

Guidelines to improve teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools

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DECLARATION

I the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K. R. J.' or similar, written in a cursive style.

Signature

12 January 2022

Date

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I would first like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Annelize Kay and brother, Louis Kay. They have assisted me through these four years and supported me in everything I do. They provided me with the opportunities to continue my studies. Most of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Illasha Kok and my co-supervisor, Dr Marinda Neethling, I have learned so much from you, the new perspectives and fruitful knowledge you have exposed me to, I will forever be grateful. A big thank you to my language editor, Dr Chidochashe Nyere.

Finally, thank you to the co-researchers who gave their time to be part of the study. Their knowledge and contribution made it possible for this study to be completed, and most of all being an example to other teachers in portraying their role in the care and support to learners with internalised mental health needs.

ABSTRACT

To date, there remains a scarcity on research in South Africa about internalised mental health needs of learners in secondary schools. Mental health amongst secondary school learners has become a great concern in South Africa and figures indicated that there are 20 attempts by young South Africans for every suicide amongst adults. There are indications that one in five children suffer from some form of mental health condition and depression is common among learners (15-19 years). Internalised mental health needs include depression, anxiety, shyness, social withdrawal, sadness, suicidal ideation, sleep problems or fear and difficulty with social assertion demands and if left untreated, these mental health issues could progress into mental health challenges with numeral negative consequences.

The primary objective of this study was to develop guidelines to improve teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools. To attain this objective, three sub-research questions guided the study: *What are teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners? What are teachers' perceptions regarding the role of secondary school teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of learners?* and *What operational guidelines can teachers collaboratively develop for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health issues?* A PAR design within a critical transformative paradigm was used in this study. The research took place in the Gauteng North District in South Africa and the sample consist of six teachers from two urban secondary schools who acted as co-researchers. Data was generated using Photovoice, visual art-based collages and online electronic applications. Results and findings of this study offers perspectives of teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs and of the role of secondary school teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of learners. Finally, the study concludes with operational guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs.

Keywords: Mental health, internalised mental health, mental health promotion, care and support, adolescents, secondary school.

OPSOMMING

Tot vandag, is daar 'n skaarste aangaande navorsing in Suid-Afrika oor geïnternaliseerde geestesgesondheidsbehoefte van leerders in sekondêre skole. Geestesgesondheid onder sekondêre skoolleerders het 'n groot kommer in Suid-Afrika geword en syfers het aangedui dat daar 20 pogings deur jong Suid-Afrikaners vir elke selfmoord onder volwassenes is. Daar is aanduidings dat een uit elke vyf kinders aan een of ander vorm van 'n geestesgesondheidstoestand ly en depressie is algemeen onder leerders (15-19 jaar). Geïnternaliseerde geestesgesondheidsbehoefte sluit depressie, angs, skaamheid, sosiale onttrekking, hartseer, selfmoordgedagtes, slaapprobleme of vrees en probleme met sosiale beweringseise, in. Hierdie geestesgesondheidsbehoefte kan tot geestesgesondheidsuitdagings met talle negatiewe gevolge vorder.

Die primêre doelwit van hierdie studie was om riglyne te ontwikkel om die begrip van geïnternaliseerde geestesgesondheidsbehoefte onder onderwysers te verbeter. Om hierdie doelwit te bereik, het drie sub-navorsingsvrae die studie gelei: *Wat is onderwysers se begrip van geïnternaliseerde geestesgesondheidsbehoefte van leerders? Wat is onderwysers se persepsies oor die rol van sekondêre skoolonderwysers in die aanspreek van geïnternaliseerde geestesgesondheidsbehoefte van leerders?* en Watter operasionele riglyne vir die versorging en ondersteuning van leerders met geïnternaliseerde geestesgesondheidsbehoefte te ontwikkel. 'n Deelnemende aksienavorsingsmetode binne 'n kritiese transformatiewe paradigma is tydens hierdie studie gebruik. Die navorsing het in die Gauteng-Noord-distrik in Suid-Afrika plaasgevind en die deelnemers bestaan uit ses onderwysers van twee stedelike sekondêre skole wat as mede-navorsers opgetree het. Data is gegenereer deur gebruik te maak van Photovoice, visuele kuns-gebaseerde collages en aanlyn elektroniese toepassings. Resultate en bevindinge van hierdie studie bied die perspektief van die *begrip van onderwysers van geïnternaliseerde geestesgesondheid en van die rol van sekondêre skoolonderwysers in die aanspreek van geïnternaliseerde geestesgesondheidsbehoefte van leerders*. Laastens word die studie afgesluit met operasionele riglyne vir die versorging en ondersteuning van leerders met geïnternaliseerde geestesgesondheidsbehoefte.

Sleutelwoorde: Geestesgesondheid, geïnternaliseerde geestesgesondheid, bevordering van geestesgesondheid, sorg en ondersteuning, adolessente, sekondêre skoolonderwys.

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION

1.1 Introduction

Adolescence is a critical stage for developing social, emotional, and physical habits that is important for mental health. Teachers can promote positive mental health within adolescent by building self-confidence and self-esteem. It is essential that learners are taught about the importance of mental health, regarding the indicators of mental health problems, and seek out assistance for any mental health needs.

My experience as a Grade 11 teacher, with a learner support background teaching at an urban secondary school in Gauteng, made me realise that learners at the secondary school level are experiencing many care and support needs about internalising mental health needs such as fear, depression, anxiety, and hopelessness. I came to the realisation that, to understand the internalised mental health needs of these learners, I would need to explore teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs as well as determine teachers' perceptions regarding the role of secondary school teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of learners to be able to develop operational guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs.

In Chapter one, I present the orientation to this research study. I introduce the research problem and motivation as I elaborate on the theoretical frameworks (Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009) that guided this study and provide a summary of the operational concepts used. Next, I formulated the research questions and provided an outline of the methodology, study design and techniques used for data generation and analysis (Gale et al., 2013). A comprehensive discussion of trustworthiness of the data and ethical considerations that this study is grounded on is then followed. The value of this research study is provided before I conclude the chapter by giving an outline of the chapters.

1.2 Problem statement and motivation

Internalised mental health amongst secondary school learners (adolescents) became a big concern in South African schools, because of the increase in mental health needs, with figures indicating that there are 20 attempts by young South Africans for every suicide amongst adults (SADAG, n.d.). González-García et al (2017) reported that "one in five children suffer from some

form of mental health condition, and depression is common among adolescents (15-19 years)"(p. 100).

Internalised mental health amongst adolescents is progressively acknowledged as a crucial health issue in South Africa (WHO, 2001). A situational analysis by Mokitimi et al (2018, p.36) revealed that South Africa has a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Policy (Sankoh et al., 2018), and mental health policy guidelines (Pilgrim, 2019). The successful implementation of the above-mentioned policies depends on the crucial factors like resource availabilities, effective coordination, adequate referral, and follow-up of identified learners, continuous capacity building, prioritisation, collaboration with essential role-players at national, provincial and district levels (Pilgrim, 2019). Mokitimi et al (2018) explain that research findings in South Africa indicate that adolescent mental health are neglected even at policy level despite the well-documented problem of internalised mental health needs in schools.

Currie (2020) explains that most internalised mental health needs "initially manifest before adulthood, with noticeable increases during adolescence" (p.452). Internalised mental health needs of adolescents can include wide-ranging emotional and behavioural issues, if such mental health needs persist without any mediation, they tend to impede the adolescent's individual functioning and possibly will necessitate professional intervention (Barry et al., 2019). According to Glenn et al (2020), "South Africa's suicide rates are among the highest in the world, and our teenagers are particularly at risk" (Kim & Leventhal, 2008, p.133). It was reported by Chernick (News24-2015) that a fourteen-year-old jumped to her death from Northgate Mall in what is believed to have been a suicide, while a sixteen-year-old boy's body was found hanging from a tree at St Stithians College in Bryanston. The above-mentioned articles indicate that learners have anxiety and stress from a young age, and it can hold more danger in their adolescent years. TimesLIVE (2018) reported that a matriculant in Schoemansdal had committed suicide early on the morning he received an SMS stating that he had failed his national senior certificate. There are also reports about the increase in adolescent depression and distress in schools (Pate et al., 2017). In South Africa it is noticeable that there is an increase in recognition that mental health is a critical health problem (Atkins et al., 2017). Internalised mental health is not given the full priority that it deserves in South African secondary schools, due to a lack of information regarding internalised mental health needs given to educators, parents, and the community itself (Atkins et al., 2017). Due to this high prevalence of internalised mental health needs in adolescence, I decided to study the internalised mental health needs in urban secondary schools.

Adolescence is labelled as a "transitional phase of development during which learners experience several changes, including physiological, cognitive, and socio-emotional determining factors"

(Patton et al., 2018, p.458). Physiological changes that can be associated with internalised mental health factors during puberty are sudden and rapid, very different for girls than for boys and characteristically make adolescents uncomfortable in their bodies (Patalay & Fitzsimons, 2018). The development of cognitive functions associated with social and emotional actions constitute another critical period for adolescents, what they think of themselves and peers around them. “They experience significant speed and intellectual functioning, with most dramatic advances in abstract thinking, decision making, response inhibitions and planning” (Bidzan-Bluma & Lipowska, 2018, p. 800), all leading to more differentiated and multidimensional thoughts about their internal feelings and react differently in different situations. Bluth et al (2018) contends that adolescence is a stage where children start to flourish however, internalised mental health needs often start to develop during this phase

Adolescents spend a major part of their day in school or pursuing school-related activities. In South Africa, secondary school education is one of the few fields in the society in which most children participate in for a minimum requirement of two years (Kim et al., 2020). Although the main aim of schooling is to teach and train learners in academic knowledge, adolescents are affected on both mental and physical levels (Ringdal et al., 2020). Education can be viewed as essential to the development of adolescents’ character and their mental health (Schurer, 2017). Because adolescents inherently interpret the results of their actions “their choices, behaviours, and competencies, can typically be better predicted by the beliefs they hold about their accomplishments in education than by what they are capable of accomplishing” (Duell et al., 2018, p. 1052). Campos (2018) posits that “the school is thus a logical arena for mental health promotion” (p. 1426). It is suggested that wide-ranging approaches can be practised to prevent, detect, or treat internalised mental health of learners in secondary schools (Sharma & Branscum, 2020). Schools are expected to provide social and personal support and not only to adolescents (Lipsitz, 2019). Because this is the case, schools are environments offering support for learners (adolescence) internalised mental health. Besides fostering cognitive development of the learner, it is the responsibility of the school to encourage psycho-social development of learners but to also attend to socio-emotional problems that might affect school dropouts (Allen & Kern, 2017). Sonesson (2020) revealed that teachers “have long noted that the unmet internalised mental health needs of children overwhelm the resources of schools” (p.581). Persson et al (2017) propose that the opinions and viewpoints of teachers are imperative when internalised mental health needs of adolescents are debated.

Internalised mental health needs of adolescents can be categorised into internalised and externalised needs (van Genugten et al., 2017, p.53), with the former including needs that are “directed inwards and are indicative of the adolescent’s emotional and psychological state” and

the latter is “displayed outwardly and are reflected by behaviour towards the physical environment” (Livazović, 2017, p.186). Externalised mental health needs are therefore acted out behaviours that include, hyperactivity, irritability, impulsivity, physical and verbal aggression, anger, and defiance (Bruffaerts et al., 2018). Internalised mental health needs include “depression, anxiety, shyness, social withdrawal, sadness, suicidal ideation, sleep problems or fear and difficulty with social assertion demands” (Bruffaerts, et al., 2018, p.99). Vidourek and Burbage (2019) explain that if left untreated, both types of mental health needs could progress into mental health disorders leading to numeral negative consequences. It can be concluded that internalised mental health needs of adolescents must be addressed, and educational strategies must be put in place in schools. For the current study, the focus will be only on the internalised mental health needs of adolescents in urban secondary schools.

1.3 Theoretical frameworks that guide the study

The researcher espouses that no single theory can effectively clarify adolescents’ mental health issues and that a blend of two theoretical lenses can offer a wider expounding foundation. The two theories that will guide this research study are the bio-ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and the critical transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1997) that will be discussed in the following.

1.3.1 Bio-ecological theory

The bio-ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) will be included as a supporting framework in understanding the relationships between various positive psychology concepts and internalised mental health. Modern ideas of the bio-ecological theory of human development focus on the interrelationship between the person, the process, and the environment (Richardson, 2019). Eriksson et al (2018, p.414) assert that the “interaction between others and the child (process) and the multiple interactions between the child and the environment (context) are emphasised as vital in the development of a child”. Bronfenbrenner’s theory (Rudasill et al., 2018) will be used to study how the adolescents’ internalised mental health needs are determined by mutual influences within the individual and the ecological systems surrounding the adolescent including the interactions between and within the ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

1.3.2 Critical transformative learning theory

Fleming (2018) refers to the critical transformative learning theory as a practice of realising adjustment in a set frame of an individual’s position. The critical transformative learning theory clarifies how learners can renew or transform the manner that the learners understand their

environment (Taylor, 2017). This critical transformative learning theory is “grounded in human interaction and communication where learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience to guide into future action” (Taylor, 2018, p.301).

During this study, I engaged the critical transformative learning theory for the teachers that contributed practically and through their thoughts, feelings, and actions of the title – learners internalised mental health needs. Through consciousness-raising of the learners’ internalised mental health needs, the teachers came to see the world and their place and responsibilities in it differently (Jemal, 2017). To the contrary of this consciousness-raising, the teachers were empowered in their new perspectives, thus could act to transform their new perspectives on internalised mental health needs.

In summary, I aimed to promote the teachers’ understanding of the internalised mental health needs of learners against the above-mentioned theories. The bio-ecological theory is the first theory to embed the environment in which adolescents live by biological predispositions (Rudasill et al., 2018). Based on the various systems of the systems theory, it is deduced that human development moves beyond the child’s biology. Thus, it can be concluded that the adolescent’s development is not only shaped by the immediate context but also by various interactions connected to the larger environment.

1.4 Clarification of key concepts

The key concepts related to this study are briefly clarified within the context of the research study.

1.4.1 Adolescence

Adolescence is a stage of life, stretching between childhood and adulthood, its definition has long posed a difficulty (Sawyer et al., 2018). Historically, this phase of life spans from 12 to 18 years (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2020), which signifies the period the adolescent spends in high school in the South African context. Adolescence frequently co-occurs with the biological phenomenon called puberty, a pattern of events that are identified by increases in gonadal and adrenal hormones, suggesting that adolescence may be a sensitive period for development and mental health problems (internalised and/or externalised problems) are likely to be present (Stacey & Lozano, 2019). These changes occur against the background of developmental changes that are influenced by external environment elements as well as internal elements that provoke and strengthen behaviours. An emotional caring and supportive setting provides adolescents with ample developmental opportunities (Osher et al., 2020). Adolescence offers growth opportunities, not only in physical dimensions but also in cognitive and social competence, autonomy, self-

esteem, and intimacy (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019). Adolescence is associated with a “period of increased risk-taking behaviours as well as increased emotional sensitivity” (Sawyer et al., 2018, p.223).

1.4.2 Mental health

Health is a multifaceted concept with mental health as a fundamental component (Bjørnsen et al., 2019). The World Health Organisation constitution states: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (Kühn & Rieger, 2017, p.887). The above definition is at means that mental health is more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities. According to Golightley and Goemans (2020) mental health is primary to our collective and personal ability as individuals think, emote, interact with each other, earn a living, and enjoy life. The promotion and repairing of mental health, can be regarded as an important concern of individuals, communities, and societies throughout the world. Mental health for each person is affected by individual factors and experiences, social interaction, societal structures and resources, and cultural values (Bratman et al., 2019). Mental health is influenced by experiences in everyday life, in families and schools, on the streets, and at work.

1.4.3 Internalised mental health needs

It is a common way in which to scrutinise mental health needs that occur between childhood and adulthood is to separate internalised and externalised needs. “Internalised mental health needs are to a great extent related to problems mainly developed and experienced within the individual” (Trapp et al., 2016, p.889). De Vries et al (2018) explain that internalised mental health needs have often been referred to as undisclosed mental health issues. These internalised mental health needs are frequently misinterpreted and often overlooked in schools because it is difficult to detect through observation (DeFosset et al., 2017). Internalised mental health needs constitute a very specific type of emotional and behavioural needs such as anxiety, depression, fear, unhappiness, worry, sadness, or withdrawal from social context (Andermo et al., 2020).

1.4.4 Mental health promotion

“Mental health promotion involves actions that improve psychological well-being” (Hernandez et al., 2018, p.18). Mental health promotion involves creating an environment that supports mental health in an environment that respects and protects basic socio-economic, and cultural rights in fundamental to mental health (Barry et al., 2019). It is difficult to maintain a high level of mental health without the security and freedom provided by these rights.

Mental health promotion attempts to surge and boost the shielding factors that “encourage and increase protective factors and healthy behaviours” that can help prevent the “onset of internalised mental health needs and reduce risk factors that can lead to the development of a mental disorder” (O’Reilly et al.,2018, p. 647). Mental health promotion also involves creating positive conditions and environments that supports internalised mental health and allow individuals to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles or “a climate that respects and protects basic, political, socio-economic and cultural rights is fundamental to mental health promotion (O’Connor et al., 2018, p.e412).

1.4.5 Participatory action research

Participatory action research (PAR) is reviewed as a subset of action research, which is the systematic collection and analysis of data to act and make changes by generating practical knowledge (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019). PAR focuses on a collaborative process with co-researcher involved in the research process from the beginning of the research to the conclusions as well as being part of the succeeding processes (Kjellström & Mitchell, 2019). Marshall and Marshall and Rossman (2016) explain that “PAR involves a cyclic process that includes research, reflection, and action” (p.56). Moreover, McTaggart et al (2017) point out that PAR is transformative rather than merely informative.

1.4.6 Secondary school education

Ojo and Adu (2017) define secondary school education as: “secondary education is the education level that exists between primary education and higher education” (p. 60). Learners start secondary education as children and depart as young adults at the age of 17 or 18, ready to enter university, start looking for work and become responsible citizens in their community. Secondary education has become a central policy concern of developing countries, mostly among those individuals that have made progress in universalising primary education, and individuals in which demographic transition has changed towards adolescents (Ball 2021). Also, secondary school education should address problems unique to human development (Sigelman & Rider, 2021).

1.4.7 Urban schools

Urban areas are created through urbanisation which is perceived as human settlements with high population density and dense building infrastructure (Ouellette et al.,2018). Milner (2021) explain that it is problematic to define urban schools, even for those who focus on the educational setting of “urban schools, statisticians who concentrate on urban populations, or those trying to combine an urban school’s broad cultural context and census data” (p.195). It is stated that South Africa’s urban population is growing at astonishing rates (Keddy et al., 2018). Studies revealed that by

2050, almost 80 percent of the population will be living in urban areas, this will have considerable implications for learners in these areas (Keddy et al., 2018). Urban schools are often characterised by lower academic achievement (Park & Holloway, 2017). According to Ouellette et al (2018) urban schools are usually situated in densely populated areas and primarily serve poor and/or ethnically diverse learners.

1.5 Research questions

The primary research question during this study is set out as follows: What guidelines can be developed to improve teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools?

From the primary research question the following three sub-research questions were formulated:

1. What are teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners?
2. What are teachers' perceptions regarding the role of secondary school teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of learners?
3. What operational guidelines can teachers collaboratively develop for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health issues?

To address these questions, the facilitator, in collaboration with the participants, also referred as co-researchers, made use of three cycles, namely: planning, action and evaluation, and reflection of the PAR process...

1.6 Research design, approach, and methodology

In any research study the research design is applied to the research process, the research approach, the philosophy that underpins the research, the participant selections and site from which data are collected, the data collection generation and finally the data analysis (Crotty, 2020). The methodology leading this study is the critical transformative paradigm, as the teachers (co-researchers) had the opportunity to portray their reality as well as critically discuss the understanding of learners with internalised mental health needs. The epistemological (the knowledge of the co-researchers), ontological (what is the reality what this study constitutes), and axiological assumptions are also discussed in Chapter 4. The following aims were formed (cf. section 4.3.3):

Main aim:

- To develop guidelines to improve teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools.

Three sub-aims:

- To explore the teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners.
- To determine teachers' perceptions regarding the role of secondary school teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of learners.
- To collaboratively develop operational guidelines with the teachers for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs.

In the course of this study, photovoice, art-based collages and informative discussions through Padlet and WhatsApp were completed by the teachers to see if they understood the concept "teachers understanding of internalised mental health needs among secondary school learners and their role in the care and support of these needs". Thus, this qualitative research approach was chosen to understand experiences of teachers. To understand the experiences and perceptions of the teachers, PAR as a research design was applicable, as the teachers, including myself as the research facilitator, collaboratively acted as co-researchers where we discovered, reflected, and shared our knowledge and experience on the focus of the study.

The purpose of PAR is "to understand the specific problem statement, to identify phenomena by means of how they are perceived in a situation" (Budig et al., 2018, p.1). PAR is particularly effective in compiling the experiences and outlook of individuals from their perspectives and thus through challenging structures and normative assumptions.

1.6.1 Participatory action research (PAR) design

"Participatory action research (PAR) draws on the paradigms of critical theory and constructivism and may use a range of qualitative and quantitative approaches" (Morales, 2019, p.317). Jull et al (2017) explain that PAR is about "knowledge and understanding, based on perceptive and learning as collective acts" (p.1). This philosophy embodies the concept that people can determine their development and recognises the need for local people to participate meaningfully in the process of analysing their solutions, over which they have (or share, as some would argue) power and control, to lead to sustainable development (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017). The postmodern view assumes that social truths are dynamic, forming as well as restructuring in response to time and place (Javanmardi et al., 2020). Bertrand et al (2017) describe PAR as a subsection of action research (cf. section 3.7), which is explained as the "systematic collection and analysis of data for purpose of taking action and making change" by generating practical data

(p. 142). The working definition for this study is built on Jull et al (2017) explanation that PAR “is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowledge in the pursuit of worthwhile human purpose, grounded in a participatory worldview” (p. 1). With PAR the researcher facilitator aims to bring together action, reflection, theory, and practice in participation with others. The researcher facilitator further pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern, and more generally the flourishing of individuals and their communities.

During the research journey, the co-researchers are involved in the community (in this study, the urban secondary school) and share influence on the mental health needs of learners, from their own experience, impartially and responsibly, during all 3 cycles (McNiff, 2017). According to Zuber-Skerritt (2021), PAR is based on the process of planning, acting, evaluation, and reflection on the consequences (re-planning, acting, and reflecting) as summarised in Figure 1-1.

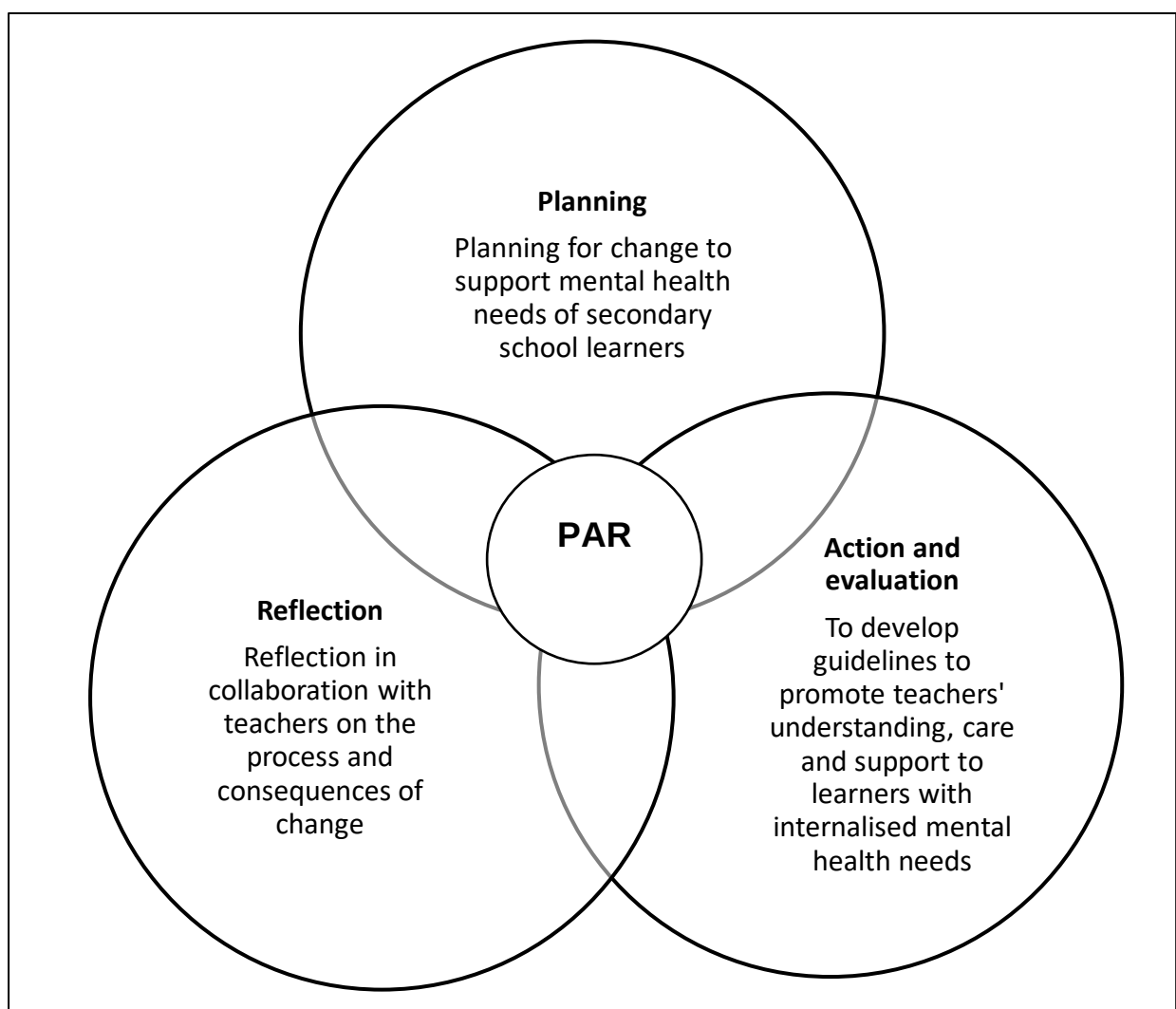


Figure 6-1: The cyclic nature of PAR for the current study

1.6.2 Research approach

The qualitative research approach is suited for research about the teacher's understanding of learners internalised mental health needs, because it centres around understanding socially associated experiences which generally are formulated in words and not in numbers (Bertaux & Thompson, 2017). As stated by Daher et al (2017), this approach allows for a meaningful and holistic understanding of embedded experiences that naturally occur in the teachers' environment without any extraneous influences. Qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes anti-disciplinary field (Klaassen et al., 2019). Klaassen et al (2019) also describe qualitative research as the intersection of humanities, social sciences, and physical sciences, in other words, qualitative research is many things at the same time.

1.6.3 Participant selection and site

An open invitation was sent via an independent person to teachers in two urban secondary schools for possible participation in this research study. Teachers who accepted this invitation formed part of the co-researchers' group for this study. The research took place in the Gauteng North District in South Africa and the population consist of six teachers from two urban secondary schools who acted as co-researchers. The participants were selected within the following inclusion criterion:

- Teachers ought to have teaching experience at the urban secondary schools in the Gauteng North District for at least two years.
- Teachers should all be able to easily express themselves in English, have access to a computer and the internet.
- Teachers should be daily directly involved with urban secondary school learners.

1.6.4 Method of data generation

Ballard (2018) explains that PAR differs from most other approaches in education research because co-researchers, within the context of the problem, collaborate to generate data, take action and reflect on the process to understand and improve education in their communities.

To generate data collaboratively, provide a wealth of comprehensive information applicable to the research study. It further enables co-researchers to explore perceptions democratically, provide opportunities for transformative reflection, and learning. In this study, data was generated in three cycles (cf. section 5.2). Each cycle was followed by the posing of an initial question that aims to answer the primary research question (cf. section 5.4, section 5.5, and section 5.6). In each cycle, the co-researchers reflected on their experiences, they took action, and reflected (Zuber-Skerritt,

2021). This made the research pliant so that each turn of the cycle could build on the understanding and experiences of the previous cycle. During the PAR process, we became aware of the effects of our actions regarding the understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners and through our data generation actions, we obtained opportunities to reflect on it, seek opportunities to improve our understanding from past and present experiences, to improve the future. Authors such as Bartels and Wittmayer (2018) as well as Yuan and Burns (2017) refer to action research as constructing and reconstructing research, these authors also elaborate to enlighten the process and consequences of the specific objects that are studied. Kentischer (2018) points out that action research can produce a considerable amount of data which may be overwhelming. Zuber-Skerritt (2021) recommends that in PAR, the data should be interpreted continuously after each cycle, because the cyclical process of collecting and analysing data is inter-linked, and reflection is integrated into every session of data collection.

The first research cycle (cf. section 5.4), addressed question one of this study namely, *what is the teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners within an urban secondary school?* During this cycle we discovered knowledge on internalised mental health needs of learners through photovoice (cf. section 4.6.2); each co-researcher took two photos and wrote a short narrative on the specific photo, keeping the research question in mind.

The second research cycle (cf. section 5.5) aimed to explore the co-researchers' understanding of care and support for learners with internalised mental health needs (cf. section 4.6.3) through designing collages. Utilizing pictures from magazines or newspapers, we depicted our emotions and perceptions. Each of co-researchers presented their collages to the group and they made notes on their understanding of the collage. From the presentation and notes, they compiled a list of keywords (cf. figure 5-4) to form seven themes that flowed into the third research cycle to collaboratively form guidelines for teachers to better understand their roles in the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs.

We used Padlet (Dewitt et al., 2015) during the third research cycle (cf. section 4.6.4). The primary research question was presented; *what guidelines can be developed to improve teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools?* This innovative way of data generation enabled the co-researchers to collaboratively work through the seven themes that were formed from the collages, as well as the primary research question and to write further keywords under each theme that led to forming operational guidelines for the care and support of learners internalised mental health needs (cf. section 5.6).

1.6.5 Method of data analysis

In PAR, the analysis of data is a continuous process because of the cyclical process of generating, analysing, and reflecting on the data (Zuber-Skerritt, 2021). For this study, a coding frame was developed with the main categories. The first step in building the coding frame is to choose acceptable data that reflects the full diversity of data sources (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). The material should preferably be broken into smaller segments, with coding frames built for one segment after another until all the main categories have been covered (Flick, 2018). Each main category had sub-categories. Qualitative content analysis requires that the material be segmented and that all parts of the material be accounted for by the coding frame (Kuckartz, 2019).

The purposeful discussions were transcribed by me and then sent to the co-researchers via email to verify. We reflected upon the data at the beginning of each meeting to analyse the data. Daher et al (2017) emphasise the importance of reflecting on the same phenomenon in different cycles, to produce reliable data with high precision. Since the focus of the research study was on: *What guidelines can be developed to improve teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools?* This phenomenon was perceived in its complexity as it unfolded with facts and characteristics during our meetings.

1.7 Trustworthiness

Cuervo-Cazurra et al (2020) state that, “to establish the trustworthiness of research increases the reader’s confidence that the findings are worthy” (p. 121). Trustworthiness mentioned the “degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study” (Kyngäs, 2020, p.41). In each study, “researchers should establish the protocols and procedures necessary for a study to be considered worthy of consideration by readers” (Amankwaa, 2016, p.23). Korstjens and Moser (2018) propose four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to be considered in pursuit of a trustworthy study.

Credibility includes the adoption of well-established researched methods, a research design that fits the research question, a theoretical underpinning that is aligned with the research question and methods (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). To ensure credibility, I was constantly present during the data generation session, and the information gathered from the three research cycles and informative discussions was a true reflection of the co-researchers’ perspectives.

“*Transferability* does not involve generalised claims but invites readers of research to make connections between elements of a study and their own experience or research” (Munthe-Kaas

et al., 2020, p.1). I provided clear guidelines used during the photovoice, art-based collages and the informative discussions so that the teachers (co-researchers) could refer to it. Furthermore, the literature review and the theoretical framework also served as an avenue to help other teachers explore the findings of the study.

Dependability is demonstrated through the “research design and its implementation; and the operational detail data gathering and the reflective appraisal of the project” (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019, p. 229). Dependability is the stability of data over time and under different conditions. Dependability is important to trustworthiness because it establishes the study findings as congruous and repeatable. The aim was to verify that the findings through data generation were consistent, thus, I ensured dependability by providing an adequate audit trail to offer clarification on data generation, data analysis and research techniques followed in conducting the research study.

Confirmability relates to the level of neutrality to which the findings of a study are shaped by the participants and not by the researcher’s bias, motivation, or interest (Urban & van Eeden-Moorefield, 2018). To ensure confirmability I ensured that the presentation and the discussion of the findings revealed the teachers’ (co-researchers) perspectives. To diminish bias, I discussed the data analysis and findings with my supervisor before finalising it.

1.8 Ethical considerations

Arifin (2018) comments as follows about ethics in research: “in order to understand, researchers must be more than technically competent” (p.30). They must enter into chattered intimacies; open themselves to their subjects’ emotional worlds, whether these worlds are congenial to them or repulsive (p.30). They must confront the difference of represented and experienced selves at the same time, both conflicted and both real” (p.30). Following Arifin’s view, I considered the following, and protected the feelings, welfare, and rights of the co-researchers. Ethical considerations in a PAR data generation process are critical, they are the norms of conduct during the research process, and they regulate the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (Cohen et al., 2017). Consequently, before data gathering started, formal ethical approval and clearance were obtained through the NWU Faculty of Education ethics committee (Annexure A). Permission to direct the research was obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education (Annexure B), the principals from both schools (Annexure C & D) and the School Governing Bodies (SGB’s) as the gatekeepers (Annexure E), I kept to the four-stage access model of responsible engagement in schools and the gatekeepers, mediators and independent persons as postulated by Andoh-Arthur (2019). This access model focused on pre-entry,

fieldwork, post-fieldwork and getting back as components when gathering data. The essential role of gatekeepers, mediators and independent persons is highlighted and discussed in more detail in the ethics application for the dissertation, as their involvement was required to honour the ethical obligations to conduct appropriate research. All co-researchers were provided with information about the aim and purpose of PAR, the methods of data generation and analysis, therefore, the co-researchers were informed about PAR and that it is used for research purposes. The co-researchers prepared to voluntarily participate in PAR, completed and sign informative consent (Annexure F), to have their discussions recorded, analysed, and published, while assuring privacy and confidentiality. Co-researchers were informative about open discussions and respect for the perspectives of other participants, as well as on specific PAR processes.

