with subsequent subthemes. The finalized themes were used to formulate semi-structured interviews used during the Skype interviews conducted and the data collected was reviewed in order to confirm the findings of the data collected during the World Café event. The researcher came to the following conclusions regarding the barriers to relational wellbeing as perceived by the participants in this study:

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the literature overview and the empirical research in this study the following conclusions were reached:

5.2.1 Relational wellbeing plays a significant role in children's lives.

Based on an overview of current global and local literature on the health and wellbeing of children in school communities, the review clearly indicated that children needed to establish healthy relationships with adults and peers in order to flourish and to obtain positive academic outcomes. Policy documents seemed to acknowledge the importance of relational wellbeing, if one considered the IQMS criteria.

5.2.2 Relational wellbeing is not a priority.

Relational wellbeing was often not prioritised in contexts where the research was conducted, resulting in restrained relationships that jeopardised children's relational wellbeing. Media reports and current research on children who display delinquent behaviour suggested that children's relational wellbeing in school communities was a matter of great concern. There were strong indications in the literature that relationships were restrained on different levels in South African school communities. Despite these indicators, very limited research has been conducted to establish why relationships were restrained and, more specifically, what barriers hindered the enhancement of relational wellbeing for all role-players involved in school communities.

5.2.3 Teachers might not be equipped to promote relational wellbeing.

Some teachers in these contexts were not well-equipped to promote children's relational wellbeing. The participants in this study indicated that they perceived some

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teachers lacking the necessary skills and knowledge to equip children with the skills to initiate and maintain meaningful, healthy relationships in the school environment (Theme 2).

Due to a predominant focus on the academic work in schools, limited attention was given to the enhancement of relational wellbeing in the contexts involved in this study. The overarching academic focus also contributed to teacher stress, such as “teaching load, lack of time, lack of resources for teaching, shortage and poor facilities” (Akpochafo, 2014), “heavy workloads, time pressure and managing students’ behaviour and learning” (Leung, Chiang, Chui, Lee, & Mak, 2011) and more specifically within the South African context teachers experienced stress as a result of “learners’ poor behaviour and attitude and lack of discipline, lack of time, large class sizes, and teaching a learning area in which they were not trained” (Crafford & Viljoen, 2013: 1). The result of these stressors in teachers’ daily work environments, resulted in teachers being less willing to nurture relationships with their learners.

5.2.4 Parents seem to lack the capacity to equip their children with skills associated with relational wellbeing

According to the participants in this study, most adults involved with children in the school contexts represented in this study, had limited abilities to promote the relational wellbeing of the children and to develop and maintain healthy relationships in the school environment.

5.2.5 Conflict between role-players in these contexts might restrain the promotion of relational wellbeing

There was ample unresolved conflict between all role-players in the school communities. The participants indicated that, in addition to the conflict remaining unresolved in certain instances, the conflict seemed to be on-going and even escalated in some cases.

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They indicated that there was conflict between teachers and learners, conflict between staff members, as well as conflict between teachers and parents. The conflict between teachers and learners related mostly to learners' misbehaving, conflict between staff members related to a lack of support between colleagues, as well as a tendency of staff members to compete in their learners' academic subject achievement, and the conflict between teachers and parents related to teachers experiencing a lack of involvement in their children's general wellbeing at school and parents' lack of interest in developing meaningful relationships with teachers and children alike. The teachers experienced these situations as lost opportunities, during which they could have focused on establishing and promoting meaningful relationships with the learners (Theme 3).

Viewed from an ecological perspective, the barriers to relational wellbeing were present on various levels of the eco-system, and should therefore be addressed by professionals who work with individuals. Relational wellbeing should rather be addressed from an ecological systems perspective if we intended to overcome the barriers to relational wellbeing. Evidently there were problems within the school as a micro-system that needed attention. However, the research in this study also clearly indicated that barriers were also evident in the mesosystem as the system where the school and the home connect.

