

**Capabilities and flourishing: The role of social
network support in previously disadvantaged African
communities**

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Thesis accepted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Doctor
of Philosophy in Industrial Psychology*
at the North-West University

Promotor: Prof S Rothmann

Co-Promoter: Prof J Hoffman

PREFACE

This thesis is presented in the form of a collection of research articles. The referencing style follows the guidelines of the Publication Manual (7th edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA). However, details of the publisher have been included in the reference list (which is not an APA7 requirement), as some journals may require this for publication purposes. This practice is consistent with the policy of the Optentia Research Unit of North-West University.

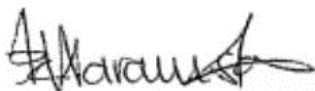
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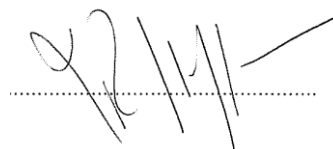
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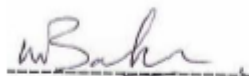
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To whom it may concern

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Based on approval by the **Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC)** on 12/12/2018, the Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-RERC) 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.

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	Institution						Study Number				Year			Status		
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SUMMARY

Title: Capabilities and flourishing: The role of social network support in previously disadvantaged African Communities

Keywords: capability approach, capability, flourishing, functioning, enablers, values, mental health, social support, adolescents, wellbeing, secondary school learners, latent profile analysis, Sub-Saharan Africa.

This thesis focused on the capabilities and functionings of learners in secondary schools in a sub-Saharan context from a capability approach perspective. It identified common capability themes and enablers within the sub-Saharan context. It applied the capability approach to understanding what learners in secondary schools really valued and their reasoning for their choice. The study then looked at how social support enables flourishing.

Study 1 investigated capabilities present among secondary school learners. It also looked at the enablers of capabilities and functionings through a systematic review of the literature within the sub-Saharan African context. A descriptive research design was followed using ASReview. PRISMA guidelines were used to conduct the study (PRISMA, 2023). Twenty-two articles from Western, Eastern, and Southern African countries were identified. The article identified the following nine capabilities: technical capabilities (numeracy and science, knowledge, and cognition and ideation); and behavioural capabilities (affiliation, autonomy, confidence, morals, resilience, and a growth mindset). Four groupings that related to resources, capabilities, and functionings of secondary school learners were identified: leadership, quality education, a policy framework, and conversion factors. Leadership improves and transforms the performance of educational institutions by having an impact on capabilities and functioning. Quality education prepares learners to become economically active citizens. A policy framework helps steer innovation and ensures essential skill sets and capability development among all educational stakeholders. Conversion factors allow learners to convert available resources within their contextual situation. These factors and their associated capabilities can create a framework that enhances secondary school learners' capabilities to promote their well-being and employability.

Study 2 utilised the capability approach to identify what secondary school learners valued and what capabilities could be developed and supported within an educational context. A purposive sample of 21 learners in secondary schools in Gauteng participated in semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted face to face. The data was analysed using ATLAS.ti, adhering to the Saldaña coding strategy (2021). Six themes were identified: career choice based on values, enabling lifestyle, affiliation for goal attainment, achieving a balanced life, schooling to develop sensing, imagination, and play, and reciprocal support from the family, school, and communities to provide control. Capabilities identified by learners were similar to those in other studies conducted in different contexts. Learners wanted the freedom to be autonomous and set goals for themselves that would enable them to have a good life and attain well-being. Most importantly, they wanted to support and be supported by people. Knowing and understanding these valued capabilities can empower learners to flourish.

Study 3 focused on identifying adolescent learners' social support profiles based on their self-reports regarding four sources of social support (i.e., parental, classmate, teacher, and close friend support) and associations of such profiles with their well-being. A biographical questionnaire, the Social Support Scale for Children, and the Mental Health Continuum – Short Form were administered to a sample of 770 learners from previously disadvantaged schools in South Africa. Three social network support profiles were identified using latent profile analyses of parental, classmate, teacher, and close friend support, namely the connected, moderate, and isolated profiles. Social support profiles were associated with well-being. The most desirable well-being outcome was associated with the connected profile (moderate parental support, and high classmate, teacher, and close friend support). In contrast, the lowest levels of well-being were observed in the isolated profile (low close friend, teacher, and classmate support). The results confirmed that teacher, close friend, classmate support, and parental support were vital for adolescent learners' well-being in the South African context.

Limitations of the study were reported, and recommendations were made for future research.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on secondary school learners' capabilities and functioning's in the sub-Saharan African context.

As an introduction and background to the study, this chapter provides an overview of the problem and discusses the general and specific objectives. The methods of data collection and analysis are also described in detail.

1.1 Background to and Motivation for the Research

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is arguably upon us. It is different from its predecessors and brings with it unique challenges. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is characterised by technological and social system changes (Dombrowski & Wagner, 2014), such as robotics, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, material science, cyber-physical systems, energy storage, and quantum computing. These changes will probably result in job losses, especially in sectors like transportation and logistics. Society must prepare people for new jobs that demand higher cognitive abilities (Schwab, 2016). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic had and continues to negatively impact schools in the sub-Saharan African region (Oyinloye, 2020). The lack of contact hours and e-learning platforms has destabilised the educational system (Oyinloye, 2020). The response to these changes requires the re-education of society by building new skills and capabilities (Butler, 2018; Lonka, 2018). If societies transform people's current capabilities to meet these challenges, they will flourish (Lonka, 2018).

Developing capabilities is challenging in developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa, as countries grapple with poverty, political instability, lack of security, and educational crises (Tissington, 2010). For example, South Africa's upper secondary school completion rate (age 15 and older) was 55,1%, while the tertiary school completion rate (age 25 and older) was 30,7% (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA], 2017). South Africa has a dual education system dependent on wealth, socioeconomic status, geographic location, and language. A minority of the learners in the system (20–25%) significantly outperform the others and the gap between what most learners should know and what they do know grows over time. Children fall further

behind as the gap becomes too difficult to bridge as time passes. This poor quality of schooling hinders the learners' real career opportunities.

Furthermore, rural schools lack the necessary resources, including libraries, computers, and proper building insulation. Parents and schools must often raise funds to improve these conditions as government financial support is insufficient. The monetary allocation to basic education is not optimal, with the budget for school children remaining at 17% of total government expenditure (Department of Basic Education, 2016). In addition, schools lack basic infrastructure such as electricity, sanitation, classroom space, and drinking water. The teaching and teacher behaviour standards appear to be another concern in rural schools, with incidents of tardiness, absenteeism, lack of learner control, and unauthorised presence of teachers at extracurricular activities (Lemon, 2004; Modisaotsile, 2012; Watkins, 2013).

Many learners in sub-Saharan Africa lack access to basic learning. Over 61 million children are estimated to enter adulthood without basic numeric and literacy skills (Modisaotsile, 2012; Spaul, 2013; Watkins, 2013). Further exacerbating the situation is the threat of HIV/AIDS, violence, acts of terrorism, sexual abuse, and malnutrition (Modisaotsile, 2012; Theron & Theron, 2010). The advocacy of gender equality in education is an important capability that can offer many opportunities to female learners (Unterhalter, 2005).

It is important to understand the process youth follow to decide what they have reason to value in and from education (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). Education entails instrumental and intrinsic values and can lead to other valuable goods, like skills and knowledge or be valuable (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). Achieving empowerment relies on acting in defence of values and reasons supporting what is valued. It can also be an opportunity structure that facilitates agency enhancement, allowing them to self-regulate and exercise choice in their preferences (Mtawa, 2019). Quality education requires equal capabilities for diverse students, not just those from privileged backgrounds (Walker, 2008). Therefore, the concept of equality must consider both the availability of options and outcomes and freedom in opportunities (Walker, 2008). Learning how to develop one's character and personality can be aided by sports and extracurricular activities (Ghildiyal, 2015). Sports can benefit all participants, irrespective of their context by developing different capabilities (Ghildiyal, 2015).

The benefits of sports go beyond physical well-being to fostering emotional and psychological competencies (Donaldson & Ronan, 2006). Sports in schools can assist in developing the

capabilities to flourish. Physical exercise reduces chronic health conditions in early and late adulthood, like obesity and heart diseases (Sabo et al., 2004). The involvement in sports further reduces the involvement of risky behaviours as learners' time is spent on sporting activities (Sabo et al., 2004). Sports can encourage capability building by supporting learner engagement, relatedness, and the opportunity to be challenged optimally. Critically, it can build the learner's sense of self (Badura et al., 2015). Participation in youth sports assists in bonding and helping others (Schüttoff et al., 2018; Wegner et al., 2008). Sports facilitators, parents and peers all play an important role in shaping how learners experience sports and the capabilities they develop as a result of their participation (Sheridan et al., 2014).

Children's family, school, and community lives are important predictors of subjective well-being. Parental support and understanding of their children's schooling activities positively impact their learning (Modisaotsile, 2012; Ngcobo & Tikly, 2010). This includes helping them with homework and supporting extramural activities like sports (Modisaotsile, 2012). Social networks' structural and qualitative nature plays a critical role in youth flourishing (Scheier & Brissette, 2002), because social networks provide love, identity, and belonging to learners which mediates violence, increases resilience, and encourages tertiary education completion and commitment to school (Theron & Theron, 2010). Broader community interaction through engagement with local farmers, religious leaders, and politicians can also contribute to a conducive learning environment (Ngcobo & Tikly, 2010).

The capability approach

As a paradigm, the Capability Approach (CA) allows society to measure success based on the capabilities of its members (Alkire, 2003). It is a people-centric approach that incorporates the concept of potential in terms of the possibility of achieving these capabilities (Alkire, 2003). Individual freedom is essential to this paradigm, as is the need for equality among individuals with different needs and priorities. A different set of principles and data gathering must be used for measuring and evaluating success, be it flourishing. In the CA, valuable capabilities are determined by consensus and ethics (Alkire, 2003). The vector of capabilities cannot be aggregated but need to possess different weighting. This paradigm allows for both aspiration and reason to be the catalyst for capability development (Alkire, 2003).

CA is a framework that evaluates individual well-being, social arrangement, design policies, and proposed social change (Robeyns, 2017). Amartya Sen (1980) initially developed the CA

with Martha Nussbaum (2011), who significantly contributed to its development (Robeyns, 2003). The CA assesses whether people have the opportunity to lead long and healthy lives, have opportunities for education, and are free to use their knowledge and talents to shape their futures based on the real freedoms (opportunities) available to them (Chinyakata et al., 2021). It encourages the development and sustainability of their freedom to lead the lives they value and encompasses political freedom and human rights (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2010).

Capabilities are realistic activities that individuals are able to undertake in relation to their context. Capabilities are opportunities and freedom to undertake action and activities (Sen, 1999). Functionings are potential or achieved states that a person values or has reason to value (Sen, 2004). The CA emphasises the importance of applied value and internal resources in relation to people's capabilities and real opportunities to live meaningful lives (Hart & Brando, 2018). Capabilities do not include opportunities or freedoms theoretically or legally bestowed upon an individual; they are actual choices individuals possess (Alkire, 2005). Capabilities range from simple things, such as being well nourished and preventing avoidable deaths, to more complex ones, such as respecting oneself and integrating into society (Sen, 1990). Functionings are things achieved by exercising capabilities (Robeyns, 2017; Sen, 1999) and these could include *ways of being*, such as being literate, and *acts of doing*, such as writing a book (Gopinath, 2018). Converting resources and goods into functioning depends on personal, social, political, and environmental factors (Crocker & Robeyns, 2010; Sen, 1992).

Nussbaum (2011) offers a list of capabilities necessary for human flourishing (Claassen, 2018; Svarstad & Benjaminsen, 2020). These include: 1) the ability to live the length of a normal human life; 2) being in good health and having the necessary contributing factors to support this, like nourishment; 3) being able to freely move between places and this means being free from any form of violence. The fourth capability is using senses, imagination, thinking, and reasoning. All the capabilities need to be supported by education, including numeracy, literacy, and science. The fifth capability is to use imagination and thought to experience and create work and events that one chooses to produce. Other capabilities include having attachments to things and people outside ourselves; being able to form a conception of what is good and engaging in life reflection; having affiliation with others; being able to live with other species; being able to enjoy recreational activities; and having control over one's environment (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993).

Capabilities can result in various levels of mental health in terms of flourishing and languishing. Flourishing, also known as positive mental health (Catalino & Fredrickson, 2011), refers to attaining a balanced life where people are satisfied with their lives and function well (Keyes, 2016), and indicates positive functioning and positive feelings in life (Keyes, 2002). For this study, mental health is defined as a multidimensional subjective state characterised by emotional as well as psychological and social well-being (Hughes et al., 2004; Keyes, 2002). Psychological well-being refers to self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, personal growth, the ability to accomplish goals, mastering the environment, and expressing independence (Keyes, 2002), while hedonic happiness, satisfaction, and interest in life constitute emotional well-being (Keyes, 2007). A person's social well-being is determined by how they view their circumstances and society (Keyes, 1998).

Well-being can be measured by the presence or absence of symptoms resulting from an unobservable state or condition (Keyes, 2005). Therefore, well-being scales measure levels of flourishing on hedonic well-being (satisfaction and a positive affect balance), and eudaimonic well-being (positive psychological and social functioning) (Keyes, 2005). To be deemed as flourishing, individuals must exhibit high levels of one of the hedonic constructs. Furthermore, they need to measure high levels on a minimum of six of the positive functioning constructs. Languishing individuals have low levels of one of the hedonic constructs. Additionally, they have low levels on at least six positive functioning constructs – moderately happy individuals fit neither the criteria for flourishing nor languishing.

Mental illness and mental health, although related, are seen as independent continua in the two-factor theory of mental health (Keyes, 2002). Individuals can be categorised as those who have mental illness and those who do not have mental illness and can further be grouped into those who are flourishing, languishing, moderately mentally healthy, and depressed (Keyes, 2005). A mentally healthy individual is flourishing and free of mental illness. An individual who is flourishing but has an episode of mental illness functions better than a person with moderate levels of mental health. A person with moderate mental health functions better than a person who is languishing and has an episode of mental illness (Keyes, 2005).

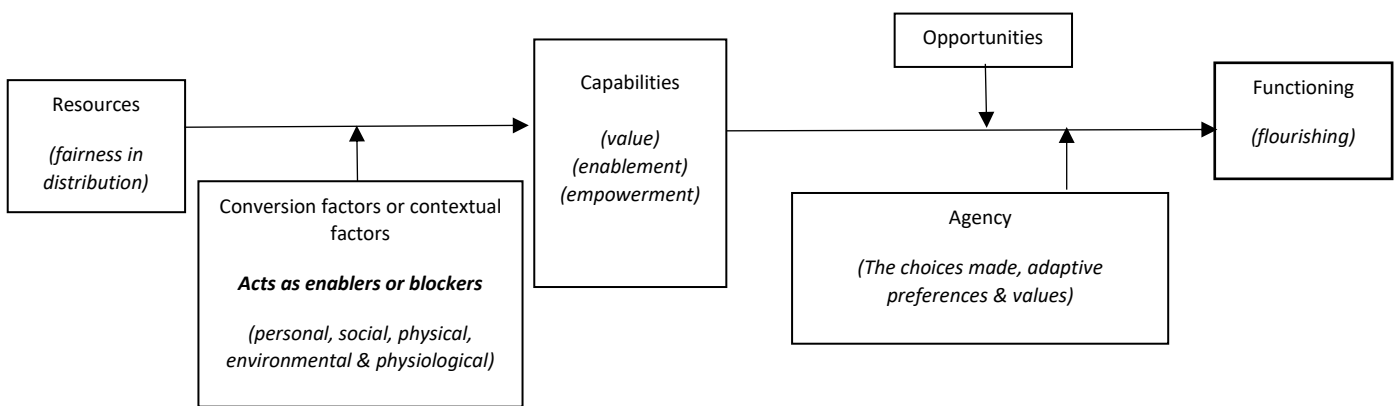
The presence of four constructs over 12 months can indicate whether there is a presence of mental illness. Depressive episodes, generalised anxiety, panic attacks, and alcohol abuse are among these constructs (Keyes, 2005). It was found that flourishing people are the least likely

to suffer from any of the four mental disorders, while moderately mentally healthy people are at intermediate risk of having more than two mental disorders over the last year (Keyes, 2005).

Education can equip learners with capabilities to flourish in life. The subjects offered at schools offer capability building beyond basic needs, like reading, to deeper capability building, like using literary works to better understand society’s makeup. The formal curriculum, informal curriculum, and ethos of the school play a significant role in learners’ choice of functioning’s (Brighouse, 2009). By using the CA, it is possible to provide learners with the conditions, protection, and spaces to choose their own paths.