1.9 Value of the research study

This study was significant to the field of basic education as it contributed by prompting teachers' understanding of the internalised mental health needs of learners (adolescents) in urban secondary schools. The guidelines developed for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs will be implemented and consequently can become a day-to-day practise to assist teachers as well as learners. Co-researchers will be empowered with skills to be able to identify the internalised mental health needs early and support the learners or identify them for professional assistance. The study aimed to contribute to the field of special needs education by addressing the internalised mental health needs of learners. The findings can assist the Department of Education and the Department of Health in collaboratively developing workshops for teachers, focusing on special support to learners with specific internalised mental health needs.

1.10 Outline of the chapters

The following is the outline of this research study:

Chapter one: Orientation

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the research study. It commences with the problem statement and motivation for this study and then I present the theoretical frameworks that guided this study. The operational concepts that relate to the title are briefly summarised. The research design and methodology are elaborated. Trustworthiness and ethical considerations that are associated with this research is discussed in detail in this chapter. The chapter concludes with the value of this research.

Chapter two: Literature review - Reviewing the literature towards an understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners.

In this chapter, I present Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model as well as the critical transformative learning theory as theoretical frameworks to guide this study. The conceptual framework that focuses on the mental health of learners, especially internalised mental health in adolescents is discussed. I conclude this chapter with literature related to the role of teachers at school in addressing internalised mental health needs. The purpose of this chapter is to develop, constructs and make sense of the PAR-generated data.

Chapter three: Exploring participatory action research

In chapter three, the PAR-procedures were used to offer insight into the understanding of teachers regarding internalised mental health needs of learners, was explained. These procedures were supported through historical backgrounds on PAR, followed by various era-specific interpretations of the concept of PAR. I elaborated on the critical and transformative paradigm related to PAR, this was then followed by discussions of the design emphasising the cyclic nature of this study. The chapter concluded with the stages during PAR.

Chapter four: Research methods

Chapter four introduced an outline of the research methods that were followed in the study. I provided information about the teachers as co-researchers, who they were and how they participated. The instruments that were used for data generation were also described as well as the procedures that were followed. I discussed the methods used to analyse the data. The chapter concludes with a summary of the detailed concepts of data generation.

Chapter five: Analysis of the generated data.

Chapter five presented the findings of this study. I explained the objective of each session that took place during data generation as well as the themes that were formed from these sessions. I synthesised the findings to summarise the new body of knowledge generated from the knowledge of teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners and the role of secondary school teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of learners. I concluded chapter five with the keywords that emerged from the guidelines that will guide me through to chapter six, where the guidelines were formed through these keywords that were conducted in chapter five.

Chapter six: Summary, guidelines, and conclusion

This chapter presents a summary of the study, it further provides the link that led to the operational guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs in urban secondary schools in the Gauteng North District. Limitations of the study and recommendations for further research are suggested. Finally, I reflected on my journey as a PAR researcher.

1.11 Conclusion

Chapter one dealt with the orientation to this study and provides an overview of the entire study. A short description of the theoretical frameworks was given as well as how I, as a researcher, used the theoretical frameworks continuously in the study. Clarity was also given to the operational concepts. Trustworthiness and ethical considerations were discussed in depth in this chapter because it is important to meet that criterion. At the end of the chapter one, the outline of the chapters was also presented. Chapter two presents the literature review towards an understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF INTERNALISED MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter one, I provided an orientation to this research study. The discussions start with the problem statement and rationale for this research inquiry. Next, I introduce the theoretical underpinnings that relate to this study. With Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory I look at learners and their immediate environment, as well as their interaction with the larger environment (Guy-Evans, 2020). I engage in the critical transformative learning theory looking at the processes of learning and development of the teachers (Romano, 2019). Following the theoretical frameworks discussion, I employ the conceptual framework that are is associated with the themes that focus on the understanding of internalised mental health, the role of teachers in supporting learners and suggested guidelines to address the support and care of learners with internalised mental health needs. I further formulate the research questions that led the study and briefly deliberate on the research design and methodology. The chapter concludes with a detailed discussion of how trustworthiness and ethical consideration are applied, the value of the study and an outline of the chapter.

I provide a detailed discussion of the theoretical frameworks in Chapter two to direct the interpretation of the generated data. Next, I confer with a literature review that use the research questions as a starting point in an endeavour to establish a broad conceptual framework to conceptualise the study. To accomplish this, current and associated literature and practices around the world are examined. Finally, a summary is presented.

2.2 Theoretical frameworks

A theoretical framework involves other authors' theoretical viewpoints that researchers can interpret as fitting to their research study, and it is helpful in the interpretation of the generated data (Kiyunia, 2018). Kiyunia (2018) furthermore explains that a theoretical framework offers the researcher a structure for what to search for the understanding of the data. No single theory can effectively clarify learners internalised mental health needs and a blend of two theoretical lenses can offer a wider expounding foundation. The two theories that will guide this research study are the bio-ecological theory of human development (Guy-Evans, 2020) and the critical transformative learning theory (Cranton, 2013). McGregor and Devaney (2020) consider

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory, as a contextualist perspective that recognises the development of learners within multi-layered contextual systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem) that they are part of. McGregor and Devaney (2020) believe that the bio-ecological theory emphasises how the learners interact between and within the interrelated contexts over time. The critical transformative learning theory can be seen as a process of change brought about in an individual's belief system (Cranton & Taylor, 2011). Howie and Bagnell (2013) believe that when people are confronted with any disorienting dilemma, they unintentional review their understandings to accept the new knowledge or experience as part of their worldview. This process usually happens in a dialogue setting and is referred to as critical reflection (Howie & Bagnell, 2013).

These two theories both merge with the influences, internally and externally of the learners' internalised mental health needs and the teachers understanding regarding their roles in the care and support of these needs.

2.2.1 Bio-ecological theory

Research about mental health and mental health needs are realising the value of environmental influences (e.g., family support, peer support, demographical aspects) and ecological aspects on the adolescent's life (Arango, 2018; Glasgow, 2018; de Figueiredo, 2021; Sameroff, 2021). Richardson (2019) explains that factors of internalised mental health include individual, social, and societal factors, and their interaction with each other. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory expresses the internal feelings from learners' knowledge and his or her personal influences from these internal feelings through external influences as experience in the multilevel systems. The bio-ecological theory considers the "influences on a learners' development within the context of the complex system of relationships that forms his or her environment" (An & Blanchard, 2020, p. 266). Bio-ecological issues are thought to have a significant influence on factors related to mental health needs amongst learners (Helbich, 2018). Bronfenbrenner (2005) asserts that the interaction between others, the child (process) and the multiple interactions between the child and the environment (context) are emphasised as crucial in the development of a child..

Kelly and Coughlan (2019) opine that Bronfenbrenner's theory fits in with the components of mental health recovery and are embedded in the ecological context of influential relationships of the young person such as peers, family and school all help mental health development .The theory advises that a learners' development is a result of a variety of critical dimensions including context, process, time, and personal attributes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). Bronfenbrenner

explain that the learners' development contains five systems of interaction: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem (Hertler et al., 2018).

Each system depends on the contextual nature of the learners' life and offers an ever-growing diversity of options and sources of growth. The interrelated and interactive systems of the bio-ecological theory have interrelations with each other, meaning that any disruptions in any one system will affect the other systems (Herselman et al., 2018). Ford et al. (2018) think that the benefit of using an ecological approach is that it can help teachers to recognise "how an interruption in a learner's environment caused by internalised mental health issues might impact on their wellbeing, growth and development as well as their ways of coping/adapting" (p. e40). The responses of learners to any disturbance in their environment is caused by a wider range of factors (cf. 2 par. 2.3.2), such as age, gender, individual learner, and the interactions with the various systems as described by Bronfenbrenner (Ford, 2018).

Eriksson et al. (2018) proposed to develop helpful care and support in the field of mental health issues, that Bronfenbrenner's theory is a conceptual tool is useful to develop helpful care and support within the field of mental health issues. Williams and Nelson-Gardell (2012) found the importance of peer and family support, in combination with each learner's capacity to accept support and their ability to use available resources, is significant for addressing the learner's mental health, either internalised or externalised. The authors also suggest that the care and support of learners related to their mental health will be most effective if the focus is on support and school engagement (proximal processes) by the caregiver and teacher along with addressing education or economic assistance (contextual factors). The bio-ecological perspective can integrate the broader community to address the mental health needs of learners at an individual level (Stokels, 1996).

Figure 2-1 shows the array of systems as seen from the most immediate (microsystems) to the largest (macrosystems). As indicated, schools (along with other microsystems, including the family) are among the learners' microsystems - their most immediate developmental contexts – and subsequently exert the utmost impact on the learners' development (Guy-Evans, 2020; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

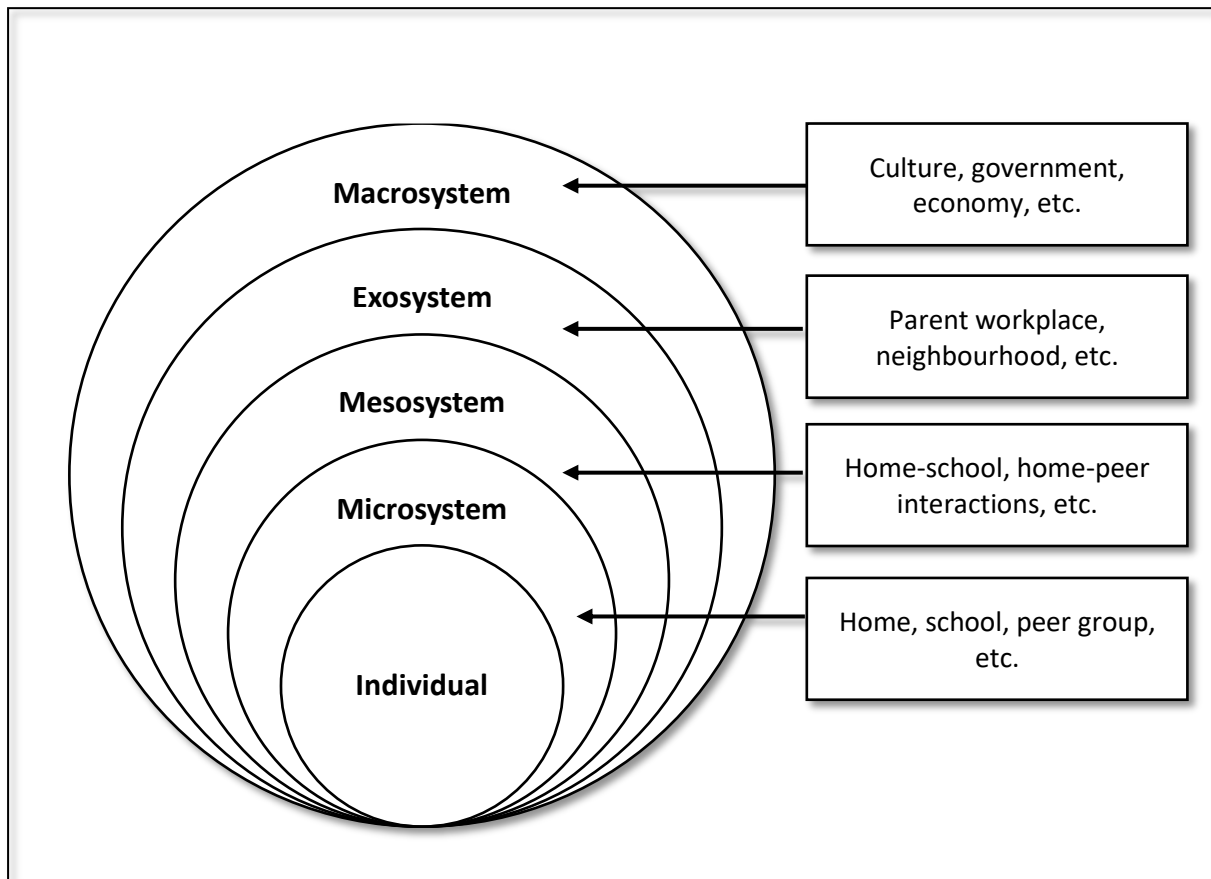


Figure 7-1: Bio-ecological model (adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Guy-Evans, 2020)

Bronfenbrenner's model will assist in the interpretation of the generated data (i) to determine teachers understanding of internalised meant health needs of the learners, (ii) to explore teacher perspectives about their role to address the issues within an urban secondary school, and (iii) determine how teachers collaboratively can develop guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health issues within an urban secondary school.

In Table 2-1 the bio-ecological model is presented indicating its relationship with the promotion of learner's internalised mental health.

Table 7-1: Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model for promoting learner's internalised mental health

System	Bronfenbrenner's definition of system	Explanation of system	System in the school context
Microsystem	Over the life course, human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur regularly over extended periods. Such enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment are referred to as proximal processes. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005)	The microsystem surrounds the relationships and interactions a learner has with his or her immediate environment. In this system, relationships have an impact on: away from the learner and towards the learner (Kilanowski, 2017).	Learners' internal feelings and behaviours may affect his or her parents, teachers, and peers, however, the parents', teachers' and peers' feelings and behaviours may affect the learner internally (Eskelä-Haapanen et al., 2017). Schools and teachers provide long-term and stable relationships. Teachers work to support the relationship between them and the learners and create an environment that welcomes all learners with internalised mental health needs.
Mesosystem	The mesosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person (e.g., the relations between home and school). In other words, a mesosystem is a system of microsystems. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005)	Perron (2017) interprets the mesosystem by saying that this system "produces the connections between the learner microsystems, the connections between the learner, teacher, and the parents" (p.7). It is a system of microsystems that involves linkages between home and school, between peer groups and family and between family and the community (Perron, 2017).	The mesosystem comprises the connections among the major setting containing the learner at a point in his or her life (Dishion et al., 2019). For a secondary school learner, the mesosystem encompasses interactions among family, school, and peer group. The interactions between the family and the peer group as well as the school are especially significant in the mesosystem (Holmes et al., 2020).
Exosystem	The exosystem encompasses the linkage and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not ordinarily contain the developing child, but in which events occur that influence processes within the immediate setting that does contain that child. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005)	The exosystem is an extension of the mesosystem embracing the visible social structures, both formal and informal, that affect the immediate setting containing the learner and thereby influence and even determine what goes on (Erdener & Knoepfel 2018).	The exosystem affects how teachers view learners who are struggling with internalised mental health needs in the classroom as well as demonstrate the environmental factors that affect the learner's development and learning (Guy-Evans, 2020).
Macrosystem	"The macrosystem is the larger culture as a whole and includes socioeconomic status, wealth, poverty, and ethnicity. This further	The macrosystem includes social class, ethnic and religious groups, communities, and neighbourhoods (Taveira et al., 2017) and	A learner with internalised mental health needs can affect how the teacher teaches and how other learners relate within the classroom.

	includes children, their parents and school, and their parent's workplace as part of a larger cultural context" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 162).	refers to attitudes, beliefs, and values. The macrosystem reunites in the systems within a specific community or culture that can influence the nature of interactions at all levels of the bioecological theory (De Beer, 2019).	The teacher's organisation strategies, management practices and instructional strategies will all have an impact on the learners (Guy-Evans, 2020).
Chronosystem	"This system consists of all of the environmental changes that occur over the lifetime which influence development, including major life transitions, and historical events" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 162).	The chronosystem refers to the developmental timeframes that exist within the interactions within the systems and their influence on the development of the learner and includes development time, family time and historical time (Kuruvilla, 2018).	Experiences can influence the interactions and relationships within the school community, family and consequently the adolescent's development (Gonzales, 2020).

The bio-ecological theory can be utilised as a supporting framework in understanding the relationships between contextual factors, individual aspects, and mental health (Hewett et al., 2017). Next, the second theory namely critical transformative learning theory will be discussed.

2.2.2 Critical transformative learning theory

The critical transformative learning theory as explained by Mezirow in the field of education has been defined as a process that depend on critical reflection, such that it minimises the role of feelings and overlooks transformation through the unconscious development of thoughts and actions" (Mezirow, 2018, p.114). The critical transformative learning theory, which was first introduced by Jack Mezirow, is the personal experience of an integral part of the learning process (Hoggan et al., 2017). The critical transformative learning theory "transforms problematic frames of references - sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning, perspectives, mindsets) - to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change" (Mezirow, 2018, p.114). The literature surrounding critical transformative learning theory suggests to the possibility that "other" ways of knowing, such as affective and spiritual may be just as significant in fostering critical transformation not only among learners but greatly the teachers (Mezirow, 2018). It suggests that a teachers' interpretation of the experience creates meaning, which leads to a change in behaviour, mindset, and beliefs in classrooms (Mezirow, 2018). When critical transformation occurs, the teacher may undergo a "paradigm shift" that directly impacts future experiences (Makrakis & Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2017, p. 94). Hoggan (2016, p. 57) explains that critical transformation is a "uniquely adult" process, therefore it is suitable to change the "thoughts, feelings and, actions of individuals". Thus, this theory determines a person's actions.

The critical transformative learning theory clarifies how teachers can renew or transform the way they interpreted learner internalised mental health needs in their classrooms (Taylor, 2017). This theory is support in any human interaction and communication where teaching is understood as the process of using an earlier interpretation of the meaning of one's experience to guide into future action (Mezirow, 2000). Figure 2-2 Mills (2019) represent the critical transformative learning process as four main actions:



Figure 2-2: Critical transformative learning process (Mills, 2019)

According to Mills (2019), the experience is the first step in the process. It focuses on a shift in the worldview of the teacher. This means that there is an issue where the teachers cannot use their current knowledge to address it. The next process is critical reflection, this relates to problem solving. As Mezirow (2000) highlight critical reflection “reflect on the content of the problem, the process of problem-solving, or the premise of the problem” (p. 110). Teachers need to reflect on the baseline knowledge needed to address the issue (Mills, 2019). Mezirow (2000) exposes that reflective discourse introduces “dialogue is devoted to searching for common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation” (p. 110). This is the process where collaborative peers start sharing their experiences to develop a better understanding of the issue and sometimes even get to a theoretical solution. Reflecting on Mills (2019) clarification the reflective discourse in this study happened through positive engagement with a knowledge process to allow for a deeper understanding of the issue (Mills, 2019). Finally, the teachers begin with the implementation of the knowledge they acquired through discourse and reflection (Mills, 2019). This action can be the engagement of learning through various media (Mills, 2019) or as seen in this study the teacher’s implementation of the guidelines they collaboratively develop using a Par Action Research (PAR) design.

“This critical transformative learning process can be slow or immediate, and it doesn’t have to be huge learning experiences” (Mills, 2019). Teachers need to understand how internalised mental

health needs act upon learners in their classrooms and of these learners and their values, purposes, feelings, and meanings rather than presume they do understand the term internalised mental health needs (cf. section 4.4.1). Critical transformation learning assists the teacher to achieve a shift in outlook through critical self-reflection. This self-reflection of teachers improves professional proficiency, for fostering personal growth and increasing social justice in the classroom. Rarieya (2005) added that transformative learning involves exploring issues from both the micro and macro levels as well various dimensions including ethics and social.

Dirkx et al. (2018) exposes that critical self-reflection and self-understanding is fostered through the analysis of our meaning, frames, and perspectives of reference. Teachers are provided with an opportunity to transform. To foster critical transformative learning, the teachers' role is to support learners in becoming aware of their assumptions, thus, to become aware of learners internalised mental health needs (Carrington & Selva, 2010). This includes the teachers' beliefs that lead to their interpretations, habits of mind, or points of view, as well as the beliefs of others. Teachers must provide practice in recognising frames of reference (Carrington et al., 2015, p.61). By doing so, teachers encourage practice in reconceiving internalised mental health needs from different perspectives. The goal is to create a community who are united in their shared experience in trying to make meaning of their mental health (Taylor, 2018). Teachers provide learners with opportunities to effectively participate in the discourse. Discourse involves assessing beliefs, feelings, and values (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). Teachers can validate how and what they understand about internalised mental health, as well as develop well-informed judgments regarding internalised mental health. "Critical reflection and experience with discourse through the implementation of participation in social action can" can be encouraged through teachers (Thomas, 2009, p. 35).

2.3 Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework is commonly developed, grounded on a literature review of the body of existing knowledge, related to the research topic (Swaen, 2021). Luse et al. (2012) opine that a conceptual framework makes it easy for the researcher to identify and define the various concepts that relate to the problem statement of the research study. Moreover, a conceptual framework envisions to set out fundamental concepts that will be the foundation related to the topic under investigation (Gornik-Tomaszewski et al. 2018). It can be concluded that a conceptual framework's components serve as a structure for the literature review (Sample et al. 2020). Building on the review of the literature, I clarify each relevant concept as presented in the research questions.

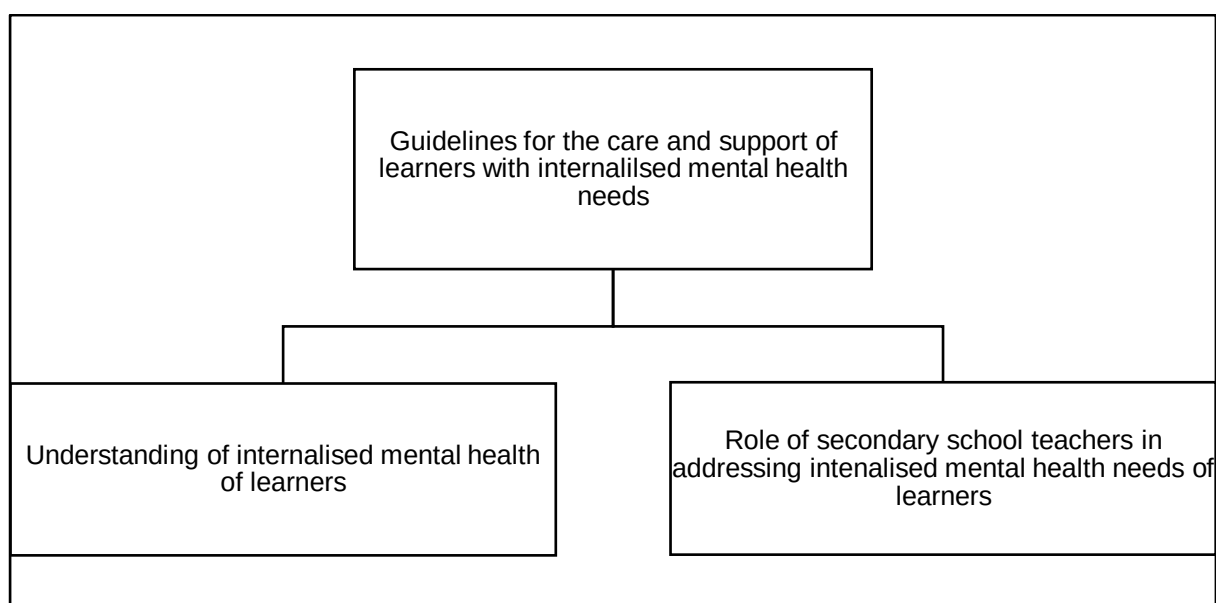


Figure 2-3: Conceptual framework of the primary research question and the two sub-research questions that guide this study.

For this study the conceptual framework supports the explanation of teachers' understanding regarding learners internalised mental health needs in secondary schools, their roles in addressing internalised mental health needs of learners as well as guidelines to improve these understandings concerning learners internalised mental health. Figure 2-3 provides a presentation of the primary research question and the three sub-research questions revealing key concepts that are associated with the research study. The operational concepts that guide this study in relation to the title are exemplified in the research questions.

2.3.1 The key concepts

Some key concepts related to this study will be clarified within the context of the research study.

2.3.1.1 Mental health

Mental health is important in every stage of life, throughout childhood and adolescence through adulthood. Therefore, it is important to understand the development of clarifications of mental health over the past decade as it relates to this research study. First, Westerhof and Keyes (2010) elucidate that mental health is a dynamic state of wellbeing characterised through physical, cognitive, emotional, and social potential, which satisfies or rather contribute to the demands of personal responsibility. World Health Organisation (WHO) (2019) clarifies mental health as the realisation of the individual's potential and indicate that mental health is the ability to cope with the typical stresses and environmental contributions as important elements. In addition, Galderisi

et al. (2015) describe “mental health as a dynamic state of internal equilibrium which enables individuals to use their abilities in harmony with universal values of society. Basic cognitive and social skills; ability to recognize, express and modulate one's own emotions, as well as empathize with others; flexibility and ability to cope with adverse life events and function in social roles; and harmonious relationship between body and mind represent important components of mental health which contribute, to varying degrees, to the state of internal equilibrium” (p. 231). This definition is further expanded by Kozlowski et al. (2017) explaining that certain motivational properties will lead to specific mental health behaviour. It can be said that the emotions of individuals add to their mental health. Mental health is something that all people have, it is an individual's cognitive, behavioural, and emotional wellbeing (Nagel, 2008). Nowadays, the continuity approach appraises that mental health and mental illness are the two opposite poles of a continuum (Hernández-Torrano, 2020). Individuals seek to be in control of their lives and their future.

Mental health problems are a common problem amongst adolescents and are linked to distress and impairment and might lead to permanent psychosocial and health consequences for the individuals (Maughan & Collishaw, 2015). There has been an increase in acknowledgement of the vital role mental health plays in the general functioning of individuals. It is stated in the WHO special initiative for mental health (2019-2023): universal health coverage for mental health that there “cannot be healthy or sustainable development without positive mental health” (WHO 2019, p.1). WHO (2019) states that it is important to mention that the gap between individuals needing care and those with access to care remains large although there is inexpensive care and support assessable (WHO, 2019). Sellers et al. (2019) are of the opinion that mental health problems amongst adolescents are related to significant “functional impairments affecting the child's educational progress, later social relationships and future mental health” (p. 819). These authors also suggest that there should be efforts to address the lack in society to actively promote mental health amongst adolescents and explore ways to reverse these trends. These mental health promotion actions amongst adolescents should be tailored to the person's mental health needs.

2.3.1.2 Mental health needs

Mental health needs refer to an extension of mental health conditions or disorders that affect thinking, moods, and behaviour (Barkham et al., 2019). Mental health needs are associated with depression, anxiety, anger, stress, confusion, fear, and nervousness including more serious psychological disorders (Salari et al., 2020). A mental health need can make an individual miserable and can cause problems in their daily life, such as at school (Mirowsky & Ross, 2017).

Mental health proposed the foundation for thinking, emotions, communication, learning, resilience, and self-esteem (Aldridge & McChesney, 2018). Mental health is the basis to personal relationships, and emotional well-being and contributing to community or society (Aldridge & McChesney, 2018). Manstead (2018) explains that assistance for mental health needs includes several options that comprise coping mechanisms when there is a need for care and support. People who have mental health needs usually do not know how to cope with the symptoms and mostly resort to dysfunctional coping mechanisms to get rid of the emotional distress (Stanke et al., 2012). In short mental health needs influences the way that an individual think, feel, and behave (Manstead, 2018). The concept of "mental health needs" refer to mental health problems and conditions, issues that may or may not be diagnosed. Most mental health needs begin during youth (12–25 years of age), although they are often first detected later in life (Malla et al., 2018). Poor mental health is strongly related to other health and development concerns in adolescence, notably lower educational achievements, and anti-social behaviour (Turgoose & Maddox, 2017). Commonly mental health needs are frequently linked to "low self-esteem, loneliness, self-harm, and social isolation" (de Voursney & Huang, 2016, p.77). These types of mental health emotions can make you feel depressed, alone, misunderstood, and no one to relate to (Nasheeda et al., 2017). Adolescents who have developed a pattern of mental health needs often magnify and intensify their issues, causing them to feel attacked or alone, leading to outbursts, conflict, and/or suicidal ideation (Nasheeda et al., 2017). Some children face these challenges and learn to overcome them with support (Tillmann et al., 2018). Teachers and parents should be sensitive and monitor symptoms of anxiety and depression among learners who present internalised mental health needs.

2.3.1.3 Internalised mental health needs

"Internalised mental health needs are to a great extent related to problems mainly developed, experienced, sustained and exhibited within the individual" (Trapp et al., 2002, p. 223). Internalised mental health issues further consist of problems that are based on over-controlled symptoms (Merrell, 2008). Overcontrolling means that these issues are evident when the individual attempt to "regulate their internal emotional and cognitive state, in other words, the way they think about the way they feel" (Merrell, 2008, p. 2). Brownhill et al. (2005, p. 922) explain that "internalised mental health needs have often been referred to as undisclosed mental health needs." These mental health issues are frequently misunderstood and often excuded in schools because it is difficult to detect through observation (Horowitz & Ballard, 2009). Harris et al. (2016) state that the understanding of emotions is defined as the knowledge to recognise and comprehend other individuals' emotions by way of their physical cues or facial expressions, within

a specific situation. Therefore, teachers in schools need to be able to identify or recognise the learners' emotions and emotional disturbance.

Internalised mental health behaviour is not always as easy to observe as this behaviour is mostly directed at the self. Atkins et al. (2010, p.42) clarify this by confirming that "internalised mental health dealt with attitudes towards self, relations to reality, and efforts of understanding one's environment." McCabe (2016) indicates that internalised means that the individuals are keeping their feelings or issues inside and do not share their concerns with others. For this reason, Atkins et al. (2010) deliberate on internalised mental health needs a secret illness, because it is difficult to detect especially employing external observation. Thus, it can be derived that the concept internalised also indicates that these problems are developed and continue to a great extent within the individual. Adolescents show their feelings in different ways or may even not show them at all (McCabe, 2016). Schulte-Körne (2016) pronounces that internalised mental health symptoms are usually related to "a range of difficulties affecting health and everyday life for youths (e.g., impaired self-worth, lack of joy, disrupted appetite and sleep patterns), including increased risk of self-harm and suicide." Burke et al. (2018) explain that internalised mental health needs include a broad "variety of over-inhibited or internally focused symptoms including anxiety, fear, sadness/depression, social withdrawal, and somatic complaints" (p. 745). Askell-Williams and Lawson (2013) goes further by elaborating on internalised mental health behaviours as those that include anxiety, depression, substance abuse, feelings of loneliness, feelings of sadness, nervousness, social withdrawal, fearfulness, difficulty concentrating and negative self-talk. This is in coherence with Bettes & Walker (1986) who revealed that internalised symptoms include anxiety, sadness, social withdrawal, and fearfulness. Garnefski et al. (2005) furthermore identified internalised issues as problems that are directed inwards such as disordered moods, withdrawal, anxiety, or depression.

2.3.2 Factors influencing the internalised mental health of learners

Learners in secondary schools, in general, is in an "important period for the development of a socially integrated self-concept, while a negative self-concept may affect future decisions through depression and anxiety" (Zahn-Waxler et al., 2000, p. 444). Although the Department of Health formulated internalised mental health intervention strategies for adolescents, it is unclear whether these strategies are being properly implemented in schools (Zahn-Waxler et al., 2000). Multiple factors determine internalised mental health needs in adolescents. The more risk factors adolescents are exposed to, the greater the potential impact on their internalised mental health. Below various risk factors influencing internalised mental health amongst learners are discussed. These included socio-economic problems (Teich, 2008), peer support (Moore et al., 2018),

teacher-student relationships (Krane et al., 2016), gender (Rosenfield & Mouzon, 2013), self-esteem (Moksnes & Reidunsdatter, 2019), resilience (Dray et al., 2017), personality traits (Gray et al., 2017) and subjective wellbeing (Lampropoulou, 2018).

2.3.2.1 Socio-economic

Internalised mental health is shaped by the extended characteristics (including inequalities) of the economic, socio and physical environments in which people live (Xie et al., 2021). Internalised mental health, health status and socio-economic status are important determinants of an individual's wellbeing (Contoyannis & Jones, 2004). Clotfelter et al. (2008) explain that economic challenges, such as poverty are seen as both a cause and a consequence of internalised mental needs among learners in schools. Internalised mental health needs can be exacerbated by shortages in mental healthcare, which are shown to be complexly interrelated with stigma (Crosnoe, 2009). "People with low socio-economic status have poorer mental health than individuals with high socio-economic status" (Kuruvilla & Jacob, 2007, p.273). "Socio-economically disadvantaged children and adolescents were two to three times more likely to develop mental health problems" (Kuruvilla & Jacob, 2007, p.273). The low socio-economic status that persisted over time was strongly related to higher rates of internalised mental health problems (Flouri et al., 2014). A decrease in socio-economic status was associated with increasing internalised mental health problems.

The socio-economic determinants of learners internalised mental health have been widely explored (Rogers & Pilgrim, 2021), and the independent effects of socio-economic indicators, such as household economic income, parental educational level, or parental occupation positions, on learners internalised mental well-being have been analysed (Chowdhury et al., 2018). In terms of household economic conditions, low financial status have a negatively influence on learners internalised mental health (Aldridge & McChesney, 2018). High levels of parental education can also reduce the probability of experiencing mental health needs among learners (McLaughlin et al., 2011). A low occupational status from parents is related to the low quality of social relations among children (McLaughlin et al., 2011).

2.3.2.2 Peer support

An individual's social world is "comprised of a complex interplay between experiences within his or her social networks, perceptions of social competence, and feelings of social support" (Roeser & Eccles, 2000, p.443). Social relations are "the structure of an individual's social relationships,

social support can be broadly conceived of as the process by which the individual feels valued, cared for, and connected to a group of people” (Amati et al., 2018, p. 12). Adolescents who experience peer connectedness present with better mental health (Moore et al., 2018).