Furthermore, policies and the implementation of these policies, although not specifically mentioned by participants, were implicitly indicated as creating barriers to the promotion of relational wellbeing through the lack of implementation on the one hand, and on the other hand through the emphasis that was placed on academic work.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations will be made with reference to ways to address the barriers to relational wellbeing in practice as well as ways to enhance future research.

5.3.1 Recommendations for practice.

➤ *Finding time to connect.*

Schools should revisit their time schedules and make time available for the interactions between the role-players in the school communities that would contribute to the relational wellbeing in these contexts. They should not take relationships for granted but be consciously aware of the role that everyday interactions play in this regard. The excuse that there is no time should be challenged, as we often found that learners were roaming the streets during exam times. A more proactive approach needed to be implemented with the aim of identifying times that could be utilised for this purpose

Concurrently, the expectations by the Department of General Education with regards to the heavy workload experienced by teachers, should be addressed since teachers experienced a severe lack of time to complete basic tasks as expected by the department and, as a result, the time to connect and care was limited. Teachers' experiences and perceptions should form part of the process of the development of curricula and Quality Management Systems. Teachers should also have access to channels of reporting and giving feedback to the policy makers in order to have a continual, contextual, and problem-specific approach to the development of policies to enhance the functioning and coping systems in place.

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➤ *Sharpen teachers' skills to facilitate relational wellbeing.*

As indicated, some teachers did not have the capacity to develop healthy relationships with learners. Higher education institutions should be challenged to reconsider their curricula and DoE should incorporate these skills in their training schedules instead of merely focussing on academic skills development

➤ *Consider pro-active parent training at schools.*

In view of the concern raised about the way in which parents across the socio-economic spectrum failed to equip their children, the question was whether schools should not consider what Epstein referred to as Type 1 involvement, by actively engaging in training of parents.

➤ *Actively attend to the resolution of conflict in schools.*

Schools should attend to the types and contexts of the conflict situations which occurred in their environments. Policies for dealing with conflict should be in place in order to create procedures which could assist all role-players involved in identifying, addressing, and resolving conflict situations. In addition to policies and procedures being in place in order to effectively and actively address conflict within the schools, all role-players should be granted the opportunity to give their inputs with regards to the development of such procedures.

5.3.2 Recommendations for future research.

A longitudinal study conducted in the specific contexts to explore the barriers related to the promotion of relational wellbeing in school communities is recommended to obtain a deeper understanding of the way in which the barriers influence the relational dynamics in the

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particular contexts. This would enable the researcher to develop a more accurate strategy to address the perceived barriers that were identified in this study.

- The voice of other role-players, such as parents, learners and other significant role-players within the schooling environment should be included in a follow-up studies to establish alternative perspectives on the phenomenon of children's relational wellbeing.
- Research on the restraints regarding the implementation of policies that support the facilitation of children's relational wellbeing is also necessary to ensure that relational wellbeing is sufficiently attended to in these school communities.
- More attention should be focused on the training of teachers at pre-graduate level. Teachers should be equipped with basic skills in understanding the emotional needs of children at different developmental levels and not only focus on the cognitive development related to education.

5.4 LIMITATIONS

The participant sample in this study was limited due to the fact that the participants had to be postgraduate students with a particular research focus. Although limited, the sample was heterogeneous in nature and might therefore be applied to various contexts. Furthermore, the participants had adequate exposure and experience in school communities, and could therefore contribute valuable information on the barriers relating to the promotion of relational wellbeing in school communities,

- A more long-term involvement with the participants and site-visits would have provided a more adequate understanding of their contexts and the barriers to the promotion of children's relational wellbeing in these contexts. However, due to the fact that the participants lived and worked in four provinces, as well as Botswana and Namibia, such involvement was not possible. To address this challenge, the World Café

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event was selected as a method to ensure that participants spent sufficient time together to gather rich data.