Figure 1

Diagram Depicting the Systematic Process of the Capability Approach and the Framework of this Study



1.2 Problem Statement

Many years into liberation have seen progressive policy changes and global best practice implementations in South Africa. However, positive change in schools has been slow and sometimes regressive. The schooling environment is not conducive to learning and often threatens students’ safety. Additionally, schools lack resources and infrastructure to support students in all facets of their schooling careers (Arends et al., 2017; Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Kubow, 2017). For learners to flourish, adequate resources like social network support must be provided, and learners must have the personal, social, and environmental characteristics to convert these resources into capabilities that encourage development (Ciarrochi et al., 2017; Hobfoll, 2011). Capabilities like positivism, affiliation, and practical reasoning have proven to

be relevant in an educational context. Students must be free to choose the functioning they value (Hart & Brando, 2018). It is important to determine what capabilities can stimulate the flourishing of learners by applying the CA. CA studies have been conducted in primary school and many in tertiary institutions (Atmore et al., 2012; Atmore, 2013; Bozalek, 2010; Walker, 2012; Wilson-Strydom & Walker, 2015), however, limited secondary school studies have explicitly called out the CA in their research (Hoferichter et al., 2021; Masitsa, 2006; Mendick et al., 2015). It is, therefore, important to identify prominent capabilities and their enablers in a secondary school setting that could help identify and enhance identified capabilities in a sub-Saharan context. To advance knowledge, the researcher needs to build on and understand what previous work has been conducted on the subject (Xiao & Watson, 2019). Reviewing the relevant literature enables us to better understand what has already been done and identify gaps that need to be filled (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Human beings have different values and experiences at different times and places, so the functions most appropriate for them might vary according to the situation and the purpose of the exercise (Alkire, 2016). This means that global, national, and local findings differ (Gastrow & Oppelt, 2018). The CA can be used in educational research to investigate how different forms and education processes facilitate freedom and opportunities (DeJaeghere & Murphy-Graham, 2022). It is essential to understand what flourishing looks like. To do this, it is essential to understand what capabilities they value in life and why, by asking them directly. This understanding will form the basis for offering relevant support to learners.

Flourishing individuals can find satisfaction in their creativity and productivity (Keyes & Haidt, 2003). Social support exists in various forms, including physical assistance, resources, information sharing, learning behaviour, and emotional and psychological support (López & Salas, 2006). The quality and structure of social support are essential in learner flourishing. Different sources of social support have compensatory or mutually reinforcing effects. Studies have not focused on the combined effects of different sources of social support on adolescent learners' well-being.

- Consequently, little is known about the patterns that characterise the combination of different types of social supports and their effects on adolescent learners' well-being. Furthermore, it is unclear how and why these relationships positively affect youth flourishing (Profe & Wild, 2017). It is also unclear how these social support structures interact and influence each other (Wentzel et al., 2016), taking cognisance of the

heterogeneity of people (Meyer & Morin, 2016). Considering the aforementioned, the following research questions were developed.

- What are the prominent capability themes emerging from recent literature in a secondary school setting? What are the capabilities of secondary school learners and what are the enablers of capabilities and functioning's in the sub-Saharan African context?
- What capabilities do South African secondary school learners value, enable for, and achieve?
- Which social support profiles can be identified from different types of social support, and how do these profiles relate to flourishing and demographic variables amongst learners in secondary schools?

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study was to investigate the capabilities and flourishing of secondary school learners in the sub-Saharan context. This involved identifying existing themes of capabilities and enablers, validating these themes in a sub-Saharan context, and investigating the effects of social support profiles on flourishing in this context.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this research study were:

- To investigate capabilities of secondary school learners and to determine the enablers of capabilities and functioning's in the sub-Saharan African context.
- To identify what secondary school learners value and what capabilities could be developed and supported within an educational context.
- To study adolescent learners' social support profiles based on their self-reports regarding four sources of social support (i.e., parental, classmate, teacher, and

closefriend support) and associations of such profiles with their mental health.

1.4 Research Method

1.4.1 Literature Review

This thesis is based on a multi-method study using the CA as a theoretical framework. The first systematic review study aimed at identifying common learner capabilities identified in secondary schools and their enablers. The literature search was conducted using the keywords “capabilities”, “functioning”, “flourishing and well-being and wellness”, and “secondary and/or high school”. In the second study, the focus was on what flourishing meant to learners, acknowledging that the context in sub-Saharan Africa is unique with its own nuances. To do this, it is necessary to understand what capabilities learners value in life, why, and whether they believed these values are attainable. The third study focused on the combined effects of different sources of social support on adolescent learners’ well-being. A person-centred approach was taken to identify complex relationships among social support and mental well-being, thus incorporating the heterogeneity of the sample population.

1.4.2 Empirical Design

1.4.2.1 Research Design

A literature review was conducted to determine what capabilities and enablers of capabilities existing in recent studies in a South African secondary school setting. A systematic literature review (SLR) serves as a comprehensive, unbiased summary of relevant studies, when conducted and reported in accordance with international standards (Lockwood et al., 2019). The literature review was undertaken by implementing an SLR protocol, using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) process (PRISMA, 2023). Electronic search databases were accessed through the North-West University’s (NWU) access platform. Results were imported into EndNote (Thomson ResearchSoft, 2005), a citation manager, which was then utilised to remove duplicates and export a database file in text format ready for screening.

The second study entailed a qualitative research design, in which the researcher visited the schools and conducted face-to-face interviews with the students. The researcher applied the flourishing approach of Wilson-Strydom and Walker (2015) used within a secondary school

context. The researcher asked learners the following questions (Robeyns, 2017): (a) What do you think is most valuable for you to be able to do or achieve in life? You can include personal and academic (ultimate) values (Robeyns, 2017). (b) How can you achieve this? (This explored whether learners had real opportunities to achieve functionings (Robeyns, 2017).) (c) What are you doing to achieve this? (d) Do you think you will achieve this? Face-to-face interviews helped me explore the phenomenon's meaning from the participants' perspectives and subsequently, create themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The third study used a quantitative design. A cross-sectional survey design with stratified systematic sampling was used to select male and female learners from Grades 10 and 11 from each school. The empirical study utilised the following instruments: A biographical questionnaire, the Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF) and the Social Support Scale for Children (SSSC). The descriptive statistics were computed with SPSS 26.0 (IBM Corp, 2017). The MHC-SF has shown high validity and reliability scores in adolescents (12 to 18) (Keyes, 2005; Lamers et al., 2011). The SSSC has excellent content, criterion, and construct validity, with internal consistency scores ranging from .72 to .88 (Harter, 1985). The full information maximum likelihood method (FIML) in Mplus 8.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2018) was used to deal with the few missing values in the dataset (Van Buren, 2018). Latent profile analysis (LPA) was used to determine whether distinctive profiles relating to youth engagement with cultural resources could be found in the data (Wang & Wang, 2020). Latent profile analyses assume that subgroups of samples (profiles) come from a heterogeneous population (Ahlborg et al., 2019; Caesens et al., 2020; Ciarrochi et al., 2017; Meyer & Morin, 2016) and can identify complex relationships among variables that will not ordinarily be detected using a variable-centred approach (Meyer & Morin, 2016)

1.4.2.2 Participants and Sampling

The literature review did not involve participants. The population for the second, qualitative study included learners from two schools. The first school was a government-funded school in a previously disadvantaged area in Pretoria. The second was a partly government-funded school in Edenvale. Two methods of purposeful sampling were used in the research, which consisted of strategically choosing cases that offered much information. The first method was extreme or deviant sampling (outlier sampling), in which learning was gained from unusual manifestations of the phenomena. The second was a snowballing method, where participants

recommended other participants who would provide good examples for the study (Patton, 2002).

The third quantitative study sample comprised 770 learners from four secondary schools in previously disadvantaged areas. Stratified systematic sampling was used to select male and female learners from Grades 10 and 11 from each school. One school was in Gauteng West, and three in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. These schools were chosen as they were recent recipients of sports facilities and could enhance our findings on social support and well-being.

1.4.2.3 Data Gathering

Study 1

South African and sub-Saharan African articles were analysed during the secondary eligibility screening phase. Any articles that did not apply to adolescents of secondary school-going age were removed. Furthermore, only published peer-reviewed articles were included in the process. Twenty articles did not explicitly refer to capability, functioning, and flourishing in a secondary school setting. Two articles specifically mentioned the concepts of capabilities and functioning in their arguments. Articles were included where reasonable deductions could be made from the values, enablement, implementation, and well-being discussed in these articles.

Study 2

The researcher visited the schools and conducted face-to-face interviews with the students. The flourishing approach of Wilson-Strydom and Walker (2015) was used within a secondary school context. McLean and Walker (2015) asked four questions when determining how professionals expanded their communities' capabilities: a) What are my clients or the communities I work with able to do and be? b) What opportunities do they have to be and do what they value? c) How do social arrangements influence expanding their capabilities? d) How do we build a profession that values creating capabilities for all?

Adapting these questions, the researcher asked the following questions to ten learners (Robeyns, 2017): a) What do you think is most valuable for you to be able to do or achieve in life? You can include personal and academic (ultimate values) (Robeyns, 2017). b) How can you achieve this? (This explored whether learners have real opportunities to achieve functionings (Robeyns, 2017)). c) What are you doing to achieve this? d) Do you think you will achieve this? The researcher collated what was valued, capabilities needed, capabilities

possessed, and learners' perception of goal attainment. The study was based on the premise that the values of all mentioned capabilities and functionings were weighted equally (Robeyns, 2017).

Credibility was established by ensuring the study focused on its intended assessment (Forero et al., 2018). The researcher applied qualitative description, a well-tested and recognised way of conducting qualitative investigation and information science research. Moreover, the researcher used well-established qualitative purposeful sampling methods, such as extreme or deviant sampling and snowballing (Sandelowski, 2000; Shenton, 2004), removing researcher bias (Shenton, 2004). Next, the researcher examined the alignment and relevance of the questions with the co-researchers (supervisors). Questions were structured in an interview schedule for all participants to engage with the same scope of enquiry with suitable language (Forero et al., 2018). The researcher spent a day in the sample group's classroom, ensuring that she understood the organisation and that the participants could trust me (Forero et al., 2018).

The informed consent ensured that participants knew that the researcher was independent of the school and were aware that they could exit the process at any point. Probing questions were used to get more detailed responses, and coded participants' responses verbatim, with the assistance of an expert external coder. Findings were discussed with the expert coder, co-author, and peers for trustworthiness and consistency. The findings were supported with direct quotations from the participants, thus enhancing the accuracy of the analysis (Levitt et al., 2018). The researcher thoroughly described the topic under investigation and examined previous studies to make comparisons (Forero et al., 2018). The study outlined its process in detail, thus making it easy to replicate. It also provided the baseline for understanding the topic, against which subsequent studies can be compared (Forero et al., 2018).

Study 3

The quantitative part of the study utilised the following instruments: A biographical questionnaire, the Mental Health Continuum- Short Form (MHC-SF) and the Social Support Scale for Children (SSSC).

A biographical questionnaire was used to capture information about gender, age, grade, participation in sports in school, participation in sports outside school, legal guardian, and their relationship to the learner.

The MHC-SF (Keyes, 2009) was used to assess flourishing versus languishing among learners and consists of three items measuring emotional well-being, which include questions like “How often does the learner feel happy?” Six items measure the six dimensions of psychological well-being (e.g., “How often does the learner like his/her personality for the most part?”. Finally, five items measured social well-being. This includes a question on how often the learners believe their life has meaning. Each item is rated on a six-point Likert scale. The MHC-FS has an internal consistency of greater than .80 and has discriminant validity in adolescents (ages 12–18) and adults in many countries, including South Africa. The test-retest reliability of the MHC-SF over three-month periods was .68, and over nine months was .65 (Lamers et al., 2010).

The SSSC (Harter, 1985) was used to measure the support and positive regard that adolescents felt they received from the people in their lives. The measure has 24 questions and four subscales: parents, teachers, classmates, and close friends. Each subscale investigates different contents; for example, the parent scale determines the extent to which parents understand their children, want to hear about their children’s problems, care about their feelings, treat them like a person who matters, like them the way they are, and act like what their children do is important. It is a structured alternative instrument where a learner is first asked to decide which kind of child is most like them. For example, “Some kids have parents who treat their child like a person who really matters, but other kids have parents who do not usually treat their child like a person who really matters.” The learner was then asked to go to the side of the statement that is most true for them and then decide whether this statement is only somewhat true for them or completely true. Each statement was coded from 1 (really true for me) or 2 (sort of true for me) when one of the options of the first part of the statement was chosen, and 3 (sort of true for me) or 4 (really true for me) in the event of choosing the second statement. The scale has excellent content, criterion, construct validity, and internal consistency scores ranging from .72 to .88 (Harter, 1985).

1.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The studies were conducted in this thesis and the data analysis for each are highlighted below.

Systematic review

A systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted to ensure that previous studies were summarised, analysed, and synthesised using valid, reliable, and repeatable methodologies

(Xiao & Watson, 2019). The literature review was undertaken by implementing an SLR protocol using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) process (PRISMA, 2023). The researcher included studies from all disciplines and written in English. The literature search was conducted using the keywords “capabilities”, “functioning,” “flourishing and well-being and or wellness,” and “secondary and/or high school.” The title determined preliminary relevance. If the content seemed to be applicable to secondary school learners, the full reference was captured for investigation for possible inclusion in the literature review. The focus groups were learners and any other groups, educators, and school management whose actions may affect learners.

Electronic search databases were accessed through the NWU’s access platform. These included Google Scholar and African Journals (Sabinet), ensuring that research articles from various disciplines applicable within the African context were included. The articles needed to be empirically grounded research – either qualitative or quantitative. The publication dates of the papers were set between 2010 and 2022 to ensure the paper built on recent literature (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Results were imported into EndNote (Thomson ResearchSoft, 2005), a citation manager, which was then utilised to remove duplicates and export a database file in text format ready for screening. There were 1 713 resources imported to EndNote, including journal articles, reports, reviews, and Acts.

Variables that were of interest in this study were scientific evidence that pointed to the following aspects: (a) studies focused on the learners' capabilities (i.e., participants answered questions about the capabilities the article mentioned from the perspectives of students, teachers, parents, communities, or institutions); (b) supporting resources (individual, social, and environmental); (c) the conversion factors that helped transform capabilities into functionings; and (d) factors that constrained their doings and beings in utilising these resources. A qualitative researcher who was an ATLAS.ti (Friese, 2021) certified trainer was part of the research to assist with the data analysis. To work through the 22 articles simply and logically, Friese’s three principles of analysis, namely, noticing, collecting, and thinking, were used (Friese, 2019).

Qualitative research

The researcher analysed the responses from 21 semi-structured interviews for qualitative content using the coding strategies of Saldaña (2021). The analysis was guided by the research questions together with the interview questions. To this end, the researcher engaged in data reduction, coding, and decoding analytic processes to analyse and interpret each of these qualitative data forms (Saldaña, 2021). The methods unfolded through concurrent and iterative research processes: data collection, audio-recorded semi-structured interview data, and data analysis. Coding terminology and procedures according to Saldaña (2021) were applied. Descriptive, process, and in vivo codes were used, which were created inductively (data-driven). The researcher created a code list or a codebook of 102 codes (first cycle), which were reduced to 24 codes (second cycle) and six thematic code groups or categories aligned with the research objectives from 462 quotations. This was done in ATLAS.Ti version 22 is a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software package.

This software adds value and sophistication to the coding process, together with an audit trail for transparency of the analysis process (Smit, 2005; Smit & Scherman, 2021; Smit & Zimmerman, 2014). ATLAS.ti is a powerful workbench for analysing extensive textual, graphical, audio, and video data. During the qualitative analysis, ATLAS.ti Web (Version 22.0.6.0) helped to explore the complex phenomena hidden in the data. All the responses were loaded into the project function, a container for all the data, for subsequent coding. Coding is the procedure of associating code words with segments of data or quotations, which is the association between a quote in the text and a specific code. In linking, collecting, and interpreting data, coding is the basis for developing the analysis. The researcher clustered codes into six groups, referred to as categories in the literature. The next section describes and discusses (interprets) the research findings based on the categories as invoked in the literature and accompanying relevant theories.

Quantitative research

The descriptive statistics were computed with SPSS 26.0 (IBM Corp, 2017). The full information maximum likelihood method (FIML) in Mplus 8.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2018) was used to deal with the few missing values in the dataset (Van Buren, 2018). Latent profile analysis (LPA) was used to determine whether distinctive profiles relating to youth engagement with cultural resources could be found in the data (Wang & Wang, 2020).