Learners in schools do not always have the necessary peer support, this leads to the learner keeping his or her emotions and feelings inward rather than talking to their classmates and teachers. “Peer support builds on the recourses that friends spontaneously offer one another. Peer support systems require that the peer supporter should be skilled in communication, should be able to listen actively to another person, and should adopt a problem-solving approach to another’s difficulty” (Cowie & Wallace, 2000, p. 9). Helgeson (2003) explained that peer support is extremely important for the development of social relationships that can provide a feeling of care and support for adolescents.

There are different types of peer support, these types all involve both giving and receiving support (Mead & MacNeil, 2006). Peer support could be sharing knowledge or providing emotional support, social interaction, or practical help, for example (Kiefer, 2015). Everyone’s experiences are treated as equally important; no-one is more of an expert than anyone else (Kiefer, 2015). Peer support provides the potential for learners to develop the flexibility needed to reduce internalised mental health needs and to recognise their wellbeing needs (McBeath et al., 2018). Peer supports contribute to the foundation of a caring community in schools that provides support, guidance, and behavioural models for learners (Visser, 2005). The belief was that peer support helps learners to overcome psychosocial problems, thus, preventing or reducing eventual high-risk behaviour and promoting healthy lifestyles and psychological well-being among school-going young people (Dennis, 2003).

2.3.2.3 Teacher-learner relationships

Teacher-learner relationships act as a buffer and are significant to learners who are academically and socially at risk and who have mental health problems (Krane et al., 2016). Positive teacher-learner relationships lead learners into the process of learning and promote their mental health. Moore states that teacher-learner relationships are improving wellbeing along with the mental health of adolescents. Thus, the importance of teacher-learner relationships must not be overlooked, especially for the adolescent with less family support (Moore et al., 2018)

Being a teacher and promoting learners’ mental health, the teacher puts him or herself in a position to secure that mental health difficulties among learners are recognised and treated, thus, teachers can enhance the social and emotional development of all learners in creating an atmosphere that promotes their mental health (Payton et al., 2000). Positive teacher-learner

relationships occur when teacher critically examine their classrooms through developing positive relationships between the learners and develop alternative perspectives of understanding of their practice (Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010). Improving learners' relationships with teachers, has positive and long-lasting implications for the learners' academic and social development (Hughes, 2012). Improving learners' relationships with their teachers will not produce gains in achievement (Wayne & Youngs, 2003). However, those learners who have positive, close, and supportive relationships with their teachers, will attain higher levels of achievement not only in academics but within their internalised mental health than those learners with more conflict within their relationships (Lee, 2012).

A learner feels strong and personal connections towards the teacher when they talk to the teacher frequently and receives more constructive guidance and praise rather than just criticism from the teacher (Pianta, 1999). The learner is likely to trust the teacher, show engagement in learning, to behave better in class, achieve higher levels academically, and present positive mental health.

2.3.2.4 Gender

Starting in early adolescence, women suffer more from internalising mental health needs than men, which turn problematic feelings against the self into depression and anxiety (Rosenfield & Mouzon, 2013).

Internalised mental health needs are a leading cause in development globally (Walker et al., 2015), and in most individuals is first experienced in childhood (Kessler, 2005), leading to growing interest in improving adolescent internalised mental health (Kessler, 2005). During childhood and adolescence, “girls tend to report significantly worse internalising mental health needs than boys and this gender gap increases with age during adolescence” (Anniko et al., 2019, p.155). Gender is corresponding with the generalisation of certain internalised mental health needs, including anxiety, depression, and somatic complaints. For example, girls are more likely to be diagnosed with major depression, while boys are more likely to be diagnosed with substance abuse and antisocial personality disorder. Thus, girls are more likely to experience mental health needs with internalising symptoms, such as low self-esteem and anxiety, than boys, while boys are more likely to experience externalising symptoms and the mental health needs that go along with them (Pattyn et al., 2015).

2.3.2.5 Self-esteem

Moksnes & Reidunsdatter (2019) defined self-esteem as people's set of thoughts and feelings about their worth and importance. High life satisfaction is associated with a learner's strong self-

esteem (Boden, 2008) and strong self-esteem seem to be a protective factor by acting as a potential buffer against negative stressors (Zeigler-Hill, 2011). The term self-esteem describes an individual's overall subjective sense of personal worth and value (Sharma, 2014). In other words, self-esteem is defined as how much an individual appreciate and likes themselves regardless of the circumstances. Self-esteem tends to be lowest in childhood and increases during adolescence, as well as adulthood, in due course reaching a stable and enduring level (Dukes & Martinez, 1994). This makes self-esteem like the stability of personality traits over time; thus, no learning takes place unless it is motivated and supported. Self-esteem is the evaluative and affective dimension of a learner's self-concept (Orth et al., 2012). Civitci & Civitci (2009) explain that self-esteem is prone to various internal and external influences and changes during adolescence.

Every learner is required by some motive to learn new things. In the absence of motivation, the learner sometimes does not feel interested in the act of learning. A learners' behaviour in learning is energised by motives, selected by motives, and directed by motives (Mann et al., 2004). This is the value individuals place on themselves, their sense of self-worth, and their positive self-image. People with high self-esteem generally have a positive outlook and are satisfied with themselves most of the time (Mann et al., 2004).

Self-esteem impacts the decision-making process, relationships, emotional health, and overall well-being (Mann et al., 2004). It also influences motivation, as learners with a healthy, positive view of themselves understand their potential feel inspired to take on new challenges (Li et al., 2010). Learners with low self-esteem tend to feel less sure of their abilities and may doubt their decision-making process. They may not feel motivated to try novel things because they do not believe they can reach their goals (Taylor et al., 2007). Those with low self-esteem may have issues with relationships and expressing their needs. They may also experience low levels of confidence and feel unlovable and unworthy. Low self-esteem has the potential to lead to a variety of mental health needs, including anxiety disorders and depressive disorders (Keane & Loades, 2017). Learners may also find it difficult to pursue their goals and maintain healthy relationships. Having low self-esteem can seriously impact the quality of life and increase the risk of experiencing suicidal thoughts.

2.3.2.6 Resilience

Psychological flexibility is the 'super skill' of resilience and mental health (Rao, 2021). Kashdan and Rottenberg (2010) detailed that psychological flexibility refers to an individual's ability to cope with, accept, and adjust to difficult situations. Fledderus et al (2010) defined psychological

flexibility as being in contact with the present moment, fully aware of sensations, emotions, and thoughts, welcoming them, including the unbid ones, and moving in a pattern of behaviour in the service of values. In other words, this means accepting thoughts and emotions and acting on long-term values rather than short-term thoughts, impulses, and feelings that are often linked to experiential avoidance and a way to control mental health. When experiencing stressful life events psychological flexibility is protective against negative feelings and can promote positive internalised mental health (Lucas & Moore, 2020).

Internalised mental health needs may cause a variety of psychosocial problems such as decreased quality of life of the learner as well as the increased social distance for the learner and the family and teachers caring for the learner (Kashdan and Rottenberg, 2010). Psychosocial challenges are enhanced by the stigma attached to internalised mental health needs, which is a problem affecting not only the learner but also the people around them (Doorley et al., 2020).

2.3.2.7 Personality traits

Each person is unique, and what brings this uniqueness to the fore is their differences (Papalia & Feldman, 2012). Personality traits can be defined as a consistent, stable, and enduring internal characteristic that is inferred from a pattern of behaviours, attitudes, feelings, and habits in the individual (Roberts, 2009). “Personality traits reflect individuals’ characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, internally as well as externally” (Asendorpf, 2009, p. 43). Introvert and extrovert are helpful concepts to describe different personality traits, illuminating the differences in human temperament (Stewart, 2019). Definitions of introversion and extroversion vary in the literature but are mostly used as umbrella terms to clarify “extremes on a spectrum of personality characteristics” (Miller et al., 2020, p. 2). Lincoln (2008) found that introverts are more likely to experience chronic internalised mental health problems and were less likely to seek support or aid in dealing with their internalised mental health needs. Extroverts display internalised mental health symptoms differently, thus, extroverts should also be mindful that symptoms that individuals typically identify with certain mental health needs such as depression or anxiety is displayed much differently for an extroverted individual (Fan et al., 2020).

A broad classification of learners’ behaviours and disorders are based on their reactions to stressors. Externalising behaviours are characterised primarily by actions in the external world, such as acting out, antisocial behaviour, hostility, and aggression. Internalising behaviours are characterised primarily by processes within the self, such as anxiety (Joshani & Nosratabadi, 2009). There are internal and external factors that influence a learners’ behaviour. External influences are the factors that influence the learner from the outside, for example, family

influences and classmates' actions, while internal influences come from within and are, for example, the learners' character traits (Matthews et al., 2003). Learners are not always aware of why they behave differently in different situations. Obstacles arise that cause this behaviour of different personality traits to change in learners. If the learner does not receive the necessary support from their parents, teachers, or schoolmates during his or her development, he or she will struggle to act realistically in different situations (Sternberg, 2006).

2.3.2.8 Subjective wellbeing

Subjective well-being is defined as “a person’s cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life” (Diener et al., 2002, p. 63). Keyes (2006) defined subjective wellbeing in terms of holistic aspects that sustain adolescents’ happiness with their lives. . The cognitive element refers to what individuals think about their life satisfaction in global terms (life as a whole) and preserve terms in specific areas of life such as school and relationships (Feixas et al., 2009). The affective element refers to emotions, moods, and feelings. Affect is considered positive when the emotions, moods and feelings experienced are pleasant (e.g., joy, elation, affection etc.). Affect is deemed negative, though, when the emotions, moods and feelings experienced are unpleasant (e.g., guilt, anger, shame etc.). Subjective well-being refers to how learners experience and evaluate their lives and their internalised mental health (Yakovlev & Leguizamon, 2012). Subjective well-being exists on a continuum, ranging from states of very low well-being, including “severe depression and hopelessness” to those of very high well-being such as “genuine happiness” (Konu et al., 2002, p.155). Moore et al. (2018) reveal that secondary school learners with peer connectedness experience better subjective wellbeing that is linked to their mental health. Subjective well-being, therefore, focuses on how a learner evaluates his or her own life, including emotional experiences of positive versus negative in response to specific events and cognitive evaluations of what a learner considers a good life (Van Hoof & Raaijmakers, 2002). Components of subjective well-being relate to affect and include positive effects such as: experiencing pleasant emotions and moods and low negative affect as: experiencing unpleasant, distressing emotions and moods (Klocke et al., 2014).

2.3.3 Internalised mental health needs in adolescents

“Adolescence is a phase of life stretching between childhood and adulthood, and its definition has long posed a conundrum” (Sawyer et al., 2018, p. 223). “Historically this phase of life spans from 12 to 18 years” (Jaworska & MacQueen, 2015), which signifies the period the adolescent spends in high school in the South African context (p. 291). Jones (2013) explains that most mental health needs “initial manifest before adulthood, with noticeable increases during adolescence” (p. 6).

Internalised mental health needs of adolescents can include wide-ranging emotional and behavioural issues. Adolescents in general is an important period for the development of a socially integrated self-concept, while a negative self-concept may affect future decisions because of minimum support given (Speyer et al., 2021). If such internalised mental health needs persist without any mediation, it tends to “impede the adolescent’s functioning and possibly will necessitate professional intervention” (Pryjmachuk, 2011, p. 293). “Adolescents develop best when increasing opportunities occur in environments that are emotionally supportive” (Li et al., 2014, p. 56). “Adolescence offers growth opportunities, not only in physical dimensions but also in cognitive and social competence, autonomy, self-esteem, and intimacy” (Papalia & Feldman, 2012, p. 355). This period is associated with a “period of increased risk-taking behaviours as well as increased emotional sensitivity” (Jaworska & MacQueen, 2015, p. 291).

In the context of this study, many adolescents are experiencing internalised mental health needs (cf. section 4.2). That aligns with Jones (2013) and Grant and Potenza (2010) stating that most internalised mental health needs initial manifest before adulthood, with noticeable increases during adolescence. Internalised mental health needs associated with social and emotional actions is another critical period for the adolescent, what they think of themselves and peers around them. They experience significant “speed and intellectual functioning, with most dramatic advances in abstract thinking, decision making, response inhibitions and planning” (Yurgelun-Todd, 2007), all leading to more differentiated and multidimensional thoughts about their internal feelings that react differently in different situations (p. 256). Jaworsko and MacQueen (2015) contend that internalised mental health in adolescence indicates “a period of strength and resilience”, however, internalised mental health needs often “begins during this developmental timeframe” (p. 292).

Multiple factors determine internalised mental health needs in South African schools. The more risk factors adolescents are exposed to, the bigger the potential impact on their internalised mental health. Factors that can contribute to internalised mental health needs during adolescence include a desire for greater autonomy, pressure to conform with peers, exploration of sexual identity, and increased access to and use of technology (Aarons, 2009, p. 2087). “Media influence and gender norms can exacerbate the disparity between an adolescent’s lived reality and their perceptions or aspirations for the future” (Teich, 2008, p. 13). Although the Department of Health formulated internalised mental health intervention strategies for adolescents, it is unclear whether these strategies are being properly implemented in schools (Speyer et al., 2021).

During the past 25 years, emotional and behavioural problems have been recognised as a major cause of mental health problems among adolescents (Zwaanswijk et al., 2003). Such problems

are associated with an “increased likelihood of poor later life outcomes such as depression, impaired social relationships, and other emotional behavioural problems” (Sempik et al., 2008, p. 228). As a result, the prevention of emotional and behavioural problems and the promotion of mental health is now a national priority for children and adolescents (McMunn et al., 2001).

2.3.4 Value of good mental health

Mental health promotion and learning refers to “the process of enabling learners and teachers to increase control over and improve their mental health” (Smith et al., 2006, p.854). Schwager et al (2019) recommended that for learners to engage fully with education, they need to be emotionally healthy, as emotional health problems are barriers to learning (Adelman and Taylor, 2006; Paternite and Johnston, 2005). Teachers are encouraged to guide positive mental health (Gueldner, 2020) and learning inside as well as outside the classrooms (cf. section 5.7), as the learners can observe examples as well as share the emotional barriers with their peers and with the teacher, building new relationships and trust (Sapthiang et al., 2019). The promotion of internalised mental health consists of any action taken to create living conditions and environments that support mental wellness and allow individuals to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles fostering optimal emotional functioning and social inclusion (O'Reilly et al., 2018). Mental health is as important as physical health. Positive mental health enables individuals to function well, have meaningful social connections, have positive self-esteem and be better able to cope with life (Eriksson et al., 2018). Strengthening adolescents’ mental health and protecting them from risk factors and adverse experiences positively impact their potential to thrive and their mental health during adulthood (Sontag-Padilla et al., 2018).

Ryan and Deci (2009) explain that a school is a unique setting where learners’ social and emotional well-being can be promoted and critical skills for school, work and life can be taught and learned. A wide range of skills, including cognitive, social, and emotional skills, are needed by learners as well as teachers to develop positively and be successful in life (Barry, 2017). Motivation and support from the teacher, parent, and community, therefore, build positive and healthy relationships with the learner (Mousavi et al., 2018).

The role of schools involves actively participating in discourse. Through discourse, teachers can validate what is being communicated in and outside the classroom. This provides “the opportunity to critically examine the evidence, arguments, and alternate points of view, which fosters collaborative learning” (Allen et al., 2017, p.32). Through fostering internalised mental health, “learners with different backgrounds can work together. They come together and can hear different opinions and learn about new values and skills” (Karantzas et al., 2013, p. 40). To

achieve their full potential and goals, learners are encouraged to work together, through this, learn to trust one another (Gregory et al., 2008). As learners and the teacher work together, they also receive more support, therefore gain confidence.

Through communicative learning, teachers must work towards critically reflecting on assumptions that underline intentions, values, beliefs, and feelings. Learners are involved in objective re-framing of their frames of reference as they critically reflect on the assumptions of others around them (Mezirow, 2000). Objective re-framing can assist the teachers and learners to dig deeper and work on uncovering, articulating, and questioning their mental health and beliefs (Graham et al., 2017). In contrast, “subjective re-framing occurs when teachers and learners critically assess their assumptions” (Smith, 2011, p.3). “The teacher becomes a facilitator when the goal of learning is for learners to construct knowledge about themselves, others, and social norms” (Smith, 2011, p.3). As a result, teachers play an important role in the learning environment and process. Teachers must create norms within the classroom that include respect and responsibility for supporting one another’s (Hue & Li, 2008) internalised mental health needs. Teachers must welcome diversity within the learning environment and aim for class participation (Voltz, 2010).

Mental health is increasingly recognised as an important public health and development issue in South Africa (Draper et al., 2009). Approximately 16,5 % of South Africans between 2002 and 2004 were suffering from mental health needs, similar prevalence estimates have been found among children and adolescents (African Journal of Psychiatry, 2020). Learners in South African schools with mental health needs are often victimised for their “illness” and face unfair discrimination. These learners are often mistreated by their family and friends as well as in the community (Govender et al., 2013). Mental health amongst secondary school learners has become a great concern in South Africa, because of the apparent increases in mental health problems, with figures indicating that there are 20 attempts by young South Africans for every suicide amongst adults (SADAG, 2018). Fisher et al. (2012) reported that “one in five children suffer from some form of mental health condition and depression is common among adolescents between the ages 15-19 years” (p. 149). There are reports about the increase in adolescent depression and distress in schools (Cluver, et al., 2008).

2.3.5 Internalised mental health as experienced in schools

“Internalised mental health is the foundation of individual wellbeing as it relates specifically to the individual’s physical, social, and emotional wellbeing” (Ekornes et al., 2012, p. 289). Caldarella et al. (2009, p. 51) classify the “common social, emotional, and behavioural problems displayed by adolescents as either internalised or externalised” (cf. section 2.3). Schools have increasingly

been targeted as appropriate sites for mental health promotion and teachers are considered well placed to identify issues concerning learners internalised mental health (Wells et al., 2003). “Supporting teachers identify the components to supporting internalised mental health and learning in learners as roles they can integrate into practice may begin to remove barriers to services” (O’Reilly, 2018, p. 647). Learners’ behaviour towards certain situations at school differs because they are exposed to different home and peer group conditions and with different perceptions of life (Kim & de Dear, 2018). Learners entering the school regularly bring with them lifelike patterns of antisocial behaviour as the result of mental health (Reid, 2002). Researchers such as Wilson (2017) place emphasis on this type of behaviour that can be associated with a particular behaviour pattern that affects the learner’s internalised mental health, thus, lasting characteristics are formed. Positive internalised mental health and learning will be detailed as well as the promotion of the factors influencing this positive mental health and learning in schools (Hattie, 2003).

Declining mental health is an emergent epidemic in secondary schools in South Africa as an indication of a rise in the prevalence (Herman et al., 2009). There is growing recognition that mental health is a “crucial public health and development issue” in South Africa (Lund et al., 2012, p. 402). Mental health is not given the full priority that it deserves in South African secondary schools, due to a lack of information regarding mental health needs given to educators, parents, and the community itself (Lund et al., 2008).

South African schools need to have a clear awareness of the extend of internalising mental health in adolescents and their responsibility to be part of the response, not least because these issues do not go away (Massey et al., 2005).

2.3.6 Mental health care and support services for schools

Whitley et al. (2018) express their opinion about the need for care and support for learners with internalised mental health problems by stating that “young people need to have affection, and respectful physical contact with others; they need to be comforted when they are upset, listened to with sympathy, taken seriously, and given opportunities to share feelings, including difficult ones like anger, fear, anxiety and bewilderment” (p. 5). Schools should be a place of care and support for learners with internalised mental health needs and thus need sufficient support services (Rickwood et al., 2005). School support services are a critical component of creating a positive environment (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). Support services in schools support the learners and teachers by addressing the underlying issues, such as internalised mental health needs, that contribute to discipline challenges and are barriers to learners’ success

(Carsley et al., 2018). These support services in schools can provide screening of internalised mental health needs in learners and provide early intervention services to create a positive and supportive environment (O'Reilly et al., 2018).

Schools have increasingly been targeted as appropriate sites for mental health promotion and teachers are considered well placed to identify needs concerning learners' mental health (Gueldner et al., 2020). Supporting teachers identify the components to supporting mental health in learners as roles they can integrate into practice may begin to remove barriers to services (Gray et al., 2017). If the schools work together with the GED and the Department of Health to look after the welfare of teachers and learners, effectivity of understanding of internalised mental health can be enhanced or improved. The desire for a healthy and better world in which to live our lives and raise our children is common to all people in all generations (Vidourek et al., 2014).

In South Africa, guiding policies from both health and education sectors for teachers to adhere to is developed. In South Africa, the strengthened collaboration between the Department of Health and Department of Basic Education in the past five years has culminated in the development of an integrated school health policy (Plüddemann et al., 2014). Videto and Dake (2019), in their endeavour to re-engineer primary health care services, has identified school health as one of the three priority streams. The Department of Basic Education, in its policy initiatives, has developed a framework that provides for health promotion as a priority area in schools (Shung – King et al., 2013).

2.3.6.1 Screening Identification Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy

The Screening Identification Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy provides sufficient information on how the school and teachers can effectively support a learner with internalised mental health needs (Mulovhedzi & Mudzielwana, 2021). To make sure that this support is provided and followed up through an ongoing review process, an Individual Support Plan (ISP) must be completed to outline what support will be provided for learners with internalised mental health needs at the school level and how it will be monitored (Hess, 2020). This ISP of the learner will be used at the end of each year when making decisions about progressions. The tracking process should include quarterly consultation with and involvement of teachers and parents (Hess, 2020).

The SIAS policy provides a framework with which to standardise the procedures to identify, assess and provide programmes for all learners who require additional support to enhance their participation and inclusion in school (Ntseto et al., 2021). The SIAS policy is aimed at improving access to quality education for: vulnerable learners who experience internalised mental health

needs, including learners in ordinary and special schools (Hess, 2020). Internalised mental health needs include family disruption, lack of positive self-esteem, the impact of poverty, negative social relations, and no teacher-learner relationship (Mann et al., 2004).

Every learner require support, but some may require additional support not only for learning but towards positive mental health (Van der Vleuten et al., 2017). According to Clarizia et al. (2018), additional support needs can arise from any factor which causes a need to learn and positive mental health, whether that factor relates to social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, or family and care circumstances. The SIAS policy framework is structured in such a way that it ensures that teachers and schools understand the support needs of all learners to enhance their internalised mental health (Ntseto, 2019).

An important principle of the SIAS policy is that the learner is viewed within their context and the extent to which intrinsic factors, the home and school context are impacting on his or her internalised mental health, remaining enrolled and achieving to his or her optimum potential must be evaluated (McKenzie & Dalton, 2020).

2.3.6.2 Whole school development

The whole school atmosphere aims to develop an atmosphere such that everyone involved with the school has a role and responsibility to promote mental health (Hornby & Atkinson, 2003). With a positive, caring atmosphere in place, the school can create a safer and more productive learning and developing environment. Thus, with a positive, caring atmosphere in place, the school can create a safer and more productive learning and developing environment. A health-promoting school is a place where all members of the school community work collaboratively to provide learners with integrated and positive experiences and perceptions that promote and protect their health (Rosas, 2017). Health-promoting schools is set up in a way that ensures that positive changes are sustained (Turunen et al., 2017). A health-promoting school is a holistic model of health which includes the interrelationships between the physical, mental, social, and environmental aspects of health (Lee & Cheung, 2017).

The whole school involves getting mental health onto the agenda of the school that it is considered in considering policies and the way that the school functions (Hornby, 2003). These aspects of school organisation are particularly important in promoting mental health and dealing effectively with learners' mental health needs. Classroom practice needs to be based on a thorough understanding of learners' development and the mental health needs to which they may be vulnerable (Hornby, 2003).

2.3.6.3 Mental Health Policy Guidelines (1997)

The Mental Health Policy Guidelines (Department of Health, 1997) promote recovery from mental health needs among learners in schools. The policy assures the rights of learners with mental health problems and enables them to participate meaningfully in the school as whole. The Mental Health Policy is important because it helps establish guidelines that benefit people and healthcare organisations. The purpose of this policy is to give guidance to schools for mental health promotion, understanding of mental needs, treatment, and rehabilitation. The policy is intended to be comprehensive in its scope, addressing the influences of mental health among learners and covering all mental needs.

2.3.6.4 Mental Health Care Act 17 of 2002

The Mental Healthcare Act (Department of Health, 2002) aims to provide mental healthcare services for learners with internalised mental health needs. It ensures that these learners have a right to live life with dignity by not being discriminated against or harassed. Learners spend the majority of their time in school, schools play an increasingly critical role in supporting these learners with internalised mental health needs and providing a safe and supportive natural environment in which these learners have access to prevention, early intervention, and treatment through school-based mental health programs. The Mental Health Act sets out to improve and maintain the health and wellbeing of learners who have internalised mental health needs.

2.3.6.5 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Policy

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Policy (Department of Health, 2003) was introduced as: Children's emotional wellbeing is just as important as their physical health. Good mental health helps them develop the resilience to cope with negative influences and grow into well-rounded, healthy adults. Other factors are also important in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Policy, including feeling loved, trusted, understood and safe (Dray et al., 2017). Learners who are optimistic, resilient, have some control over their lives and feel like they belong are more likely to have good mental health (Duong et al., 2021).

2.3.6.6 Integrated School Health Policy

According to Shun-King et al. (2013), the introduction of school health services was essential to assist children to enter school at the right age by addressing barriers to school entry, helping children to stay in school until completion, reducing absenteeism due to health reasons, and contributing to an educational performance by minimising health barriers to learning. The objective of the School Health Policy is to contribute to the promotion of education quality by

instructing children to exercise the habits of tidy living, help to keep their school environment clean and safe with hygiene and sanitation and provide equal rights of access to health care.

The Integrated School Health Programme aims to provide more comprehensive services, which addresses not only barriers to learning but also other conditions which contribute to internal and external influences amongst learners with internalised mental health needs.

2.3.7 Role of teachers at school in addressing internalised mental health needs

The whole school atmosphere aims to develop an atmosphere for the learner and teacher that everyone involved with the school has a role and responsibility to promote mental health (Hornby & Atkinson, 2003). With a positive, caring atmosphere in place, the school can create a safer and more productive learning and developing environment (Bandura & Evans, 2006). Teachers want learners to succeed in their academic, personal, and social lives (cf. section 5.5.5.1). They want their learners to have the motivation and ability to achieve and to establish positive relationships with their peers and adults (Wells et al., 2003). Teachers have an important role to play in the promotion of learners' mental health as well as in the identification of learners with internalised mental health needs. These aspects of school organisation are particularly important in promoting mental health and dealing effectively with learners internalised mental health needs. Bandura and Hall (2018) explain that if the teacher understands the term internalised mental health, it is seen as active participants who perceive and evaluate stimuli, who strive towards goals and devise plans to achieve them.

Teachers can provide an opportunity to transform. To foster transformation, the teachers' role is to "assist learners in becoming aware of assumptions", thus, to become aware of learners' internalised mental health needs (Carrington & Selva, 2010, p. 45). This includes the teachers' assumptions that lead to their interpretations, beliefs, habits of mind, or points of view", as well as the assumptions of others. Teachers must provide practice in recognising frames of reference (Carrington & Selva, 2010, p.61). By doing so, teachers encourage practice in redefining internal mental health needs from different perspectives. The goal is to create a community who are: King (2002) "united in a shared experience of trying to make meaning of their mental health" (p. 283).

Being a teacher and addressing learners internalised mental health needs, the teacher puts him or herself in a position to ensure that mental health difficulties among learners are quickly recognised and treated, they can enhance the social and emotional development of all learners by creating a climate that promotes their mental health (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

A teacher's role is very important in the promotion of healthy behaviour in learners at school level. Learners are spending most of their time in school atmospheres and the school authorities and teachers must play a vital role in developing healthy behaviour in learners (Killion & Harrison, 2017). Developing and promoting healthy behaviour is also a part of the curriculum, thus, healthy behaviour in learners helps in promoting internalised mental health (Aldridge & McChesney, 2018). Teachers promote learners' social and emotional health by establishing trusting relationships. This is created when teachers express warmth, affection, and respect towards the learners in the class (Gueldner et al., 2020). Teachers can intentionally teach and enhance these skills using strategies to teach and reinforce positive behaviours.

"Classroom practises need to be based on a thorough understanding of learner's development and the mental health issues to which they may be vulnerable" (Hornby et al., 2003, p. 8). The teacher must be able to understand the situation of the learner. Thus, the learner's behaviour changes due to the situation. Bandura regards the result of continuous interaction between personal, environmental, and behavioural determinants (Bandura & Hall, 2018). Thus, teachers and learners determine their behaviour towards internalised mental health while being influenced by the environment, other circumstances as well as by their behaviour.

2.4 Conclusion

As discussed in this chapter, the school environment is the ideal place to begin to work on addressing internalising mental health needs. Through this, schools must start to educate their personnel to understand internalised mental health needs and thus work on promoting mental health through providing guidelines to recognise internalised mental health needs amongst adolescence.

In chapter three, I explore PAR as a research design with procedures that will be used to offer an insight into the understanding of teachers regarding internalised mental health needs of learners. I will highlight the importance of collaboration between researchers and participants in PAR in this chapter. Lastly, I deliberate on the focus of PAR to improve situations and empower individuals involved by highlighting the unique relationship between the researcher and participants in PAR

CHAPTER THREE

EXPLORING PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

"You cannot understand a system until you try to change it" (Lewin, 1946)

3.1 Introduction

In chapter two, I provided the conceptual and theoretical framework that emphasises aspects associated with internalised mental health needs. The chapter presented the review of relevant literature as it relates to this study.

In chapter three, I describe the Participatory Action Research (PAR) procedures that will be used to offer an insight into the understanding of teachers regarding internalised mental health needs of learners. A brief historical background on PAR is provided followed by various era specific interpretation of the concept of PAR. Next, I elaborate on the critical and transformative paradigm related to PAR, this is followed by a discussion of the design emphasising the cyclic nature thereof. The PAR principles and values are discussed being important aspects that drive the PAR process and focus on action to improve a situation and empower individuals. Lastly, I discuss on the role of the participants in PAR and highlight the respective unique roles of the researcher and participant during the PAR data generation.

3.2 Historical background of PAR

PAR is a subset of action research, defined as the "systematic collection and analysis of data for the purpose of taking action and making change" (Gillis & Jackson, 2002, p., 264). The origin of PAR is traced back to Kurt Lewin, a Russian psychologist and Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany as explicated by Kemmis and McTaggart (2005), Reason and Bradley (2008) and MacDonald (2012). Lewin, after the second world war wanted to conduct a kind of action research to deal with social issues like segregation, discrimination, and integration (Nelson, 2014). MacDonald (2012) suggests that Lewin coined the term "action research" to describe a client-centred approach used with the purpose of finding explanations and solutions to certain social issues, seeking to bring about transformation (p. 36). Although they admit to suggestions of earlier "actionists" approaches, Kemmis and McTaggart (2005, p. 559) explain the evolution of the PAR trail to be reviewed in terms of generations. They suggest that the first generation (1940s-1960s) is reflected in the work of Lewis that offers "impetus to the action research movements in many different disciplines" (p. 272). McNiff and Whitehead (2006) claim that the earliest ideas of Lewis

persist in influencing researchers to manage and report their work in cycles of steps that include observation, reflecting, acting, evaluating, and modifying. Furthermore, McNiff and Whitehead (2006) clarify that these cycles are replicated and thus spiral into a new cycle. Pine (2009) elucidates that Lewin will spiral into creating a second action step, implementing, evaluating, and revising the broad research plan, evolving into the third action step, implementing, evaluating, revising, and even progress to three, four, and five cycles.

Research produced by researchers like John Elliott and Clem Adelman based on a British action research approach on organisational development are suggested as the second generation (1970s-1980s) (Kemmis & McTaggart 2005). Elliot and Adelman highlighted the repeated cycle of research and action, including the planning and implementation (Manfra, 2009). Campos (2016) clarifies that PAR is intended to develop a “critical awareness of individuals in their community struggles” (p. 240). Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) go further asserting that researchers from Australia and some parts of Europe introduced the third generation (1990s-2000s) that encourages a more critical emancipatory approach. Elliot and Adelman were joined in their work by Australian educators who transformed “teacher as researcher” into “participatory action research” (McNiff and Whitehead, 2002 p. 46). Manfra (2009) states that Australian educators created an action research model that they coined as classroom-based inquiry or “educational action research” (p. 33). This model resulted as a spiral process involving devising a question, planning, implementing, observing, reflecting, and re-planning phase.

Meanwhile Paolo Freire, an emancipatory educator in Brazil who is concerned with social justice, demanded a more “actionist” methodology and a fourth generation called PAR, developed in developing countries where researchers link their research to broader community groups (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 560). McIntyre (2007) mentions that Freire considers critical reflection as crucial for personal and social change. He presented thoughts of critical instruction further than the restricted intellectual academic practices in “relation to oppression being rooted in real and material experience” (McGregor, 2018 p. 21).). According to Freire, the respect and humility in educational context, encourage conditions of trust and communication between teacher (who also learns) and learner (who also teaches) (Darder, 2002). Education becomes a collective activity, a dialogue between participants rather than a “top-down” one-way lecture from one person for the benefit of the other (Roberts, 2015, p. 13). In saying this, Freire did not intend to create conditions where learners’ knowledge, feelings and understanding should go unchallenged or for the teacher to step back as a mere facilitator (Rugut & Osman, 2013). Learning takes place when there is mutual respect and understanding between the teacher and the learner (Darder, 2002).