- Another limitation was the absence of the voices of parents and children in the study. The omission of their voices was not intentionally exclusive. The researcher particularly wanted to listen to the voices of participants who were informed about the notion of relational wellbeing to establish a basis for further research in this regard. The researcher, however, acknowledges the importance of investigating the inputs and contributions of all significant role-players such as learners, parents, and those in management positions in schools and the Department of Education.

5.5 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

Information and knowledge regarding the barriers to relational wellbeing is pivotal in improving relationships, addressing behavioural issues and role-player conflict in school environments. Research on the actual barriers to the promotion of relational wellbeing in schools is scarce. The contribution of this study was to facilitate an initial awareness on some of the barriers that existed with regard to the promotion of relational wellbeing in school communities.

A final word

This study aimed to contribute to the overall enhancement of relational wellbeing as a way to mediate holistic wellbeing in school communities in South Africa to ensure that schools become enabling environments in which all people can experience quality engagement and a sense of belonging.

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ADDENDUM A



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23 April 2013

Beste Deelnemer

INGELIGTE TOESTEMMING – Persepsies van verhoudingswelstand in 'n opvoedkundige konteks

U word hiermee versoek om deel te neem aan 'n navorsingsprojek wat poog om persepsies van volwassenes oor verhoudingswelstand in 'n opvoedkundige konteks te ondersoek. Deelnemers sal versoek word om deel te vorm van 'n interaktiewe gesprek waar elkeen die geleentheid sal kry om hul standpunt te bespreek in 'n groep.

Deelnemers sal ongeveer 3 ure by die navorsing betrokke wees en daar word nie enige voorsienbare risiko's verwag nie. Indien deelnemers ontlonting benodig na afloop van die navorsingsprojek, is sielkundiges beskikbaar vir die doel. Etiese goedkeuring is verkry vir die navorsingsprojek wat geloods word deur AUTHER (African Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research) van die Noordwes-Universiteit se Potchefstroom kampus. U word versoek om uself te vergewis van die onderstaande inhoud voordat u die vorm onderteken.

In die ondertekening hiervan verklaar ek dat:

Ek ingelig is dat die navorsing ten doel staan om verhoudingswelstand in 'n opvoedkundige konteks te ondersoek. My deelname sal behels dat deel te vorm van 'n interaktiewe gesprek waar elkeen die geleentheid sal kry om hul standpunt te bespreek in 'n groep.

Ek verstaan dat daar geen voorsienbare risiko's of ongemaklikhede is wanneer ek instem om deel te neem aan die studie nie. Ek verstaan dat die resultate van die studie gepubliseer mag word, maar dat my naam of enige identifiserende besonderhede nie geopenbaar sal word nie. Die Noordwes-Universiteit sal konfidensialiteit handhaaf van alle rekords, materiaal en opnames.

Ek is daarvan ingelig dat ek nie vergoed sal word vir my deelname nie. Ek is ingelig dat enige vrae wat ek aangaande die navorsing of my deelname voor of na toestemming mag hê, beantwoord sal word deur die navorsers van hierdie studie. Ek verstaan dat ek my toestemming kan terugtrek en dat ek my deelname ter enige tyd kan beëindig, sonder enige boete of verlies van voordeel aan myself. In die ondertekening van hierdie toestemmingsvorm, laat vaar ek enige wettige eise, regte en regsstellings.

Handtekening van deelnemer

Datum

ADDENDUM B: SCHEDULE FOR SKYPE INTERVIEWS

The Semi Structured Skype interviews were conducted in order to crystallize the information gathered in the World Cafe Process.

The themes were not named during the Skype interviews, however open ended questions were asked in line with the themes.

The Skype interviews were conducted in the participant's home language in order to be sure that the participant could express themselves adequately in order to capture the full meaning of their explanations. The quotes gathered during the Skype interviews were translated into English.

Each Skype interview lasts approximately 40 – 45 Minutes in order to give the participant ample opportunity to express themselves clearly.