Different models with a variety of latent profiles were tested. A model was retained when a significant improvement from the reference model to the model with more profiles was found. The competing models were compared based on their Bayesian information criterion (BIC), Akaike information criterion (AIC), and sample-size adjusted BIC (ABIC) values. The model with the smallest value of information criterion (AIC, BIC, and ABIC) is preferred. Entropy is a measure used to determine the quality of profile verification in latent profile analysis; these values range from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating suitable classification (Geiser, 2013). The Lo-Mendell-Rubin test (LMR LR), the adjusted Lo-Mendell-Rubin test (ALMR) test, and the bootstrapped likelihood ratio test (BLRT) (Wang & Wang, 2020) were used to determine the optimal number of profiles. When individuals are assigned to specific latent profiles, a probability value of higher than .80 is generally considered a good indicator (Geiser, 2013).

Measurement models of social support and well-being were tested using Mplus 8.4 by conducting a confirmatory analysis (CFA) (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2020). The maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors (MLR) was used. Chi-square statistics, standardised root mean residual (SRMR), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) and comparative fit index (CFI) were conducted to assess model fit. For TLI and CFI values to be acceptable, scores higher than .90 are required. Lower RMSEA and SRMR scores of .08 indicate a close fit between the model and the data (West et al., 2012).

Pearson's correlation coefficients were used to study the relationships between variables. Point estimates of scale reliability were determined with coefficient Omega (ω), instead of Cronbach's alpha, since Omega considers the strength of association between items (Raykov, 2009). A cut-off score of .70 was used.

As a means of determining the mean of a distal continuous outcome across latent profiles, the automatic Bolck, Croon, and Hageaars (BCH) method was used (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014; Bakk & Vermunt, 2016). Types of social support were used to determine the latent profiles. The means of the auxiliary variables, across the different profiles were determined with the BCH approach to ensure that a shift in the latent profiles did not occur (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014). The BCH method comprises three steps. In step 1, the parameters of the LPA model are determined without the distal outcomes. In step 2, the subsequent probabilities of profile membership are used to compute the weights of variables. Finally, step 3 uses the weighting variables to calculate a weighted average for each profile. According to Wang and

Wang (2020), the BCH approach is robust and works well when variances of distal outcome variables are unequal across profiles. The auxiliary variable option in the variable command in Mplus 8.4 was used to examine the relationship of latent profile membership with gender and distal outcomes (depression and delinquency).

The distal outcomes well-being, gender, and class (as covariates) and the BCH weights were used in the USEVARIABLES option in Mplus 8.4, and the BCH weights were used as training variables in the TRAINING option of the VARIABLE command. Two regression models were specified for each distal variable. The first regression was a multinomial logit model in which gender was used to predict latent profile membership. The second model is a linear regression in which gender was used to predict the distal variables (well-being). In the latter model, the regression slope coefficients and associated parameters were restricted to be the same across the two latent profiles. In the profile-specific subcommands, the within-profile model specification removed the equality restriction on the regression parameters in the specific profiles.

1.6 Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct the studies was approved by the Basic and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HS-2018-0125). As part of the research procedure and ethics considerations before the commencement of the study, permission was obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education and the Department of Education of KwaZulu-Natal for research to be conducted in Gauteng West and Newlands, respectively. All researchers were trained in data collection. Consent was attained from principal, Educators and learners before questionnaires were administered. Furthermore, the principals were advised on the appropriate time for data collection, thus ensuring minimal school disruption. It was reiterated that participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the process. The consent forms briefed participants on the nature of research, the requirements of participation, the implications of participation, the use of the data collected, the way in which it will be reported, and whom to contact if there are any questions about the research. Participants were allowed to withdraw from participating at any point in the research. The content of the questionnaires and interviews and the data collection process did not cause any negative reactions to the participants. This includes embarrassment, stress, discomfort, pain, and harm. The researcher maintained credibility and trustworthiness when collecting data by ensuring that data collection was accurate and collected fully.

The hardcopies were stored confidentially using lock and key cupboards at my home. The researcher was the only person with access to personal, sensitive, and research data. Responsible members of the Optentia Research Unit were given access to data for monitoring and offering expertise. The electronic transcripts were password protected, ensuring only the relevant parties had access to the information. The hard copies will be shredded after three years.

1.6.1 Gatekeepers and Mediators

The Department of Education in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provided the research with an authorisation letter to conduct the study. The researcher contacted the principals in each school to discuss the studies and attain consent to conduct the studies in their schools. Sessions were arranged to facilitate the sessions with the learners. The roles and responsibilities were stipulated. The researcher emphasised the voluntary participation and maintenance of the anonymity of all participants.

1.6.2 Data Analysis and Statisticians

As reported above, the researcher undertook qualitative and quantitative statistical analysis per methods and tools.

1.6.3 Informed Consent

The research procedure and ethical considerations before the commencement of the study included obtaining permission from the Gauteng Department of Education and the Department of Education of KwaZulu-Natal for research to be conducted in Gauteng and Newlands respectively. The NWU's Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC) granted ethical approval for the study (NWU-HS-2018-0125).

Meetings with key stakeholders from the six secondary schools in the stipulated regions (principals, gatekeepers, and probable participants) were arranged to discuss the logistics and purpose of the study. All data collectors were trained in data collection. Consent was attained from the principal and learners before questionnaires were administered. The consent form briefed participants on the nature of research, the requirements of participation, the implications of participation, the use of the data collected, how it will be reported, and whom

to contact if there were any questions about the research. Participants could withdraw from participating at any point in the research.

1.6.4 Risks and Benefits to Participants

The NWU's BaSSREC classified this study as a low-risk study. Study participants were given the chance to access, understand, and clarify any risks and benefits. There was no direct benefit to participants.

1.6.5 Privacy and Confidentiality

The questionnaires and interview guides were stored under lock and key in a secure place only accessible to the researcher. The analysed data was stored in a secure database and password protected. None of the questionnaire or interview guides required any form of identification like name or surname. The results were analysed collectively and not on an individual basis. All participants had access to the ethical clearance documentation.

1.6.6 Dissemination of Results

The principals of participating schools received a letter of recognition and appreciation. I will disseminate a copy of the final published articles and offer to present a feedback session to the school should they require it.

1.6.7 Data Provision After Research

The NWU was provided with the results database after the research was conducted. There was no identifying information associated with schools and secondary school teachers and learners, but demographic information was retained.

1.7 Chapter Layout

The chapters in this thesis are presented as follows:

Chapter	Topic
Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	Capabilities and flourishing of secondary school learners in sub-Saharan Africa: A systematic literature review

- Chapter 3 Validating a measure of capabilities in schools within an African context
- Chapter 4 Investigating the current level of flourishing and social support of learners
- Chapter 5 Conclusions, limitations, recommendations, and contributions of the thesis

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CHAPTER 2

MANUSCRIPT 1

Capabilities and Flourishing of Secondary School Learners in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Systematic Literature Review

Abstract

This study investigated capabilities present among secondary school learners. It also looked at the enablers of capabilities and functioning's through a systematic review of the literature within the sub-Saharan African context. A descriptive research design was followed using ASReview. PRISMA guidelines were used to conduct the study. Twenty-two articles from Western, Eastern, and Southern African countries were identified. The article identified the following nine capabilities: technical capabilities (numeracy and science, knowledge, and cognition and ideation); and behavioural capabilities (affiliation, autonomy, confidence, morals, resilience, and a growth mindset). Four groupings that related to resources, capabilities, and functionings of secondary school learners were identified: leadership, quality education, a policy framework, and conversion factors. Leadership improves and transforms the performance of educational institutions by having an impact on capabilities and functioning. Quality education prepares learners to become economically active citizens. A policy framework helps steer innovation and ensures essential skill sets and capability development among all educational stakeholders. Conversion factors allow learners to convert available resources within their contextual situation. These factors and the capabilities associated with them should be included in a model that enhances secondary school learners' capabilities to promote their well-being and employability.

Keywords: capability, flourishing, functioning, enablers, secondary school learners, sub-Saharan Africa.

Introduction

The world's most valuable resource is its youth (Bekker et al., 2015; Eze-Michael, 2020; Waigel & Lemos, 2023). However, youth aged 15 to 24 years (WHO, 2022) are in a state of being and becoming (Hart & Brando, 2018). During this period, adversities significantly affect stress, biology, development outcomes, and rapid biological and social changes (Doane et al., 2023; Waigel & Lemos, 2023). Family, peers, and structural institutions, such as the community, society, culture, and economics, can be stressors or support the youth's overall well-being (Doane et al., 2023). These factors affect the youth's strong sense of social motivation and strength, which affects their ability to interact with people outside their family (Walsh et al., 2023). A balance must be struck between vulnerability and competence to be active agents of change (Hart & Brando, 2018), bearing in mind that the youth are prone to risky behaviour (Gamache et al., 2023).

Recognising and utilising the youth's opportunities for growth and innovation are essential for economic growth (WHO, 2022). Being a good citizen and an active member of society are not accidental or acquired qualities; they must be developed over time (Akinyetun, 2021). Unfortunately, the youth are not being developed or utilised as a potentially powerful resource (Anowor et al., 2023). The sub-Saharan African region experiences high levels of youth labour non-engagement, underutilisation, and unemployment, all impacting the youth's social and economic capability (Anowor et al., 2023). Moreover, the youth in sub-Saharan Africa lack the capabilities to become competitive in today's economy (Anowor et al., 2023).

The highest rate of education exclusion globally occurs in sub-Saharan Africa. It is estimated that about one-third of the youth between 12 and 14 years of age and approximately 60% of 15- to 17-year-olds do not attend school (UNESCO, 2016). The poor educational quality in sub-Saharan Africa can be attributed to a teacher shortage and inadequacies regarding teacher methodology, the educational curriculum, and the policy environment (De Wet & Rothmann, 2022; Ogunniyi & Rollnick, 2015). Schools have poor infrastructure, lack proper sanitation, and are often overcrowded (Ogunniyi & Rollnick, 2015; UNESCO, 2016), which result in a poor quality of education.

Schools must also contend with and adapt to an ever-changing environment. Schools in this region are dealing with changes in digitalisation and the interconnection of the technological

and biological spheres (De Wet & Rothmann, 2022). Unfortunately, teachers lack proficiency in subject knowledge and computer literacy, making transferring knowledge and skills difficult (De Wet & Rothmann, 2022). Learners are still acquiring the knowledge they lost academically during the COVID-19 school lockdown. Most children in sub-Saharan Africa were unstimulated at home during this lockdown period (Addae, 2021). In other words, learners were not adequately supported from a learning and overall well-being perspective (Alghufali, 2023). Although online classes were available to learners, it was only a privileged minority of wealthier learners who had access to computers and the Internet (Spaull & Van der Berg, 2020). Teenage pregnancies, interpersonal violence, child labour, and early marriage were already prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa and increased during COVID-19, resulting in many of these victims not returning to reopened schools (Addae, 2021). COVID-19 had a negative impact on learners' development, which unfortunately may not be regained (Addae, 2021).

Schools are the primary institutions where children grow, learn, and develop, playing a crucial role in framing the balance between learner protection and participation (Hart & Brando, 2018). It is, therefore, important that the knowledge, skills, and values transferred to learners in these institutions need to be of a high quality. As a result, the learner's chances of success in life and livelihood will be increased (Smith & Barrett, 2011; Spaull, 2015). Education is viewed as a means to improve social welfare, growth, security, and poverty alleviation (Smith & Barrett, 2011; Tikly & Barrett, 2011). It is associated with a qualified workforce, social mobility, higher adult literacy and numeracy, better health care and well-being, and economic growth (Mensah & Baidoo-Anu, 2022).

A failure to improve children's education will perpetuate intergenerational poverty, regardless of their abilities or efforts (Spaull, 2015). When youth functionings are managed effectively, progress can be made, but when they are abused and misused, crimes and violence can result (Eze-Michael, 2020). Young people not in employment, education, or training (NEET) often experience poorer livelihoods and overall well-being (Mngoma & Ayonrinde, 2023). Their access to opportunities mainly determines individuals' well-being, and if these opportunities are restricted, it can negatively affect their well-being and quality of life (Chinyakata et al., 2021).

Positive emotions and life satisfaction were initially the focus of well-being research. However, a comprehensive understanding of well-being requires understanding eudaimonic factors

(Wissing et al., 2021). In Keyes's mental health continuum model, flourishing is defined as having high levels of well-being, languishing as having low levels of well-being, and moderate as having moderate levels of well-being (Wissing et al., 2021). The flourishing state means that an individual has optimal functioning and well-being across all facets of life (Logan et al., 2023), to which the person attaches intrinsic value (Wilson-Strydom & Walker, 2015). The ability to reach one's full potential, face life challenges, and contribute to community development defines well-being (Waigel & Lemos, 2023). Studying the entire environment to comprehensively understand flourishing is highly relevant (Logan et al., 2023). Disadvantaged individuals, particularly those with low incomes, low educational attainment, and certain racial/ethnic backgrounds, report lower levels of flourishing (Willen et al., 2022).

The opportunity and capability to flourish are significantly influenced by people's contexts, including social networks (Willen et al., 2022). When considering flourishing in the classroom and how to improve it, it can be an empowering and valuable experience, and it may lead to reflection. In addition, it may indicate that the education environment takes care of learners (VanderWeele, 2020). Flourishing is vital, as it speaks to moral purpose and meaning in life, in line with individual potential (Brunsdon & Walker, 2022). When individuals flourish, their inner needs are harmoniously balanced with external demands, allowing them to identify and focus on what is important, express and share their unique talents, and function optimally (Ellyatt, 2022). Understanding the context, especially the structural impediments to flourishing, can significantly assist the field of well-being (Logan et al., 2023).

According to the resource-based approach to well-being, a lack of resources in all facets of a learner's life, including education, affects the learner's mental well-being (Galagali & Brooks, 2020). However, the resource-based approach has shortcomings. It fails to account for how resources are obtained, how they interact, and how they need to change to accommodate environmental changes (Vasudevan, 2021). Capability-based evaluative approaches enable us to assess the contribution of education to human flourishing on a broader scale (Hart & Brando, 2018). The approach emphasises the importance of applied value and internal resources in relation to people's capabilities and real opportunities to live meaningful lives. The capability approach provides relevant guidelines for alternative education policies that place children (in all their facets) at the centre of the discussion. The school provides children with opportunities to be and become what they value and aspire to, not outcomes (Hart & Brando, 2018). Measuring people's well-being by their ability to pursue what they value is most effective. The

freedom to accomplish valuable functions requires individuals to have the requisite capabilities (Ragadu & Rothmann, 2023).

A lack of evidence on what works and what does not make it difficult to develop evidence-based interventions that target secondary schools despite efforts to engage learners. Without such evidence, most interventions assume that the youth will require the skills that governments and educational partners assume they will need. Various research gaps exist. The first research gap is that there is no systematic information on the capabilities of learners in secondary school in sub-Saharan Africa, especially those needed to flourish. The second research gap is that studies focus on the functioning or flourishing of the youth, not on flourishing as a functioning. The third research gap is that the transformation of the resources to learner capability and the transformation from learner capability to functioning have not been researched. Therefore, this study sought to understand the capabilities and flourishing in the educational system within a sub-Saharan context. Human beings have different values and experiences at different times and places, so the functions most appropriate to them vary according to the situation and the purpose of the exercise (Alkire, 2016). Therefore, global, national, and local findings differ (Gastrow & Oppelt, 2018).