McGregor (2018), highlighted Orlando Fals-Borda (1987), a Colombian sociologist, “who saw science as a social construction subject to critique as another prominent person in the development of PAR” (p. 21). By constructing praxis in research, Fals-Borda (2006) indicates that we act based on new understandings and knowledge generated by research and should concentrate on pragmatic issues by doing research with the participants. Furthermore, he believes that “researchers ought to explore the social realism of a nation with the purpose of striving to resolve the serious injustices that research exposes” (Fals-Borda, 2006, p. 358). Brydon-Miller and Maguire (2009) declare that Fals-Borda is often cited as “coining the term participatory action research” (p. 81). Fals-Borda helped to turn PAR into a coherent school of practice in social sciences, which is defined quite succinctly as an “experiential methodology which implies the acquisition of serious and reliable knowledge upon which to construct power, or countervailing power, for the poor, oppressed and exploited groups and social classes” (Fals-Borda, 2010, p. 352).

3.3 Interpretation of the concept PAR

PAR has been defined by researchers from “different areas of inquiry, such as sociology, anthropology, social psychology, philosophy, feminist research, and community-based research” (MacDonald, 2012, p. 38). McTaggart (1991) explains that there is a multiplicity of meaning for PAR because any literature search using the descriptors “participatory research”, “action research”, and “participatory action research” identifies a confusing and meaningless diversity of approaches to research” (p. 169).

Maguire (1987) clarify PAR from a feminist perspective, stating that this research approach was perceived as a learning action for participants and researchers, with the aim of giving attention to the underlying roots of issues “through collective discussions and interactions” (p. 29). She defined PAR as “a method of social investigation of problems, involving the participation of oppressed and ordinary people in problem posing and solving” (p. 29).

McTaggart (1991) highlights the fact that “PAR was developed as a means for improving and informing social, economic, and cultural practice” which “in principle is a group of activities” whereby individuals with differing power, status, and influence, collaborate in relation to a thematic concern (p.169).

PAR refers to an approach to research that focus on structural self-evaluation, in which the people taking part in the study participate with the professional researcher and co-researchers throughout the research process, from the initial design to the final presentation of the results and discussion of their action implications (Whyte, 1989). Furthermore, the co-researchers are

actively engaging in the quest for information and ideas to guide their future actions (Whyte, 1991).

Wadsworth (1998) explains that PAR can be defined as a process that incorporates the reflection of historical, political, economic, and geographic settings to emphasise problems that need action to address a situation. Thus, PAR is action that is researched, changed, and re-researched within the research process by the participants (Wadsworth, 1998).

PAR, according to Vollman et al. (2004), is seen as “a philosophical approach to research that recognizes the need for persons being studied to participate in the design and conduct of all phases (e.g., design, execution, and dissemination) of any research that affects them” (p.129). Consequently, PAR aims to encourage aspects like capacity, community development, empowerment, access, and social justice.

Chatterton et al. (2007) explain that PAR is about producing knowledge collaboratively with individuals to generate critical interpretations of the context that are understandable as well as available to all those engaged and actionable. Reason and Bradbury (2008) provide a definition that encompasses many of the characteristics of PAR. Reason and Bradbury (2008) define PAR as a participatory, representative process that combines theory and practice, action and reflection with individuals who seek practical solutions to issues and problems and pursue the flourishing of individual persons and communities.

Coghlan & Brydon-Miller (2014) added to the definition of PAR by explaining that it is a research paradigm within the social sciences that emphasises collaborative participation of trained researchers as well as local communities in producing knowledge directly relevant to the stakeholder community.

Reviewing the above-mentioned definitions, there are some key factors that can be derived regarding PAR. The PAR research approach is committed to collaboratively participate with individuals to improve the world they live in, to comprehend and appreciate their knowledge and perceptions and to generate new themes (Kindon et al, 2007). The research is aimed at the needs of an identified group within a particular context. The researcher presents the problem statement that relates to the specific needs to participants. The specific target group of participants who are willing to partake in the research study will act as co-researchers to answer the defined questions. The focus is on the collaborative research approach where the researcher and participants, together, examine issues. An interactive cycle of research-action-evaluation-reflection is part of the research process. The participants are actively involved in the research, sharing their opinions, and generating innovative themes with regard of the research problem.

Following the clarification from PAR, there are many ways in which this approach can be defined; however, and fundamentally, it all represents the same process. The researchers' beliefs and knowledge about the world that they live in and most importantly, reflect they how they define the research problem (McIntyre, 2007). As stated by Schwandt (2001) a research paradigm inherently reflects the world view that embodies beliefs and values linked to the research approach that guides how problems are solved. Next the transformative paradigm that reflects PAR studies is discussed.

3.4 Paradigms related to PAR

The worldview is the perspective, or thinking, or school of thought, the set of shared beliefs that informs the meaning or interpretation of research data (Bogachkov & Feldman, 2015). In educational research, paradigm is used to describe a researcher's "worldview" (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p. 193). A research paradigm determines existing studies, and a clear explanation must be established regarding the research paradigm and "problem-solving", it constitutes the abstract beliefs and principles that shape how a researcher sees the world, and how he or she interprets and acts within that world (Khaldi, 2017, p. 15). Rehman and Alharthi (2016) make it clear that "one should choose methods and methodology which one finds most suitable for investigating the phenomena one sets out to investigate" (p.58). Next, the critical and transformative paradigm that relates to PAR is discussed and then detailed in chapter four (c.f. section 4.3).

3.4.1 Critical paradigm

Horkheimer (1982), one of the founders of the Frankfurt School and Critical Theory, defines the term as "the action that seeks human emancipation to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (p.244). Patton (2002) opines that the objective of critical research is not merely to explain the research problem but to change it. Rehman and Alharti (2016) pronounce that the critical researcher attempts to "bring to light the beliefs and actions that limit human freedom with the ultimate aim of transforming the situation" (p. 57). Rehman and Alharti (2016) further state that these researchers aim to confront situations of power, injustice, and oppression and bring about change. The critical researcher sets out with the understanding that individuals understand deep knowledge about their lives and experiences, and should help shape the questions, and frame the interpretations of any research (Fine & Torre, 2006). Finally, the critical paradigm is concerned with the empowerment of participants and eradicating oppressive structures around them (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

3.4.1.1 Axiology

The axiological position of critical researchers reflects the set of values that undergird the critical paradigm; thus, the axiological assumptions reflect on the change rather than what already exists (Killam, 2013). This is assumed that a reality exists, but it has been shaped by cultural, political, ethnic, gender and religious factors which interact with each other to create a social system (Killam, 2013).

3.4.1.2 Ontology

As stated by Cohen et al. (2007) the social behaviour of people is the outcome of “particular illegitimate, dominator and repressive factors, illegitimate in the sense that they do not operate in general interest - one persons’ or groups’ freedom and power is bought at the price of another’s freedom and power” (p. 26). PAR researchers assumes that there is a reality that can be apprehended and addressed.

3.4.1.3 Epistemology

Critical paradigm is subjective as it assumes that no topic can be researched without being affected by the researcher and co-researchers. Furthermore, the epistemology of critical paradigm is developed based on the real-world experiences, moreover “knowledge is both socially constructed and influenced by power relations from within the society” (Scotland, 2012, p. 14). Critical researchers should be cognisant of their own epistemological beliefs and convey these beliefs clearly when starting an investigation so that “no one is confused concerning the epistemological and political baggage they bring with them to the research site” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011, p. 305-306).

3.4.1.4 Methodology

Critical methodology refers to the transformation of the social system that needs to change due to either discrimination or injustice (Rehman & Alharti, 2016). Guba and Lincoln (1994) confirm that it is dialogic and dialectical, and requires the researcher to engage participants in dialogue, this reflective discourse permits the researcher and the participants to question the current situation and challenge the current systems. In critical research, qualitative data is mostly generated, even though quantitative data could also be used (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). In PAR, methodology refers to the way in which a researcher explores the current problem by identifying the problem, planning the actions, implementing the plan, observing the changes, and reflecting on the changes observed (Richards, 2003). This transformation could be attained by the methodologies employed by critical researchers through the implementation of PAR. Rehman

and Alharti (2016) explain that to prevent the risk of participants being marginalised, PAR researchers engage all participants in formulating research questions, data collection and data analysis using a collaborative approach. Gall et al. (2003) is of the view that “an individual’s awareness is both expanded and constrained by the language that is available to the individual for encoding his experience” (p.497). From the above discussion, critical paradigm is associated with the concept of transformation, therefore it is important to also understand the transformative paradigm.

3.4.2 Critical transformative learning paradigm

The critical transformative learning paradigm is a meta-physical framework that engages directly the complexity experienced by researchers and evaluators in culturally diverse communities when their work is focused on increasing social justice (Mertens, 2009). The critical transformative learning paradigm in PAR offers the researcher and participants a way to understand how communication is used to provide ways to create positive social change (Robson, 2002). Guba and Lincoln (2005) declare that there are four sets of philosophical paradigms that are most relevant to defining a theory in a research context. This includes axiological, ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions (Mertens, 2007). Walker (1993) is of the opinion that “PAR comes with its own in-built value system (axiology) and way of perceiving the reality of an issue or problem (ontology) and values the knowledges and knowledge systems of the community of research interest above others, thereby exhibiting a specific epistemology” (p.2). What follows is a discussion of the four philosophical assumptions relative to PAR.

3.4.2.1 Axiology

Axiology reflects the assumptions about ethics that needs to be considered and is based on respect, beneficence, and justice (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) are of the opinion that axiology encompasses defining, reviewing, and understanding the ethical behaviour during the conduct of the research. The researcher should realise that all individuals have dignity that should be respected, and people have a basic human right regarding the making of choices which the researcher must respect. The American Psychological Association (2002) proposes that the researcher acts as a mediator of prosocial transformation to reduce racism, prejudice, bias, and oppression. Mertens (2010) is of the opinion that transformative axiology reflects the “researchers’ understanding of the nature of reality” and is shaped by their belief in the value of “respectfully addressing cultural diversity” (p.12).

3.4.2.2 Ontology

Ontology is essential to any paradigm and theory as explained by Scott and Usher (2001) as it holds the understanding of the objects that constitute the world as it is known. Kivunja and Kuyini, (2017) assert that ontology “seeks to determine the real nature, or the foundational concepts which constitute themes that we analyse to make sense of the meaning embedded in research data” (p. 27). Furthermore, they claim that ontology determines how you make meaning of the data you gather, thus it adapts the way the researcher thinks about the research problem, the impact of the problem and how the research question might be answered (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The critical transformative paradigm embraces reality as a socially structured aspect (Mertens, 2010). PAR accommodates the ontology that people are dynamic agents capable of reflexivity and self-change (Kindon et al., 2007).

3.4.2.3 Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with “the nature and forms of knowledge, how it can be acquired, and how it is communicated to other human beings” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 7). It is important, as proposed by Kivunja and Kuyini (2017); it assists researchers to establish faith in their data. Furthermore, the authors maintain that epistemology determines how researchers will go about discovering knowledge in the social context used during the study. Mertens (2007) clarifies that epistemology focuses on the relationship between the researcher and participants in the study. A close relationship between the researcher and the participants of the study are paramount, as suggested by Mertens (2010), to attain an insight of what valid knowledge is and build trust. In PAR studies, the epistemology is embodied by collaboration between the researcher and co-researchers (participants). This includes the collaborative development of the research objective, research methods, and implementation that is appropriate in the context. PAR embraces an epistemology which accommodates the reflexive capacities of humans within the research process.

3.4.2.4 Methodology

Methodology refers to the research design, methods and approaches used during the research process to address the research problem and objective (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) also suggest that the methodology formulates the logical flow of the methodical steps to conduct a research study and to generate information about the problem under investigation. Grix (2010) explains that methodology “is concerned with the discussion of how a particular piece of research should be undertaken” (p. 32). No specific method is associated with the critical transformative theory, the researcher can use “multiple methods, techniques and

theories that align with the discussed assumptions” (Mertens, 2010, p.14). Elsewhere, Mertens (2005) explains that the researcher needs to continuously reframe his/her understanding of methodological decisions. The researcher in PAR adopts the role of a facilitator by promoting the involvement and participation of the participants who become co-researchers and partners in the research process (Neuman, 2000).

“The transformative methodological belief system supports the use of a cyclical model in which community members are brought into the research process from the beginning and throughout the process in a variety of roles” (Mertens, 2010 p. 472). Subsequently, PAR as a cyclic self-reflective research approach is discussed.

3.5 PAR as research design

Bergold and Thomas (2012) stated that PAR is a principles-driven approach to research. Reason (1998) defines PAR as having a double objective: “one aim is to produce knowledge and action directly useful to a group of people through research, adult education, or socio-political action. The second aim is to empower people at a second and deeper level through the process of constructing and using their own knowledge (Reason 1998). “PAR seeks to understand and improve the world by changing it, at its heart is collective, self-reflective inquiry that researchers and participants undertake, so they can understand and improve upon the practices in which they participate and the situations in which they find themselves” (Baum et al., 2006, p. 854). The reflective process is directly linked to action, influenced by the understanding of history, culture, and local context as embedded in social relationships (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). PAR reflects the culture, political and economic realities, and social issues of the time and place in which it was developed as well as the personal experiences of the individuals who led the movements in these specific locations (Brydon-Miller & Maguire, 2009).

The locations of individuals’ personal experiences are also explained by Baldwin (2012) that PAR is about knowledge and understanding, based on perceptive and learning as collective acts. This philosophy embodies “the concept that people have a right to determine their own development and recognises the need for local people to participate meaningfully in the process of analysing their own solutions, over which they have (or share, as some would argue) power and control, in order to lead to sustainable development” (MacDonald, 2012, p. 34). Martin et al. (2019) state that when PAR is applied in a research study the participants can understand the research process, why the specific research is needed and ultimately how the research question can be answered together. This means that “the traditional hierarchy between research and the participant-as-researchers” can become undone and modified “into a space where all knowledge

is valued and heard.” (p. 297). From means of the PAR design, advantages were formed in the table below.

3.5.1 Advantages of PAR

PAR has several advantages.

Table 3-1: Advantages of PAR (Walker, 1993, p.37)

	Advantage	Meaning
1	PAR is applied research	The problem-solving focus means that PAR is research with practical outcomes and positive change.
2	PAR is collaborative research	Involving the community of research interest with the research objective, aids in producing practical outcomes that are workable.
3	PAR is committed research	The commitment of the community of interest enables the research project to access community understanding, knowledge, and collective memory.
4	PAR originates with the researched	The community locus of control leads to the identification of problems that are important to the community, not diagnosed from outside.

Firstly, PAR increases profundity and understanding of issues, making research more relevant. Participants are actively involved in the research; it means that this active involvement increases chances of community adopting practices and outcomes from research. Secondly, logistical barriers to research are reduced in PAR, which can improve efficiency and reduce frustration. Thirdly, PAR provides the ability to observe behaviour as it occurs, thus increasing the efficiency of data collection. Fourthly, the risk of misunderstanding is minimised due to the close relationships developed with the community. Finally, relationships are built on each other’s knowledge and research participants already possess the required knowledge and expertise to help improve the programme. From the above advantages, PAR also included disadvantages in table 3-2.

3.5.2 Disadvantages of PAR

Participatory action research is not good in all situations, and there are a few disadvantages with the approach.

Table 3-2: Disadvantage of PAR (Walker, 1993, p. 37)

	Disadvantage	Meaning
1	PAR has no research leader	The group involvement and democratic processes may lead to competing research agendas.
2	PAR may be impractical	Categorising a group with a shared interest or problem as a 'community' does not automatically result in a consensus on what the problem is and how it might best be addressed.
3	PAR usually has no timeline	The process, by its nature, has no set end date. The question then becomes how do we know when a problem is resolved, or when has the process become ineffectual.

Some disadvantages regarding PAR are also mentioned in the literature. The results in PAR cannot be generalised. The results are applicable to the population studied and the exact system concerned. It is more difficult to conduct when compared to conventional research as it takes longer and requires refinement of the methodology as the research continues. During PAR, the researcher works in their own practice. Monitoring closely, this practice as they act within it, demands space and time which, almost by definition, the practice does not give easily. It is therefore difficult to maintain diligence in data gathering, thus the researcher has less control over the data that is generated.

3.6 Cyclic nature of PAR

PAR is cyclic, working its way through various iterations of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The cyclical nature of PAR is its fundamental process feature (Wadsworth 1998). From the cycles it is apparent that research and practice are linked in participatory action research, as a practical challenge and/ or social issue drives the action research process (Koshy et al., 2011). The PAR approach is flexible in terms of the cycles that are followed during the research process (Carr & Kemmis, 2003). Next, the different names for the different cycles (and spirals) in PAR is explained by various authors.

Stringer and Genat (2004) describe the cycles as phases, with phase one as the point where the research focus is defined with the participants. During phase two the participants reflect on their perceptions and experiences. Phase three the participants identify the issue they want to focus on. They explain phase four as the point where participants explore the issue by generating data about the problem under investigation, also by presenting the issue they want to focus on. The last phase (phase five) is where the participants take part in developing action, the participants

should reflect continuously, discussing the issues by voicing their issues and listening to others' issues and then collaboratively act. Stringer and Genat (2004) concluded the phases of PAR in the figure 3-1 below.

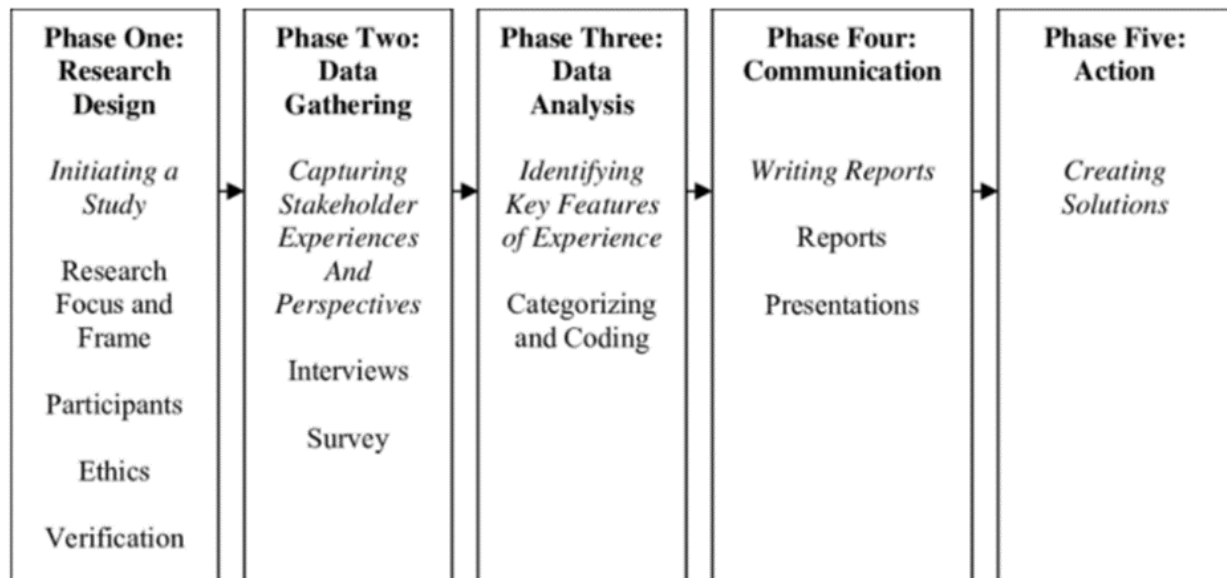


Figure 3-1: Phases of the participatory action research (Stringer & Genat, 2014)

The two primary phases of this PAR are focused on building relationships and collaboratively developing action initiatives (Stringer & Genat, 2014). The development and implementation of action at the individual and school levels.

Morales (2016) presents PAR as recurrent stages of planning, and action followed by reflection. The goal of PAR is to resolve or rectify specific problems in communities. The stages begin with a community's issue, proposed action, or strategy and then supports or enhances this action with research. The process is affected through a series of stages:

Table 3-3: Stages of PAR

	Stage	Meaning
1	Planning a change	The planning starts with a question about an issue, problem or difficulty experienced by some or all the community members (Ioannidou-Koutselini & Patsalidou , 2015, p. 124).
2	Acting and observing the process of change	Acting and observing procedures, no one holds the final truth and the right results; thus, the researchers and participants learn and change, and they experience their own and others' development (Koutselini, 2008, p. 29).

3	Reflecting on the process and its consequences	“All participants interact, exchange ideas, reflect upon and enrich their practice based on their exchanges and come to a new enriched or changed discourse during the process of each interaction and after that as part of their reflective practice” (Snell Herzog et al., 2009, p. 239).
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Throughout the stages of PAR, Kelly (2005) is of the opinion that three essential elements must, therefore, be contained in every PAR project: Collaboration with participants, reflection, and evaluation. Reflection of participants through learning provides them with the unique opportunity to negotiate their beliefs and change misconceptions through discussions, decisions and actions, reflections, and new actions with one another (Gillis & Jackson, 2002).

Loewenson et al. (2014) refer to PAR as cyclical and spiral processes. These authors explain that the first step is organising and validating the experience collectively; the second step is collectively analysing, reflecting on problems, and theory; the third step viewing alternative causes of action and identifying actions; the fourth step is acting and reviewing the course and consequences of action and change; the fifth step is that of organising, validating, and sharing new knowledge. At the end of the fifth step the process is repeated. Loewenson et al. (2014) presented PAS cyclic and spiral processes in figure 3-2.

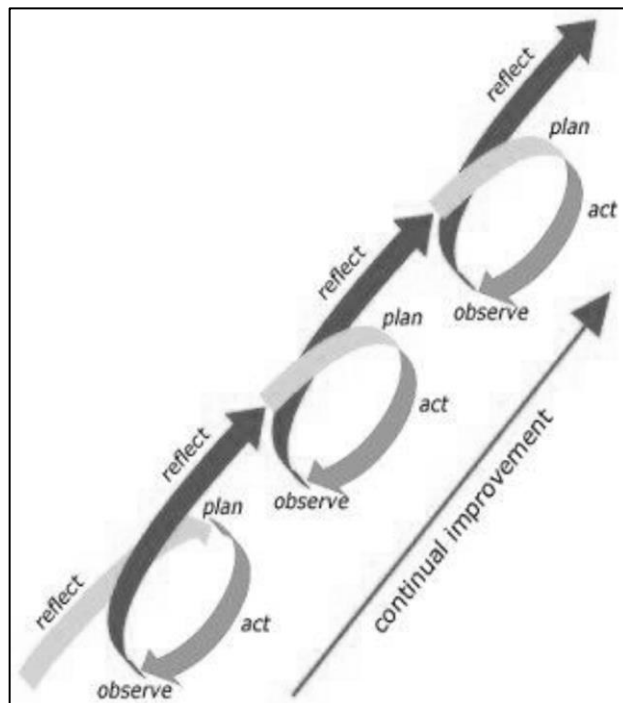


Figure 3-2: The cyclic and spiral nature of PAR (Loewenson et al., 2014)

From the different phases, stages, cycles, and spirals, it is apparent that research and practice are linked in participatory action research, as a practical challenge and/or social issue drives the action research process (Koshy et al., 2011).

3.7 Context of the cycles in PAR

The context of the research cycle in PAR may not be as neat and final in some other procedures, as the stages will overlap, and mutual plans may quickly become obsolete considering learning from experience, refer to chapter four (cf. section 4.6). The action of describing the preliminary research cycle is stated as follows. The researcher may become aware of a problem in the school community, or the school may approach the researcher for an opinion on the problem or to assist in identifying and then formulating the problem (Goessling, 2019). Thus, the challenge during a practice phase is whether the participants understand the problem statement and their roles in addressing these problems. To gain a clear vision of the problem statement, information should be collected about the problem and the situation and the context within which the problem occurs (Goessling, 2019). The reflection of the data is done in a manner that will assist the researcher in writing a first draft report of high quality that will also be of interest to the potential readers, that is, the teachers (Dickson & Green, 2001). Reflection should be part of the process, in other words the extent to which goals have been achieved, the level of skills development and the empowerment of people, and the benefits to the school community through participation.

The nature and context of the community's impediments must be determined by way of research (Weyers, 2001). This phase means implementing the data-collection techniques after the proposed collages of each teacher. This technique can be defined as informal techniques. The needs of the school community are systematically assessed and the necessary information to guide suitable action is gathered. It is critical to be clear at the outset of this phase of what the goals are, and to continue a proper balance between the research and the action goals (Neuman & Dickinson, 2003). During the plan phase the individual interpretations of the participants should be linked to and integrated into the broader context of the research problem. The development of the action plan follows on the recommendations of the preliminary research report (Kemmis et al., 2014). After this action plan has been implemented, the results of this phase are assessed and a further period of research is initiated, as follows cycle 2 known as the PAR research cycle.

According to MacDonald (2012) the cycles of PAR, the researcher must:

- Must clearly define the research topic using known definitions outlined in the literature; the researcher must be able to give detailed definitions to the participants, to retrieve more knowledge about their understanding of the research problem.

- Address the important and relevant issue the participants share their knowledge and understanding, not only to write or speak but through a creative manner, using pictures to express their knowledge on this specific topic. The researcher may continue narrowing the study focus to an area that can be addressed as a single topic.

A good researcher will also have some new aspects that have never previously been examined, the new aspect of focus is on the knowledge and perceptions of the participants, not only does the researcher advise, but solicits more input from the participants

3.8 Principles of PAR

McTaggart (1991) made it clear that the objective with PAR is to improve and inform social, economic, and cultural practices by means of group activities where participants from different viewpoints can collaboratively work together to address a thematic concern. A synthesis of various authors (e.g., Hall, 1981, Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Reason, 1994; Selener, 1997, Israel et al. 1998, Bhatt & Tandon, 2001, McIntyre, 2007, Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008, Vollman et al. 2008, Kalliola, 2009, Stringer, 2014) confirmed that PAR is characterised by various principles. This is best captured by Canlas and Karpudewan (2020) who propose various principles based on the characteristics of PAR, that can be used as a “point of departure but are by far not conclusive” (p. 3). Below Table 3-4 presents seven broad principles as condensed from the literature.

Table 3-4 Principles of PAR

	Principle	Action
1.	Community is acknowledged as a unit of identity.	PAR works specifically within communities. These can be defined as “community of identity that is not necessarily bound geographically but members hold a sense of common identity and shared future” (Israel et al., 1998, p.173).
2.	The problem originates in the community.	PAR explicitly define, analyse, and solve the problem collectively with the community to improve the research context (Selener, 1997).
3.	Involve full and active participation of the community at all levels of in the entire research process.	PAR involves all members of the community in every phase they want to participate in, including but not limited to problem and data collection, interpretation of results, and implementation of the findings to address the research concerns. This involve applying skills from the community but should focus on issues identified by the community and create situations in which all parties can truly influence the entire research process (Israel et al., 1998). Hence, it can be seen as a democratic process (Stringer, 2014).

4.	Integrates knowledge and action to foster awareness among the individuals involved.	PAR might not contain a direct-action component, but everyone has a commitment to applying the research results to a social change effort (Israel et al., 1998), that may be mobilised to develop self-reliance, making it a life-enhancing process (Bhatt & Tandon, 2001).
5.	Encompasses co-learning and empowering of a range of powerless groups of individuals.	PAR acknowledges the worth of people (MacDonald, 2012). It recognises the innate inequalities between marginalised communities and researchers and attempt to address these by emphasising knowledge of community members and sharing information, resources, and decision-making power, making it equitable and liberating (Stringer, 2014).
6.	Involves a cyclical and iterative process.	PAR should involve trust-building, relationship development and maintenance in all phases of the research (Israel et al., 1998).
7.	Disseminates findings and knowledge gained to all partners.	PAR should disseminate information gained in a respectful and understandable language that acknowledges all participants' contributions and ownership of the knowledge production (Israel et al., 1998). The goal is radical social transformation and improvement in the lives of the community or involved individuals (Hall, 1981).

The principles of PAR are an effective way of distilling knowledge accumulated from the experience of the participants as well as the researcher. The principles relate to the development of research that facilitates collaboration between the researcher and the participants.

3.9 Principles of PAR

PAR is emerging as a useful approach in improving the way we learn about and improve the way we manage this specific process (Campbell & Groundwater-Smith, 2007). PAR aims to pursue action and research outcomes at the same time. PAR is the focus in the action to improve a situation and the research is the conscious effort to develop public knowledge (Cardno, 2003). There are five main values in PAR and the values influence all components of the research process:

3.9.1 Empowerment

Empowerment is the process of increasing personal, interpersonal, social – economic and political power, thus enabling people to improve their circumstances (Nelson et al., 2001). Empowerment as a concept has been defined as “involving people developing capacities to act successfully within the existing system and structures of power” (Berg et al., 2009, p. 345). Through PAR

empowerment, it prioritises researchers and participants in forming partnership to identify issues of importance, determine ways to understand these issues and then strategies for acting (Berg et al., 2009). The researcher will adopt a PAR approach that is prioritised relationally through acquired knowledge and the role of the insiders by privileging participants' experience, knowledge, and contributions throughout the study (Budig et al., 2018).

3.9.2 Social justice and equity

In any PAR approach, it is ideally committed to equitable participation in all stages of the research process to collaboratively approve social transformation within the research study (Cook et al., 2020). Educators dedicated their lives to implement change and reforming schools, thus, social justice means defining what it means to have educational equality. Social justice in education requests equity for the teachers as well as the learners. Social justice and equity are seen as the "full and equal participation of the participants that is mutually shaped to meet their needs" (Walker, 2001, p. 21).

3.9.3 Collaborating and partnerships

Bless and Higson – Smith (2007) maintain that what is typical for the PAR model is relationships between people involved in the research process and the use of research as an instrument for action and for increasing human knowledge. PAR builds relationships between the people that are involved in the research, this can be seen as collaboratively working together to understand the specific issue and to take control of the issue (Bless Higson – Smith, 2007).

3.9.4 Mutual learning

Mutual learning is the process where teachers teach each other, also known as learning through teaching. Mutual learning involves "teachers asking questions and being comfortable without having all the answers" (Polk & Knuttson, 2008, p. 642). This entails working together to "find answers or rather to understand concerns and challenges they as educators face inside and outside their classrooms" (Polk & Knuttson, 2008, p. 643).

3.9.5 Respect

Respect has many definitions, everyone has his or her own way of showing respect to others and himself or herself (Coghlan, 2019). Respect is emphasised during PAR, the participants can each share their own ideas, perceptions, and knowledge. Respect is important because it contributes to a context of safety, openness, and reflection (Greenwood & Levin, 2006). This refers to the ability to value and honour another person, it is accepting the persons' ideas and perceptions

rather than trying to change another. Educators are encouraged to respect each other because they will be able to learn from each other (Thai & Lien, 2019).

3.10 Role of the researcher

PAR frequently requires a researcher to perform in unfamiliar roles and relationships (Danley & Ellison, 1999). The role of the researcher in PAR is to stimulate and facilitate the participants' initiative, focused on valuing their knowledge, creating systematic opportunities for learning, and nurturing their capacities to research their full potential (Bryman, 2003). Whyte et al., (1991) is of the opinion that, on one hand, the role of the researcher within the process of PAR primarily is that of a facilitator. On the other hand, the facilitating role of the researcher in PAR is proposed by Babbie and Mouton (2008) as one that facilitates the research process, enhancing communication and unlocking the generation of knowledge.

3.10.1 Facilitation

Wilson-Strydom (2015) suggests that the researcher guides the process of understanding and interpreting during the research process. The managing of the many roles required for effective PAR collaborative process requires a wide range of knowledge and skills from the researcher. The researcher facilitates quality assurance, namely data verification (Anney, 2014). Whyte (1991) elaborates on the role of the researcher as the person who organises the logistics, monitors the data generation processes, and handles the interpretation of the findings. Danley and Ellison (1999) opine on the significance of the researcher in facilitating the development of trust amongst all the group members to function competently and respectfully.

3.10.2 Communication

In PAR, the researcher is inclined to be responsible for the facilitation of communication (Wilson-Strydom, 2015). Winkler (2013) suggests that it includes the arrangement of regular chances for the communication of the process. Danley and Ellison (1999) are of the opinion that the researcher needs to identify the fundamental member functions, set out the distinctive roles of the individual team members to all the participants for the entire team to work well and efficiently. The researcher must always explain the phenomena congruent with reality, thus establishing validity of the study (Mays & Pope, 2000). Babbie and Mouton (2008) also suggest the researcher must develop a platform for discussion, a natural setting where participants can share their perceptions and ideas in a safe place, to guarantee the quality of communication.

3.10.3 Generation of knowledge

Whyte (1991) describes the researcher as a facilitator with professional skills and knowledge leaving the researcher to lead the process of knowledge generation. In PAR, the primary researcher's role is that of knowledge generator by discussing the methods and tools used for data generation with the participants (Danley & Ellison, 1999). Strydom (2015) proposed that the facilitating role of the researcher is used to unlock the information that is linked to the context from the participants in a collaborative manner. Babbie and Mouton (2008) confirm that knowledge can only be obtained if the researcher focuses on the participants, motivating spontaneous discussions that are useful in terms of research. Kidd and Krall (2005) refer to the role of the researcher as multifaceted, that includes, leading discussions, conceptualising the topics of importance, analysis of gathered data with the participants, reflecting on the gathered data and finally, the generated themes need to be discussed with the participants in a holistic manner.

3.11 Role of the participant

As stated by Danley and Ellison (1999) PAR often requires of the participants to perform in unfamiliar roles and relationships. Therefore, it is important to summarise these roles and relationships. Wilson-Strydom (2015) defines the role of the participants in PAR in three distinct parts, namely: the participant's active involvement, shared responsibility, and consideration of respect for diversity are set out below.

3.11 1 Active involvement

Birch and Miller (2002) opine that the important key to PAR is the participants' active involvement in all activities of the PAR research process. Participants supply a personal perspective that guides the development, design, and implementation of all aspects of the research while they equally contribute to all decision-making (Dickson et al., 2001). The participant is active in making informed decisions throughout all aspects of the research (Kach & Kralik, 2006). Kindon et al (2007) concludes that PAR participation emphasises teamwork and active collaboration, researchers and participants work together to analyse problems and generate actions to solve these problems. Participant participation creates awareness among participants about a current situation and the need to take action to create change. PAR considers participants' role in setting the agenda, determining the themes of the inquiry, their participation in data collection, data analysis and their control over the use of outcomes of the whole process as crucial to the research process (Kindon et al., 2007). The participants become collaborative researchers who work alongside the researchers (Trickett & Espino, 2004, p. 2).