An example of the questions used during the Skype interviews, follows:

THEME 1: A problem-focused approach towards the promotion of relational well-being

- How would you describe the current approach to the promotion of relational wellbeing?
- What is the focus of this current approach?
- What do you perceive as the reason for the focus of this current approach?
- How does this current approach influence the promotion of relational wellbeing in schools?

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ADDENDUM C: CODING EXAMPLE

so ek sien baie goed wat onderwysers nie weet nie
hulle deel goed wat hulle nie in 'n klas sal se nie, maar wat hulle harte seer maak verstaan.
 Ek is by die gr 1's, so ek is tussen die onderwysers en die kinders
 daar is goeie en slegte verhoudings tussen die onderwysers
 Ek is by die grondslagfase en daar is vir my 'n baie goeie verhouding
 Baie ondersteunend almal help mekaar almal maak seker jy is op die regte (pad) daars vir my 'n
halwe vangnet verhouding waar almal werk saam.
 Tussen die onderwysers is daar goeie verhoudings
 Dis 'n beter band wat jy met die kinders het en jy ken hulle beter. (Grondslagfase)
 Nog 'n baie afhanklike verhouding en is baie afhanklik van die onderwysers af in Gr 1
 As ek nou vat het ek nie baie kinders in my klas nie. En om vir elke kind daai verhouding te gee
 elke dag die hele dag is nogal bietjie moeilik, so jy moet maar die kinder anders benader.
 Die wat maklik verhouding bou en die wat soveel werk vat
 Ja, nou dat jy so praat. Omdat ek met die hele skool betrokke is, ek sien van Gr tot Gr 7, kan ek
 dieselfde se oor die grondslag fase. Vir 1 of ander rede het die junior personeel 'n baie sterker
 band of hulle o/steun mekaar baie beter as die senior fase.
 In die senior fase voel dit vir my ek 1 is op sy eie en daar is baie wywing. Dis nou in my skool.
 Daar is baie wywing tussen die o/wysers en die o/wysers en die kinders.
 Ek dink dis omdat hulle wissel. Jy het nie meer die kinders die hele dag in jou klas nie. (?)
 ja dit voel vir my by die juniors elkeen hets y plek en almal is fine daarmee en niemand baklei vir
 sy plek nie, maar by die seniors is dit vuur op vuur.
 Ek dink baie keer is dit oor die resultate by die senior fase soveel meer belangrik is. Dit is half 'n
kompetisie ipv mekaar o/steun. Wie se klas doen die beste wie het die hoogste punte. (?)
 In die grondslag fase is dit almal op 'n vlak kry om aan te gaan, so almal werk saam en hulle
 beweeg saam vorentoe.
 Ek wonder of dit dalk te doen kan he met die verskillende vakke wat die juffrou aanbied, want