The Capability Approach

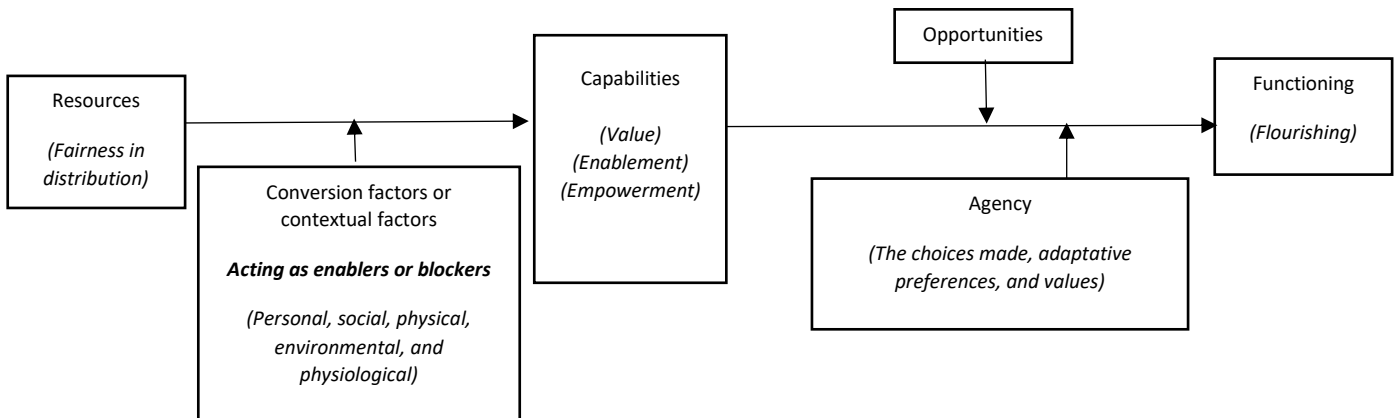
The capability approach (CA) focuses on the real freedoms (opportunities) from which people can select to accomplish valued functionings (Chinyakata et al., 2021). Previously, the central rationale for investing in education, particularly the quality of education, lay in its contribution to economic growth (Smith & Barrett, 2011). The CA does not take a homogenous approach to well-being like the gross domestic product (GDP) or the utilitarian approach (Sen, 2009). It considers the intrinsic individual importance of non-utility information, such as freedom, which the resource-based approach has been criticised for not doing (Sen, 2009).

The CA can be used in educational research to investigate how different forms and education processes facilitate freedom and opportunities (DeJaeghere & Murphy-Graham, 2022). The CA conceptualises well-being from the perspective of capabilities and functionings (Robeyns, 2017). Education entails instrumental and intrinsic values. It can lead to other valuable goods, such as skills and knowledge, or be valuable (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). Achieving empowerment relies on acting in defence of values and reasons in support of what is valued. It

can also be opportunity structures that facilitate agency enhancement (Mtawa, 2019). It would require equal capabilities for diverse students, not just those from privileged backgrounds where education is a given (Walker, 2008). The concept of equality must, therefore, consider both options and outcomes and freedom in opportunities (Walker, 2008).

Figure 1

Diagram Depicting the Systematic Process of the Capability Approach



Resources can be ideas, technology, and finance. Several characteristics make resources attractive to people, including marketable goods and services and non-market goods and services (such as household production) (Robeyns, 2017). There are few capabilities where resources do not play a role, and most depend heavily on resources (Robeyns, 2017). Conversion factors determine an individual’s ability to transform a resource into a functioning. People’s lives are influenced by many contextual factors, including personal factors, social factors, and their environment (home, school, and job), as well as services available in their communities (such as transportation, health care, and social services) (Mitra, 2006). Personal characteristics include physical ability, mental status, individual traits, preferences, and skills (Robeyns, 2017). Social characteristics refer to the influence of people’s social environment on their decision-making. This includes public policy and unfair discrimination (Robeyns, 2017). Together, these three conversion factors shape how people can interpret the characteristics of goods and services (Robeyns, 2017).

Capabilities refer to the things people can accomplish if they choose; it is the real opportunity or freedom they have in doing and being (Robeyns, 2017; Sen, 1999). Overall, capabilities range from simple things, such as being well nourished and preventing avoidable deaths, to

more complex ones, such as respecting oneself and integrating into society (Sen, 1990). Functionings are things achieved by exercising capabilities (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2017). These could include *ways of being*, such as being literate, and *acts of doing*, such as writing a book (Gopinath, 2018). Personal, social, political, and environmental factors influence how resources and goods are converted into functioning (Sen, 1992; Crocker & Robeyns, 2010). Agency is the ability to make choices from a capability set, which leads to certain functionings (Sen, 1992). An active agent contributes, and his/her accomplishments can be measured independently based on his/her objectives and values (Sen, 1999). Agency is the ability to navigate between cultural practices and change or leave these practices. Some capabilities can protect or enhance agency, such as the capability of empowerment (Claassen, 2018).

A person's advantage refers to his/her real opportunities, from which he/she will benefit (Mitra, 2006). In other words, what real opportunity does a person have to transform or apply the capability into functioning? Individuals are differentiated by factors beyond their control that influence their lifestyle outcomes or advantages (Krishnakumar & Nogales, 2015). The equality of opportunity approach groups people sharing the same circumstances into types. The lifestyle outcomes represent the common opportunities that are available to members of a type (Krishnakumar & Nogales, 2015).

Education and the Capability Approach

Education has been described as a basic capability essential for developing other capabilities and well-being (DeJaeghere, 2020; Hofmann, 2006). From a capability perspective, education promotes physical, mental, and emotional well-being, economic productivity, democratic participation, and relationships (DeJaeghere & Murphy-Graham, 2022). Furthermore, it allows the study of well-being from its roots, consequences, and interconnected layers (De Wet & Rothmann, 2023). The CA can be used to consider structural constraints by using conversion factors at individual, social, and environmental levels (DeJaeghere & Murphy-Graham, 2022).

The CA offers a normative framework for assessing social arrangements and well-being (Kim, 2017). The approach differs from other economic models in that it acknowledges that measuring the well-being of a society based on resources or successes (functionings) has limitations (Oades et al., 2021). Resources are only useful if they can be converted into meaningful achievements for well-being (Oades et al., 2021). The well-being of a person may

be determined not only by the availability of resources, but also by what those resources allow the person to accomplish (Alkire, 2016). Education benefits from the capability approach through equity (equal capacity), democracy, public deliberation, participation, empowerment, and global justice (Gracia-Calandín & Tamarit-López, 2021). Rawls's social justice theory proposes that all individuals should have equal access to resources, opportunities, and privileges achieved by an authority mechanism protecting the disadvantaged (Ayala et al., 2011; Rawls, 2006). According to Rawls, everyone has equal rights, dignity, and autonomy, and diversity is valued (Bredemeier & Shields, 2019).

The CA focuses on the actual opportunities rather than the means of living, acknowledging the roles of institutions in achieving and enhancing justice. Real opportunities contribute to the lives people can live according to what they value and allow people to analyse these values (Sen, 2009). The ability to make comparisons when determining justice and the context are extremely important when establishing justice. In other ways, there is no universal way of conceptualising or applying justice. Another crucial process in pursuing justice or understanding injustice is consulting with others and understanding the consequences of actions such as policies (Sen, 2009).

The Current Study

Several studies have been conducted on primary school learner capability (Atmore et al., 2012; Atmore, 2013) and tertiary institutions (Bozalek, 2010; Walker, 2012; Wilson-Strydom & Walker, 2015). Studies have considered capability from a secondary school perspective (Hoferichter et al., 2021; Masitsa, 2006; Mendick et al., 2015). Due to the variety of approaches to understanding capability and the use of multiple definitions, these studies seem to lack a basis for comparison. For example, studies may discuss valued capabilities, but may not explicitly call them capabilities. I wanted to identify prominent capabilities and their enablers in a secondary school setting that could help identify and enhance identified capabilities in a sub-Saharan context. Furthermore, analysis of the capabilities associated with these enablers was carried out. To advance knowledge, we need to build on and understand what previous work has been conducted on the subject (Xiao & Watson, 2019). Reviewing the relevant literature enables us to better understand what has already been done and identify gaps that need to be filled (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Method

Research Design

A systematic literature review was conducted to ensure that previous studies were summarised, analysed, and synthesised using valid, reliable, and repeatable methodologies (Xiao & Watson, 2019). When conducted and reported in accordance with international standards, a systematic literature review serves as a comprehensive, unbiased summary of relevant studies (Lockwood et al., 2019). A systematic literature review is different from a scoping review, which is a type of synthesis and not a systematic review. For example, the scoping review will not critically analyse or recommend reviewed practices (Lockwood et al., 2019). The literature review was undertaken by implementing a systematic literature review (SLR) protocol, using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) process (PRISMA, 2023).

I included studies from all disciplines and only included studies written in English. The literature search was conducted using the keywords “capabilities”, “functioning”, “flourishing and/or well-being and/or wellness”, and “secondary and/or high school”. The title determined preliminary relevance. If the content seemed to be applicable to secondary school learners, the full reference was captured for investigation for possible inclusion in the literature review. The focus groups were learners and any other groups, educators, and school management whose actions might affect learners.

Electronic search databases were accessed through the North-West University access platform. These included Google Scholar and African Journals (Sabinet), ensuring that research articles from various disciplines applicable within the sub-Saharan African context were included. It was important that the articles be empirically grounded - either qualitatively or quantitatively. The publication dates of the papers were set between 2010 and 2022 to ensure that the paper built on recent literature (Xiao & Watson, 2019). A citation manager, EndNote (Thomson ResearchSoft, 2005), was used to import the results, remove duplicates, and export a text file for screening. There were 1 713 resources imported to EndNote. These included journal articles, reports, reviews, and Acts.

Study Selection

Machine learning (ML) was used in the review process for maximum time, efficiency, and accuracy. ML extracts meaningful relationships and patterns by observing and analysing the user's examples (Janiesch et al., 2021). Algorithms are used to generate predictions, answers, recommendations, or similar outcomes in ML (Janiesch et al., 2021). The artificial intelligence (AI)-aided screening tool Active learning for Systematic Review (ASReview) was used for this process (Ferdinands, 2021). I decided which article was relevant or irrelevant. ASReview updated the relevancy predictions for the remainder of the articles, thus minimising the articles that needed to be screened by me (Ferdinands, 2021). This was done by using either naïve Bayes or logistic regression as the classifier (Ferdinands, 2021).

Studies focusing exclusively on learner capacity in secondary schools in sub-Saharan Africa were preferred. Studies focusing on adolescents not in a secondary school setting were scrutinised, as they might offer valuable insights into the capabilities of the target age group. Furthermore, studies included different school phases, such as tertiary, to determine whether they offered capabilities that led to their current realities. If I was not able to ascertain this, the studies were not included. A total of 29 journal articles were selected using ASReview; however, nine were not relevant.

Data Collection Process

Sub-Saharan African articles were analysed during the secondary eligibility screening phase. Any articles that did not apply to adolescents of high-school-going age were removed. Furthermore, only published peer-reviewed articles were included in the process. Twenty articles did not explicitly refer to the concepts of capability, functioning, and flourishing in a secondary school setting. Two articles specifically mentioned the concepts of capabilities and functioning in their arguments. I included articles where they could make reasonable deductions from the values, enablement, implementation, and well-being discussed in these articles.

Table 1*Number of Articles Sourced on Secondary School Learner Capabilities and Functionings*

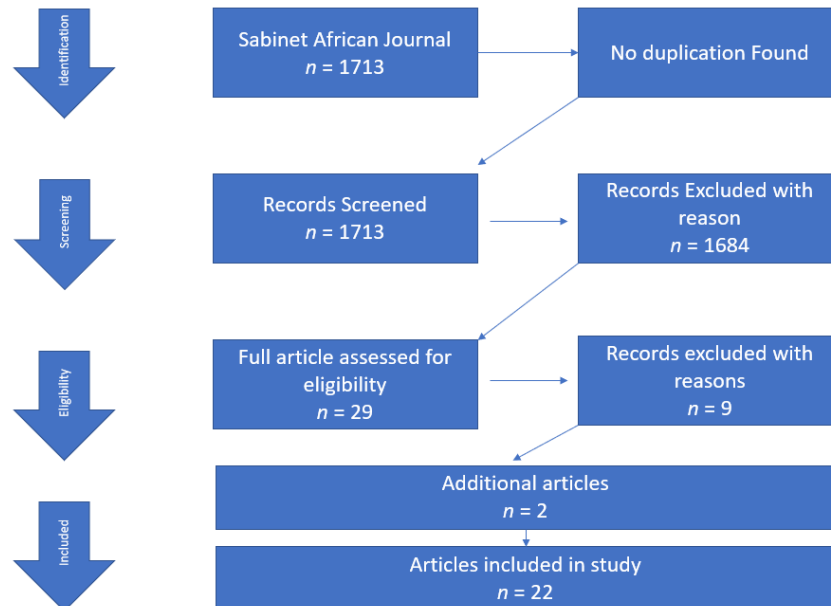
Articles (2010 to 2022)	South Africa- specific	Other sub- Saharan African countries	Other developing countries	Developed countries	Multinational studies
Sourced through ASReview	1 058	633	13	9	0
Usable for analysis	16	6	N/a	N/a	N/a

Table 2*Number of Studies Analysed by Country, Subject*

Sub-Saharan African country	Total number of articles 2010 to 2022	Subjects
South Africa	16	Circuit managers, district officials, educational leadership School district Educational quality, capability approach Educational capabilities, human capital approach, human rights approach, disadvantage Orality, literacy, otherness, communication, marginalisation, memory, resistance Schooling experiences, post-school youth, basic educational paradigm, aspirations, NEETS (not in education, employment, training) School vision Anti-schooling, African learner, transformative, ideology Equality, girl child, right to education, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Change, collaboration, collective intelligence, continuous learning, systems thinking, teacher commitment Formal mentoring, mentoring relationships, novice teachers Mathematics, numeracy Family experience, gender, racial group, school type, science Invitational learning theory, invitational environment, diverse culture Higher education, community colleges, NEETS Youth leadership, youth development programmes Approach, intervention, strategies, Grade 12, learners
Nigeria	3	Fundamental, issues, management, secondary education, human resource development Character education, moral education, leadership
Somalia	1	Entrepreneurship, innovation, policy, post conflict
Zimbabwe	2	Resilience, resilience process, adversity, child-headed households, coping strategies Afrocentric, curriculum, postcolonial
Total	22	

Figure 2

Diagram depicting the systematic review process



Data Items

Variables that were of interest in this study were scientific evidence that pointed to the following aspects: (a) studies focused on the learners' capabilities (i.e., participants answered questions about the capabilities the article mentioned from the perspectives of students, teachers, parents, communities, or institutions); (b) supporting resources (individual, social, and environmental); (c) the conversion factors that helped transform capabilities into functionings; and (d) factors that constrained their doings and beings in utilising these resources.

A qualitative researcher who was an ATLAS.ti (Friese, 2021) certified trainer was part of the research to assist with the data analysis. To work through the 22 articles simply and logically, Friese's three principles of analysis, namely, noticing, collecting, and thinking, were used (Friese, 2019). In the 'noticing' phase, I first created a 'Word Cloud/List' for each article to familiarise myself with the collected content (Soratto et al., 2020). As part of data exploration, I put the data in the table and read it, looked through it, and spotted issues related to the study. Phase 2 of the Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) was to generate or import a list of codes (Friese, 2019). After the 'Word Cloud/List' function of ATLAS.ti had been applied, I also used

the 'Opinion Mining' function of the software and, consequently, identified a few preliminary codes.

The research team created these 'equations' as a structure of the phenomena/constructs in this study:

- Flourishing = accomplished functioning.
- The opportunity to flourish is provided through capabilities.
- Capabilities = opportunities and the freedom to choose/take action.
- Agency = the application of capabilities.
- Functioning = the result of capabilities applied through correct agencies.

There are technical aspects involved in the use of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), such as the VISE principles: visualisation, integration, serendipity, and exploration. To improve the quality of data analysis, these are the major strategic modes of operation. I applied both the Noticing, Collecting and Thinking (NCT) method and Visualisation, Integration, Serendipity, and Exploration (VISE) principles in this project. Data were collected, selected, appraised, and synthesized to construct codes and categories to reveal the themes of the phenomenon of 'capabilities.' (Bowen, 2009). Themes and categories emerged from the data as patterns were identified. My use of PRISMA improved the quality of systematic reviews and meta-analyses, which improved the study's trustworthiness (De Wet & Rothmann, 2023). The CA was used as a valid social science framework, ensuring validity (De Wet & Rothmann, 2023).

Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct the studies was given by the Basic and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HS-2018-0125). The literature review was undertaken by implementing a systematic literature review (SLR) protocol, using the PRISMA process (PRISMA, 2023). As mentioned above, our findings were validated using the CA as the social science framework (De Wet & Rothmann, 2023).

Results

The range of literature originated from across sub-Saharan Africa, including research articles from South Africa ($n = 16$), Nigeria ($n = 3$), Zimbabwe ($n = 2$), and Somalia ($n = 1$), and either targeted secondary schools or youth presumably around the same age. Most of the studies were qualitative ($n = 20$), with one being a mixed method and the other quantitative. Most of the methods were literature reviews ($n = 18$) and, thereafter, qualitative interviews ($n = 4$). I also included articles that referred to the impact of secondary schooling on higher education. I identified nine capabilities mentioned in the research: numeracy and science, knowledge, cognition and ideation, affiliation, autonomy, confidence, morals, resilience, and growth mindset. I categorised these into technical and behavioural capabilities. Four themes that enabled capability emerged: leadership, quality of education, policy framework, and conversion.