3.11.2 Shared responsibility

Babbie and Mouton (2008) suggest the role of shared responsibility of participants. Participants are seen as the decision-makers taking responsibility for how, when, and why a study proceeds, thus, “it is the responsibility of the researcher to take the role in ways that reflects the participant’s desire to move the research in a particular direction” (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout ., 2010, p. 215). Participants promote the building of trust, sharing of power, cohesion, and research outcomes. PAR display the understanding that individuals have the right to determine their own development, thus, the need for the same to participate meaningfully in the process of analysing their own solutions over which they have the power and control (Langmead & King., 2020). The role of the participants is to take joint responsibility in defining the most practical ways to participate. In this way the quality of participation is ensured. Participants will be involved in the “initial identification of the problem to be studied, the design of the research process or methods, the collection, documentation, and analysis of data” (Chesler, 1991, p. 757).

3.11.3 Respect for diversity

Wilson-Strydom (2015) suggests that diversity not only focuses on differences among participants and researchers. Diversity comprises both acceptance and respect, diversity also highlights the understanding of the uniqueness of all individuals as well as the recognition of individual differences (Patrick & Kumar, 2012). These authors state that it is not only how individuals perceive themselves but also how they perceive others. Those perceptions affect their interactions. Respect for diversity in PAR is the exploration of these differences in a secure, constructive, and nurturing environment. This can be potentially challenging since PAR is applied within a cross-cultural context (Wilson-Strydom, 2015). Trickett and Espino (2004) explain that participants should never assume that all norms and values are consistent, as community and individual agendas impact collaboration during the research process. Disrespect among participants and/or researcher may produce immaterial results with limited credibility (Wilson-Strydom, 2015). It can be concluded that respect for diversity during a PAR study is about more than only tolerance, as stated by Patrick and Kumar (2012) “it is about moving towards embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within everyone” (p. 1). Mistrust can be created among participants and researchers participating in PAR especially where respect for diversity is not practiced (Damos, 2014). Patrick and Kumar (2012) opine that awareness of diversity is not only set in ways of being, but it is also in ways of knowing. Participants in the PAR research process need to recognise that individual, social, and institutional bias create and maintain privileges for some and, at the same time, create and sustain disadvantages for others.

It is suggested that participants should build relationships across differences and work collaboratively to eliminate bias (Patrick & Kumar, 2012).

3.12 Steps followed in the PAR process

“PAR is research of a reflective process of progressive problem solving that integrates research, action and analysis” (Kemmis & Wilkenson, 2002, p. 47). Each cycle in the research process has four steps: plan, action, observe and reflect. These steps are used to facilitate the kind of participatory dialogue necessary to enable researchers to generate their and the participants’ own transformational theories of practice to promote the research problem.

3.12.1 Plan

The combination of action includes the development and implementation of a plan or strategy to address the focus of the research (Mertler, 2009). Planning includes the creation of knowledge to understand the effectiveness of the study. Firstly, the participants share ideas and knowledge with one another, they should sit down together to plan further steps regarding the study. The researcher must explore and affirm the inherent strengths, skills, and weaknesses within the participants (Koshy, 2011).

3.12.2 Action

The development of action leads on the recommendations of the planning report (Koch & Kralik, 2009). After action has been implemented, results of this step are assessed, and a further period of research is commenced (Johnson, 2008). The resources and needs of the participants are systematically assessed and the necessary information to guide appropriate action is gathered. It is critical to be clear at the outset of this step what the goals are, and to maintain a proper balance between the research and the action goals (Neuman, 2003).

3.12.3 Evaluate

The evaluation of the data is done in a manner that will assist the researcher in writing a research report of high quality that will also be of interest to potential readers (Smith, 2010). Evaluation must always be part of the research process, meaning the extent to which goals can be achieved, the level of skills development and most importantly the empowerment of the participants (Reason & Bradbury, 2001).

3.12.4 Reflect

The last step, reflection, encompasses participants that individually have an opportunity to represent their knowledge by means of various creative activities (Meyers & Rust 2003). The participants are encouraged to take part in the study as co-researchers, they are given the power to participate in the study together with the researcher. The participants must be prepared to work together to find a solution to the problem and to achieve all the various goals that are set out during the study (Goodnough, 2011).

3.13 Conclusion

In this chapter, I focussed on the PAR process that involves researchers and participants working together to understand a challenging situation and together change it for the better. Throughout the chapter, PAR is emphasised as the participation and involvement of the participants and the researcher, which means everyone in the community. PAR is committed to social justice and equity, especially in powerless and disenfranchised communities and schools. Research and the result of action become compatible in PAR and call for equal movement and responsibility of the participants and the researcher.

In the next chapter I will provide a practical explanation of the PAR methodology and methods that I used for the data generation process to answer the main research question on how teachers work collaboratively to develop guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs within an urban secondary school. The main research question is supported by two sub questions that focus on the promotion of teachers understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools and the teachers' perceived role that they can play to address the internalised mental health needs.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODS

"We are the change agents for the future that is wanting to emerge. And we begin with our own inner practice: at the heart of community engagement" (Wilson, 2019)

4.1 Introduction

Chapter three focused on Participatory Action Research (PAR), portraying this complex and flexible action research method. Hence, it is imperative to briefly explore the origins and various perspectives related to PAR. I particularly highlight the cyclic nature of this research approach. PAR is guided by certain principles and values that are emphasised during a broad discussion. During data generation it is also important to understand the distinctive roles of the researcher and teachers. The primary research question during this study is set out as follows:

- What guidelines can be developed to improve teacher's understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools??

From the primary research question the following three sub-research questions were formed:

1. What are teachers' understandings of internalised mental health needs of learners?
2. What are teachers' perceptions regarding the role of secondary school teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of learners?
3. What operational guidelines can teachers collaboratively develop for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health issues?

The research question is therefore clear on what the problem statement is and focuses on what the researcher and co-researchers is going to investigate. It becomes the beacon that guides the researcher over months, even years of research, as one strives to find answers to these (Maree, 2016).

This chapter aims to introduce a better understanding of the research methods that were followed in the study. This chapter provides information on the teachers, that is criteria for inclusion in the study, who the teachers were and how they were sampled. The research design that was chosen for the purpose of this study and the reasons for this choice was described further in this study. The method that was used for data collection is also described and the procedures that were

followed in explaining this study are included. The researcher also discusses the methods used to analyse the data. The chapter concludes with a summary of the detailed concepts.

4.2 Contextualisation of the study

Building on my experiences and beliefs as a secondary school teacher, I opted for PAR because it involves teachers in the analysis of internalised mental health needs that affect the secondary school learners in their schools. The teachers also could design guidelines for potential solutions to the phenomenon under investigation. Schneider (2012) described PAR as a philosophy of engagement that is focused on cycles of reflection, data collection and action. Furthermore, PAR as an interactive process on community engagement to explore the problems facing the specific community and to discuss, design and adapt possible solutions. Nhamo (2012) clarifies that it is assumed that community engagement unusually is associated with poor environments that needs help, but the aim of the research and the form of engagement can influence on the meaning of community as it can also be a “very rich group and also professional clusters” (p. 5). According to the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2011), community engagement is:

The process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people. It is a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental and behavioural changes that will improve the health of the community and its members. It often involves partnerships and coalitions that help mobilise resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs, and practices (p. 3).

For this study, I will engage with teachers teaching at identified secondary schools to increase their levels of understanding, allowing them to promote their ideas, and to gather possible solutions based on their teaching expertise and experiences.

Rossen and Cowans (2014) explains that every school has learners who are struggling with mental health, in most cases, internalised mental health needs. This mental health needs do not simply go away on their own but often become worse if they are not identified or if they are left untreated. Schools are an ordinary part of individuals' everyday experience that is all too easy for them to overlook how extraordinary they are (McLeskey et al., 2000). Schools are foremost places of building competencies, learning, and achievements, but they are also places for of care and encouragement and safekeeping in creating the health and confidence necessary for future independence of teachers and learners. A formal invitation was sent by an independent person at each school, to all teachers who were interested in partaking in the research study. The principals and the SGB's had to give their permission for their staff to participate and act as co-

researchers in this research. Six teachers from the two different secondary schools volunteered to take part in this research study and together we collaboratively worked together to find solutions to the research questions. The aim was that as co-researchers we learn from each other's perceptions because we shared our knowledge from the two different school environments. The knowledge that was shared between us as co-researchers provided the opportunity for us to act as experts on our own experiences as co-researchers of learners who experience internalised mental health needs as we directed the learners' feelings and understandings when teaching them. The co-researchers were encouraged to identify that schools have a critical role to play in the aspects of internalised mental health needs. Discussions with the co-researchers specified that school experiences were important for teachers as mentors and learners' psychological and intellectual development, therefore asserts that schools need to concern themselves with self-esteems, social experiences as well as academic performances. Table 4-1 indicated the six participants who participated during the study, their information is as follow:

Table 4-1: Teachers participating in the research study

Teachers teaching at urban secondary schools	Gender of participant	Age of participant	Qualification of educator	Years of experience	Grades teaching at the time of this research study
Teacher 1	Female	31	B.Ed Hons. Educational Law	8	8 - 11
Teacher 2	Male	29	B.Ed Senior phase	4	8 -10
Teacher 3	Female	26	PGCE	2	8 - 9
Teacher 4	Male	32	B.Sc Hons. Mathematics	6	8 - 11
Teacher 5	Female	43	B.Ed UNISA	14	10 - 12
Teacher 6	Female	38	PGCE	8	9 - 11

The results in Table 4-1 indicated that four of the six teachers were female. The teachers were aged between 26 and 43. Regarding their qualifications level, participants held different qualifications; two held honours degrees, two held bachelor's degrees in Education and another two held Post Graduate Certificates in Education. Teachers in the two schools had different number of years of experience. One is a novice teacher with only two years of experience, one has four years and another six years of experience. Two of the teachers had eight years of teaching experience and one had 14 years of experience. The teachers indicated the grades they

had taught at the time of this research study, and all the teachers taught learners in their adolescent development phase.

Within the context of the study, philosophical paradigms were made clear, not only from me as facilitator but mostly for the co-researchers.

4.3 Philosophical paradigms

The philosophical paradigms reflect the researcher and the participants' beliefs about the world that they live in and wants to live in (Szyjka, 2012). Davies and Fisher (2018) state that "any research constitutes the abstract beliefs and principles that shape how a researcher and participants sees the world and how they interpret and acts within the world" (p. 21). Throughout the study, PAR reflected the culture, political and economic realities, and social issues of time and place in which it was developed as well as the personal experiences of the teachers who led the movements. The overall purpose of PAR during the study included three types of potential change: the development or expansion of critical consciousness of co-researchers; improvement in the lives of those involved, as the define change or improvement, and critical transformation of fundamental societal structures and relationships (Bradbury, 2015). It is the critical and transformative paradigm (CTP) through which the researcher and co-researchers examined the methodological aspects of the research project to determine the research methods that were used and how the data was analysed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Willig (2013) and Harper (2011) state that epistemological, ontological, and axiological positions related to PAR can be found on a continuum of 'naïve realism to 'extreme relativism to describe the extent to which data is seen to reflect reality.

4.3.1 Epistemology

Epistemology relates to the philosophy of knowledge and how we obtain this, with questions about how and what we can 'know' about 'reality' (Burr, 2003). Epistemology is referred to as the study of the nature, scope, and justification of knowledge, Willig (2013) explains that epistemology assists in answering questions like "how, and what can we know?" underpin the pragmatic inquiry (p. 4). The co-researchers had three questions that needed to be answered through creative illustrations, thus then guided the researcher through the how component of the question, and what we know component. Epistemology is considering how knowledge is generated using the PAR data generation process as this research study seeks to construct a better understanding of internalised mental health aspects by the co-researchers. Epistemology questions who produce knowledge and in what way this is important to internalised mental health. New-found awareness about internalised mental health led to knowledge that is important in generating meaning, and

new knowledge towards change in the research study. Regarding the epistemological assumptions, this “is concerned with the nature and forms of knowledge” (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 312). Epistemological assumptions are about how knowledge can be created, developed, and communicated. In other words, is the question of how teachers became more aware of learners internalised mental health needs.

4.3.2 Ontology

Ontology relates to questions fundamental to reality or existence (Burr, 2003). Ontological assumptions concern the nature of reality, in other words the ontological assumptions are the study of being (Bahari, 2010). Ontological assumptions are concerned with what constitutes reality (Mack, 2010). As researcher, I had to take a position in the study regarding teachers’ understanding of how the internalised mental health needs really are and how these needs affect learners. Broadly speaking, the study was one distinct ontological assumption that was taken, namely: realism, that claims that there is an external reality of learners internalised mental health needs and teachers understanding of it (Scott, 2013).

4.3.3 Ontology

The axiology contributes to how teachers can work collaboratively to develop guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs. Axiology is the branch of philosophy that considers the study of principles and values. Axiology primarily refers to the objectives of the research. Thus, the aims and sub-aims that guide the research study are as follows:

Main aim: To develop guidelines to improve teachers’ understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools.

Three sub-aims: (1) To explore the teachers’ understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners. (2) To determine teachers’ perceptions regarding the role of secondary school teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of learners. (3) To collaboratively develop operational guidelines with the teachers for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs.

Axiology focuses on what the researcher and teachers value in the research, working together to develop guidelines to develop operational guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs. This is important because as researcher, values of the teachers affect how I conducted my research and what I as researcher valued in my research findings.

From the axiological assumptions of the study, in connection with the study, the critical theory will be discussed in detail.

4.4 Critical theory

Critical theory similarly views social reality as an ongoing construction process but goes further to suggest that discourses created in shifting fields of social power shape social reality and our study of it (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011). Critical theory is a social theory oriented toward assessing and changing society (How, 2017). Throughout the study, I as researcher aimed to dig beneath the surface of the social life and uncovering the assumptions that kept teachers from understanding the internalised mental health needs of learners. From these assumptions of teachers, critical theory evolves and shows how reality of internalised mental health needs can change continuously.

4.4.1 Critical transformative learning theory

During this study, the researcher engaged a critical transformative learning theory reflected from Chapter 3 (cf. section 3.4.2) prior to the teachers that contributed practically and through their own thoughts, feelings, and actions in relation to the title – teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners. Taylor (2007, p. 180) refers to the critical transformation learning theory as a “practice of realising adjustment in a set frame of an individual's position”. Taylor (2017) explains that critical transformation is a “uniquely adult” process; therefore, it is suitable to change the “thoughts, feelings and, actions of individuals” (O'Sullivan et al., 2002, p. xvii). The critical transformative learning theory clarifies how teachers renewed or transformed the way they interpreted their world.

This critical transformative learning theory is grounded in any human interaction and communication where learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation of the meaning of one's experience to guide into future action (Nichols & Dewerse, 2010). Through consciousness- raising of learners internalised mental health needs, the teachers will come to see the world and their place and responsibilities in it differently. To the contrary of this consciousness – raising, the teachers will be empowered in their new perspectives, thus could act to transform their new perspectives on internalised mental health needs.

4.5 Research design and methods

PAR is a “strategy research” where the researchers seek to share influence and are involved in the community (school) in all phases of the research study (Brydon-Miller & Maguire, 2009, p. 82) impartially and responsibly. In this study, PAR will be used as a qualitative research design that

promotes collaboration among teachers and the researcher. Within the study the methods used are discussed in (cf. section 4.6), three types of methods were used for the teachers to collaboratively work together. Before the methods of the study are discussed, the teachers had a pre-reflection session hence they are seen as co-researchers in the study, thus the term teachers change to co-researchers. Methods such as photovoice, as the co-researchers had the opportunity to reflect their understandings. The second method is collage making, for the co-researchers to share their opinions with regard to their role in addressing learners with internalised mental health needs as well as the care and support given. The last method was with the use of Padlet, the co-researchers were able to form themes from the collages and use Padlet to communicate constantly. It furthermore provides the inopportunity for co-researchers to act as experts on their own experience as teachers of learners who might experience internalised mental health needs within urban secondary schools as they direct their feelings and understanding when teaching these learners. PAR is based on critical transformative reflection (cf. section 4.4), data collection and action that aim to address the internalised mental health needs and reduce health inequities through involving the educators and community who, in turn, take actions to improve learners internalised mental health. PAR is an appropriate design because of its ability to bring about both research knowledge and practical change. I believe that both participation and action-focused learning is vital to achieve the objectives of my research. The results from the cycles of action and reflection derived from the research should be clear, furthermore, a sensitivity to new knowledge is required as it might be useful in future cycles.

4.5.1 Research site and participant selection

In this study the research involved the six teachers (cf. table 4-1) who applied their own ideas and perceptions using their own beliefs and competences that supported them in attaining ways to identify the problem under investigation employing their own ideas (Hubel, 2014). This PAR study within the critical transformative paradigm (CTP), sought to explore the teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners. The subjective perceptions formed the core data of this study. This research study initially starts with qualitative exploratory approach because of the nature of the problem; understanding internalised mental health needs; is not yet determined, thus cannot always provide the reader with conclusive evidence, but helps the reader to have a better understanding regarding internalised mental health needs of learners.

"PAR offered principles and frameworks (cf. section 3.8) to enable teacher's inquiry to become more participatory, collaborative, and democratising in ways that meaningfully engage (Altrichter et al., 2002, p. 126) learners, families, and other teachers in the full range of the action cycle, from problem identification to making project results and implications public.

PAR provides teachers the opportunity to investigate the underlying causes that produce conditions of injustice and ultimately to challenge them by finding solutions of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools. Understanding how to understand these internalised mental health needs is critical to discovering one's ability to produce personal and social change. Cammarota and Fine (2008) state that once this capacity to effect change is understood, "the systems of oppression experienced can no longer dictate that the source of social and economic problems is merely a result of poor choices" (p. 6).

PAR pursued more holistic understanding towards the co-researchers, and better ways of achieving change, than is possible through traditional research.

4.5.2 My role in the research

As a researcher, I exposed the co-researchers to share their reflections with each other. The teachers soon realised that they also serve as co-researchers in the study (cf. section 4.5), they could share with each other through their own personal experiences. I facilitated communication with the co-researchers by guiding them through the research questions, ideas from the research questions as well as key concepts related to the study. Baldwin (2012) explains that PAR is about knowledge and understanding, based on perceptive and learning as collective acts. This knowledge embodies "the concept that people have a right to determine their own development and recognises the need to participate meaningfully in the process of analysing their own solutions, over which they have (or share, as some would argue) power and control, in order to lead to sustainable development" (Atwood, 1997, p. 2).

4.5.3 Population and sampling

The population for this study were the secondary school teachers at two secondary schools in the North District of Johannesburg. I send the invitation to the secretaries (independent persons)(cf. section 4.2) at both the schools (Annexure G). This was uploaded onto the WhatsApp group of each school and teachers had the opportunity to contact the secretaries if they were interested in partaking in the research study. It was important to obtain the viewpoints of the co-researchers to create a more accurate, critical reflection of internalised mental health needs of learners.

The population for this research project was secondary school teachers in the North District of Johannesburg. The sample consisted of two male and four female teachers who were interested to be involved in the data collection.

4.6 Data generation methods

The qualitative data collection approach was implemented by including strategies that increased participation, like photovoice, art-based collages, zoom meetings, Padlet and WhatsApp. For this study, I generated data using recorded data, taking notes, and recording each co-researcher. The co-researchers made use of different research methods, where they had the opportunity to use creative ways to form on the knowledge, they have learned regarding their understanding of internalised mental health needs amongst learners and their roles for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs. This served as a practical way where co-researchers could share perceptions from their points of view and thus synthesised their views with those of others. Throughout the study, the co-researchers were objective, never influenced by personal feelings or opinions in considering and representing facts. The co-researchers presented signs of the ability to understand, strong emotional intelligence and manage their own emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges, and defuse conflict. Please see Figure 4-1 below presenting methods which are elaborated on more fully after. In Figure 4-1 these methods were chosen to support the reflexive cycle. Each cycle (cf. section 3.7) builds on the previous one to improve its effectiveness.

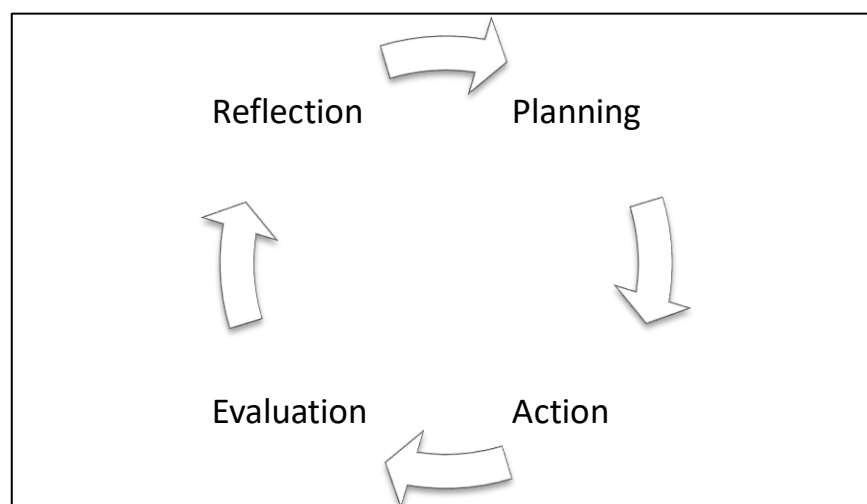


Figure 4-1: Reflexive cycle of PAR (Williams et al., 2003)

4.6.1 Informative discussions

An informative discussion is a qualitative data collection technique in which a selected group of people discuss a given topic or issue in-depth, facilitated by the researcher (Moretti, 2011). This

method serves to solicit participants' attitudes and perceptions, knowledge and experiences, and practices shared during interaction with different people (Williams, 2001).

During the first informative discussion of this research study, I introduced the teachers as co-researchers to one another because not everyone is from the same school. We sat together and talked about the term internalised mental health needs, and from the conversations, the co-researchers were able to realise that everyone thinks and acts differently in situations where learners experience barriers related to internalised mental health needs. Expectations from the study aims were created and change throughout the reflections of each cycle.

4.6.2 Cycle one: Photovoice

"Photovoice is an innovative data collection method which can provide deep and rich information for researchers and the participants" (Walton et al., 2012, p.168). Photovoice is a process where participants record several issues in their community by camera as their tool and they play roles as potential facilitators to make a difference in their community (Pithouse & Mitchell, 2007). Photovoice was first described by Wang and Burris (1997), who assigned three major goals to this type of project: Enabling individuals to record and reflect their community's concerns and strengths; promoting critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small group or individual discussion of photographs and reaching goals to change things. Photovoice roots are grounded in both qualitative and action research. Some of the initial photovoice researchers defined it as a method of seeing the world through the viewpoint of people who are leading different lives (Wang & Burris, 1997). Communities or specific target groups are invited to assist in defining questions, collecting data, making meaning, and identifying strategies for change.

During the research cycle one, as facilitator I introduce the technique of photovoice to the six teachers. An explanation of the term photovoice, what it entails by showing examples to the teachers as well as explaining the ethical aspects to the teachers. Before the action of photovoice were implemented, I also describe photovoice as an innovative data collection method which can provide deep and rich information for me and the co-researchers.

4.6.3 Cycle two: Art-based method - collages

"Collages are art-based visual artworks that are created by selecting magazine images and textured papers; cutting or altering these elements; and arranging and attaching them to a support such as paper or cardboard" (Chilton & Scotti, 2014, p. 163). The process of creating a collage typically brings together disparate visual elements securing a variety of materials permanently to

surface reflects a commitment to relationships, making the ordinary into something special and bringing diversity into unity (Sheiden, 2001, p. 103).

A short explanation was offered to the teachers as to what a collage is, as well as, pointed out how and where collages are used in PAR research. In doing so, the teachers were given time to have reflect and ask questions.

4.6.4 Cycle three: Padlet and WhatsApp

Padlet is a “free web-based application that provides a wall that allows to post words, pictures, and even videos, which can be viewed by anyone with [the] link or address to the specific wall” (Rashid et al., 2019, p. 613). The research demonstrated the application that strengthens teacher relations, encourages, and motivates teachers and learners, and most importantly offers effortless and continuous communication. Fuchs (2014) puts forward an interesting argument for Padlet, he confirms that the application can “encourage real-time, whole class participation and assessment.” (p. 7). Moreover, Padlet is a straightforward and easy method to be utilised for data collection.

As stated, Padlet is an uncomplicated research data collection method that many researchers use to post questions and themes quickly and anonymously, thus receiving immediate feedback from fellow researchers or participants. I used the Padlet method because it is much easier to get in touch with the co-researchers to complete this part of the research, data collection. The co-researchers were invited to a specific Padlet group. I therefore post the primary research question in large font which was clear on the screen as well as the seven themes next to the research question. In collaboration with my co-researchers, we decided to visit Padlet daily, we all reflected on the seven themes as we wrote down key concepts below each theme. These keywords served as our reflections on one another’s collages, as the seven themes emanated from the collages.

Yale et al (2018) explain that WhatsApp is a popular mobile messaging technology allowing users to send images, text, video, and voice messages and conduct individual or group conversations. WhatsApp focus group discussions are more recently being used as mobile messaging as a qualitative research method (Chen & Neo, 2019). Singer et al (2020) discovered that the use of “WhatsApp technology enhanced the quantity of data collected in several ways” (p. 4). They revealed that WhatsApp “offers the potential for in-depth nuanced data as participants have more time to gain confidence with the researchers and fellow participants” (p. 5). With WhatsApp technology the participants are turned into the researchers, “allowing them to document their experiences on the spot” (Boughton, n.d.).

I established a WhatsApp group as requested by the co-researchers to collaboratively develop operational guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs. I uploaded the Padlet group to the WhatsApp group, I opened the informative discussion with a WhatsApp voice note to welcome the co-researchers. The co-researchers discussed possible guidelines and finally decided on five operational guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs. This WhatsApp group remained active for three days.

Below is a summary of the research process used to collect data that is presented in Table 4-2. Each session is separately clarified in line with the explicit cycle, and data collection strategy. Also, the course and the aim of the research process is laid out.

Table 4-2: Summary of the research process used to collect data

Session	Cycle	Data collection strategy used	Plan or strategy	Aim
1	Pre-flection	Informed discussion	Planning	Teachers were introduced to each other as co-researchers. There was an opportunity to talk over a cup of coffee. The groundwork started by explaining the study and establishing the co-researchers' expectation, the planning and preparation then started.
2	One (i)	Photovoice. Planning	Briefly introduced co-researchers to the concept internalised mental health. The co-researchers discussed the use of their smart phone to take photos. The co-researchers collaboratively decided to take two photos each.	Developing a general idea among the co-researchers about internalised mental health. To determine if they are at ease with the functionality of their phones. Introduced the co-researchers to the idea of collaboration and being a co-researcher.
	One (ii)	Photovoice Action	The co-researchers were to take two photos portraying their understanding of internalised mental health amongst learners.	The co-researchers individually decided on what they wanted to photograph to present the concept that was briefly explained to them.
	One (iii)	Presentation Reflection & evaluation	The co-researchers verbally reported back on the two photos and then decided on the one that stood out. They then had to write a narrative base on the one photo.	The co-researchers explored their own perceptions of internalised mental health, as well as those of their co-researchers during the verbal presentation. The co-researchers reflected on the two photos and then wrote a narrative about the photo they chose.
3	Two (i)	Art – based Collages Planning	The co-researchers were introduced to art – based collage making as a data collection method. The co-researchers discussed internalised metal health need of learners.	The co-researchers discovered the material in the art-based collage boxes. To gain a better understanding of the concept.

	Two (ii)	Art – based Collages Action	The co-researchers were asked to illustrate how they see the role teachers in supporting learners with internalised mental health needs.	The co-researchers got to creatively show their ideas on how to support learners with internalised mental health needs using many assorted materials from the art – based collage's boxes.
	Two (iii)	Presentation Reflection & evaluation	Each co-researcher presents their collage verbally while the others wrote key words on sticky notes related to each presentation. The sticky notes were clustered into meaningful groups by each of the co-researchers.	The co-researchers reflected on their own perceptions through the art - based collages and recognise meaningful key words or ideas from each other's explanations. The co-researchers thought critical about the concept under investigation by grouping the key words or ideas into groups, and finally name themes that emerged from the groupings.
4	Three (i)	Zoom meeting Planning	Informed discussion schedules by researcher via Zoom.	Each co-researcher reflected on the completed section of the research. The way forward to be planned collaboratively.
5	Three (ii)	Padlet Action	The researcher established Padlet group and sent the link to all the co-researchers. Research question three and themes are uploaded onto the Padlet group.	The co-guidelines that are linked to the themes.
6	Three (iii)	WhatsApp informed discussions Action & Reflection and evaluation	The researcher established a WhatsApp group, uploaded the final Padlet screen and open the discussion with an introduction voice note.	The co-researchers reflected on the possible guidelines to develop operational guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs.
7	Process evaluation	Develop quantitative questionnaire using SurveyMonkey	Co-researchers' experiences and reflection of the PAR process.	The co-researchers responded on their experience of the research process using PAR.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, as the researcher, I indicated that there are numerous approaches, reflections and actions associated with participatory action research and that the co-researchers had the opportunity to act as experts on their own experience as teachers of learners who experience internalised mental health needs within urban secondary schools as they directed their feelings and understanding when teaching these learners. Next, I will present a discussion of the findings of the research.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

*“And what is the use of a book (manuscript), thought Alice, without pictures or conversation?”
(Lewis Carroll, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland)*

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter four, the research methodology was clarified in detail. I equally elaborated on the context of the study, as well as detailed information regarding the co-researchers. Next, the philosophical assumptions, the ontology, epistemology, and axiology that undergird Participatory Action Research (PAR) were discussed. Subsequently, PAR’s roots in critical theory were explored. This study contains the description of the three cycles of the PAR approach as exploited in the research process. Next, a summary of the research process used to collect data was summarised in a table format and analysed. The chapter concludes with a summary.

The aim with chapter five is to present the findings. To do this, I explain the objective of each session taking place in the three cycles as well as sketch out themes, to analyse all the data collected during the three cycles of the PAR study. I integrate the findings and summarize the new body of knowledge generated from the exploration of teachers’ understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners and their perceptions on the role of secondary school teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of learners. Finally, I present the summary to answer the primary research question focusing on the operational guidelines that the co-researchers collaboratively developed for the care and support of learners with internalised.

5.2 PAR cycle used for this research study

The intention during this study is that the co-researchers is equal partners with the researcher during the process. PAR normally functions in four stages, refer to (cf. section 3.6), namely: planning, action and evaluation, and reflection for this study, I adopted the stages as set out below in table 5-1.

Table 5-1: Stages included into each PAR cycle

Stages	The approach that I followed for this PAR study
Planning	I decided on a structure that comprises details of <i>doing</i> . This includes what, who, when, where, and how. It involved designing a plan to guide the next step (Kindon et al., 2007).
Action and evaluation of data generation	I deliberately and strategically initiated the plan with the hope for improvement to the social situation regarding internalised mental health needs of secondary school learners. The action and evaluation take place in <i>reality</i> and is not “just to see if it works” (Seymour-Rolls & Hughes, 1995, p. 2). During the process of evaluation, we as a group evaluated what was happening and presented it clear and accurate to provide a sound base towards change. This implies that we produce a common understanding of the situations during data collection (Quixley, 1997).
Reflection	I started to build a shared perception of what happened. I start with a process of understanding the data as a variety of information and perspectives is prone to deliver various perceptions. My reflection is formulated to inform improvements to practice that supports or challenges ways of doing things (Everitt, 1992).