Comment [N1]: Kennis ontbreek om verhoudinge te bevorder

Comment [N2]: In seker fases groter klem op die bevordering van verhoudinge

Markup Area

Comment [N3]: Wywing tussen onderwysers

Comment [N4]: Senior fases meer dru kompetisie

sy plek nie, maar by die seniors is dit vuur op vuur.
 Ek dink baie keer is dit oor die resultate by die senior fase soveel meer belangrik is. Dit is half 'n
kompetisie ipv mekaar o/steun. Wie se klas doen die beste wie het die hoogste punte. (?)
 In die grondslag fase is dit almal op 'n vlak kry om aan te gaan, so almal werk saam en hulle
 beweeg saam vorentoe.
 Ek wonder of dit dalk te doen kan he met die verskillende vakke wat die juffrou aanbied, want
 elke juffrou het moes haar eie vak wat sy dan aanbied, so haar doel is net haar vak. So dit gaan nie
 meer oor die kind se spectrum nie, maar net oor my vak
 Doen jy goed in my vak? Is my kinders beter as die ander dat daar nie meer 'n algehele doel nie.
 Dit is eintlik so sleg want dit het te doen met verhoudings
 En daar waar die kind 'n doel het en almal mekaar ondersteun is die verhoudings fine, lekker en
gemaklik
 Maar waar almal teen mekaar werk en elkeen vir himself is verhoudings glad nie goed nie
 Ons het nou 'n oulike ding wat my skool doen, ek moet se ek het nie so seer die katterigheid van
 die senior fase gesien nie, maar hulle het nou 1keer 'n week 'n learner support meeting. Kom
 ons se dis nou byvoorbeeld gr 7's. in die personeelkamer nou sit ons almal daar. Dan praat nie
 o/wysers nou oor die kind, maar soos oor uitvalle en so, nou nie oor elke liewe kind nie. Maar dis
 dan waar hulle hul link maak sodat almal ingelig is. Nie oor al die kinders nie, maar oor die
outjies met wie hulle sukkel. Dis 'n goeie prinsiep. Dis waar jy die link vorm en o/wysers kan
 hande vat.
 Dink jy dit is positief vir die kind? Dit is definitief al twee kante toe. Dit hang af die gesindheid.
 Ek mag nie oor konfidensialiteit die detail van die saak vir die personeel vertel nie, dan kry jy die
 personeel vir wie jy die situasie vertel, oppervlakkig, wat nooit 'n probleem gehad het met die
 kind nie, maar dan target hulle hom nou sommer in die klas
 Maar aan die ander kant ondervind die o/wyser dalk 'n probleem met die kind in die klas en die
 kind werk nie saam nie en hulk an net nie verstaan wat aangaan nie, maar sodra hulle weet die
 kind se ouers gaan dalk deur egskeiding, dan is dit bietjie beter in die klas vir almal.
 Dit is nog 'n ding wat die personeelkamer ding so lekker maak, want dank an die grondslagfase
juffrou se hoor hier maar toe hy gr 2 was het dit en dit gebeur en hulle maak daai links en dit
 gebeur want vir 'n o/wyser is daar nie tyd nie

Comment [N4]: Senior fases meer dru kompetisie

Comment [N5]: Opeelgerig en ondersteuning daar is verhoudinge goed

Markup Area

Comment [N6]: Gesprekke oor wyses waarop kinders ondersteun kan word belangrik om verhoudingswêreld te bevorder - anders as personeelkamer gesprekke waar ...

Comment [N7]: Kind getarget word

EXPLORING BARRIERS TO RELATIONAL WELLBEING

ADDENDUM D: EXAMPLE OF WORLD CAFE TRANSCRIPT

Goed, uhm, relational wellbeing in schools. Dink julle dit is hoe dit huidiglik nou lyk of oor hoe dit moet lyk? Seke hoe dit nou lyk dat mens dit kan verbeter.

Wat alles gaan verhoudinge beïnvloed. Die kinders se verhoudings. Hulle relational wellbeing.

Ek is 'n o/wyseres, ek ook. Ek is ook 'n o/wyseres, maar hou nie tegnies skool nie ek het 'n ander program aangeel skool.

Ek werk privaat. Goed, dan moet julle maar begin en van julle eie skole praat.... Wel, in die skool waar ek is doen berading..so ek sien baie goed wat o/wysers nie weet nie.. hulle deel goed wat hulle nie in 'n klas sal se nie, maar harte seer maak verstaan. Verhoudings..ek kort net 'n paar minute om te dink