Table 3

Capabilities and their Definitions

Type of capability	Capability	Definition
Technical	Numeracy and science	Mental agility that encourages analytic thinking and problem solving
	Knowledge	The ability to learn and think critically
	Cognition and ability to ideate	Information acquisition, processing, and utilisation
Behavioural	Affiliation	The ability to form social networks with stakeholders
	Autonomy	The freedom to choose who you are and what you want to do in life
	Confidence	The ability to believe and respect your individuality and decisions
	Morals	The ability to know right from wrong
	Resilience	Adaptability and commitment to overcoming adversity
	Growth mindset	The belief that effort can develop your basic qualities

Technical Capability

This refers to the knowledge of a particular subject, art, or craft. A solid understanding of numeracy and science enables learners to cope with complex concepts in school and later in life by learning how the world works and how things are ordered. Science-based understanding leads to innovation, which leads to economic growth. The example below illustrates this point.

“Mathematics and science are key areas of knowledge and competence, and government has emphasized the centrality of mathematics and science as part of the human development strategy for South Africa” (Reddy et al., 2012, p. 1).

An understanding of knowledge capability includes understanding associations, situations, phenomena, concepts, and procedures. Knowledge needs to be understood, acquired, and applied to garner results. The excerpt below explains the importance of knowledge and its benefits.

“... knowledge capability relates to students being cognitively well-prepared by their schools to gain university knowledge” (Gore & Walker, 2020, p. 67).

This capability refers to the learner’s ability to adapt to challenges in an innovative way:

“... criticism of formal schooling was it aimed at conformity at the expense of uniqueness and creativity” (Naidoo, 2021, p. 19).

Behavioural Capability

In addition to actions and manners, a person’s traits make up behavioural capabilities.

Affiliation is having concern for one another and joining groups, regardless of racial, gender, sexual, age, or ethnic background. Social relationships, respect, dignity, and recognition are part of affiliation. Schools can encourage affiliation by promoting inclusiveness and diversity in class. The example below shows that it is possible for language to exclude learners from having a sense of belonging.

“Concerning language, most black students come from schools where English is spoken less frequently; yet the opportunity to use the language of instruction proficiently is instrumental in enhancing students’ respect and recognition” (Gore & Walker, 2020, p. 63).

A learner’s autonomy is his/her ability to take charge of his/her own education. It is the ability to make choices that are meaningful to learners themselves. The example below shows how factors inhibit autonomy.

“Tshidi’s opportunities to make choices were, therefore, primarily limited due to her low social capital that contributed to her not accessing information from her school, peers and family” (Gore & Walker, 2020, p. 66).

Confident learners know themselves to be capable of handling challenges and overcoming them successfully. The quotation below shows the disadvantage of not having confidence.

“... that caused embarrassment and led him to exclude himself” (Naidoo, 2021, p. 24).

Morals are important in character building, as they allow learners to be compassionate and responsible citizens. Morals also show them the right direction and give them purpose.

“... the goals of moral education are essentially the goals of raising good children: youth, who understand, care about, and act upon the core ethical values (such as diligence, compassion, integrity, and fairness) that make for a productive, just and democratic society” (Ndukaku, 2018, p. 65).

The ability to adapt to adversity positively and use internal and external resources in response to different contexts and developmental challenges is what defines resilience. The excerpts below confirm this definition.

“... working strenuously towards challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity and plateaus in progress” (Waller et al., 2016, p. 3).

“... show resilience in the midst of challenges by employing a range of their own situation – specific social and economic tactics in order to unlock opportunities for survival” (Gorong & Mampane, 2021, p. 152).

Learners who possess a growth mindset tend to experiment with new strategies, seek assistance when needed, and put more effort into their studies. This is illustrated below.

“... basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work – brains and talent are just the starting point” (Waller et al., 2016, p. 3).

Table 4*Enabler Themes*

Themes	Sub-themes	Definitions
Leadership	Learning and performance transformation Building capability of people Displaying morality, trust, and authenticity Systems thinking Open dialogue and communication Capability building of leaders Mentorship of leaders Understanding the role of contextual factors	The ability to improve and transform performance at educational institutions through encouraging capabilities, functioning, and flourishing
Quality education	Supporting and upskilling educators Shared vision and direction Building valued knowledge, skills, and competencies Effects of contextual factors Learning institutions	Assessed through monitoring and evaluation and ensures that relevant resources prepare learners to become economically active citizens
Policy framework	Building human resource development Local relevance in curriculum Skilled implementers of curriculum Following SDGs of equality and lifelong learning	Enhances the role of government institutions as stewards of innovation and contributors to the development of all educational stakeholders' essential skill sets
Conversion factors	The role of contextual factors Understanding how to convert capabilities into functionings Importance of resilience in agency	The real individual freedom to convert resources, which are influenced by social, political, and economic factors, into meaningful functions and capabilities

Theme 1: Leadership

A complex and dynamic environment requires leaders to transcend their self-interest to meet the needed change, goals, and improvements to create the collective vision, while respecting the boundaries that apply. A leader encourages, supports, inspires, and develops his/her team to think innovatively, differently, and sustainably to achieve this outcome. The excerpts from the research articles confirm the role of a leader as a motivator, as he/she drives improvement in learning and quality. These interventions are said to have an impact on the role of learners as economic participants.

“... view the significance of district leadership in improving schools and student learning as central to driving educational reforms and achieving greater educational quality in the emerging economies” (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018, p. 1).

“... leadership deals with the ability to guide, influence, or direct people” (Ndukaku, 2018, p. 65).

“... advises that schools need to be freed from underperformance through transforming schooling conditions and delivering economic emancipation ideals” (Modiba, 2019, p. 138).

Leaders need to recognise, assess, and make sense of their situation and the current norms. Thereafter, they must help their people embrace the change and build valued capabilities such as knowledge sharing, caring, and bigger-picture thinking. Leaders help develop capability building by showing, guiding, and training their people. They encourage continual learning and are willing to invest resources, money, and time in developing capabilities. The extracts below show that the circuit office, one form of leadership in the South African educational system, is expected to translate the mandate of the district into meaningful on-the-ground actions by training and educating the school management. The mandate of the Basic Education – Foundational Phase (B.Ed. (FP)) is clear on the traits needed in having a systematic view.

“Circuit offices are expected to provide management support and administrative services to schools and facilitate training for principals, school management teams and School Governing Bodies (SGBs)” (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018, p. 2).

“At present, the following capabilities have been specified for the B.Ed. (FP): ‘caring, competent’ (both in educational content and professional knowledge), ‘able to make deliberative decisions’, ‘responsive’, having an ‘understanding of the broader picture’” (Baxen et al., 2014, p. 10).

Moral integrity is essential for leaders at both a personal and an operational level. The concept of morality refers to behaviour and attitudes that are altruistic and ethical. Attributes include honesty, justice, integrity, caring, and empathy. Leaders need to demonstrate morality and be perceived as moral, the latter being achievable through communication. This fulfils their people’s basic needs of trust, safety, and security. The quotations to follow illustrate these points succinctly.

“Encompassing and successful leadership is not possible without a good sense of morals” (Ndukaku, 2018, p. 63).

“Authentic leaders know who they are and what they believe in; show consistency between their values, ethical reasoning and actions; develop positive psychological states such as confidence” (Ndukaku, 2018, p. 66).

Systems thinking, the fourth sub-theme of leadership, allows leaders to help navigate their people in a complex and uncertain time. Leaders can see the interconnectedness and independencies of agents within the system and identify points of leverage. The identified capabilities allow leaders to act systematically when applying and implementing change.

“... ‘system thinkers’ are located and regardless of their own level in the system, they connect and work with one another with full awareness of how the different levels influence one another” (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018, p. 2).

“... when African secondary school learners behave strangely by rebelling against imbibing school knowledge, both the society in which the school is situated and the context of resistance cannot be ignored” (Modiba, 2019, p. 135).

The sub-theme of open dialogue and communication means that the opinions of all stakeholders on matters are welcomed. Everyone has equal participation rights, and all opinions are valued collectively and concurrently. Deliberation is encouraged to have mutual understanding, collaboration, and respect for one another.

“... notes that dialogue encourages regenerative thinking and generative listening and also being open to multiple possibilities that encourage creativity” (Moloi, 2010, p. 630).

“... success of an education system depends entirely on the strong leadership and synergy at all levels of the system, such as the district, provincial and national level” (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018, p. 2).

Leadership development involves setting direction, aligning goals, and committing to them. Effective leadership is achieved by acquiring new skills and competencies and improving holistic functioning. People in leadership positions, such as teachers and principals, need to be mentored formally and informally. This will allow for a safe place for them to practise what they have been taught and know that they are on the correct path. Developing learners into

youth leaders is a means of upskilling the youth to be active participants in their community. They develop the right levels of non-cognitive capabilities such as resilience, a growth mindset, and self-efficacy. There is evidence from the research, included below, that shows the importance of mentoring and building the capabilities of leaders.

“... raises the concern about whether school leaders and managers have the requisite skills, knowledge and expertise to manage and lead schools efficiently and effectively in a complex and ever transforming school conditions” (Modiba, 2019, p. 139).

“A plethora of literature studied support the assertion that good classroom managers are made, not born” (Modiba, 2019, p. 139).

“... having completed teacher’s training and securing a teaching position, novice teachers receive a few days of orientation and thereafter are expected to perform their duties on the same level of proficiency as their veteran counterparts” (Mphojane, 2021, p. 122).

“Experienced teachers who usually serve as mentors, though not officially assigned, are essential supporters in directing novices to improve their subject expertise and methodology” (Mphojane, 2021, p. 123).

“Youth leadership development is a way to equip young people to actively contribute to society” (Waller et al., 2016, p. 2).

The sub-theme of understanding and managing the contextual environment shows that even the best intentions of leaders cannot fully mitigate the effects of the contextual environment on the quality of education. These include infrastructure, resources, support, and poor learner behaviour. Low socio-economic status, in the form of parents’ educational level, occupation, and income, affects the enhancement of educational development. Societal norms pertaining to gender and general support provided to learners are also factors.

“... contextual factors in some districts can work against the best leadership efforts” (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018, p. 1).

“... contextual factors include the lack of resource materials and infrastructure, lack of human capacity, lack of clarity on mandates, procedures and policies” (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018, p. 1).

“This is conspicuous by the manner in which learners exploit and manipulate the leadership and management vacuum in institutions of learning, by usurping power and influence to create a tradition of anti-schooling” (Modiba, 2019, p. 132).

Theme 2: Quality Education

The way learners are taught, in terms of what, how, and by whom, determines the quality of education. Educators play a critical role in facilitating this process. They need to display subject matter expertise and self-discipline. The latter refers to behaviours such as punctuality and reputation. Educators need to also display kindness, leadership, and pride in their profession. To display these personal and professional mastery skills, investment in the form of teaching, supporting, and guiding of educators is needed, as seen below.

“The government seems to fail to accord teaching the befitting status of a profession; hence the shoddy way and manner in matters affecting the profession are treated.” (Eimuhi & Ogedegbe, 2015, p. 267).

“Well-trained and highly resourceful teachers are needed in secondary schools for full commitment to improving learner performance” (Muthala et al., 2022, p. 8).

“... personal mastery was an important quality for them to be able to build a learning organisation” (Moloi, 2010, p. 627).

“... intervention strategies need to be provided for sustainable and successful teaching and learning, where teachers will be supported with professional development activities and necessary resources adequately” (Muthala et al., 2022, p. 6).

Quality education requires a shared vision and direction by all stakeholders in the educational system. This important sub-theme requires stakeholders to operate as a collective and positive team. They need to be involved in making decisions and sharing ideas from planning,

implementing, monitoring, and evaluation. They must demonstrate awareness and responsibility towards the learners, creating a comfortable and supportive environment.

“Every school that displays first class learner performance succeeds from the quality classroom interactions between learners and educators” (Modiba, 2019, p. 137).

“... collaboration is about partnerships where everybody is committed to education” (Moloi, 2010, p. 628).

“The performance of a school system requires adequate contributions from various stakeholders to influence the school’s instructional capacity” (Muthala et al., 2022, p. 6).

Quality education develops and enhances the skills, knowledge, and competencies of learners – the third sub-theme. Learners learn to build on what they know by working together, being open to change, and being able to process information. They do this by synthesising, analysing, and evaluating material. Thus, quality education helps build the capability and agency of the learner. The ability to self-regulate requires the capabilities of problem solving and self-monitoring. The quotations below emphasise the need for value, knowledge, skill, and competency building. Furthermore, they provide examples of these competencies.

“Quality education from the human capital (HC) perspective is education that equips learners with knowledge, competences and skills which increase personal earnings and contribute to economic productivity” (Baxen et al., 2014, p. 95).

“By foregrounding capabilities and functionings instead of accumulated resources, the CA extends the gaze of education quality practitioners beyond education’s impacts on productivity and human rights to a wider array of benefits which promote human flourishing” (Baxen et al., 2014, p. 98).

“Quality education should foster agency by developing self-determination, participation, public debate, democratic processes and empowerment” (Baxen et al., 2014, p. 98).

The context in which learning takes place, the fourth sub-theme, focuses on the environment, the role players, and the characteristics of the role players. Learning institutions (Sub-theme 5) are important in supporting educational quality by creating an environment of mutual respect,

trust, care, hope, and intention. This gives learners a sense of control, resilience, and pride in their work and makes them want to actively participate in class. It is lifelong learning that goes beyond rote learning to a sustainable learning ethos where creativity is encouraged, and learners learn from their mistakes. They solve real-life problems and build capabilities required for their respective working lives.

“... a learning organisation as a place where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire and where people are continually learning how to learn together” (Moloi, 2010, p. 622).

“He argues that within this environment, learners are positively encouraged or ‘invited’ into the educational experience by the teacher” (Venketsamy et al., 2020, p. 120).

“Development of individuals often takes place through experience, by allowing a person to learn from role models in the context of observation and doing” (Waller et al., 2016, p. 3).

Theme 3: Policy Framework

It is the government’s responsibility to have educational policies that set the standards and understanding of the quality of education. Policy frameworks assist in the regulation and evaluation of practices. The frameworks are seen to build human resource development in a country, taking cognisance of the alignment between ideal states and the reality of the educational system. The excerpts below illustrate this need.

“Through a policy framework, government institutions have a critical role in steering innovation and ensuring essential skillsets and capability development” (Daka & Siad, 2022, p. 578).

“... main objective of the national policy of education is to use education as a strategy for human resource development” (Fatai, 2016, p. 108).

The policy framework applies a blanket approach to educational systems. The result is that history and context, such as local conditions and daily activities carried out by school leadership and administrators, are not catered for. Furthermore, government corruption affects the educational system. In many ways, the policy framework lacks structural and

implementation strategies. One strategy is incorporating local realities into context-relevant material for learners. The following statements illustrate the need to adapt content to ensure local relevance.

“It is vital to identify innovation policy instruments that sit well in a post-conflict nation like Somalia” (Daka & Siad, 2022, p. 578).

“... experienced the school curriculum as narrow, irrelevant, boring and meaningless for their lives in their communities and an imposition that disregarded their own life-worlds and talents” (Naidoo, 2021, p. 25).

“It is envisaged that adopting and incorporating indigenous knowledge into the mainstream Western-oriented education system will inject new vitality into the misfiring post-colonial educational systems” (Mswazie & Mudyahoto, 2013, p. 170).

“These issues include prompt payment of salaries, refusal to implement approved wages and salaries as outcomes of negotiations, supervision of schools, recruitment policies, reward structure for hard work, politicization of the education sector and advancement of car loans to the teachers” (Eimuhi & Ogedegbe, 2015, p. 267).

The development and implementation of policy frameworks requires knowledgeable educational staff. These skilled implementors (Sub-theme 3) need to tailor their practices to meet the required needs of their stakeholders. They do this by adapting instructions and social constructs. Technical and motivational skills are required to implement policies such as behaviour, norm, and belief change.

“... the study notes that lack of managerial knowledge and skill in implementing educational innovations constitute major constraints in reforming education in Africa” (Mswazie & Mudyahoto, 2013, p. 171).

“... learners need a personal connection to the learning material, whether that is through engaging them emotionally or connecting the new information with previously acquired knowledge” (Venketsamy et al., 2020, p. 131).

As part of policy frameworks, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals must be incorporated, which seek to ensure quality education that is inclusive and equitably accessible to all. This is particularly relevant in the increasing and supporting of female learners in the educational system.