From the table above, I outline a short description of the three stages that I followed for this PAR study (cf. section 4.6). The first stage - the planning stage – speaks to the teachers who were willing to share their opinions and perceptions with each other. The co-researchers talked to each other and realised within their discussions that there is a big gap in the understanding of internalised mental health needs. After the planning stage, we moved on to the action and evaluation stage, where the co-researchers came to indicate that some learners in their classes struggled with internalised mental health needs and that, as teachers, they were not always aware of what to do or how to provide care and support to the learners. The reality is that teachers face daily challenges in terms of learners' internal mental health needs. We had informative discussions about learners internalised mental health needs as well as using creative ways to portray each other's experiences and knowledge. Evaluation of our understanding of the problem at hand takes place continuously, from the time we started with our informative discussions through to the end of data collection. Reflection, which is the last stage, gave me as a researcher and the teachers as co-researchers the opportunity to tackle the challenges, through the development of themes as well as keywords to guide the themes in the study. The following figure 5-1 will detail the process of the cyclic nature of the study:

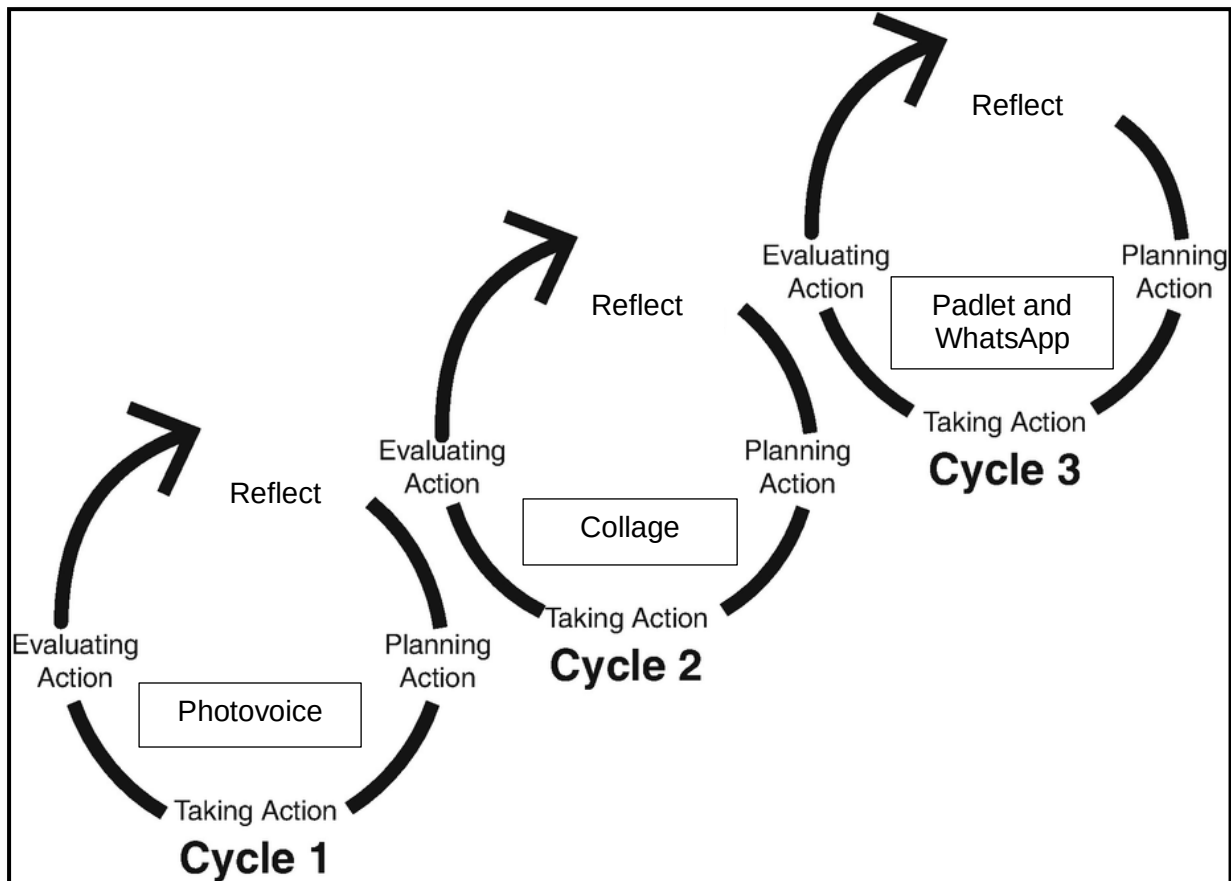


Figure 5-1: Cyclic model (adapted from Nørgaard & Blöndal, 2020)

As stated by Boyle (2012), the strength of the PAR process originates from the iterative cycles as the cycles empower people to advance past the expansion of their knowledge to a better understanding of the issues they face. “The cyclic nature of action research allows for the integration of the conscious and deliberate thinking and knowing of reflection with the less conscious and deliberate knowing and thinking of action” (Dick, 1998, p. 398). The four stages that guided this PAR study throughout cycle one to cycle three (cf. table 4-2) is presented:

Planning action: Clarified the problem based on gathered data and the research questions in parallel, co-researchers suggested possible actions to be done (cf. table 4-2).

Action and data generation: During this stage, action planned by co-researchers was put in action in the context by themselves (cf. table 4-2).

Evaluating action: Considering both the aspects mentioned above, this is the problem-solving stage. From a research perspective, the evaluation stage means putting together results and research questions, aims and objectives of the research project (cf. table 4-2).

Reflection: Identified by Moroni and Bürki (2020) as “critical reflection and communication of learning” this stage gathers “reflection upon the experience, which may bring to the realization of further actions” and “identification of results reached and sharing of experience both within the context and outside, towards the relevant scientific community” (p. 371).

5.3 Pre-flection

The research process started with a pre-flection session. The term pre-flection is as a useful descriptor of the initial meet and planning session of the PAR process” (Méndez et al. 2017). Méndez et al. further claim that pre-flection refers to “a period of preparation and planning that is critical for building trust, establishing expectations, and refining the research questions” (p. 2). Pre-flection can be defined as “a strategy designed to enhance and enrich the reflection process held before the experience encouraging the co-researchers to image what the experience will be like and to express any feelings they have as they anticipate their involvement” (Singh, 2008, p. 241). For this study, the first session in cycle 1 is not formally part of the research, but rather an orientation session to collaboratively establish the context for the data generation process used in this research. Zuber-Skerrit (2012a) explains that this first session is a way to get the teachers together to collaboratively negotiate the way forward as co-researchers.

This first session was an informal way to get to know each other, as the teachers and researcher gathered around a table to formally meet each other face-to-face and address ethical requirements. The next step was to discuss the focus of the study, the co-researchers were brought into the picture about the objective, scope and processes involved in the research, I expound on the concept of co-researchers (Zuber-Skerrit, 2012a) and make sure everyone had a broad understanding of the concepts used. Together we reflect on ideas and questions and our participatory expectations to this research. We then shared information regarding internalised mental health needs that they contemplate to be significant in a pre-reflective manner. As co-researchers, we recognised the common interest and the creation of a collaborative partnership commenced during this pre-flection. The co-researchers in this research study included six teachers from two different secondary schools in the Gauteng North District (cf. section 4.5.3).

Next, the findings of this study will be presented. PAR emphasises social change that promotes democracy and challenges inequality that is context-specific, regularly aiming at the needs of a particular group. Through an inductive approach (Burnett, 2006), I will, in each cycle, explicate the planning, action, observation, and reflection in an effort to, as a research facilitator together with the co-researchers, come to a better understanding of the problem at hand.

5.4 Cycle one: Teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs

The objective with cycle one is to present in a detailed discussion of the co-researchers' efforts and actions to answer the first sub-research question: *What are teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners?* This sub-research question aims to explore teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in secondary schools. The purpose of this type of research question is that the co-researchers collaboratively share their perceptions, experiences, and knowledge regarding internalised mental health needs. Everyone voluntarily provided their insights during this cycle. As a group, co-researchers seek to explore an understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in secondary schools in the Gauteng North District.

I conferred cycle one in Table 5-2 below. I will present the planning, action and evaluation of data generation, and reflection sessions.

Table 5-2: Cycle one: planning, action and evaluation of data generation, and reflection sessions

Cycle one	The objective of cycle one was to explore teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners. Cycle one represents the data collected through Photovoice.
Planning	The co-researchers were all novices regarding Photovoice (cf. section 4.6.2) as a data collection strategy. Together the co-researchers collaboratively decided that each co-researcher could respond individually practically and creatively to the first sub-research question stated in chapter four (cf. section 4.1). As referred to in the cyclical model (figure 5-1), each cycle begins with a planning stage. The co-researchers were sharing their perception about internal mental health and as the research facilitator, I explained to them what Photovoice entails. Ethical considerations regarding the use of Photovoice as a method were discussed. I briefly expanded on the three main ethical needs identified by Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) regarding privacy, safety, autonomy, representation, and recruitment. Consequently, it was proposed by the co-researchers that during cycle one no persons would be photographed. Together, it was decided that photographs of objects or sceneries that represents the co-researchers' perceptions, experiences, and knowledge about internalised mental health needs of learners will be appropriate. Lastly, a timeframe was negotiated for this activity. The co-researchers opted to use their smartphones to take photographs, making it easy to "WhatsApp" the photos to my computer for printing. It was clear that they understood the task and were enthusiastic to start taking photographs.
Action and evaluation of data generation	As the cycle progressed to action, the co-researchers went on to take their photos and sent them via WhatsApp to me. I printed all the photos in A4 colour format. The co-researchers, individually, reflected on their photos and finally choose one photo to write a narrative about what they understood regarding their role for learners with internalised mental health needs. Based on the informative discussions, the co-researchers decided to focus on the photo that represented their understanding of the internalised mental health needs of secondary school learners the best. The co-researchers had the opportunity to write their own narrative about the photo they chose. The presentation of the photo was audio-

	recorded, and the co-researchers negotiated a timeline of three days for the sending of the narrative to the researcher facilitator via email.
Reflection	During an informative discussion, the co-researchers suggested that many learners felt that they are not acknowledged and, as a result, impacted on their internal mental health. The co-researchers were of the opinion that emotions that affect the inside, like your mind and heart are reflected on the outside, this is an outcome of how you can cope with your feelings. Factors that cause internalised mental health issues are social barriers associated with social backgrounds. Social barriers as an external barrier will influence the internalised mental health needs of the learners. Each reflection session was valuable as the co-researchers got more at ease as the process evolved. Each of the co-researchers was able to learn and form a better understanding of each of their individual photos. The co-researchers realised that everyone looked at a photo or object differently, they also found that although they all have different photos and ideas in the end, they could agree to a certain extent.

After this session as the research facilitator, I recorded my reflection:

From the collaborative conversations with the co-researchers, I realised that many teachers are not aware of, or do not know how to perceive, learners with internalised mental health needs. The co-researchers were eager to share their experiences as well as opinions, and in the process, realised that they are from similar circumstances. It was clear that the co-researchers understood the concept of internalised mental health needs from their own personal experiences and knowledge. The co-researchers collaboratively and freely shared their opinions with each other in the group.

5.4.1 Discussion of the findings on sub-research question 1

The aim of the first cycle Photovoice was that the co-researchers could first develop knowledge regarding the understanding of learners with internalised mental health needs. As research facilitator, I asked the various co-researchers to present themselves so they could get comfortable with each other. I made it clear to them that there were no wrong answers and that we will work collaboratively to find solutions.

As mentioned during the planning session, as a research facilitator, I explained Photovoice to the co-researchers as well as showed examples of different types of Photovoice. The aim was that they could build up knowledge regarding the background in terms of Photovoice. This knowledge led them to go out and take pictures with the idea of what their understanding of learners' internalised mental health needs was. After the co-researchers sent me their photos to print, they had the opportunity to share their insights while taking the photos and thus, through these discussions, built further knowledge.

Below in figure 5-2 the outcomes of the Photovoice activity are presented. The co-researchers decided to individually label their photographs. The labels are offered in figure 5-3 below.

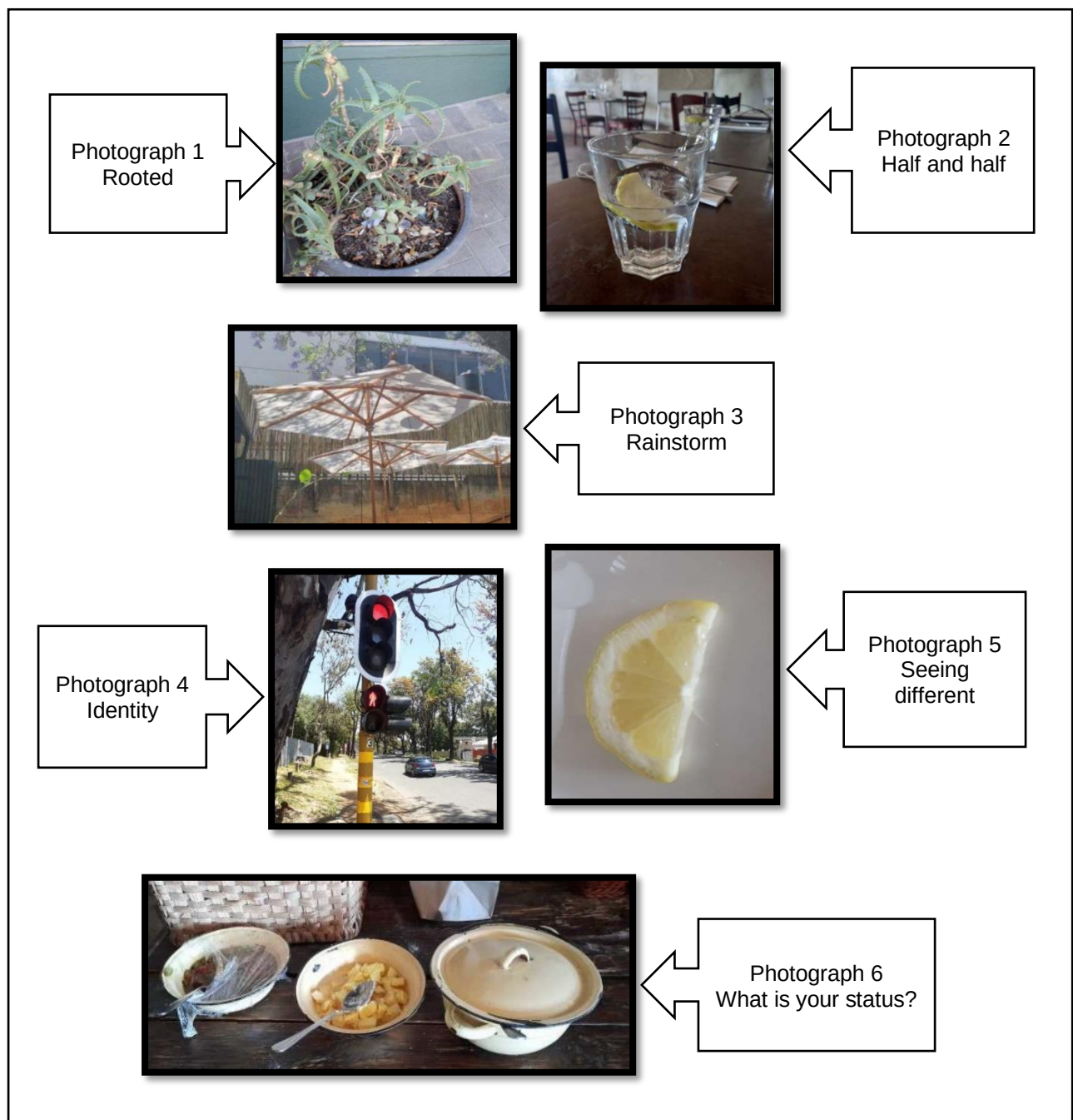


Figure 5-2: Outcomes of Photovoice activity

The co-researchers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of secondary school learners offered through the Photovoice activity, focused on diverse but congenerous themes. From the informative discussion and Photovoice narrative, it was possible to identify five emerging themes: (i) Supportive teacher and peers' relationships, (ii) Adaptability of learners, (iii) Internalisation of emotions, (iv) Subjective conflicts (v) Contextual influences. Next, I deliberate

on the five themes as seen in figure 5-3, supporting them with literature relevant to the themes and verbatim quotes from the Photovoice narratives (PV) and informative discussions (ID).

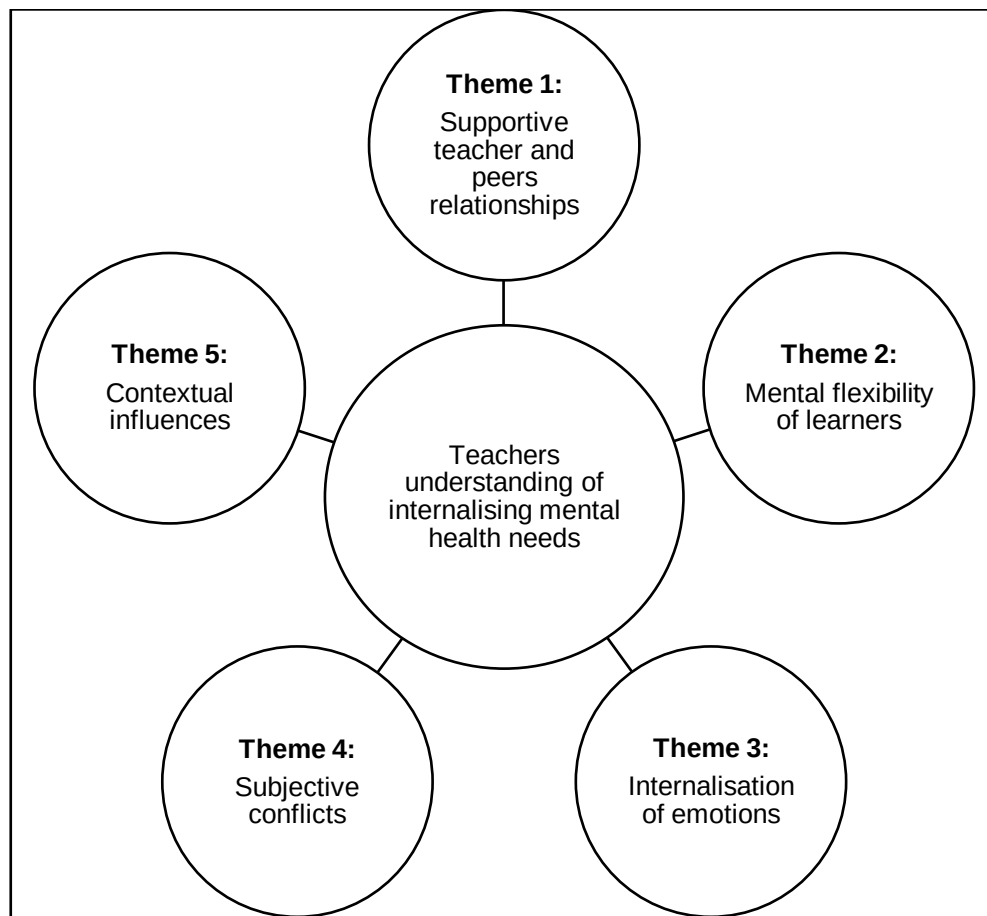


Figure 5-3 Themes that emerged from Photovoice

Next, I discuss the five themes as I support them with relevant literature and verbatim quotes from the Photovoice narratives (PV) and informative discussions (ID).

5.4.1.1 Theme 1: Supportive teacher and peer relationships

Supportive teacher and peer relationships were outlined as support by the teacher to the learners and support by peers. The following extracts from the Photovoice informative discussions and narratives reveal how the taking of the photographs seemed to support the co-researchers to explore their understanding of the internalising mental health needs of learners in terms of supportive relationships:

Teachers can be seen as mentors to the learners in and outside their classes (PV3).

It takes different and all kinds of people to make a world ... they complement each other (PV6).

... to see what values you can add in others' lives and adding them to your life, when you share ... (PV4).

You realise the child longs for support and protection (PV6).

I understand the formation of strong and supportive relationships of learners with teachers as support that allows learners to feel safe and more secure in the school setting, feel more confident, providing them with interpersonal skills to enable them to make more positive connections with their peers (Hambre & Pianta, 2006).). Positive teacher-learner relationships that was evidenced by teachers', reports of low conflict, a high degree of closeness and support, this have been shown to support learners' adjustment to school, contribute to their social skills, promote academic performance, and foster learners' resilience (Rudasill et al., 2010, Rimm-Kaufman, & Chiu, 2007).

Children need the support and motivation to fill their glasses that may be running dry (PV2).

... to bring learners together in support of one another (PV3).

Peer support as described by Mead et al. (2001) support my view that it is a system of giving and receiving support founded on key principles of respect, shared responsibility, and an agreement of what can be helpful . Coggan et al. (1997) emphasise that adolescents rarely use available support services for emotional needs, they rather turn to their peers when they are worried or anxious. One of my co-researchers also viewed the support amongst peers as significant as one declared during the informative discussion:

Learners need the social support from their friends to feel they belong (ID6).

Adolescence has been recognised as a critical time for the development of social relationships and the need for peer interaction (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Supportive teacher-learner and learner-peer relationships are associated with better adolescent mental health (Miller-Lewis et al., 2014).

The co-researchers who participated in this activity identified the importance of supportive teacher-learner relationships along with their learner-peer relationship. The co-researchers recognised that internalised mental health needs of learners are mental health needs associated with the adaptability of the learners to handle their own internalised emotions and needs.

5.4.1.2 Theme 2: Mental flexibility of learners

Mental flexibility reflects how learners' approach new challenges and problems each day, and that learners' healthy mindset can overcome obstacles (Loftis, 2016). Doorley et al, (2020) are of

the opinion that mental flexibility is the “tendency to respond to situations in ways that facilitate valued goal pursuit” and it is vital in “situations that are challenging and provoke distress” (p.2). I understand mental flexibility, according to the explanation by Burton and Bonanno, (2016) and Kashdan and Rottenberg (2010), that it refers to a person’s ability to cope with, accept, and adjust to difficult situations.

...realise that obstacles are not threats but rather as new opportunities to tackle and to grow (PV2).

The sharing of the Photovoice and the informative discussion aided some of the co-researchers to gain insight into the mental flexibility of learners as an element significant to the understanding of internalised mental health. The resulting citations from the Photovoice informative discussions and narratives relate to how the taking of pictures seemed to support the co-researchers to explore their understanding of the internalising mental health needs of learners in terms of the mental flexibility of learners.

Through the co-researchers’ expressions of their understanding of internalised mental health needs as the mental flexibility of the learners, learners’ ability to change, cope and adjust are important and some of the co-researchers revealed that:

... rather strive for growth (PV4).

...work through your own situations...(ID5).

Furthermore, mental flexibility is significant when stressful life events are experienced as it protects against negative feelings and promotes positive internalised mental health (Masuda & Latzman, 2011). This flexibility is “particularly useful when challenges arise during goal pursuit that produces distress” (Doorley et al., 2020, p. 1). Thus, mental flexibility can act as a buffer between stress and negative mental health outcomes (Feng et al., 2020). One of the co-researchers explained that:

... how you handle a situation...your attitude (ID2).

... because the red [negative] stops you from doing self-examination (PV4).

This is how you handle a situation in other words, what is your understanding of different situations and influences (Warnes et al., 2005). Another of the co-researchers shared that:

Sometimes learners tend to keep the emotions bottled up rather to speak up (PV2).

Learners tend to deviate from themselves and would rather be someone else and change themselves to fit in (DeHaan, 2009). The mission to adapt in school is not to only cover content, but rather to help learners become thoughtful about, and productive with, content (Heylighen et al., 2018). It is not to help learners get good grades at school, but rather to prepare them for the world beyond school - to enable them to apply what they learnt to needs and problems they will face in the future (Wiggins & McTighe, 2008).

... who strives to be him or herself (PV5).

If the learner can strive for the positive, he/she will change his/her attitude towards situations, thus depicting influences towards the rest of the peers (Dolph, 2017). As a co-researcher also commented during the informative discussions: *Something in life can be presented as bitter, as indicated above, there may be a negative idea towards a certain situation, something that is dragging you down.* Learners start to believe they are this negative person and struggle to be uplifted by peers. Kramer (2013) indicated from “mental flexibility”, a lot of learners feel they are not acknowledged, this tends to develop a gap in their emotions. In any school setting, learners are looking for something to make them happy:

Identify and acknowledge learners with internalised mental health needs (ID3).

Teachers are advised to understand behaviours that may not necessarily be problematic to classroom instruction, but ultimately impact learners’ outcomes in school and life beyond the boundaries of school (Sciaraffa et al., 2018; Spratt et al., 2006). Interventions are needed inside the classroom to prevent social and emotional problems in children and youth as well as to modify negative thought patterns and promote self-regulation (Anthony et al., 2005; Polsgrove & Smith, 2004; Barry et al., 2019).

The co-researchers made it clear that learners want to receive a feeling of belonging. “Learners tend to remain quiet rather than ask for help or support” (Camara et al., 2017, p. 123). The co-researchers indicated that teachers are not always aware that there are learners in their classes who have barriers to internalised mental health. During the informative discussion with the co-researchers the following stood out:

... rather be you, you are a unique person, with your own personality and your own humanity (ID4).

Positive internalised mental health promotes success in life, thus positive internalised mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood” (Naylor et al., 2009).

Photovoice as a research technique enabled co-researchers to visualise the mental flexibility of the learners, but this exercise also assists in identifying the internalisation of emotions of the learners as a significant part of their internalised mental health.

5.4.1.3 Theme 3: Internalisation of emotions

Internalisation of emotions is the reactions to stress and negative emotions and are more likely to be hidden within the learner (Rieffe et al., 2008; Bai & Repetti, 2018). Because of the tendency to remain out of view, internalised emotions are not as well-known as externalising emotions that involve acting out (Rieffe & De Rooij, 2012; Gross & Cassidy, 2019). As stated by Jeung et al (2018), it does not mean internalised emotions are any less damaging to the learner, in fact, continuing such behaviour of internalised emotions, can cause serious damage to one's overall mental health, self-esteem, and relationships with other.

Some children's external image shows something completely different from what is going on internally (PV5).

Learners experience different emotions through different circumstances (Jones & Doolittle, 2017). The co-researchers focused on the fact that they, as teachers, play a big role in the development of learners in their classes. Emotions that affect the inside – the mind and heart and reflect on the outside; this is a result of how the individual can cope with their feelings (Sabatier et al., 2017). During the informative discussions of Photovoice between the co-researchers, they focussed on the following:

Stand strong and fight through the rough storm – literally the internal influences in your life (PV 3).

... work through mental issues (PV4).

... you sometimes think no one will accept you for who you are because they have their own perception of what is going on inside you (PV5).

Negative influences from outside affect the internal wellbeing, for example, someone who says bad things about, or to, an individual, affects the way the individual think and feel towards themselves (Woodhead, 2004). The co-researchers mentioned that when a learner hears something negative, it is as if the learners' behaviour and internal emotions towards a certain situation change. Thus, this results in doing and saying what others expect of them. In life, people can lose their own identity, who they are, how they see life and largely how they can work through internal mental emotions (Allen et al., 2018).

People need to start realising that what they see is not necessarily who the person is (PV6).

Internal -self-doubt, inferiorities and feeling less or gratitude for what you have and what you have become and for grace (PV6).

You may have a thick skin or think you can work through situations, you sometimes think no one will accept you for who you are because they have their own perception of what is going on inside you (PV5).

Thus, it takes different and all kinds of people to make the world, if you start to understand and respect one another's' differences, you will complement one another (Clinton, 2017). The co-researchers indicated the importance of internalised emotions with the following informative discussions:

Sometimes those affect you and it can also show the outside (ID1).

... sometimes you then tend to keep the emotions bottled up rather to speak up (ID2).

To be "bottled up" means to ignore or in other word look over feelings. It is when an individual refrains from venting out and end up bottling emotions. Within the conversations with the co-researcher, it is due to the fear of seeming weak or the unwillingness to feel the negativity but avoiding challenging emotions, yet that does not make them go away. They harm individuals' minds and bodies. Many learners struggle to assert their thoughts and feelings, even when they know that speaking up is the right thing to do (Denham, 2007).

The Photovoice activity enabled the co-researchers to present their knowledge regarding internalized emotions in learners, so the following stood out from the informative discussions with the co-researchers. Internalised emotions amongst learners are directed inward and are indicative of a learner's psychological and emotional state.

5.4.1.4 Theme 4: Subjective conflicts

The co-researchers highlighted the importance of emotional skills in promoting positive development and optimal social functioning. Many learners in school do not realise that they are struggling with emotional, physical, and cognitive conflict, this can be defined as subjective conflict (Sharples, 2006; Shoshani & Slone, 2017). These conflicts affect the quality of the learning environment and the teachers' performance (Mooney et al., 2021). In this sense, Hamre and Pianta (2006) explained emotions affect the teacher–learner relationship and help to understand the subjective conflict within the classroom, when positive emotions within the teacher and learner

are developed, it is more likely that subjective conflicts are successfully solved. The co-researcher discusses the following subjective conflicts through their Photovoice:

Believing in themselves (PV1).

Barriers must be broken from the individual or with help from someone (PV1).

To grow, an individual must understand his or her feelings and emotions (Drigas & Papoutsis, 2018). The negative feelings and emotions are the lessons that the individual must learn from (Pekrun, 2014; Frenzel et al., 2018). Subjective conflicts cannot conclude to exist, as they are natural to human beings, forming an integral part of their moral and emotional growth (Skelton, 2012). Subjective conflict does not only emerge outside the classroom but exist in all school settings. The school is inserted in a space where the subjective conflict manifests itself daily and assumes relevance, being the result of the multiple interpersonal relationships that occur in the school context (Faulkner et al., 2013). Thus, subjective conflict is part of school life, which implies that teachers and learners must understand how to manage subjective conflict constructively. The co-researchers also depicted the following in their Photovoice:

Negative influences that can affect your life (PV3).

Stop seeing only the bad (PV4).

The school as a microsystem (cf. table 2-1) of community brings different views of the world together, thinking, different ways of being, and living, thus becoming a space for representing social differences and being, a place where different subjective conflicts occur daily (Seidman et al., 1995; Dittmer & Bos, 2019). Thus, from the above mentioned Photovoice presentation, the co-researchers discussed in their informative discussions:

If you are not rooted in the way you supposed to be then you won't be able to grow (ID1).

The subjective conflict presents growing possibilities, since the perception of the differences existing between the learners and their values, needs, ideas, and different ways of living are essential to a democratic society in the school atmosphere (Olweus & Limber, 2010). In this sense, it is important to enhance positive subjective conflict characteristics and reduce the negative ones (Domitrovich et al., 2017). Knowing how to communicate and respect the rights of others and existing differences are essential for subjective conflicts to revert to social and human development benefits (Osler & Starkey, 2017). Schoeps et al. (2018) defined subjective conflict as a phenomenon of incompatibility between individuals or groups with irreconcilable ends, considering it a social process.

As learners struggle with internalised feelings and emotions, subjective conflict is formed (Compton & Hoffman, 2019). The conflict is not primarily portrayed outward but are inwardly struggling to resolve this type of conflict (Bergstein, 2020). The co-researchers portrayed the following informative discussion as:

Life sometimes sends negative influences (ID3).

Learning about negative influences, feelings and their meaning helps learners attend to critical information so they can effectively navigate through their lives (Silins & Mulford, 2002; Minev et al., 2018). Adolescents often experience more negative influences than younger children, but the negative influences often increase during the high school years (Yeager et al., 2018). Learners are more easily influenced and subjective conflict arises because they would rather suppress their emotions and feelings rather than share them with someone (Thomassin et al., 2019). The last theme known as contextual influences is going to be detailed from the perspectives of the co-researchers.

5.4.1.5 Theme 5: Contextual influences

Schools are complex, dynamic systems that influence learners' academic, affective, social, and behavioural learning, in other words the contextual influences (Steenbeek & Van Geert, 2013). Contextual influences are defined as, learners' success is constructed of a broad array of skills, experiences, and outcomes across several different emotional areas, from social-emotional learning and health to creative and critical thinking (Ajjawi et al., 2017).

... bad seeds sown (PV1).

... where children in schools are influenced by their status (PV6).

Learners have the urge to change their status. I realised that the co-researchers understood and explained that there is a gap in the emotional and physical development of the learners in their classrooms as underlined by Kariippanon et al. (2018). Learners can easily influence each other, not necessarily positively, but largely negatively. These influences have a drastic effect not only on the self but on the others around the learner (Frenzel et al., 2018). Thus, learners are not always protected from the negative influences, as stated in the next informative discussions:

Not protected from the negative influences (ID3).

... barriers that the individual creates (ID1).

From the above-mentioned informative discussions, learners do not always receive the necessary care and support. Learners thrive when there is a structure of care and support and struggle when there is chaos (De Caluwe & Vermaak, 2003; Ungar & Liebenberg, 2018). When learners sense or see their peers and teachers follow a structure, this provides a greater sense of security (Owens et al., 2002). The feeling of security is one a basic human need. When that's provided in a learning environment, it allows learners to fully focus on the positive influences, rather than the negative barriers influencing their internal mental health (Moeketsane, 2012).

The co-researchers could have held informative discussions, during which they could elaborate on their knowledge and perceptions regarding contextual influences that affect learners with internalised mental health needs.

5.5 Cycle two: Role of secondary school teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of the learner

The aim of the second research cycle is to explore the co-researchers' understanding as teachers in the care and support for learners with internalised mental health needs. The following sub-research question was presented to the co-researchers: *What are teachers' perceptions regarding the role of secondary school teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of learners?* The second sub-research question aims to explore the co-researchers' roles as teachers in the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs. The co-researchers were encouraged to think about the internalised mental health needs in their school and what roles they play regarding the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs.

I conferred cycle two in Table 5-3 below. I will present the planning, action and evaluation of data generation, and reflective sessions.

Table 5-3: Cycle two: Planning, action and evaluation of data generation, and reflection sessions

Cycle two	The objective of cycle two was to explore teachers' perceptions regarding the role of secondary school teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of learners. Cycle two represents the data collected using collage making.
Planning	A short explanation was offered by the researcher to the co-researchers as to what art-based collage is (cf. section 4.6.3), also pointing out how and where art-based collage is used. We examined examples of collages and shared our ideas and questions about the execution of this session. We collaboratively agreed that each co-researcher will create an individual collage. The co-researchers were encouraged to think about the internalised mental health needs in their school and what roles they

	play in the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs.
Action and evaluation of data generation	After the planning session, the co-researchers each went to different areas and worked on their collage. I arranged the collage-making material for this activity, providing the six teachers with a box filled with collage materials and a white A3-size blank page. As seen above the collage materials consisted of magazines, different coloured pens, markers, different coloured blank paper, yarn, ribbon, and stickers. I also included a stapler, glue, or various kinds of tape to stick  and compile the collages. All six teachers eagerly created their collages using the material I provided. Based on the informative discussions the co-researchers decided to individually present their collage to the group. The co-researchers observed each other as well as built up new knowledge from each other's response. They also continuously wrote down keywords that stood out from each other's collages. Writing and discussing keywords served as a reflection on the individual collages where we all learned from each other. Finally, possible themes emerged from the keywords mentioned by the co-researchers.
Reflection	The co-researchers each moved to an area where they could sit comfortably to work on their collages. The co-researchers were very eager to design and present their collages to the rest of the group. Although teachers are physically, emotionally, and mentally exhausted, they still try to support colleagues and learners. From the informative discussions that were formed between the co-researchers, they also shared their reflections. Each co-researcher had the opportunity to present and explain his/her collage to the others. While one co-researcher explained his or her collage, the other co-researchers each wrote keywords on a piece of paper about what the collage represented for them as well as what stood out from the description of the specific collage.

After cycle two as the research facilitator, I recorded my reflection:

From the collaborative conversations of the co-researchers' perceptions I sensed that they all experience the need to be able to address the internalised mental health needs of the learners in their classes. It was mentioned by the co-researchers that the learner should strive to be himself or herself, that they as the teacher would go the extra mile to help the learners. For teachers, the learners sitting in their classrooms must experience the feeling of belonging. The co-researchers opine that learner must know that they must not change themselves to fit in with others.