In die skool waar ek nou is. Ek is by die gr 1's, so ek is tussen die o.wysers en die kinders. As ek kyk na..daar is goeie slegte verhoudings tussen die o/wysers. Ek is by die grondslagfase en daar is vir my 'n baie goeie verhouding. Baie ondersteunend almal help mekaar almal maak seker jy is op die regte daars vir my 'n halwe vangnet verhouding v werk saam. Tussen die o/wysers is daar goeie verhoudings, en dis hoekom vir my die sisteem so goed werk as ek kinders vat, is dit kleintjies so dis heeldag by jou. Dis 'n beter band wat jy met die kinders het en jy ken hulle beter baie afhanklike verhouding en is baie afhanklik van die o/wysers af in Gr 1. As ek nou vat het ek nie baie kinders in nie. En om vir elke kind daai verhouding te gee elke dag die hele dag is nogal bietjie moeilik, so jy moet maar die kinders benader. Die wat maklik verhouding bou en die wat soveel werk vat. Ja, nou dat jy so praat. Omdat ek me skool betrokke is, ek sien van Gr tot Gr 7, kan ek dieselfde se oor die grondslag fase. Vir 1 of ander rede het die juffrou personeel 'n baie sterker band of hulle o/steun mekaar baie beter as die senior fase. In die senior fase voel dit vir is op sy eie en daar is baie wrywing. Dis nou in my skool. Daar is baie wrywing tussen die o/wysers en die o/wysers kinders. Op watter ouderdom of graad dink jy begin dit. Gr 4. Interessant, wat dink jy is dit wat dit veroorsaak? Dit oor die feit dat hulle an begin toetse skryf, bietjie akademies meer van hulle verwag word? Ek dink dis omdat hulle Jy het nie meer die kinders die hele dag in jou klas nie. Dis ook waar ja. Buiten dit die o/wysers en die kind, is dit die o/wysers met mekaar. Ek weet nie of dit by julle ook so is nie.. ja dit voel vir my by die juniors elkeen hets y plek e fine daarmee en niemand baklei vir sy plek nie, maar by die seniors is dit vuur op vuur. Ek dink baie keer is dit oor resultate by die senior fase soveel meer belangrik is. Dit is half 'n kompetisie ipv mekaar o/steun. Wie se klas doer beste, wie het die hoogste punte. In die grondslag fase is dit almal op 'n vlak kry om aan te gaan, so almal werk saam hulle beweeg saam vorentoe. Ek wonder of dit dalk te doen kan he met die verskillende vakke wat die juffrou aan want elke juffrou het mos haar eie vak wat sy dan aanbied, so haar doel is net haar vak. So dit gaan nie meer oor e spectrum nie, maar net oor my vak. Doen jy goed in my vak. Is my kinders beter as die ander dat daar nie meer 'n doel nie. Dit is eintlik so sleg want dit het te doen met verhoudings. En daar waar die kind 'n doel het en amal met ondersteun is die verhoudings fine, lekker en gemaklik. Maar waar almal teen mekaar werk en elkeen vir hiesel verhoudings glad nie goed nie. Ons het nou 'n oulike ding wat my skool doen, ek moet se ek het nie so seer die katterigheid van die senior fase gesien nie, maar hulle het nou 1keer 'n week 'n learner support meeting. Kom ons nou byvoorbeeld gr 7's. in die personeelkamer nou sit ons almal daar. Dan praat nie o/wysers nou oor die kind, maar oor uitvalle en so, nou nie oor elke liewe kind nie. Maar dis dan waar hulle hul link maak sodat almal ingelig is. Nie die kinders nie, maar oor die outjies met wie hulle sukkel. Dis 'n goeie prinsiep. Dis waar jy die link vorm en o/wysers hande vat. Dink jy dit is positief vir die kind? Dit is definitief altwee kante toe. Dit hang af die gesindheid. Kyk as ek dit het. Ek mag nie oor konfidensialiteit die detail van die saak vir die personeel vertel nie, dan kry jy die personeel vir die situasie vertel, oppervlakkig, wat nooit 'n probleem gehad het met die kind nie, maar dan target hulle hom nou in die klas. Maar aan die ander kant ondervind die o/wyser dalk 'n probleem met die kind in die klas en die kind wat saam nie en hulk an net nie verstaan wat aangaan nie, maar sodra hulle weet die kind se ouers gaan dalk deur egs dan is dit bietjie beter in die klas vir almal. Dit is nog 'n ding wat die personeelkamer ding so lekker maak, want die grondslagfase juffrou se hoor hier maar toe hy gr 2 was het dit en dit gebeur en hulle maak daai links en dit spaar vir 'n o/wyser is daar nie tyd nie. So 'n skool wat 'n berader het kan dan so daai kinders help want as dit uit kan kom almal die kind beter verstaan. Want dank an die onderwyser se maar sy het met dit gesukkel in Gr 1 en dit maak die kind makliker om toegang tot 'n beter verhouding te he. Ja, ons skool verwys baie. Dis vir my bietjie sleg dat daar die uitvalle is, net die uitvalle wat aandag kry eintlik. Waar daar ander verhoudings is ook, dat dit op so punt kom om die kind te kan praat wat die spies so ver gooi, maar daar is nie geleentheid om al die kinders van 'n kant aft e vat