“... inclusive education incorporates the democratic values of equality and human rights and the recognition of diversity” (Mokoena & Jegede, 2017, p. 9876).

“Centering on achieving effective monitoring and evaluation measures, the authors argue that SDGs may be implemented to enhance accountability in order to achieve results which would ultimately realise and feed into African and global developmental initiatives” (Mokoena & Jegede, 2017, p. 9875).

“Current state of development in terms of legislation and case law as well as the general plight of the girl child, arguably, suggests that gender is yet to be explicitly addressed in South Africa as envisaged by SDG framework on education” (Mokoena & Jegede, 2017, p. 987).

Theme 4: Conversion Factors

Contextual factors, such as infrastructure, funds, material resources, and social support, affect the ability to convert capabilities into functioning's. This is evident when comparing schools in previously disadvantaged areas to those in more affluent areas where the contextual environment is more favourable.

“High-quality schools are former Model C schools and historically white schools that charge fees to pay for additional teachers; hence, they are better resourced than township and rural schools that do not charge fees. When measuring (dis)advantage, therefore, focus should be on the quality of life or wellbeing of individuals and not only on income” (Gore & Walker, 2020, p. 57).

“Recognising the poor schooling that most black students have had, higher education set out the provision of funding for academic support programmes to improve the performance of underprepared students. The above indicates that most black and female students are disadvantaged due to structural conversion factors, which continue to be experienced” (Gore & Walker, 2020, p. 59).

“Parents who provide an enriching learning environment and promote novel learning experiences encourage the child’s willingness to actively make connections with prior knowledge, explore new concepts, and seek explanations for new and challenging content during science learning” (Schulze & Lemmer, 2017, p. 6).

Learners need to understand how to convert capabilities into functionings to achieve what they most value in life. The extracts below illustrate this sub-theme.

“Students may also have capabilities, but for whatever reason they choose not to exercise them, or they may have ‘hidden’ capabilities they do not recognise as important for their university success” (Gore & Walker, 2020, p. 57).

“According to the CA, quality education should not only expand learners’ capabilities, but also help learners overcome obstacles that prevent them from living the lives to which they aspire. These obstacles may originate from learners’ individual characteristics or from their social, cultural, or school contexts” (Baxen et al., 2014, p. 98).

“It insists that, since learners have different values, needs and interests, and differ in their abilities to convert educational inputs into capabilities and functionings, the same level of resources might not be adequate, for example, for urban and rural learners, girls and boys, and different population groups” (Baxen et al., 2014, p. 98).

Agency is an important factor in converting capabilities into flourishing. It allows learners to self-regulate and exercise choice in their learning tasks. It, furthermore, highlights the importance of knowing their preferences and being resilient.

“Adolescents living in CHHs have been described as active agents who are capable of charting their own destinies despite experiences of poverty and deprivation” (Gorongu & Mampane, 2021, p. 152).

“... value of young people who are able to bounce back from adversity and remain committed to a goal in the long term” (Waller et al., 2016, p. 6).

Discussion

The aim of the study was to give a scientific overview of secondary school learners' capabilities and functionings through a systematic review of the available literature within the sub-Saharan African context. The article identified two themes: technical capabilities and behavioural capabilities. Technical capabilities, such as numeracy and science, knowledge, and cognition and ideation, are important capabilities to acquire, understand, and apply. Behavioural capabilities, such as affiliation, autonomy, confidence, morals, resilience, and a growth mindset, are personal capabilities that are important to navigate and make sense of the world. The analysis of the 22 articles resulted in four groupings that related to enablers of capabilities of secondary school learners: leadership, quality education, a policy framework, and conversion factors. This was the main focus of the article. Furthermore, capabilities of these enablers were identified. Leadership improved and transformed the performance of educational institutions by encouraging capabilities, functioning, and flourishing. Quality education prepared learners to become economically active citizens by enhancing these capabilities. The policy framework helped steer innovation and ensured essential skill sets and capability development among all educational stakeholders. Conversion factors allowed learners to convert available resources within their contextual situation into capabilities they valued. The inclusion of these commodities should be part of a model aimed at promoting the well-being and productivity of secondary school students.

The objective of leadership in learning institutions is to improve and transform performance and learning in schools (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018; Modiba, 2019). Leaders motivate themselves and others to work towards a common purpose of effecting positive change in response to personal and social issues (Waller et al., 2016). Leaders do this by encouraging capabilities, functioning, and flourishing among learners (Baxen et al., 2014). Furthermore, they encourage learners to identify and value all benefits arising from education (Baxen et al., 2014). The emphasis on capabilities and functionings as opposed to accumulated resources allows leaders to look at educational impact beyond productivity and human rights to other educational benefits that promote flourishing (Baxen et al., 2014). Leaders can do this by stimulating debate, encouraging participation in decision-making, allowing participation of minority groups, and enabling minority groups to access power centres (Baxen et al., 2014). Leaders may not necessarily have full control of the decision-making process, as ownership preference, governance structure, culture, and geographical expectations of the locals may have

varying influence (Fisher, 2021). Educational leaders need to understand the power distance in a society, whether individual thinking is encouraged, and the approach to the uncertainty of the locals (Fisher, 2021).

Several studies have concluded that leaders are made, not born (Modiba, 2019). It appears that character and morality are used interchangeably. The *character* of a leader is said to be the most important attribute, which requires strength and firmness (Ndukaku, 2018). Leaders are defined by their psychological characteristics, which enable them to act morally. Moral education, which emphasizes character development and education, is an essential aspect of life for cultivating moral values or virtues (Ndukaku, 2018).

In the school environment, leaders are usually *principals*, but can also be circuit managers, whose performance influences the success and learner achievement of many rural schools (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018). *Circuit managers* represent the school district leadership and are the conduits between schools and the government (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018). However, they are sometimes viewed as uninvolved in supporting and monitoring the schools (Bayeni & Bhengu, 2018). The *youth* are also keen to be leaders, not only taking charge of their learning, but also transforming their schooling environment (Modiba, 2019).

Leaders earn *trust* and commitment, among others, by creating aligned organisational systems that reinforce the leaders' commitment to goal delivery (Ndukaku, 2018). Leaders should be *authentic* and able to demonstrate self-confidence, optimism, hope, and resilience; be consistent in their values, ethical reasoning, and actions; and be well-known and respected for their beliefs and integrity (Ndukaku, 2018). Leadership is about *influencing, guiding, or directing others and inviting collaboration and assistance from others* to achieve their results (Ndukaku, 2018). Leaders need to convey optimism and hope (Modiba, 2019). The above comments are aligned with a study examining the impact of culture on leadership. The study found that leaders must incorporate others and their cultural backgrounds when leading. Leadership capabilities needed were culturally appropriate communication skills and building collaboration and trust through respect and equal treatment (Fisher, 2021).

Leaders need to be *system thinkers*. A system-thinking approach to leadership emphasises the interconnected nature of the entire education system as opposed to individual components (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018). System thinkers will work collaboratively towards goal

achievement, as they comprehend the interdependency of the different levels (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018; Moloi, 2010). They can identify important elements that require attention in teaching and learning activities (Moloi, 2010).

A final capability that successful leaders need to possess is being *transformational*. Leaders can innovatively impart learning, teaching, and opportunities that lead to economic freedom (Modiba, 2019). A transformational society is transcending from traditional health and education practices to a more modern development approach. This allows learners to take control of their futures (Modiba, 2019). A transformational approach is most needed in environments where learners are disruptive (Modiba, 2019).

Leadership *success* is dependent on *contextual factors* such as resources, human capacity, mandates, procedures, infrastructure, and support needed to build the leaders' capability (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018). Circuit managers are especially vulnerable when they are junior to principals and considered the weakest link in a system whose primary roles are guiding, challenging, and collaborating with schools (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018). Leaders need to be able to monitor and evaluate the quality of school results. They can monitor learner changes and enhance the learning methods (Muthala et al., 2022).

Another important capability is the need to *continually learn and build skills*. Mentoring can go beyond basic skills to train chosen leaders in unique skills (Mpojane, 2021). This reiterates that learning is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, character, and behaviour to improve a group's capacity to achieve socio-economic and political goals, including health and safety (Fatai, 2016). The school context is becoming more complex and is constantly changing. The relevant skills and knowledge will prove critical to deal with these new nuances. (Ndukaku, 2018). Leadership development for young people enhances their capabilities to contribute positively to society and business. This includes non-cognitive competencies that must be situational (Modiba, 2019; Waller et al., 2016). Social intelligence and interpersonal skills are important as they foster and build social intelligence and relationships (Waller et al., 2016). For youth leadership programmes to succeed, an analysis of what and how interventions work is necessary (Waller et al., 2016).

Support to leaders should not be offered with political agendas where compliance and control are dominant features (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018). National, provincial, and district officials

need to be leadership agents and support school leaders and managers (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018). Monitoring leaders' professional development will allow for gap analysis and appropriate remedial actions (Muthala et al., 2022). A system-thinking framework can assist in this, where synergy can be found between institutional and human resources across all levels (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018). Furthermore, synergy is required among all stakeholders, such as the private sector and parents, who can help with the management of schools (Fatai, 2016).

There is an association between *quality education and leadership quality* (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018). Quality education includes improving critical thinking, human rights, and artistic and scientific achievement. This is also true in countries such as South Africa, where racial and regional inequalities have led to disparities in educational levels, adversely affecting the nation's growth (Baxen et al., 2014). Quality education will enable learners to become economically active by providing them with knowledge, skills, and competencies. The country's economic growth and participation in the global economy are negatively affected by a skill shortage in science and technology. An assessment of success is based on inputs and outputs such as teacher numbers, resource costs, retention rates, and assessment results (Baxen et al., 2014). Research confirms a correlation between quality education and human capital (Fatai, 2016).

To encourage and enhance learners' capabilities, they should be allowed to construct analogies that make the subject matter relevant to their circumstances (Cherif et al., 2016). In the CA, the interaction of conversion factors, such as political, social, and economic opportunities, determines the strength of learners' freedoms (Cherif et al., 2016). It is important to determine whether some learners have more opportunities than others to convert their resources into well-being achievements and, if so, the reason for this disparity (Gore & Walker, 2020).

In the CA, conversion factors result in individuals and their agency being incorporated into social arrangements. *Agency* is affected by social, political, and economic opportunities available to individuals (Gore & Walker, 2020). Personal freedom and the effect of *social influences* on it must be recognised as central (Gore & Walker, 2020). Everyone has different conversion opportunities based on personal, social, and environmental conditions (Gore & Walker, 2020).

The CA can improve the quality of education by ensuring that learners' well-being is prioritised by making sure that learners have access to what they enjoy (Baxen et al., 2014). The focus on education has shifted from simply accumulating knowledge and skills to a broader perspective that encompasses the holistic development and flourishing of individuals such as literacy, participation in decision-making, assisting minority groups to voice their opinions, and numeracy skills, which are important capabilities (Baxen et al., 2014).

A factor that impacts the quality of education is the *opportunity it offers learners to pursue their interest and expression* amid constraints such as victimisation or perceived injustice (Naidoo, 2021). Interestingly, school leaving is not linked primarily to academic capacity, but to the behaviour management policy such as uniforms, authoritarian and hierarchical social relations, punitive behaviour, and personal identification (Naidoo, 2021).

Poor resources negatively impact educational quality (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018; Baxen et al., 2014; Goronga & Mampane, 2021; Modiba, 2019). Mensah and Baidoo-Ann's (2022) results verified a relationship between the socio-economic standing of the learner, their class, and their mathematics marks. The CA does not focus on the equal distribution of resources, but rather on the quality of education and experience of each learner (Baxen et al., 2014). Providing students with the same number of resources might not be sufficient due to their differences in values, needs, and interests and their *differences* in abilities to *convert* educational inputs into capabilities (Baxen et al., 2014; Gore & Walker, 2020). *Equality* in the educational system is essential to access capabilities that learners value (Baxen et al., 2014).

Teachers' inadequate knowledge of their subject matter and lack of appropriate teaching skills contribute to learners' poor performance in schools (Moloi, 2010). Due to their inadequacies, teachers with low qualifications in a subject may be unable to teach effectively and produce good results (Muthala et al., 2022). This contrasts with the findings of Mensah and Baidoo-Anu (2022), who noticed no substantial correlation between teacher background (experience, education, and major) and teacher self-assurance, educator instructional quality, and classroom average mathematics attainment. However, it was noted that teachers with higher confidence levels provided instruction of a higher quality than teachers with low confidence levels when learners required it (Mensah & Baidoo-Anu, 2022). Educators' years of service negatively affected the instructional quality.

The intellectual depth of students is denoted by their capacity to acquire knowledge, think analytically, and make decisions regarding their lives before, during, and after study (Gore & Walker, 2020). *Fear and anxiety* can prevent learning capability (Gore & Walker, 2020).

Providing *mentorship* to novice teachers and helping them focus on the role of the teacher can ameliorate the quality of education. In other words, novice teachers' well-being, nourishment, and growth should be supported by not focusing on the subject matter that directly relates to their teaching practices (Baxen et al., 2014). In Ghana, there are no formal or planned programmes for inexperienced teachers (Mphojane, 2021). Novice teachers are seen as the last resort in Ghanaian schools. Thus, a mentoring programme can help these teachers navigate the schooling system while ensuring teacher retention (Mphojane, 2021). Teachers will not feel isolated and professionally unsupported (Mphojane, 2021). Mentoring may not provide all the benefits, so further investigation needs to be conducted into non-mentored individuals (Mphojane, 2021).

The flourishing of learners in the classroom is enhanced when *teachers demonstrate passion and confidence*. Qualified teachers with dedication, knowledge, and training contribute to quality education (Muthala et al., 2022; Venketsamy et al., 2020). Often, these teachers are willing to give extra lessons to underperforming learners after hours, be it over weekends or during the holidays (Muthala et al., 2022). This contrasts with the findings by Mensah and Baidoo-Anu (2022), who found no significant correlation between teacher confidence and learners' mathematics results.

Furthermore, there is a need to sustain *teacher professional development* to equip them with new teaching and learning techniques for better results. Teaching collaboration, peer teaching, coaching, and outsourcing of subject experts can be implemented for better learner performance. Motivation can be used as an effective tool to inspire learners in their studies and fashion more quality outcomes (Muthala et al., 2022).

Quality education means that education should be *non-discriminatory* in terms of demonstrating gender equality (Mokoena & Jegede, 2017) and promoting human rights (Baxen et al., 2014). The lowest functioning level of an environment is achieved when one purposefully creates an unpleasant environment (Venketsamy et al., 2020). This includes insulting people and the use of discriminatory policies (Venketsamy et al., 2020). Inclusive and equitable

quality school education can stimulate lifelong learning opportunities (Mokoena & Jegede, 2017). This provides peace, human security, and environmental sustainability (Baxen et al., 2014). As much as a school should encourage positive rights, such as the use of local languages, it also needs to provide tools to combat negative rights, such as protection against abuse (Baxen et al., 2014).

Government institutions must create policy frameworks to steer innovation and ensure essential skill sets and capabilities (Daka & Siad, 2022). Postcolonial countries must align their educational system with *national principles and visions* (Mswazie & Mudyahoto, 2013). The policies governing the policies should follow the *Batho Pele* principle, where the education system should serve the parents and learners, not the state (Modiba, 2019). Here the focus shifts to serving the learners and parents in the community (Modiba, 2019). Also important is incorporating the *Afrocentric educational* content that has worked locally into the educational framework (Mswazie & Mudyahoto, 2013). The curriculum should move away from an academically heavy framework to incorporate elements such as games, sports, artistic performance, and language teaching to address character and intellectual capabilities (Mswazie & Mudyahoto, 2013). Language skills are important for development and social interaction (Mxwazie & Mudyahoto, 2013).

In most countries, the processes of creating and implementing policies follow a *hierarchical* system. For example, in South Africa, policies are created by the Department of Basic Education, headed by the Minister. These are then cascaded to the provincial Departments of Basic Education for implementing. They liaise with the district bodies, who, in turn, liaise with the schools (Bantwini & Moorosi 2018). This creates frustration in the system because the government controls policies related to wage negotiations, salary payment, supervision of schools, recruitment, rewards and recognition, and car loans and politicises the educational system (Omorogbe & Ewansiha 2013). Principals have to act as intermediaries between departmental bodies and their teachers (Bayeni & Bhengu, 2018). Another frustration is that educational institutions are blamed for a lack of *transformation* when it is believed that the educational system fails to adequately address the historical, cultural, and inequality imbalances (Gore & Walker, 2020). Government policies are expected to be prescriptive, but the complexities, challenges, and contradictions principals face when implementing these policies are ignored (Bayeni & Bhengu, 2018).