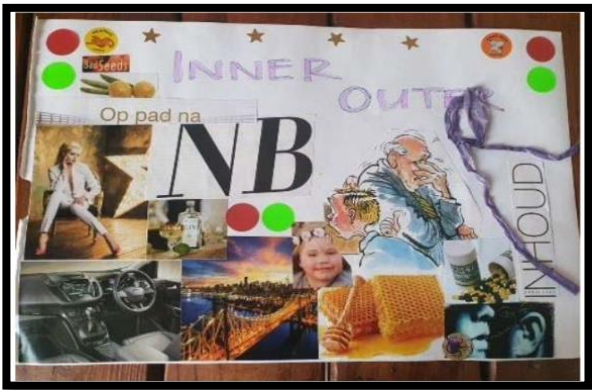
The co-researchers also observed that learners need to learn from their negative situations and turn them into positivity, in other words, to see each challenge as an opportunity.

5.1.1 Discussion of the findings on sub-research question 2

The aim of this arts-based visual data collection method, the collage technique, was to generate qualitative data and use this as an elicitation technique with the co-researchers (Kay, 2013). The focused discussion followed the co-researchers' lead in explaining the collages. The collage was used to elicit ideas for discussion and formed the basis for a reflective exercise around the participants/co-researchers' perceptions regarding the role of secondary school teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of learners.

The co-researchers each presented their collages with the aim of portraying their roles as teachers for the care and support to learners with internalised mental health. The co-researchers used any material with which they formed their collages (figure 5-4).

Table 5-4: Outcomes of collage activity

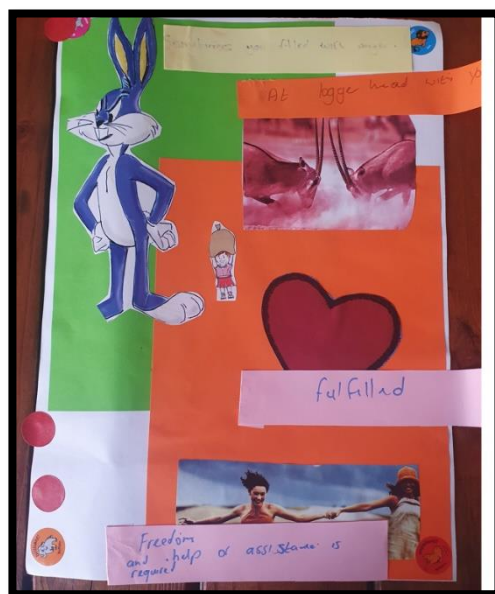
	Collage 1 Inner-outer
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Collage 2
Trust and support



Collage 3
Life is a gift



Collage 4
Different emotions



Figure 5-4: Keywords or ideas as categorised by co-researchers

The co-researchers, with my support, collectively analysed the collages and keywords, with the purpose to eventually formulate themes related to the topic under investigation.

They worked together to form groups of the specific keywords (which can be grouped). We formed seven themes from the keywords as seen in figure 5-5.

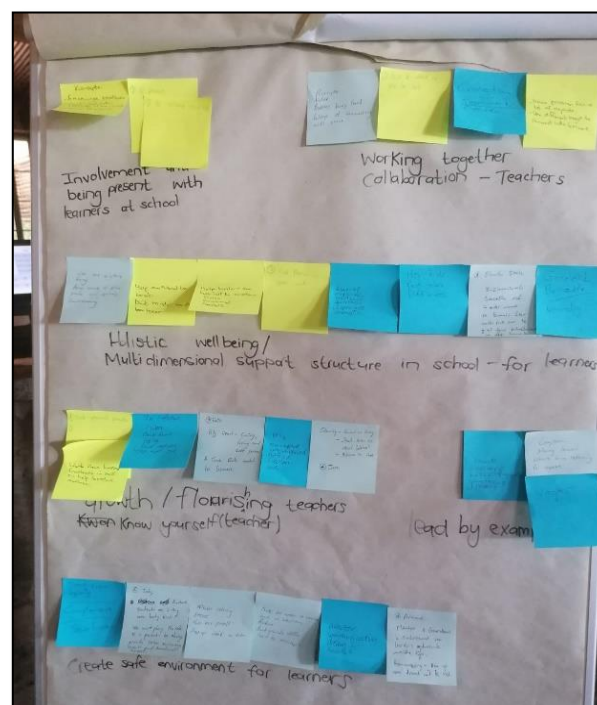


Figure 5-5: Co-researchers identify possible themes that emerged from the categories

From the informative discussion and art-based collage narratives the seven emerging themes are discussed: (i) Involvement of teachers at school, (ii) Collaboration between teachers (iii) Holistic wellbeing of teachers and learners, (iv) Provide multidimensional support structures for learners, (v) flourishing teachers (vi) Teachers should lead by example, (vii) Safe environment for teachers and learners.

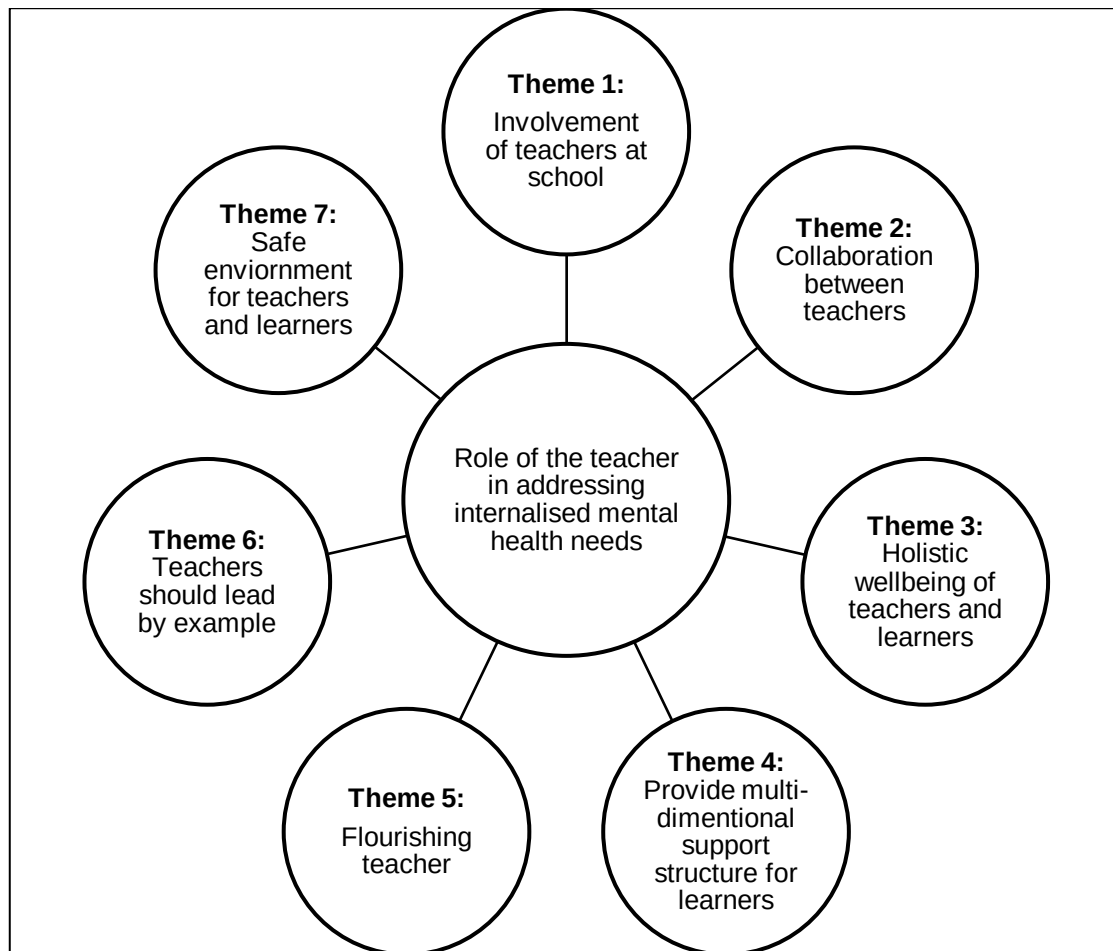


Figure 5-6: Themes that emerged from collages

Next, I will discuss the seven themes, support them with literature relevant to the themes and verbatim quotes from the art-based collage narratives (ABC) and informative discussions (ID).

5.5.1.1 Theme 1: Involvement of teachers being present with learners at school

By investing in oneself as a teacher, a positive atmosphere can be created in the classroom enhancing relationships with learners and make them feel important. Teachers' involvement in creating a positive classroom atmosphere is essential for learners to learn and develop (Conroy et al., 2009; Stronge, 2018). A teacher's role is not only to teach the learners but rather to present the learners with skills to discipline their thoughts and emotions (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987;

Deslauriers et al., 2019). Teachers have the opportunity to identify and acknowledge learners with internalised mental health needs and then encourage those learners to show their emotions rather to act on them (Gillespie, 2002). Teachers must have hope for excellence in themselves as well as for the learners individually and in the class (Shankland & Rosset, 2017). During the informative discussions with the co-researchers, we focussed on the following:

...you have a beautiful image of somebody who seems whole and complete (ABC1).

I want to see light in myself to be able to see the light in the children...(ABC1).

...we are feeding the baby birds(learners) until they are independent enough and have learnt enough to leave the nest (ABC2).

We came to realise that teachers urge for the care and support given to learners in their classes, teachers care about the learners in and outside the classrooms, teachers want the learners to succeed and are committed to helping the learners achieve their goals. Moreover, teachers care about their learners' happiness, well-being, and life beyond the classroom.

The above statement is truly important to the co-researchers, through the informative discussions on the collages, they repeated themselves why it is important to be a good example to the learners in their classes. The following informative discussions were supported throughout the involvement of teachers being present:

Believe you should be a gift for a learner (ID3).

...one should always encourage children and myself to be involved and put yourself outside...(ID6).

Research shows that a positive atmosphere increases learner academic achievement and leads to increased self-esteem (Ozsezer & Saban, 2016). Creating a positive classroom environment takes effort from both the teacher and the learner (Weissberg, 2019). By setting an example for learners and using reinforcement to promote positive behaviour, teachers can turn any classroom into a pleasant and encouraging learning environment (Rucinski et al., 2018).

A learner is more likely to respond to a teacher who cares and is more likely to learn and engage (Bucholz & Sheffler, 2009; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Connecting with learners in the classroom establishes trust, which is important to learners, because trust makes them comfortable to participate, ask for help when needed, and pay closer attention to advice and encouragement (Sieberer-Nagler, 2016). Also, learners feel better about themselves if they feel that a teacher has taken a genuine interest in them; they are motivated, and stronger self-assurance can make it easier for the learner to challenge him/herself emotionally and physically (Vagos et al., 2017).

5.5.1.2 Theme 2: Collaboration between teachers

Teachers need to develop strong, supportive relationships with a group of colleagues and together foster supportive relationships between themselves and especially the learners, thus, make the learner understand that you are always there for the care and support of the learner (Aldon et al., 2017). Collaboration among teachers is a force that positively influences not only each other but the learners in their classroom (Krammer et al., 2018).

The co-researchers explicated that *they need to have trust in their abilities as people, they need to be warm and comforting, they also explained that everyone grows at different rates; thus, everyone is unique*. Teachers must start supporting one another as well as the learners in the classrooms (Darling-Hammond, 2008). Everyone has different detail, when teachers start to work together and understand that everyone understands different situations differently, then they can pick up on strengths and encourage each other to pursue what they believe in (Briscoe & Peters, 1997). The art-based collage was an excellent idea for the co-researchers to explore inwards and then reflect on their understandings:

Communication is very important (ABC2).

...to experience different kind of emotions in a day... (ABC4).

First look within yourself, see yourself and help yourself to others to help and support you (ABC3).

Through the understanding of the co-researchers, they explained that the beauty of collaboration is not only the ability to tap into various perspectives and ideas, but also to share responsibility for learners' mental and physical learning. The more teachers invest in a learner's education, the better the chance for the learner to be successful (Brewer & Movahedazarhouli, 2018). Collaborating is purposefully building interpersonal relationships and working towards healthy interdependence, which occurs when teachers are comfortable giving and receiving help without forfeiting accountability. Thus, teachers need to be fully present and offer any support to their classes. During the next informative discussion one co-researcher reflects:

...represents my passion for a lot of aspects in the classroom (ABC5).

From the above discussions it is clear that for teacher collaboration to be effective, teachers should want to participate, rather than feel like they have to. The co-researchers shared their knowledge regarding collaboratively working together in the next informative discussions:

You need to show your learners never to give up on your dreams (ID3).

...teachers must start understanding there is a difference between positive and negative emotions (ID6).

As explained by Brown and Poortman (2018), I think teachers can develop collaborative teams in which they engage in mutually beneficial professional experiences, use communal resources to increase learner achievement, share goals, and advance their skills, knowledge, and beliefs related to student learning. Teachers will be more inclined to act in positive ways if they feel other teachers care about them as individuals (Richards et al., 2018). To build relationships, interact with one another in informal situations such as before and after class, and use instructional methods that encourage them to share their personal views and experiences (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Schwab (2017) has found that learners in classrooms prefer teachers that work in teams because they feel more supported. Given that “collaboration make[s] teaching less stressful and more satisfying” (Burns and Darling-Hammond, 2014, p. ii); arguably, teachers can focus on other aspects such as teaching solely, which in turn has considerable positive effects on learner achievement. The co-researchers reported that there is a lack of communication between themselves, and this does influence learning from one another through their experiences for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs.

As teachers depend on one another for support, they develop relationships that is based on trust and empathy (Berkovich, 2018). These interactions are important in forming professional and mentorship relationships. When teachers feel supported, they can better extend that same support to their learners (Kelchtermans, 2006; Berkovich, 2018). Teachers collaborate in a mass of ways when they interact with their colleagues to exchange ideas and resources about understanding what their role is in supporting learners, discussing learner emotions, teaming up for joint activities and knowledge creation (Killion, 2015).

Teachers co-create and increase their understanding with a shared aim to provide quality support experiences to their learners with internalised mental health needs (Strati et al., 2017). In addition to supporting the instructional role of teachers, collaboration plays a key role in building relationships among teachers so that they feel that they are part of a community and derive personal fulfilment from their work (Banerjee et al., 2017).

5.5.1.3 Theme 3: Holistic wellbeing of teachers and learners

The holistic wellbeing perspective is concerned with the development of every person's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative, and spiritual potentials (Kitching & Carstens, 2022). It seeks to engage teachers and learners in the teaching-learning process and encourages personal and collective responsibility (Kitching, 2019).

In any school atmosphere, everyone needs to create an exciting working environment where learners and teachers can participate to develop a positive relationship through actively raising awareness of the wellbeing of the teachers and learners (Price & McCallum, 2015).

I hope to see that they view themselves as kings and queens (ABC1).

You need to show everyone to never to give up on their dreams (ABC3).

Furthermore, the co-researchers emphasised that in any school setting, the focus is not only on certain situations regarding the learner, but rather to understand the teachers' understanding regarding internalised mental health as well as what they can do to work together to form the care and support towards the learners in their classes.

Everyone must learn to express their emotions, to be able to work through the situations (ABC6).

...where they can get strength to work through situations (ABC6).

Holistic wellbeing is a comprehensive approach to teaching where teachers and learners seek to address the emotional, social, ethical, and academic needs of one another (Ragoonaden, 2015). Emphasis is placed on positive school environments and providing care and support to learners with internalised mental health needs (Cherrington, 2017). Teachers and learners must be taught to reflect on their actions and how they impact others around them, as well as, how to learn from others around them (Mainhard et al., 2018). Teachers often engage learners in situations that apply critical-thinking skills toward solving real-world problems (Soutter et al., 2014).

Teachers and learners are empowered to improve their mental health and gain the life skills necessary to take on different internal situations throughout their life (Gray et al., 2017).

You as a teacher must start with yourself (ID4).

Holistic wellbeing for a teacher is about more than coping with negative situations – it also includes ideas about what it means to live a good life and be an example for the learners in the class (Price & McCallum, 2015).

As a teacher, it is important to understand your own emotions, as it will help you gain a better understanding of the learners in the classroom (McCullum & Price, 2010; Lee & Nie, 2017). Guido (2018) is of the opinion that teachers and learners need to keep each other engaged with a positive attitude. Thus, communication between the teacher and learner is most effective when the learner is motivated by the desire to be acknowledged, rather than to be overlooked.

5.5.1.4 Theme 4: Provide multidimensional support structures for learners.

A support structure can be formed by identifying learners with internalised mental health needs so that they can build on their values as well as understand different emotions. Teachers must create a variety of support structures to help learners work through their internalised mental health needs.

I understand the term multidimensional support when teachers instruct learners that they are three-dimensional, that they live in the physical, they must grow spiritually and thus go through a lot of emotions (Drew & Mackie, 2011). Santos et al (2012) quipped that teacher need to be aware of the care and support that is necessary for learners to succeed. In the class, learners observe, identify, learn, experience, and replicate behaviours, attitudes, and socio-emotional skills. Teachers form a reference point for learners with internalised mental health needs in the classroom and can influence their emotional and emotional development (Sointu et al., 2017). The co-researchers presented the support given to learners through their art-based collages:

... our classrooms are the nest (ABC2).

... it's not only to teach but to be there emotionally for the learners in the class (ABC4).

The co-researchers observed that they not only acted as teachers standing in front of the class, but rather as mentors to learners in the class, mentors who provide the necessary care and support to the learners as well as being an example for the learners as well as for other teachers (McNamara, 1995; Shanks, 2017).

... get more knowledge of what other people are going through and how other people live (ABC6).

The co-researchers also described through the art-based collages that they can be seen as:

the "nest" and their role are to protect the learners (ABC 2).

The class is surrounded with a nest, and we are the "mamma birds in the class" ... (ABC2).

Classrooms are emotional settings; thus, learners' emotional experiences can impact their ability to understand wellbeing as well as the interaction between them as learners and the teacher (Bressman et al., 2018). In our discussion regarding this matter, we understood that the teacher must receive the necessary support as well as to be the necessary support system for the learner with internalised mental health needs. As learners spend much of their time with their teachers in school, teacher support can be vital to learners' cognitive development, including not only cognitive but also affective or emotional outcomes (Rickert, 2020). Multidimensional support enhances a teacher's relationship with a learner (Wang et al., 2019). Teachers who support learners with internalised mental health needs, show their care and concern towards the learners,

these learners often reciprocate this concern and respect for the teacher by adhering to classroom norms (Chiu and Chow, 2011; Longobardi et al., 2016).

You as a teacher encourage the learners (ID6).

Understand when a learner tries to communicate through different emotions...(ID4).

Be the support system in your own class (ID2).

Multidimensional support involves understanding learners' emotions, personal goals, and values (Kim et al., 2018). This includes accurately assessing the learners' strengths and limitations, thus, preparing them by having positive way of thinking, and possessing a well-grounded sense of self-awareness and optimism (Kim et al., 2018). The authors further explain that high levels of self-awareness require the ability to recognize how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interconnected.

5.5.1.5 Theme 5: Flourishing teacher

The flourishing in teacher well-being is a positive emotional state that combines the personal needs and expectations of both learners and their teachers (Chamizo-Nieto et al., 2021). Teacher well-being strongly influences teacher behaviour and is positively related to school and classroom achievement (Lam, 2019).

As teachers, we need to be willing to empower and support learners towards internalised mental health, through understanding and developing new strategies for growth and the upliftment of learner confidence. When a teacher engages in a positive behaviour such as helping another teacher or peacefully resolving a conflict, as teacher they must acknowledge the positive behaviour by either bringing it to other teachers' attention or the attention of the school (Owen, 2016). Teachers need to be acknowledged in the roles they play, thus, complementing one another when they notice positive behaviours (Jackson & Bruegmann, 2009). The co-researchers made it a point to praise and acknowledge learners when they do something correctly, both in private and in front of their peers. This sets a positive example for both the teacher as well as the learners.

Teachers need to be honest with oneself...(ABC3).

... you as a teacher must start with yourself (ABC4).

When schools prioritise to ensure teachers are flourishing and the teacher wellbeing, this can promote better classroom climates and enable high quality teaching that leads to success for learners (Cherkowski et al., 2018; Murphy & Louis, 2018). Enabling flourishing in teachers is an important first step in school wide wellbeing to promote learner wellbeing (Quinlan 2017; Slemp et al. 2017). The co-researchers described growth within themselves as to encourage their

colleagues to aspire to be role models for each other, and most importantly, for the learners in their classes.

The co-researcher expressed that teacher support each other daily and offer the necessary care and support between each other. Teachers learn from each other's experiences; they must be able to support their learners in a class from the experiences and create a positive class atmosphere. The following informative discussions were emphasised:

... build each other up with a positive atmosphere (ID3).

Support the development of the teacher (ID2).

... be the soundboard for one another (ID5).

From the above informative discussion, it therefore appears that teachers' wellbeing should not be overlooked, they should be a “soundboard” for each other, in other words, to listen to each other as well as to give each other the necessary advice. Being a “soundboard” means that teachers help others to understand different situations as well as to give advice from experiences (Ehrenfeld & Hoffman, 2020).

5.5.1.6 Theme 6: Teachers should lead by example

“Teachers are leaders all day, they lead by example in the way they act, speak, and behave” (Wolkenhauer et al., 2017, p. 117). Teachers lead their learners through challenging activities such as internalised mental health needs and rigorous learning. Then, they take on additional teacher leadership roles inside and outside the classroom. As teachers, we must expand on our strong points as a teacher, acknowledge the not so strong points and have the courage to work on it, thus providing opportunities to share personal experiences in the classroom and encourage learners to overcome obstacles (Schuck et al., 2018).

As a teacher, it is important to lead by example and inspire learners to be the best they can be (Boylan, 2018). “Learners are highly impressionable and are seeking out role models whose actions they will adopt and understand” (Lumpkin, 2008, p. 45). Teachers are impacting the learners’ outlook on life and help shape their opinions of people and concepts that they will go on to use throughout their life.

Be the purpose for the learners (ABC2).

... being transparent in what you do ... (ABC4).

Treat oneself and learners with respect. (ABC5).

Encourage them to support each other in what they do ... (ABC6).

Communication in any situation is key, if teachers can help guide their learners to communicate effectively and express emotions and feelings, teachers will then be passing on an extremely valuable skill that will benefit learners greatly in later life (Wisehart, 2004). Being transparent is a skill that requires a teacher to be honest and straight forward to his/her colleagues and learners, thus leading by example for teachers and learners. Transparency helps teachers communicate with others in the classrooms about their roles and responsibilities towards the care and support of internalised mental health needs (Jakobsen & Knetemann, 2017). This trait is especially important because they create work relationships built on trust and demonstrate willingness to be open with others. Tschannen-Moran (2009) is of opinion that, to make teacher-learner interaction effective and safe for the teacher, schools must create an environment in which teachers and learners treat each other with dignity, courtesy, and respect, while also promoting open and critical exchange of ideas. “Respect” is an overall evaluation that teachers can give to learners based on many factors, for example, how they treat themselves and others around them (Hymel & Katz, 2019, p. 331). Respect is a positive view that teachers and learners form based on how they are living their life (Potvin, 2021). Thus, on the other hand, self-respect is the view of how teachers and learners live their life:

Respect starts with yourself and move outward ... (ID3).

Respecting yourself means giving and defining your own worth and value as a human being (Potvin, 2021). From the discussions with the co-researcher, it is clear that as teachers, self-respect must be displayed in order to give a positive example for the learners in the classes.

5.5.1.7 Theme 7: Safe environment for teachers and learners

In Creating an exciting working environment, where learners and teachers can participate to develop a positive relationship through actively raising awareness of the holistic wellbeing of teachers and learners (cf. section 5.6.5.3).

I understand that as a teacher, you are leading the way for learners to do better and to understand each other in terms of other learners that may be struggling with internalised mental health needs, and then to be better and grow up into people that teachers will be proud of knowing. Teachers may not think it, but the way they act, the characteristics they exude in class may have an influence on the learners (Shankland & Rosset, 2017). If teachers want the learners in their classes to grow up into great people and help lead another generation of learners, we need to make sure learners are led by example (Shankland & Rosset, 2017). A safe environment is where teachers and learners are free to be themselves and continually discover who they are (Clapper, 2010; Patey et al., 2019). It is about creating an environment in which the teacher and learner

feel safe, not only physically but also emotionally. For instance, a classroom is where teachers and learners feel confident asking and answering questions, as well as contributing to discussions and activities (Al Kaboody, 2013).

Make teachers and learners feel involved (ABC1).

Confidentiality is key in any situation ... (ABC3).

A safe environment is focused on not only academic achievement and maintaining high standards but foremost fostering positive relationships between the teacher and learner and encouraging a positive atmosphere in and outside the classrooms (Hernandez & Seem, 2014). Learners do not always have the self-confidence to talk to others, teachers are not always aware that a learner is struggling with internalised mental health needs (Hernandez & Seem, 2014). Thus, “communication between the teacher and learner is so important”, teachers share their experiences with the learner and the learner develops the feeling of respect (Paulson et al., 1998, p. 5).

Learners will be more inclined to act in positive ways if they feel like their teacher cares about them as individuals (Leigh & Steuben, 2018). To create a safe environment, teachers need to build relationships with learners as stated by McLaughlin et al (2015), teachers need to interact with them in informal situations such as before and after class and use instructional methods that encourage them to share their personal views and experiences with the class.

... learners must be encouraged to be themselves (ID4).

A safe and positive environment yields positive learners who are motivated to share their emotions and feelings. Dweck (2008) presented in creating a safe and positive environment is not that difficult, but the rewards are immense and far-reaching, in achieving this safe environment, it will improve the teachers' professional achievement and the success of the learners you are charged with teaching.

The co-researchers could have held informative discussions individually during which they could elaborate on their knowledge and perceptions regarding the role of secondary school teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of the learner.

5.6 Cycle three: Operational guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs

The objective of cycle three was to present in a detailed discussion of the co-researchers' efforts and actions to answer the primary research question:

What operational guidelines can teachers collaboratively develop for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs?

The purpose of this type of research question is that teachers can share their perceptions, experiences, and knowledge regarding internalised mental health needs. Everyone can voluntarily provide his or her insights during each cycle. As a group, we seek to explore operational guidelines teachers can collaboratively develop for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs in secondary schools in the Gauteng North District. The explosive evolution in the use of online electronic technologies has changed the way data collection is done. "Mobile data collection with smartphones is growing rapidly in popularity due to its many advantages (Seifert et al., 2018, p.1). Furthermore, these methods are efficient and effective, and the increase in availability of mobile phones in societies around the world, even in the remote areas has led to the use of mobile technologies in data collection (Gaggioli et al., 2013). In cycle three two online electronic data collection methods were used to address the time constraints experienced by co-researchers at the two different schools.

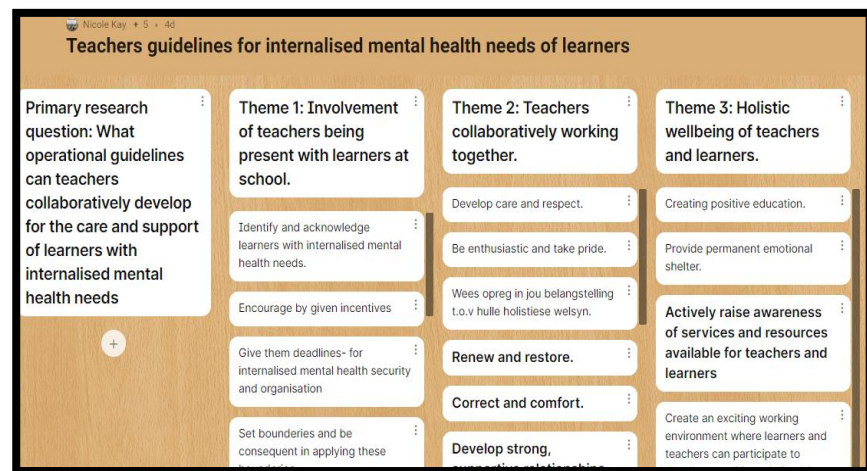
I conferred cycle two in Table 5-5 below. I will present the planning, action and evaluation of data generation, and reflection sessions.

Table 5.5: Cycle three: Planning, action and evaluation of data generation and reflection sessions

Cycle three	The objective of cycle three was to determine operational guidelines that teachers can collaboratively develop for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs. Cycle three represents data collected using online data collection methods (i.e., Zoom, Padlet, WhatsApp).
Planning	During a scheduled Zoom meeting we as a group discussed the use of (i) the online notice board Padlet for collaborative online data collection and (ii) a WhatsApp group an internet-based messaging data collection option. We discussed the processes of data collection, deliberated on our expectations, and decided on a timeline for each process. Together we decided that Padlet will be active for a week and WhatsApp for four days. The expectation was that the co-researchers visit the online notice board as well as the WhatsApp group daily.

Action and evaluation on data generation

The group decided that (i) the seven themes identified during the collage activity and the primary research question should be uploaded onto Padlet for them to reflect on guidelines related to each theme. With the Padlet the co-researchers were asked to remain anonymous to freely share their opinions. Through the course of the week, the co-researchers uploaded on Padlet, this method enabled the co-researchers to proceed from their perspectives as well as to add to each other's explanations. Different ideas and perceptions were shared and could form clear codes from the descriptions.



With (ii) the WhatsApp group the co-researchers worked together to form potential keywords that lead to guidelines from the seven themes as identified on Padlet. The co-researchers were actively involved in the group.



Reflection	During reflections the co-researchers learned from each other about internalised mental health needs of learners and the care and support that is critical for these learners. Both online electronic data collection methods provided valuable data. From the Zoom meeting, Padlet activity and the WhatsApp conversations with the co-researchers, I obtained new knowledge regarding their roles in the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs. The co-researchers enjoyed the method of using electronic devices to communicate with each other. This new method enabled the co-researchers to share their insights with me and each other. It became clear that the co-researchers took the time to elaborate on the different themes that were formed from their collages and thus also realise that they each understood the themes differently. This is an indication that operational guidelines can be formed with their knowledge as co-researchers.
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After cycle three, I recorded my reflection:

From the above excerpts of the use of Padlet and WhatsApp messages, it thus appears that the co-researchers can communicate comfortably with each other regarding their knowledge that they have built from the understanding of learners with internalised mental health needs as well as what they as their role as teachers in the classroom form for the roles they display to the learners with internalised metal health needs.

5.6.1 Discussions of the findings on the main research question of the study

The aim of the two online electronic data collection methods was to collaboratively generate keywords with the co-researchers that can be used to develop operational guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs in urban secondary schools in the Gauteng North District. Table 5.6 represent the keywords formed by the co-researchers during cycle three.

Table 5-6 Keywords emerged from guidelines using online notice board Padlet and WhatsApp group

Keywords	Themes as identified by teachers						
	Involvement of teachers	Collaboration between teachers	Holistic wellbeing of teachers and learners	Multi-dimensional support structures to support learners	Flourishing teachers	Lead by example	Safe environment for teachers and learners
Consequent teachers	X						
Contextual aspects	X						
Feeling of belonging							X
Growth teachers and learners	X		X	X	X	X	X
Inspire learners	X						
Involvement with learners							X
Peers support for learners				X			
Positive education			X				
Relationships between teachers		X					
Relationships between teachers and learners		X			X	X	
Respect and values		X		X		X	X
Share own experience						X	

Support to learners	X	X	X		X		
Support to teachers		X					
Transparent						X	
Wellness teacher and learners			X	X			X

From table 5-7 it is clear that learners who are not motivated through peer support as well as the teachers, will not express their emotions effectively, those learners will not retain to talk to the teacher, and they will not participate (Myers et al., 2017). There are clear connections of growth between the teacher and the learner (Sandilos et al., 2017). It should be noted that these alternative perspectives on growth are not mutually exclusive, and that many factors are in fact interrelated (Sandilos et al., 2017). The central focus of current growth efforts most closely aligns with the “change as growth or learning” perspective (Coertjens et al., 2017, p.499). In positive education, building relationships is key, the learners must feel the care and support given to them not only from the teacher but also between each other (White & Kern, 2018). Respect and values between teachers and learners are thus built on the relationships built. From the conversations from the co-researchers, each teacher explains that respect is not only one-sided, but is formed from both sides. We build on each other's values as well; it is important that learners first respect themselves and from the self-respect to understand each other and portray positivity. Learners with internalised mental health needs experience various emotions and need the feeling of respect towards them.

5.7 Conclusion

In chapter 5, I reported on the findings of the study with the intention to provide a broad overview of the themes that emerged from the data generated by the different methods used. In cycles one and two, I made use of two visual art-based methods, Photovoice and art-based Collage. This was followed by cycle three where I exploited Padlet and WhatsApp to generate online data. These methods allowed me to address the research questions that guided this study.

In the following chapter I offer a summary of the research study and answer the sub research questions. I present the operational guidelines that were developed in response to the primary research question: *What guidelines can be developed to improve teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools?* Subsequent, I provide recommendations for future studies and identify limitations of the study. In conclusion I reflect on my journey as a PAR researcher.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter five, I presented the findings of this study. The aim is to present the potential findings of this study. In Chapter five, I've explained the objective of each session that took place during data generation as well as the themes that were formed from these sessions. I united the potential findings to summarise the new body of knowledge generated from the knowledge of teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners and the role of secondary school teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of learners.

In chapter six, I commenced with a summary of each chapter of the study. The primary aim of this study is for teachers to collaboratively develop operational guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs in urban secondary schools in the Gauteng North District. To pursue this aim, I present findings emanating from the conclusions to answer the research questions. Next, I present recommendations for future research, indicate a possible limitation of the study, and indicate the contribution of this study to the scholarly body of knowledge before I conclude by reflecting on my journey as a Participatory Action Research (PAR) researcher.

6.2 Summary of the study

In Table 6-1 a summary of the five chapters that encompass the research study is presented.