EXPLORING BARRIERS TO RELATIONAL WELLBEING

ADDENDUM E – EXTRACT FROM PRELIMINARY THEMATIC

DATA SNIT	KODES TOEGEKEN	BL NR	TEMA
..so ek sien baie goed wat onderwysers nie weet nie	Onderwysers oningelig	1	A Posisie van onderwyses itv kinders se verhoudingswelstand
hulle deel goed wat hulle nie in 'n klas sal se nie, maar wat hulle harte seer maak verstaan.	Kinders deel nie altyd alles met onderwysers nie	1	B Posisie van kinders
Ek is by die gr 1's, so ek is tussen die onderwysers en die kinders	X	1	
daar is goeie en slegte verhoudings tussen die onderwysers	Pos/Neg Verhoudingsdinamika tussen onderwysers	1	C Verhouding kinders/ onderwysers
Ek is by die grondslagfase en daar is vir my 'n baie goeie verhouding	Grondslagfase goeie verhoudinge	1	D Redes vir goeie verhoudinge
Baie ondersteunend almal help mekaar almal maak seker jy is op die regte (pad) daars vir my 'n halwe vangnet verhouding waar almal werk saam.	Ondersteuning van mekaar	1	E Verhoudinge tussen onderwysers
Tussen die onderwysers is daar goeie verhoudings		1	E Verhoudings tussen onderwysers
Dis 'n beter band wat jy met die kinders het en jy ken hulle beter. (Grondslagfase)	Meer nabye kontak tussen grondslagfase onderwysers en kind bevorder beter verhouding tussen kind en onderwyser	1	C verhouding onderwysers / kinders
Nog 'n baie afhanklike verhouding en is baie afhanklik van die onderwysers af in Gr 1	Afhanklike verhouding tussen grondslagfase kind en onderwyser	1	D redes vir goeie verhoudings
As ek nou vat het ek nie baie kinders in my klas nie. En om vir elke kind daai verhouding te gee elke dag die hele dag is nogal bietjie moeilik, so jy moet maar die kinder anders benader.	Uitdaging vir onderwysers om kwaliteit verhoudingstyd met kinders te he	1	D Redes vir goeie verhoudings
Die wat maklik verhouding bou en die wat soveel werk vat		1	
Ja, nou dat jy so praat. Omdat ek met die hele skool betrokke is, ek sien van Gr tot Gr 7, kan ek dieselfde se oor die grondslag fase. Vir 1 of ander rede het die junior personeel 'n baie sterker band of hulle o/steun mekaar baie beter as die senior fase.	Junior fase onderwysers het sterker band tussen mekaar as Senior fase onderwysers	1	

EXPLORING BARRIERS TO RELATIONAL WELLBEING

ADDENDUM: F – GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPT OF RELATIONAL WELLBEING



ADDENDUM G: EXAMPLE OF PARTICIPANTS PERCEPTION OF CURRENT SITUATION OF RELATIONAL WELLBEING IN SCHOOLS