Other policy frameworks need *to support* and encourage the role of *educators* in society. This includes improving their living standards and role in management in secondary schools (Eimuhi & Ogedegbe, 2015). Policymakers and researchers need to come together to ensure that education supports learners in developing and sustaining skills (Eimuhi & Ogedegbe, 2015). Policymakers are perceived to give principals and school governing bodies power, but in reality, expect their mandates to be carried out without questions (Bayeni & Bhengu, 2018).

When it comes to converting capabilities into valued functions, a cornerstone of the education quality of the CA is embracing learners' heterogeneity (Baxen et al., 2019). To optimally function, learners need to be able to be autonomous, participate in learning processes, think critically, have the freedom to gain knowledge, and participate in decision-making (Gore & Walker, 2020). As Sen (1999) demonstrated, agency is formed by social, economic, and political context; hence, it is imperative to recognise both the value of personal liberty and the impact of social forces on its scope (Gore & Walker, 2020). There are different achieved functions into which individual resources translate, such as material and policy endowments. This process depends on social class, race, gender, and geography (Gore & Walker, 2020).

Robeyns (2017) suggests that commodities can be converted into capabilities and functions with the help of three types of conversion factors: personal ones (race, gender, age, physical condition, and educational level), social ones (public policy, social institutions, and power relations) and environmental ones (geography, climate, and infrastructure) (Baxen et al., 2014). It is clear from the CA that incomes and other commodities alone are insufficient for evaluating human well-being and development due to conversion factors and human heterogeneity (Baxen et al., 2014). Conversion factors integrate the *social dimension* into the CA, proposing combining the collective action literature with critical studies that emphasise power relations (Baxen et al., 2014).

Agency allows learners to advocate for the goals they value. It is difficult for learners to choose their preferred functioning when they have limited agency (Baxen et al., 2014). Compared with students with limited capabilities and little agency, those with a wider range of abilities and functions tend to benefit more (Gore & Walker, 2020). According to Sen (1999), individuals are agents of their lives, meaning they are not passive recipients of programmes (Gore & Walker, 2020). Individuals are agents when they can act and bring change to achieve what they value (Gore & Walker, 2020). Learners from poor economic backgrounds can be inhibited or

empowered by structural factors and their ability to exercise agency (Gore & Walker, 2020). From an educator's perspective, quality education encourages agency, which requires educators to be compassionate and competent in educational and professional knowledge (Baxen et al., 2017). They must be responsive, make decisions, and have bigger-picture thinking (Baxen et al., 2017).

Factors affecting the conversion process include *socio-psychological and mental health* capabilities (Gore & Walker, 2020). These determine the learners' ability to do things they value (Gore & Walker, 2020). The poor quality of school is one factor that has an impact on their confidence levels, affecting the learning process (Gore & Walker, 2020).

Alienation is a reality that students experience. Schools' curriculum, rigid rules, financial constraints, and practices are often disconnected from learners' reality in their community (Naidoo, 2021). The relationship between school and learner can provide the emotional and motivational support to use the facilities available at the school. This relationship is important in gaining the buy-in of learners (Baxen et al., 2014).

Lack of resources in terms of infrastructure is another element that diminishes meaningful learner development (Fatai, 2016). Social support from family and peers, structural issues such as language, teaching arrangements, and racism in society are other factors that affect the conversion of capabilities (Gore & Walker, 2020).

Character development can support learner agency. Moral education, of which character education is a subset, teaches good behaviour and values and is taught at school in the form of ethics, politeness, and orderliness (Ndukaku, 2018). This requires educators to facilitate learners' reasoning, enabling them to apply moral insight and judgement, allowing the cultivation and promotion of moral virtues and values a society deems desirable (Ndukaku, 2018). The more character-building youth does, the more capable they will become at doing the right thing, being committed, and leading a purposeful life, which leads to achieving justice, compassion, and flourishing societies (Ndukaku, 2018).

Limitations and Recommendations

Some articles did not explicitly point out the concepts of capability, functioning, and flourishing in a secondary school setting. I, therefore, made reasonable deductions from the

values, enablement, implementation, and well-being discussed in these articles. Only peer-reviewed articles were included. The excluded material might pose a source bias (Steurer et al., 2022). A further limitation was that concepts such as capability, agency, and functioning were applied generally across the analysis of the studies and might not have incorporated the nuances in the different countries (De Wet & Rothmann, 2023). The capabilities mentioned in the research were rather limited and lacked depth. Further research is required to delve into specific capabilities identified by learners, teachers, and principals to understand why these are lacking and find solutions for enhancing them. All stakeholders are important in developing learner capabilities; thus, their input is critical to truly understand the local reality.

Conclusion

Three technical capabilities were identified in this research, namely, numeracy and science, knowledge, and cognition and ideation. Five behavioural capabilities were identified: affiliation, autonomy, confidence, morals, resilience, and a growth mindset. Four themes were identified as critical for enabling these and other capabilities, namely, leadership, quality education, a policy framework, and conversion factors. Furthermore, the capabilities required to achieve these enablers were discovered. The capability to think critically and the capability to express oneself were common in leadership, quality education, and conversion factors. Leadership highlighted the capabilities of acting morally, trustworthiness, and the ability to transform and influence. Quality education included the concept of agency, which is the ability of the individual to actively engage with his/her surroundings from a social, political, and environmental perspective. The policy framework addressed the capability of language skills.

Conversion factors added other important capabilities such as embracing heterogeneity, the ability to participate in decision-making, and the ability to gain knowledge. Tools to enhance capabilities were subject to social, political, environmental, and personal factors. These included character building, encouragement and support, policies, resources, allowing participation and debate, subject relevance, the principle of *Batho Pele*, educator behaviour and knowledge, and reducing hierarchical decision-making. The capability method can determine students' (dis)advantage because of its multidimensionality and capacity for interpersonal comparisons of individual's welfare factors (Gore & Walker, 2020).

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CHAPTER 3

MANUSCRIPT 2

Capabilities of Learners in Secondary Schools in a South African Context

Abstract

This study utilised the capability approach to identify what secondary school learners valued and what capabilities could be developed and supported within an educational context. A purposive sample of 21 learners in secondary schools in Gauteng participated in semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted face to face. The data was analysed using ATLAS.ti, adhering to the Saldaña coding strategy (2021). Six themes were identified: career choice based on values, enabling lifestyle, affiliation for goal attainment, achievement of a balanced life, schooling to develop sensing, imagination, and play, and reciprocal support from the family, school, and communities to provide control. Capabilities identified by learners were similar to those in other studies conducted in different contexts. Learners wanted the freedom to be autonomous and set goals for themselves that would enable them to have a good life and attain well-being. Most importantly, they wanted to support and be supported by people. Knowing and understanding these valued capabilities can empower learners to flourish.

Keywords: capability approach, capabilities, values, flourishing, agency, secondary school.

Introduction

School is a primary environment for children's development, growth, and education (Hart & Brando, 2018). In this context, schooling assists learners in becoming aware and developing their values against the backdrop of the larger society (Vaughan & Walker, 2012). Secondary school provides a vital transition phase into the working world. Schools can encourage and support learners in setting bold goals and taking action to achieve them (Bottoms, 2022). Employment capabilities can be built through shared leadership, focused assignment, counselling, and encouraging proactiveness among learners (Bottoms, 2022).

The perpetuated and continued effects of apartheid education have created what can be termed a corrosive disadvantaged system for many learners in South Africa (Gore & Walker, 2020). The poverty experienced by the previously disadvantaged population in South Africa severely affects the quality of schooling for children in these communities (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Furthermore, the government's monetary allocation to basic education is not optimal, with the budget for schoolchildren remaining at 17% of total government expenditure (Department of Basic Education, 2016).

It should be noted that the concept of 'disadvantaged' is plural in nature and is not only related to poverty (Wolff & De Shalit, 2007). Income can increase purchasing power, which can have many positive effects. However, it is important to note that not all goods leading to equal relations and enhanced well-being are material goods (Wolff & De Shalit, 2007). Affiliation and feeling valued can have a positive impact on people's lives while not taking away from others. What makes a person disadvantaged is the potential risk and vulnerability that person faces, regardless of whether the feared event comes to fruition (Wolff & De Shalit, 2007). A disadvantaged person may have a certain level of functioning, but this may be difficult to sustain, as personal and external factors may threaten to compromise it. In the case of learners, poverty results in a lack of electricity, roads, transport, information and communication technology, classroom space, and water (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Poverty is also a breeding ground for community crime, which infiltrates schools (Burnett, 2020; Mollo, 2020).

Ideally, from a social justice perspective, all individuals should be equal in a balanced society (Rawls, 2006). Everyone should have the same basic rights or human rights. The management of social and economic inequality is essential for overcoming inequality. The requirement of

good faith and fairness should be met when there is a difference in exchange in terms of rights and obligations (Ayala et al., 2011; Rawls, 2006); in other words, there should be an authority mechanism to protect the benefits of the disadvantaged and ensure that the balance of equity is maintained in society.

Unfortunately, as enticing as distributive justice may sound, it is not always practical and may be impossible to implement (Gomberg, 2016). Theories of distributive justice specify what types of goods are valued and how they should be distributed within a population (Kelleher, 2013; Roemer & Trannoy, 2016). Resourcism states that distributive justice should concentrate on distributing external resources, such as money and food (Kelleher, 2013). However, resourcism does not factor in the differences between individuals and the impacts these differences can have on their ability to convert resources into achievements. It views individuals with the same resources as equally advantaged but does not factor in the relationship between the individual and the resource (Kelleher, 2013).

From a contributive justice perspective, the capability approach can assist us with a deeper understanding of the contribution of education to learner flourishing (Hart & Brando, 2018). The collective contributing to labour, supporting one another, and equal input in decisions can lead to flourishing (Gomberg, 2016). It allows us to understand what is valued from learners' perspective and what capabilities are required to reach their desired end states. Sen (1992) does not advocate a list of capabilities that should be included in a person's capabilities and encourages an objective evaluation process (Claassen, 2018). It is against this backdrop that this study was done. This study aimed to determine what capabilities would contribute to the well-being of learners. Successfully achieving life values requires learners to view them as important, to have contextual factors that enable them to do so, and to accomplish them themselves (Van der Klink, 2019).

Research on what capabilities are valued by learners has been conducted elsewhere. For example, studies showing that learners valued leadership's role in openness, support, equal treatment, accountability, and collaboration among people have been conducted (Botha, 2016; Runhare et al., 2021; Steyn, 2018). The role of the community has also been a recurrent theme, which includes subcategories such as providing social workers, free meals, learning resources, and clothing to learners in need (Runhare et al., 2021). Parental involvement has likewise been highlighted as important (Mabasa & Muluvhu, 2019). These studies could share commonalities

within a South African context, but we need to take the conversation to the members of the target audience themselves: disadvantaged learners in South Africa. Individuals differ in their ability to convert the same resource. People internalise the adversities of their situation, affecting what they believe they can achieve, and may also have limited options for what they deem valuable (Sen, 1990).

Furthermore, the South African context is uniquely different (Howell, 2019). Therefore, it is essential to take the question to the learners themselves to understand what capabilities they value. The capability approach (CA) has previously been utilised in studies of learners in South African secondary school settings (see for example Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018; Baxen et al., 2014; Gore & Walker, 2020; Hendricks, 2019; Maarman, 2009; Metsing et al., 2018; Modiba, 2019; Mokoena & Jegede, 2017; Moloi, 2010; Muthala et al., 2022; Naidoo, 2021; Reddy et al., 2012; Schulze & Lemmer, 2017; Venketsamy et al., 2020; Waller et al., 2016; Wolhuter et al., 2015; Unterhalter, 2003, 2009). Two studies did utilise the CA to investigate secondary school learners in South Africa. Maarman's (2009) study of learners in the Sarafina informal settlement in Ikageng township showed how poverty inhibited the learners' capabilities. Their circumstances, for example, not having transport or food, made them prioritise survival-related matters over their valued capabilities (Maarman, 2009). Unterhalter (2009) studied the equity in capability building in schools. However, these studies did not focus on a framework of learners' capabilities.

The Capability Approach

As a tool and a framework, the capability approach (CA) offers a way to conceptualise and evaluate the problem of inequality and the well-being of learners rather than attempting to explain it (Robeyns, 2017); in other words, the capability approach cannot explain why these inequalities exist. However, the CA can help to understand how the distribution of opportunities in South Africa affects learners in previously disadvantaged areas. It illustrates a deeper understanding of how agency (a learner's values and objectives), social influence, and the opportunity to convert factors lead to the ultimate flourishing of the learner. It can help researchers understand what obstacles exist in capability building and how best to remove them.

The CA is a multidimensional framework that evaluates individual well-being, social arrangement, design policies, and proposed social change (Robeyns, 2017). It goes beyond the income-based approach, such as the gross domestic product, to include factors such as education, nutrition, and healthcare when measuring levels of well-being (Nussbaum, 2010; Robeyns, 2017). It is essential to develop a broader understanding of people's lives and their personal, social, and environmental barriers (Middlemiss et al., 2019). The CA assesses whether learners have the real opportunity to lead healthy lives, be educated, and have the freedom to use their knowledge and talents to create their futures. Capabilities encourage the development and sustainability of their freedom to lead the lives they value.

Capabilities

Amartya Sen (1980) initially developed the capability approach (Robeyns, 2003). Nussbaum (2011) has significantly contributed to its development. A capability set is a combination of potential functionings, which are the means and not the ends of flourishing (Robeyns, 2017). Capabilities go beyond well-being and allow that the capabilities we value sometimes do not involve well-being (Claassen, 2018). Consequently, capabilities illustrate the real freedoms that people have in constructing the kinds of lives they have reason to appreciate. (Garcés-Velástegui, 2022; Robeyns, 2017). For example, impoverished learners may have certain functionings, such as having a place to go after school, attending classes, and having meals provided, but their capability set, which is the opportunity to achieve real functionings, is limited (Kim, 2017).

Nussbaum (2011) offers a list of capabilities that she deems necessary for human flourishing (Claassen, 2018; Svarstad & Benjaminsen, 2020). The list is synonymous with human dignity and forms a generic list for legal systems to debate (Ponce et al., 2018). Innate capabilities or basic capabilities can be either nurtured or not nurtured. Innate capabilities make training and development of internal capabilities possible. Combined capabilities are the internal capability and the social, political, and family environments in which people function (Ponce et al., 2018). The approach emphasises that people's internal capabilities should not be proportionate to their political and social entitlements. This view of the CA states that all people should have the same combined capability, and all be above a certain threshold (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993). However, the difference between internal and combined capability is not described. An

individual may acquire internal capabilities due to certain functioning's but may also lose these capabilities if there is no opportunity to function (Ponce et al., 2018).

Table 1 illustrates the capabilities according to Nussbaum in comparison with lists proposed by Biggeri et al. (2006) and Burchardt and Vizard (2007) and the list of human rights from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (Claassen, 2018).

Table 1*A Comparison of Lists of Capabilities*

Nussbaum	Biggeri et al.	Burchardt & Vizard	List of human rights (UDHR)
Life	Life and physical health	Being alive	Life, liberty, and security, including prohibitions on slavery, torture, and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment
Bodily health	Love and care	Living in physical security	Right to an adequate standard of living and social security
Bodily integrity	Mental well-being	Enjoying a comfortable standard of living, with independence and security	Right to freedom of movement and residence within a state and right to marry and found a family
Senses, imagination, and thought	Bodily integrity and safety	Being engaged in productive and valued activities	Right to education, right to participation in cultural life, and right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion
Emotions	Social relations	Enjoying individual, family, and social life	
Practical reason	Participation	Participating in decision-making, having a voice, and having influence	Right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion
Affiliation	Education	Being and expressing yourself and having self-respect	Protection from arbitrary interference with one's privacy, family, home, or correspondence
Other species	Freedom from economic and non-economic exploitation	Knowing you will be protected and treated fairly by the law	Recognition as a person before the law and equal protection of the law
Play	Shelter and environment		Right to rest and leisure
Political and material control over one's environment	Leisure activities		
	Respect		
	Religion and identity		Right to freedom of expression and opinion, right to peaceful assembly, and association right to political participation and universal suffrage
	Time-autonomy		
	Mobility		Right to own property "alone as well as in association with others", right to work, free choice of employment, and other work-related rights, and no subjection to arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile and related legal rights

Although all the capabilities are interrelated, affiliation and practical reasoning are the foundation for all the others. Some capabilities require equality among all people and not just

the minimum threshold. Not all capabilities are equally important in attaining quality of life or well-being. For example, health and bodily integrity may be viewed as more critical than others. There are basic capabilities, which are fundamental, and secondary capabilities, which are prerequisite to primary capabilities (Day et al., 2016). Good health is a basic capability that may be supported by secondary capabilities such as acquiring nutritious meals or cooking (Day et al., 2016). Nussbaum's (2011) view is that the political system needs to protect the 10 capabilities identified and ensure equal distribution among its people. As such, it has been criticised for being unfair to those who are forced to contribute to all the capabilities, but only use a few (Claassen, 2018). Furthermore, prescribing all 10 capabilities to individuals who may not value them is seen as unfair. This study provided a specific context in which capabilities were analysed. It provided an opportunity to determine the relevance and value of the previously identified capabilities among learners in South Africa.