Table 6-1: Summary of the study

Chapter	The topic addressed and discussed
Chapter 1	Chapter 1 offers the orientation of the research study. I introduced the research problem and motivation and elaborated on the theoretical frameworks that guided this study. I formulated the primary research questions followed by the three sub-research questions. I then provided a brief outline of the study design, methodology, and techniques used for data generation and analysis. The chapter concluded with a comprehensive discussion of the trustworthiness of the data and ethical considerations that this study is grounded on.
Chapter 2	The literature review towards an understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners is presented in chapter 2. The relationship of both Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model and the critical transformative theory to mental health is espoused as theoretical frameworks that guided the study. Next, a comprehensive conceptual framework regarding mental health and internalised mental health are considered. Literature related to internalised mental health in

	adolescents are explored and finally, the role of teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of learners in secondary school are highlighted.
Chapter 3	PAR is explored in this chapter. The discussions commenced by the provision of a brief historical background. This is followed by era-specific interpretations of the concept of PAR. I then explained the critical transformative learning paradigm associated with PAR and presented the cyclic nature of this research approach. Furthermore, the principles and values of PAR are debated as actions to transform a situation and empower individuals. The chapter concluded with reference to the unique roles of the researcher (research facilitator) and the participants (co-researchers) in PAR.
Chapter 4	In this chapter, the research method is clarified in detail. The discussions start with the context of the study by providing more information about the co-researchers. The ontology, epistemology and axiology that underline PAR, as well as the critical learning theory, are considered. The collaborative and transformative nature of PAR is defined. Next, the cyclic nature of PAR as used in this study is presented by discussing the three cycles as used in the research process. This is followed by a table that summarises the whole research process.
Chapter 5	The discussions of findings related to the research questions are offered in this chapter. Each cyclic process is discussed according to the relevant sessions. Emergent themes associated with the research questions are discussed and integrated with relevant literature. In conclusion, a summary of the emergent themes related to the primary research questions focusing on the operational guidelines that the co-researchers collaboratively developed for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs in secondary schools are presented.

The following section will answer the various research questions.

6.3 Answering the research questions

This research study is guided by the primary research question: What guidelines can be developed to improve teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools?

The supporting three sub-research questions include: (1) What are teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners? (2) What are teachers' perceptions regarding the role of secondary school teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of learners? (3) What operational guidelines can teachers collaboratively develop for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health issues?

The conclusions emergent from this PAR study are summarised and presented in the next section. This section focuses on answering the three secondary research questions and finally answering the primary research question that guided this study. Using thematic analysis and using PAR approach to generate data, the research questions are answered as follows:

6.3.1 Sub-research question 1: What are teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners?

The co-researchers had the opportunity to collaboratively share their perceptions, experiences, and knowledge regarding their understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners. From the informative discussions, it is clear that all the co-researchers are aware of possible internalised mental health needs of the learners and behaviour challenges of the learners in their classes during formal education.

Against the background of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory, learners' emotional state and internalised mental health issues (individual level) may affect these of their parents, teachers, and peers, however, the parents', teachers' and peers' feelings, emotional state and mental health issues may affect the learner internally (micro and mesosystem). The strengthening of existing support networks (meso- and exosystems); as well updating policies (macro-level) can address the learners internalised mental health needs.

The critical transformative learning theory will enable teachers to practically contribute to the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs and encourage these learners to share through their thoughts, feelings, and actions.

By conducting the PAR study and generating data using photovoice, art-based collages, online electronic data collection methods Informative discussions, to share their opinions, perceptions, and opinions around their role in the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs. The data provided a necessary association regarding personal dynamics and circumstantial aspects. The importance of supportive teacher and peer relationships, as well as contextual influence that relate to the school environment of the learner are two themes that emerged during the data analysis. Mental flexibility, subjective conflict and the internalisation of emotions are three themes that also emerged. This is an indication that teachers conceptualise internalised mental health as being emotional experiences that are associated with the environment but most of all focus on emotional experiences related to the learner as an individual.

6.3.2 Sub-research question 2: What are teachers' perceptions regarding the role of secondary school teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of learners?

The co-researchers had the opportunity to collaboratively share their perceptions, experiences, and knowledge regarding the role of secondary school teachers in addressing internalised mental health needs of learners. There was a heightened openness among the co-researchers regarding the role of secondary school teachers in addressing the mental health needs of learners. During the informative discussion, it became evident that the co-researchers experience many

challenges at the schools, hampering them to act and to care and supporting learners with internalised mental health needs.

Regarding Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory, schools and teachers must provide strong and long-term relationships with the learners. Teachers' roles in addressing learners with internalised mental health needs (mesosystem) is through educating themselves and other teachers on the symptoms of internalised mental health needs, providing a safe environment, encouraging good health, and leading by example (exosystem) for the learners in their classes.

The critical transformative learning theory states that constructive interpersonal relationships can contribute to observing internalised mental health needs and enhancing learners' development and adaptation.

By presenting the finding of the data analysis, it reveals how the co-researchers perceive the teachers' role within the schools. The importance of multidimensional support structure for learners at school can assist the teachers to address the internalised mental health needs of learners was acknowledged. Teachers need to be involved at school and should lead by example to be able to aid learners. Teachers need each other and therefore collaborate with their colleagues to strengthen their knowledge regarding their role in addressing learners' internalised mental health needs. Teachers that are flourishing are in a better position to address the learners' internalised mental health needs. Holistic wellbeing and an environment that is safe for both teachers and learners can result in the quality of teacher-learner relationship.

6.3.3 Sub-research question three: What operational guidelines can teachers collaboratively develop for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs?

The co-researchers had the opportunity to collaboratively share their perceptions, experiences, and knowledge to collaboratively develop operational guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs. During the informative discussions, the co-researchers indicated that it is important for teachers to be competent and have specialised skills to be able to provide care and support to learners with internalised mental health needs.

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory suggests that learners learn and develop through their person-to-person interactions with parents, teachers, and peers, and through the influence of their characteristics.

The critical transformative learning theory provides insights for the teachers by changing the whole class atmosphere and teachers are encouraged to promote critical thinking of internalised mental health that will support their knowledge and experiences.

In generating the findings of the online data analysis, it became evident that the PAR process of this research study succeeded in establishing collaborative problem-solving relationships that emerged between the co-researchers. The research process stimulated an experience of transformative relationships among the co-researchers. The primary idea that emerged during most of the informative discussion is that *to support learners the teacher's wellbeing is of the utmost importance. As one co-researcher emphasised it is about teachers flourishing more holistically. They also made it clear that the support and resources must be contextualised and should involve all the stakeholders.*

The co-researchers provided various keywords that guided the collaborative creation of operational guidelines to care for and support learners with internalised mental health needs. The data suggest five prevalent keywords upon final analysis. The keywords were used collaboratively as teachers develop operational guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs. The keywords and guidelines are presented in Table 6-2.

Table 6-2 Operational guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs

Keywords guided by teachers understanding of internalised mental health needs	Guidelines for the care and support of learners
Growth of teachers and learners	Teachers' professional development is a continuing process of growth for them. Teachers can improve their competencies and skills to finally enhance the learner's environment. This is a reciprocal situation for both the growth of teachers and learners. Guideline one: <i>Create a multi-disciplinary team with unique training and knowledge about mental health to intervene with workshops for teachers on how to identify and approach learners with internalised mental health needs.</i>
Respect and values	The importance of respect and values in school cannot be emphasised enough. Especially if you want to care for and support learners. By instilling respect and highlighting values as fundamental objectives in schools, it can advance an ethos of mutual respect and ultimately lead to learners and teachers who feel safe and comfortable within their school environment (Corzo & Castañeda, 2017). Guideline two: <i>Provide educational opportunities to build the capacity of teachers, peers, and learners to identify and have knowledge about internalised mental health needs, to change actions and attitudes towards the learners with internalised mental health needs.</i>

Support to learners	It is a child's fundamental right to receive care and support regarding their health (Department of Health, 2003). Learners need to be educated about internalised mental health needs to bring an end to the stigmas (Stuart, 2016). And in so doing encourage learners to get the care and support that they need. Learners often feel isolated. Guideline three: <i>Adopt a virtual support approach with a professional psychologist or counsellors providing short workshops and support groups to provide emotional support for the learners with internalised mental health needs.</i>
Relationships between teachers and learners	It is a prevalent fact that a caring and supportive teacher-learner relationship can serve in many ways to a learner's adaption to school and life (Miller-Lewis et al., 2014). Learners with internalised mental health needs are inclined to continuous positive interactions with their teachers (Minahan, J. 2019). Guideline four: <i>Offer ongoing, professional teacher development that explicitly focuses on the development of relationships and how to improve interpersonal and professional skills to foster positive bonds with learners who experience internalised mental health needs.</i>
Wellness of teacher and learners	Teaching is an extremely stressful profession with teachers enduring great job-related stress. Mental health awareness programmes at schools need to target the learners as well as the teachers. Teachers' psychological well-being is important as they must address learners' diverse wellness needs. The teacher should be empowered to model how to handle stress and distress while in the classroom (Santamaría et al, 2021). It is a rule of thumb to practice what you preach in this situation. Guideline five: <i>Provide opportunities for peer support groups or forums at the schools to share wellness ideas in a safe environment with peers who experience similar stress and distress situations.</i>

Thus, collaboratively the teachers as co-researcher in a group developed five operational guidelines that could be used to address the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs. Finally, it can be concluded that the co-researchers developed these guidelines due to transformation of their understanding of the internalised mental health needs of learners.

The following were set out as important guidelines to improve teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools. Teachers should familiarise themselves with knowledge about internalised mental health needs of learners to be able to assist learners. Teachers need to sustain joint respect, collegial relationships, and values amongst each other to be able to enhance their understanding regarding internalised mental health needs to be able to support learners towards flourishing. Teachers need to understand their own psychological wellbeing to be able to understand the internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools.

6.4 Recommendations for future research

Based on the findings of the study, recommendations were made on how teachers can collaboratively develop operational guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs. The co-researchers all experienced those emotional barriers that arise in the classroom, and those learners are influenced by internal as well as external factors.

The number of classrooms that accommodate about 38-40 learners per class, with a teacher and in some cases also a class assistant, affect the learner's internalised mental health need. With class numbers so large, there is not always a focus on learners with internalised mental health needs. Components that play a role during the learners' development can be identified as the facets that affect the learner: his /her perceptions about him/herself, the perceptions of their peers as well as the class atmosphere. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory stated that motivation, care, and support from the parents, teachers and peer groups is extremely important in the learners' development. Insufficient motivation is part of social and contextual mental health needs that contribute to scholastic underachievement and learners who experience internalised mental health needs. These factors of inadequate motivation can lead to underachievement, low self-esteem, motivational problems, and behaviour change.

Communication between teachers must be established weekly, for example, staff meetings, and forms of support forms that are prepared by the subject teacher and communicated to the rest of the staff weekly so that they can see the progress as well as areas of concern (obstacle), also to help and support the learners in their classes. These teachers will also be encouraged to attend workshops that provide more guidelines regarding internalised mental health among learners in their classes as well as how to monitor the learners' behaviour. During these workshops, teachers will receive guidance from one another on how to care for and support these learners. Thus, teachers are motivated to become more involved in school activities.

The recommendations can contribute to a better overview of how teachers can collaboratively develop guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs, as well as to improve the current situation of care and support in schools.

6.5 Possible limitation of the study

The research study was only conducted using two urban secondary schools in the Gauteng North District in South Africa. The major shortcoming of this study was the small number of co-researchers who at times were hesitant to contribute, even though I elucidated the purpose of

conducting the research. Thus, the results in this study reflect the collaborative perspectives and experiences of teachers from two urban secondary schools for learners with internalised mental health needs therefore, the findings cannot be generalised.

6.6 Contribution of the study

Participation in this research study could ignite the teachers' awareness of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools, and in this manner contribute to the context of this study. The teachers who took part in this study had an opportunity to reflect on their understanding of internalised mental health needs of adolescents as well as their role in addressing these needs, thus advancing the awareness regarding this topic in their schools.

6.7 Conclusion

Theoretically, this study offers operational guidelines for the care and support of learners with mental health needs in urban secondary schools. Through a short learning programme, the teachers teaching in the two urban secondary schools could, in conjunction with the researcher, provide opportunities to address teachers' awareness regarding internalised mental health needs of learners.

6.8 Reflection on my journey as a PAR researcher

I am a passionate secondary school teacher, aiming to care for and support learners to improve their learning experiences. On my journey as a teacher, I realised that many secondary school learners are experiencing different internalised mental health needs. I realised that learners approach you as a teacher to share their *stories* because they respect you as a teacher and expect appropriate support. The question that came to mind was: *What can we as teachers do to assist these learners?* And then I embarked on my master journey. I felt unsure but excited at the same time. I am a novice PAR researcher and was compelled to advance my knowledge, but with the support and guidance of my supervisors, it was an extraordinary journey.

I found generating data using a PAR research design, as informative and thought-provoking. TO summarise the experience in short: I've learned a lot. My own experiences and knowledge were expanded with and through the co-researchers. It was fascinating how a group that included myself as the researcher facilitator and my colleagues as co-researchers could come up with creative ways to generate and analyse data regarding internalised mental health. During our informative discussions, we build new relationships by sharing our ideas and solutions to address a shared research problem. I now believe in concepts like empowerment, self-growth and self-confidence. As a PAR researcher, I concluded that it is important to be open-minded, but also be

patient with people since we all need to develop at our own pace during a research journey. PAR enhanced my development as an individual and as a researcher. I experienced this PAR journey as educational, captivating, enlightening and meaningful. I achieved my goal thanks to the participatory action in the PAR research design.

6.9 Summary

The primary aim of this research study was for teachers to collaboratively develop operational guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs in urban secondary schools. The findings of the study have shown that teachers do have the knowledge and experience regarding learners' internalised mental health needs, but do not always have the necessary support from other teachers. Teachers need to realise that learners need mentors because learners spend a large part of their time in the classroom and struggle with internalised mental health needs. The findings also show that teachers need to develop a holistic understanding of the term internalised mental health needs among learners in their classes. PAR made it possible for us as co-researchers to share our fears, concerns, and achievements. With this in mind, we realise that learners also have that needs and that we as teachers must act in such a manner that allows them to share their thoughts and emotions. Teachers can acknowledge learners with internalised mental health needs and then encourage learners to show their emotions.

The findings reported in this dissertation provide an overview of guidelines that can be operational for the teachers involved with adolescents in the two urban secondary schools in Gauteng North District. As the researcher of this study, I hope that the literature and findings will assist secondary school teachers to implement these guidelines at their schools and by doing so became more observant of learners with internalised mental health needs. The aim is to improve the learners' overall mental health and wellbeing in secondary schools.

Recommendations were also made for teachers on how to understand their roles in the care and support of learners with internalised mental health needs. The co-researchers each had different ideas about what they understood concerning learners internalised mental health needs and the roles they as teachers can portray to care for and support these learners.

If teachers and schools use the recommendations made in this study as a guideline to collaboratively develop guidelines for the care and support for learners with internalised mental health needs, there will be improvements in learners' behaviour, as well as other teachers who play a great role in success inside and outside the classroom.

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ANNEXURE A



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Fax: 018 299-4910
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Senate Committee for Research Ethics
Tel: 018 299-4849
Email: nkosinathi.machine@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee (EduREC) on 30 April 2020, this committee hereby approves your extension of period as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-SCRE) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: A participatory action research study promoting teachers understanding of internalising mental health issues of learners in urban secondary schools														
Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Dr I Kok														
Student / Team: N Kay (MEd student – 23438673); Dr M Neethling														
Ethics number:														
N	W	U	-	0	1	2	1	1	-	2	0	-	A	2
Institution			Study Number						Year		Status			
<u>Status:</u> S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation														
Application Type: Single Study														
Commencement date: 27 May 2021										Risk: Low				
Expiry date: 27 May 2022														
Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.														

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- *The study leader/supervisor/principal investigator/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the EduREC:*
 - *annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and*
 - *without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.*
- *The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the EduREC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.*
- *Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.*
- *The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.*
- *In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRC and EduREC reserves the right to:*
 - *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;*

- *to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;*
- *withdraw or postpone approval if:*
 - *any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;*
 - *it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the EduREC or that information has been false or misrepresented;*
 - *submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or*
 - *new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.*

The EduREC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the EduREC or the NWU-SCRC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Prof JAK Olivier
Chairperson NWU Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee

Original details: (22351930) C:\Users\22351930\Desktop\ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY.docm
8 November 2018

Current details: (22351930) M:\DSS\18533\Monitoring and Reporting Cluster\Ethics\Certificates\Templates\Research Ethics Approval Letters\9.1.5.4.1 ES-REC Ethical Approval Letter.docm
5 December 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.2

ANNEXURE B



GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

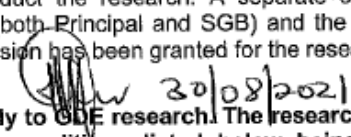
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GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	30 August 2021
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2021– 30 September 2021 2021/237
Name of Researcher:	Kay, NC
Address of Researcher:	45 Cerise Ridge Close, Stone Gate Estate Monavoni , Centurion
Telephone Number:	0833349116
Email address:	kay.nicolec@gmail.com
Research Topic:	Guidelines to improve teachers understanding of internalised mental needs of learners in urban secondary school
Type of qualification	Med in Special Needs Education
Number and type of schools:	1 Secondary Schools
District/s/HO	Johannesburg North

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.


The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1. Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.

1

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

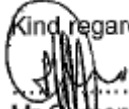
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

1. Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. **Because of COVID 19 pandemic researchers can ONLY collect data online, telephonically or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate. The approval letter will then indicate the type of arrangements that have been made with the school.**
4. **The Researchers are advised to make arrangements with the schools via Fax, email or telephonically with the Principal.**
5. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
6. A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
7. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
8. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
9. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
10. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
11. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
12. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
13. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.

14. On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
15. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
16. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards


Mr Gumani Mukatuni
Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 30/08/2021

2

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

ANNEXURE C & D



Mr. Sheldon Maconi
Studente Avenue
Rossmore
Johannesburg, 2092

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Faculty of Education

COMBER

Tel: 018 299 2143
Email: kay.nicolec@gmail.com

Date: 1 - 09 -2021

PERMISSION LETTER: SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

I herewith wish to request your permission for teachers to participate in this research, which involves participatory action research methods such as the making of collages, using photovoice as well as group discussions. Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

Guidelines to improve teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER - NWU-01211-20-A2

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr. I. Kok
CO-SUPERVISOR: Dr. M. Neethling
ADDRESS: Potchefstroom campus
CONTACT NUMBER: 018 299 2143

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM MEd-Student: N. Kay
ADDRESS: 45 Cerise, Granite Crescent street, Monavoni, Centurion 0157
CONTACT NUMBER: 0833349116

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this

committee. Permission was also obtained from the provincial Department of Basic Education/other relevant body.

What is this research about?

The aims of this research are three-fold.

- To determine teachers understanding of internalising mental health issues of learners
- To explore the roles of teachers in addressing of internalising mental health issues within an urban secondary school.
- To develop guidelines in collaboration with the teachers for the care and support of learners with internalising mental health issues within an urban secondary school.

Participants

No data collection processes will be conducted during school hours.

The research will take place in the Gauteng North District, South Africa within urban secondary school settings. The population will consist of teachers from an urban secondary school. An open invitation will be sent to teachers in the school to participate in the participant action research initiative utilised for this research study. Furthermore, the participants will be selected using clear inclusion criterion.

The criteria will include the following:

- Teachers should have teaching experience at the urban secondary schools in the Gauteng North District for at least five years.
- Teachers should all be able to easily express themselves in English.
- Teachers should be directly involved with urban secondary school learners on a daily basis.
- Teachers should be comfortable to share their views freely and openly regarding the mental health issues of learners.

What is expected of the participants?

- The data generation will involve a **pre-cycle** of a 30-minute planning session.

The participants are all teachers at the research site (school community), sharing the same teaching environment and concerns, indicating that there is already a relationship. Next, the informed consent forms will be handed out and I will explain my research study.

- During **Cycle one** data will be collected using a visual arts-based method, photovoice techniques.

Photovoice: Participants will be trained in using photovoice. Then each participant will in their own time take 4 photos that are associated with how they perceive their roles in addressing internalising mental health issues in within an urban secondary school. A second appointment will be set with the participants to discuss these photos to co-create the research data reflecting their own opinions, feelings, and perceptions of the discussions. This process will last a least 60 minutes. During this session the participants and I, will together identify possible themes. I will collect the identified photos to complete the thematic analysis process.

- During **Cycle two** of the data generation process the participants will collectively and in collaboration with each other develop guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalising mental health issues within an urban secondary school. During this reflection discussion, the idea is to strengthen participation and collaboration, while also identifying relevant existing resources to address this internalising mental health issue. The goal of this reflection is to build on established relationships, considering the setting and negotiate expectations and agendas among the participants.

Collages: The participants will have compile individual collages using various materials provided. The collage will relate to the first research aim to determine the teachers understanding of internalising mental health issues of learners. The collage will imply that the participants will use various formal and informal techniques and methods which can include using existing picture, coloured paper, coloured pens, symbols, and words to create an artistic representation on their understanding of internalising mental health issues of learners. After 30 min, the participants will reflect on their final products. I will take notes and audio tape the discussions, I predict that this might take 60 minutes. I will collect the collages to complete the thematic analysis process.

Benefits to the participants

The teachers at the urban secondary school will become more aware of internalising mental health issues in urban secondary schools. Together teachers will develop guidelines to provide learners with necessary care and support, fostering a healthy school environment, that will have an influence both inside and outside the school. Mental health issues identified can be included in the curriculum for teacher training, to make teacher aware of important aspects that usually goes unnoticed in schools.

Risks involved for participants

- Low risk study
- No precautions are applicable as a low risk study indicate that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

Confidentiality in this study encompasses the relationship of trust between the participants during the sessions where information is shared with the expectation that I will not be divulge information without consent.

All the participants will be involved as a group in the data generation process. The privacy of the group will be respected as all signed an informed consent with certain pre-requisites regarding confidentiality and privacy.

Participants will be informed about open discussions and respect for the perspectives of other participants, as well as on specific PAR processes.

Dissemination of findings

The results and implications of the study will be communicated to the participants.

A PowerPoint presentation of the results and implications will be complied with the aid of my supervisors to present to the participants during the informal meeting. Furthermore, I will invite my supervisors to attend the meeting.

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researcher for more information.

DECLARATION BY PRINCIPAL (RELEVANT PERSON):

By signing below, I, **Sheldon Maconi**, agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

Guidelines to improve teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools

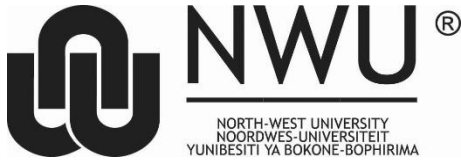
I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at **H/s Vorentoe** on **1 September 2021**



Signature of School Principal (Relevant person)



Mrs. Belinda Gibson
Vintage Street
Wilgeheuvel
Roodepoort
1724

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Faculty of Education

COMBER

Tel: 018 299 2143
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The criteria will include the following:

- Teachers should have teaching experience at the urban secondary schools in the Gauteng North District for at least five years.
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- Teachers should be comfortable to share their views freely and openly regarding the mental health issues of learners.

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The participants are all teachers at the research site (school community), sharing the same teaching environment and concerns, indicating that there is already a relationship. Next, the informed consent forms will be handed out and I will explain my research study.

- During **Cycle one** data will be collected using a visual arts-based method, namely photovoice techniques.

Photovoice: Participants will be trained in using photovoice. Then each participant will in their own time take 4 photos that are associated with how they perceive their roles in addressing internalising mental health issues in within an urban secondary school. A second appointment will be set with the participants to discuss these photos to co-create the research data reflecting their own opinions, feelings, and perceptions of the discussions. This process will last a least 60 minutes. During this session the participants and I, will together identify possible themes. I will collect the identified photos to complete the thematic analysis process.

- During **Cycle two** of the data generation process the participants will collectively and in collaboration with each other develop guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalising mental health issues within an urban secondary school. During this reflection discussion, the idea is to strengthen participation and collaboration, while also identifying relevant existing resources to address this internalising mental health issue. The goal of this reflection is to build on established relationships, considering the setting and negotiate expectations and agendas among the participants.

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- No precautions are applicable as a low risk study indicate that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

Confidentiality in this study encompasses the relationship of trust between the participants during the sessions where information is shared with the expectation that I will not be divulge information without consent.

All the participants will be involved as a group in the data generation process. The privacy of the group will be respected as all signed an informed consent with certain pre-requisites regarding confidentiality and privacy.

Participants will be informed about open discussions and respect for the perspectives of other participants, as well as on specific PAR processes.

Dissemination of findings

The results and implications of the study will be communicated to the participants.

A PowerPoint presentation of the results and implications will be complied with the aid of my supervisors to present to the participants during the informal meeting. Furthermore, I will invite my supervisors to attend the meeting.

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researcher for more information.

DECLARATION BY PRINCIPAL (RELEVANT PERSON):

By signing below, I **Belinda Gibson** agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

Guidelines to improve teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at **Curro Academy Wilgeheuwel** on **3-09-2021**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Belinda Gibson', written over a horizontal line.

Signature of School Principal (Relevant person)

ANNEXURE E



Mrs. Romilla Singh
Studente Avenue
Rossmore
Johannesburg, 2092

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Faculty of Education

COMBER

Tel: 018 299 2143
Email: kay.nicolec@gmail.com

Date: 1 – 09 - 2021

GOODWILL PERMISSION LETTER: SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

I herewith wish to request your permission for teachers to participate in this research, which involves participatory action research methods such as the making of collages, using photovoice as well as group discussions. Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

Guidelines to improve teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER - NWU-01211-20-A2

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr. I. Kok
CO-SUPERVISOR: Dr. M. Neethling
ADDRESS: Potchefstroom campus
CONTACT NUMBER: 018 299 2143

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM MEd-Student: N. Kay
ADDRESS: 45 Cerise, Granite Crescent street, Monavoni, Centurion 0157
CONTACT NUMBER: 0833349116

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this committee. Permission was also obtained from the provincial Department of Basic Education/other relevant body.

What is this research about?

The aims of this research are three-fold.

- To determine teachers understanding of internalising mental health issues of learners
- To explore the roles of teachers in addressing of internalising mental health issues within an urban secondary school.
- To develop guidelines in collaboration with the teachers for the care and support of learners with internalising mental health issues within an urban secondary school.

Participants

No data collection processes will be conducted during school hours.

The research will take place in the Gauteng North District, South Africa within urban secondary school settings. The population will consist of teachers from an urban secondary school. An open invitation will be sent to teachers in the school to participate in the participant action research initiative utilised for this research study. Furthermore, the participants will be selected using clear inclusion criterion.

The criteria will include the following:

- Teachers should have teaching experience at the urban secondary schools in the Gauteng North District for at least five years.
- Teachers should all be able to easily express themselves in English.
- Teachers should be directly involved with urban secondary school learners on a daily basis.
- Teachers should be comfortable to share their views freely and openly regarding the mental health issues of learners.

What is expected of the participants?

- The data generation will involve a **pre-cycle** of a 30-minute planning session.

The participants are all teachers at the research site (school community), sharing the same teaching environment and concerns, indicating that there is already a relationship. Next, the informed consent forms will be handed out and I will explain my research study.

- During **Cycle one** data will be collected using a visual arts-based method, photovoice techniques.

Photovoice: Participants will be trained in using photovoice. Then each participant will in their own time take 4 photos that are associated with how they perceive their roles in addressing internalising mental health issues in within an urban secondary school. A second appointment will be set with the participants to discuss these photos to co-create the research data reflecting their own opinions, feelings, and perceptions of the discussions. This process will last a least 60 minutes. During this session the participants and I, will together identify possible themes. I will collect the identified photos to complete the thematic analysis process.

- During **Cycle two** of the data generation process the participants will collectively and in collaboration with each other develop guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalising mental health issues within an urban secondary school. During this reflection discussion, the idea is to strengthen participation and collaboration, while also identifying relevant existing resources to address this internalising mental health issue. The goal of this reflection is to build on established relationships, considering the setting and negotiate expectations and agendas among the participants.

Collages: The participants will have compile individual collages using various materials provided. The collage will relate to the first research aim to determine the teachers understanding of internalising mental health issues of learners. The collage will imply that the participants will use various formal and informal techniques and methods which can include using existing picture, coloured paper, coloured pens, symbols, and words to create an artistic representation on their understanding of internalising mental health issues of learners. After 30 min, the participants will reflect on their final products. I will take notes and audio tape the discussions, I predict that this might take 60 minutes. I will collect the collages to complete the thematic analysis process.

Benefits to the participants

The teachers at the urban secondary school will become more aware of internalising mental health issues in urban secondary schools. Together teachers will develop guidelines to provide learners with necessary care and support, fostering a healthy school environment, that will have an influence both inside and outside the school. Mental health issues identified can be included in the curriculum for teacher training, to make teacher aware of important aspects that usually goes unnoticed in schools.

Risks involved for participants

- Low risk study
- No precautions are applicable as a low risk study indicate that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

Confidentiality in this study encompasses the relationship of trust between the participants during the sessions where information is shared with the expectation that I will not be divulge information without consent.

All the participants will be involved as a group in the data generation process. The privacy of the group will be respected as all signed an informed consent with certain pre-requisites regarding confidentiality and privacy.

Participants will be informed about open discussions and respect for the perspectives of other participants, as well as on specific PAR processes.

Dissemination of findings

The results and implications of the study will be communicated to the participants.

A PowerPoint presentation of the results and implications will be complied with the aid of my supervisors to present to the participants during the informal meeting. Furthermore, I will invite my supervisors to attend the meeting.

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researcher for more information.

DECLARATION BY CHAIRPERSON SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY (RELEVANT PERSON):

By signing below, I, **Romilla Singh** agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

Guidelines to improve teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools

I declare that:

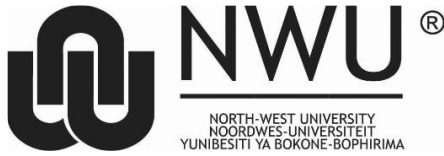
- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at **Hoërskool Vorentoe** on **1 September 2021**



Signature of Chairperson of the School Governing Body (Relevant person)

ANNEXURE F



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Faculty of Education

COMBER

Tel: 018 299 2143
Email: kay.nicolec@gmail.com

Date: 23 – 10 - 2021

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

I herewith wish to request your consent to participate in this research, which involves participatory action research methods such as the making of collages, using photovoice as well as group discussions. Before you give consent, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

Guidelines to improve teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER - NWU-01211-20-A2

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr. I. Kok
CO-SUPERVISOR: Dr. M. Neethling
ADDRESS: Potchefstroom campus
CONTACT NUMBER: 018 299 2143

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM MEd-Student: N. Kay
ADDRESS: 45 Cerise, Granite Crescent street, Monavoni, Centurion 0157
CONTACT NUMBER: 0833349116

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

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What is this research about?

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- To determine teachers understanding of internalising mental health issues of learners
- To explore the roles of teachers in addressing of internalising mental health issues within an urban secondary school.
- To develop guidelines in collaboration with the teachers for the care and support of learners with internalising mental health issues within an urban secondary school.

Participants

No data collection processes will be conducted during school hours.

The research will take place in the Gauteng North District, South Africa within urban secondary school settings. The population will consist of teachers from an urban secondary school. An open invitation will be sent to teachers in the school to participate in the participant action research initiative utilised for this research study. Furthermore, the participants will be selected using clear inclusion criterion.

The criteria will include the following:

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- Teachers should all be able to easily express themselves in English.
- Teachers should be directly involved with urban secondary school learners on a daily basis.
- Teachers should be comfortable to share their views freely and openly regarding the mental health issues of learners.

What is expected of you as the participant?

- The data generation will involve a **pre-cycle** of a 30-minute planning session.

The participants are all teachers at the research site (school community), sharing the same teaching environment and concerns, indicating that there is already a relationship. Next, the informed consent forms will be handed out and I will explain my research study.

- During **Cycle one** data will be collected using a visual arts-based method, photovoice techniques.

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- During **Cycle two** of the data generation process the participants will collectively and in collaboration with each other develop guidelines for the care and support of learners with internalising mental health issues within an urban secondary school. During this reflection discussion, the idea is to strengthen participation and collaboration, while also identifying relevant existing resources to address this internalising mental health issue. The goal of this reflection is to build on established relationships, considering the setting and negotiate expectations and agendas among the participants.

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Risks involved for participants

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Participants will be informed about open discussions and respect for the perspectives of other participants, as well as on specific PAR processes.

Dissemination of findings

The results and implications of the study will be communicated to the participants.

A PowerPoint presentation of the results and implications will be complied with the aid of my supervisors to present to the participants during the informal meeting. Furthermore, I will invite my supervisors to attend the meeting.

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researcher for more information.

Yours sincerely

Nicole Kay - Researcher

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT:

By signing below, I agree to take part in a research study.

Guidelines to improve teachers' understanding of internalised mental health needs of learners in urban secondary schools

I declare that:

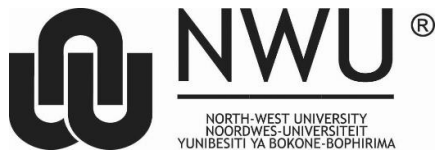
- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced to take part.
- I may may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at on

Signature of Participant

Signature of researcher

ANNEXURE G



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Faculty of Education

COMBER

Tel: 018 299 2143

Email: kay.nicolec@gmail.com

Date: 08 - 10 -2021

**I WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND A HEARTLY INVITE
TO YOU TO PARTAKE IN MY RESEARCH:**

**Guidelines to improve teachers' understanding of
internalised mental health needs of learners in urban
secondary schools**

WHEN: 23 October 2021

TIME: 12:00 PM – 16:00 PM

WHERE: CHE ARGENTINIAN GRILL RESTAURANT,
ROSEBANK



**FOOD AND BEVERAGES WILL BE
PROVIDED**

RESEARCHER: NICOLE KAY
0833349116