Functioning's are potential or achieved states that a person values or has reason to value (Gasper, 2007). They are the components of how a person lives, such as the person's health status. Functioning's range from rudimentary capabilities like sustaining oneself and attaining shelter to complex ones including achieving self-respect and being socially accepted. (Hart & Brando, 2018). Freedom is the ability to achieve systematically what the adolescent chooses. Each functioning is distinct, with different values attached to each of them. Each capability set could be weighted differently (Sen, 1999). There could be merit in the rules and procedures in attaining functioning's instead of achievement itself (Sen, 1999). Personal and societal judgements are used when assessing the importance of functioning. Social evaluation requires a social exercise where public understanding and discussions are obtained. The public participation will allow for determination of what should be included and the reason behind it (Walby, 2012).

Functioning and agency

People's functioning is called their achievement or achieved functioning (Gasper, 2007). Resulting functioning's are the functioning's that a person has achieved at any given time. When assessing human development, we need to determine whether people have the freedom to choose a path and have the freedom to bring about valuable achievements (Sen, 1999). Sen views values as context-specific, where the applicability of one set of valued functions will not suffice (Ponce et al., 2018). People's values are involved in the purpose and process of

achieving them (Ponce et al., 2018). Values can be personal or culturally shared values that drive behaviour (Fibieger, 2020).

Agency refers to people's ability to form their own goals, values, and the like (Ponce et al., 2018). Agency goes beyond well-being; it considers the person's achievement and opportunities in terms of other objectives and values (Hart & Brando, 2018). Well-being achievement is a person's success in doing or being. These functioning's may cover various achievements, including happiness (Hart & Brando, 2018). Well-being cannot be viewed as the sole indicator of happiness, as it does not take into consideration the subjective view of society (Sen, 1988). Human development can assist in enhancing the real freedoms individuals value. There are many contributing factors to freedom, including social, economic, institutional, and political arrangements and income from a national and an individual perspective (Graeff, 2012). Development also means removing unfreedom contributors that often deny basic freedoms.

The effectiveness of freedom is dependent on the free agency of people. Five types of freedoms with unique rights and opportunities enhance people's capability to live freely and longer (Sen, 1999). The first is political freedom, which is the freedom to choose who governs. The second is economic freedom, which allows us to employ economic resources for consumption, production, and exchange. Social opportunities are the third freedom and refer to the societal arrangements for education, healthcare, and the like. The fourth is transparency – social interaction that encourages openness and trust and aims to prevent corruption, financial irresponsibility, and underhand dealings. Protective security is the final freedom and refers to material changes and adverse effects on lives (Sen, 1999). Enablement refers to resources that encourage and enhance valued capabilities (Robeyns, 2017). Conversion factors (social, personal, and environmental) enable resources to be converted into valuable capabilities, which lead to valuable functionings (Robeyns, 2017).

Learners' capabilities can ultimately be grouped into learning to be, learning to know, learning to live together, and learning to do (Hoffmann, 2006). The first three refer to life skills and the latter to manual skills (Hoffmann, 2006). All these capabilities lead to the desired functioning's or quality learning outcomes that are critical for the learner. Agency allows learners autonomy in deciding which capabilities and, ultimately, functioning's they value (Dalkilic & Vadeboncoeur, 2016).

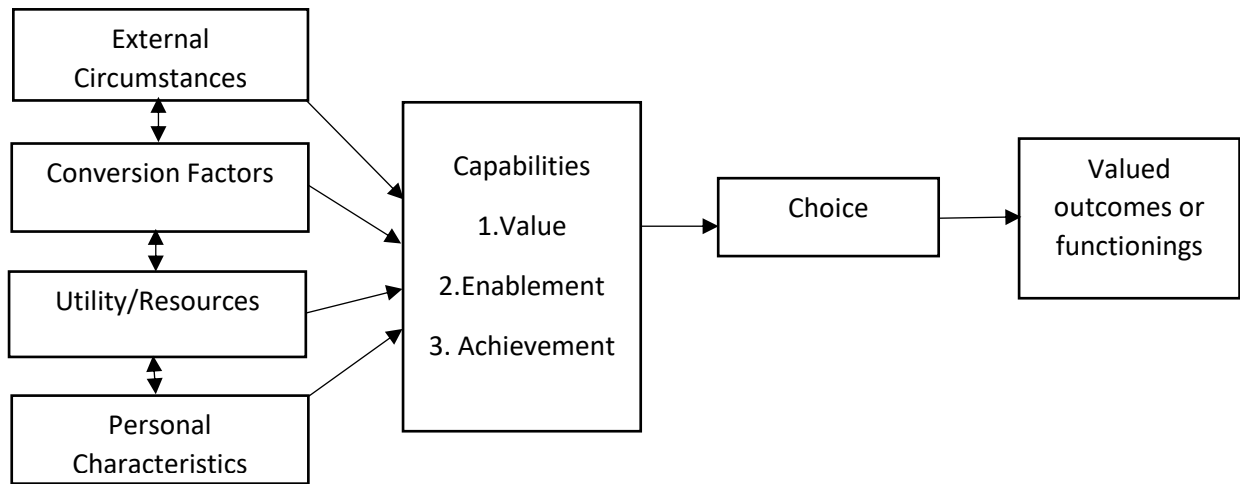
The Capability Model

The capability model illustrates the collective effect that personal characteristics, external circumstances, and conversion factors have on capabilities and, in turn, functioning's.

Figure 1 illustrates the process whereby a learner can convert resources, environmental factors, and demands into opportunities to have valuable capabilities that allow enablement and are achievable. This is referred to as a capability set (Van der Klink et al., 2016). In an academic context, value refers to the learner deeming something important, such as succeeding in his/her academic life. Choice is critical when choosing functioning's from a capability set and determines how learners engage academically (Bozalek & Dison, 2017). Furthermore, enablement empowers the learner, for example, teachers offering extra lessons after school. Achievement refers to the learner achieving what he/she has identified as valuable. The capability set will allow for opportunities to achieve valuable functioning's. Personal characteristics refer to characteristics such as physical and mental abilities (Sen, 1992). External circumstances include external environmental factors and social and cultural arrangements. Conversion factors – external, internal, environmental, social, or personal – are the ability to convert resources into valued functioning's (Garcés-Velástegui, 2022). The concept alludes to human diversity (Garcés-Velástegui, 2022). Learners should not only be able to draw on inputs, but also be able to transform those inputs into opportunities to reach their goals (Van der Klink et al., 2016). Utility or resources, such as money, have characteristics that may be of interest to learners and may be a means to achieve a capability (Bozalek & Dison, 2016). The abilities to problem-solve, think critically, make decisions, and collaborate are some important capabilities that learners would need to live the future they desire.

Figure 1

A Model of Inputs, Capabilities, and Outputs



The Current Study

When evaluating well-being, the CA approach can be used to assess the learners' functioning's. In a learning context, it is important to determine the valued capabilities, the opportunities to achieve these, and what conversion factors exist to ensure that valued functioning's are realised (Bozalek & Dison, 2016). Education plays a dual role in flourishing. Education creates opportunities to flourish. Furthermore, education values learning and enhances social influence by fostering respectful relations, citizenship, and commitments to others (Wilson-Strydom & Walker, 2015).

Socio-economic arrangements and poor schooling among disadvantaged learners in South Africa have a direct impact on learners' access to higher education. Their social network may lack knowledge of higher education and its entry. This lack of advice and guidance may limit the learners' expectations in life. Research by Martinez-Vargas et al. (2020) showed that self-confidence and agency were relational capabilities formed by connecting with others. These capabilities positively affected students' outlook on expectations of their future (Martinez-Vargas et al., 2020). This finding could help secondary school learners; it could help them build the capabilities of self-confidence and agency, which could give them university access and subject choices. Furthermore, social networks could help them create these capabilities and help convert them into achievements.

A study conducted by Walker (2019) showed that capabilities of academic results, knowledge, good relationships, agency, and self-efficacy were leading capabilities that led to functioning of access to university and social mobility. Conversion factors included objective conditions (government policy, social and economic arrangements, and family level of education) and subjective biographic details (hard work).

The South African context in which learners find themselves is unique and affects their perceptions of their future (Lundgren & Scheckle, 2019). To ensure that learners flourish, we need to understand what flourishing looks like for them. To do this, we must thoroughly understand what capabilities they value in life and why. This understanding will form the basis for offering relevant support to learners.

Method

Research Design

Using semi-structured interviews, I explored the meaning of the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I began by obtaining detailed information from learners and then arranging this information into categories or themes, which were developed into broad patterns, theories, or generalisations, for which personal experiences and current literature on the topic were compared (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Participants

The population for this study included learners from two schools. The first school was a government-funded school in a previously disadvantaged area in Pretoria. The second was a partly government-funded school in Edenvale. Table 2 shows the characteristics and demographic variables of the participants.

Table 2*Characteristics of Participants (N = 21)*

Demographic	Grouping	N	%
Gender	Male	5	24
	Female	16	76
Age	16 years old	11	52
	17 years old	10	48
Race	Black	16	76.19
	White	4	23.81
	Indian	1	4.76
Legal guardian	Both parents	6	28.57
	Mum	9	42.86
	Dad	1	4.76
	Both grandparents	1	4.76
	Grandmother	2	9.52
	Aunt	1	4.76
	Sibling	1	4.76
How many people do you live with?	1-3	11	52
	4-5	10	48

Two methods of purposeful sampling were used in the research, which consisted of strategically choosing cases that offered much information. The first method was extreme or deviant sampling (outlier sampling), in which learning was gained from unusual manifestations of the phenomena. The second was a snowballing method, where participants recommended other participants who would provide good examples of the study (Patton, 2002).

There were 21 learners, all of whom were in Grade 11. In total, 24% of the learners were male, and 76% were female. In terms of age, 52% of learners were 16 years old, and 48% were 17 years old. A total of 76% of the learners were black, 19% white, and 4% Indian. Furthermore, 28% of the learners stated that their legal guardians were both parents, while 42% stated that their mother was their legal guardian. Of the learners, 52% lived with three or fewer people, while 48% lived with four or more people.

Data Gathering

On receiving ethical clearance from the Gauteng Department of Education, the researcher obtained permission to conduct the research from the respective principals, teachers, and learners. The concepts of anonymity and voluntary participation were emphasised both verbally and in writing. The researcher visited the schools and conducted face-to-face interviews with the students. The flourishing approach of Wilson-Strydom and Walker (2015) used within a secondary school context was applied. McLean and Walker (2015) asked four questions when determining how professionals expanded their communities' capabilities: (a) What are my clients or the communities I work with able to do and be? (b) What opportunities do they have to be and do what they value? (c) How do social arrangements influence expanding their capabilities? (d) How do we build a profession that values creating capabilities for all?

Adapting these questions, the researcher asked 21 learners the following questions (Robeyns, 2017): (a) What do you think is most valuable for you to be able to do or achieve in life? You can include personal and academic (ultimate) values. (b) How can you achieve this? (This tested whether learners had real opportunities to achieve functionings. (c) What are you doing to achieve this? (d) Do you think you will achieve this?

The researcher collated what was valued, capabilities needed, capabilities possessed, and learners' perception of goal attainment. She was also able to ascertain functioning associated with the capabilities mentioned above. The study was based on the premise that the values of all mentioned capabilities and functioning's were weighted equally (Robeyns, 2017).

Trustworthiness

There are four criteria that ensure trustworthiness in a qualitative study: (a) credibility (in preference to internal validity); (b) transferability (in preference to external validity/generalisability); (c) dependability (in preference to reliability); and (d) confirmability (in preference to objectivity) (Guba, 1981). The researcher established credibility by ensuring that the study measured what it intended to (Forero et al., 2018). She used an application of qualitative description, a well-tested and recognised way of conducting research in both qualitative investigation and information science. Well-established qualitative purposeful sampling methods, such as extreme or deviant sampling and snowballing methods were used (Sandelowski, 2000; Shenton, 2004). This, furthermore, removed researcher bias (Shenton, 2004). She tested the alignment and relevance of the questions with the co-author. Her questions were standardised and used simple language (Forero et al., 2018). She spent a day in the classroom of the sample group, thereby ensuring that she understood the organisation and that the participants were able to trust her (Forero et al., 2018).

Participants knew that she was independent of the school and were aware that they could exit the process at any point. The researcher used probing questions to get more detailed responses. Participants' responses were coded verbatim, with the assistance of an expert external coder. Findings were discussed with the expert coder, co-author, and peers for objectivity and consistency. The findings were substantiated with direct quotations from the participants, thus enhancing the accuracy of the analysis (Levitt et al., 2018). The author thoroughly described the topic under investigation and examined previous studies to make comparisons (Forero et al., 2018). The study outlined the process of the study in detail, thus making it easy to replicate. It also provided the baseline for understanding the topic, against which subsequent studies can be compared (Forero et al., 2018).

Research Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was granted by the Humanities and Health Research Ethics Committee of the North-West University (NWU-HS-2018-0125). Interviews were conducted by skilled interviewers. Consent was obtained from the principals and learners before questionnaires were administered. It was reiterated that participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the process. The consent briefed participants on the nature of research, the requirements of participation, the implications of participation, the use

of the data collected, the way in which it would be reported, and whom to contact if there were any questions about the research. Participants could withdraw from participating at any point of the research.

Data Analysis

The researcher analysed the responses from 21 semi-structured interviews for qualitative content using the coding strategies by Saldaña (2021). The research and the interview questions guided this process. The researcher engaged in data reduction, coding, and decoding analytic processes to analyse and interpret the data forms (Saldaña, 2021). The methods were conducted concurrently and rigorously: data collection, audio-recorded semi-structured interview data, and data analysis. Coding terminology and procedures (Saldaña, 2021) were applied. Descriptive, process, and in vivo codes were created (data-driven). The researcher created a code list of 102 codes (first cycle), which she reduced to 24 codes (second cycle) and six thematic code groups aligned with the research objectives from 462 quotations. This was done in ATLAS.ti Version 22 (the latest version released in December 2021), a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software package.

This software enhances the coding process, along with an audit trail for transparency of the analysis process (Smit, 2005; Smit & Scherman, 2021). Smit and Zimmerman (2014) describe ATLAS.ti as a powerful tool for analysing numerous textual, graphical, audio, and video data. During the qualitative analysis, ATLAS.ti Web (Version 22.0.6.0) provided me with an insight into the complex phenomena that were hidden in the data. All the responses were gathered into the project function for subsequent coding. The process of linking code words to passages of text or quotes is known as coding. Coding serves as the foundation for creating analyses by connecting data and gathering and analysing the data. I grouped codes into six clusters, or categories.

The following section describes, examines, and interprets the research findings using the categories mentioned in the literature along with the applicable theories accompanying them.

Results

Six themes and corresponding sub-themes relevant to the research question emerged. Themes grouped units of meanings similar in experiences and understandings. Learners' words were

quoted verbatim and their language use was not corrected. The sub-themes of each theme were analysed separately. Table 3 illustrates a summary of the themes.

Table 3

Themes

-
- 1.1 Theme 1: Career choice based on values – choosing careers that allow for self-expression, individualism, and uniqueness.
 - 1.2 Theme 2: Enabling lifestyle – the action and mindset of goal attainment, leading to overall well-being.
 - 1.3 Theme 3: Affiliation (ubuntu) for goal attainment – the need for parental, school, and community support and advice in goal attainment.
 - 1.4 Theme 4: Achievement of a balanced life – the striving for a well-rounded life, one that encourages independence and the realisation of full potential.
 - 1.5 Theme 5: Schooling to develop sensing, imagination, thought and play – the capability to laugh, play, and enjoy recreational activities.
 - 1.6 Theme 6: Support from the family, school, and community to provide control – support from the social network to bring order and control in one’s life.
-

Table 3 shows six themes, namely, career choice based on values, enabling lifestyle, affiliation for goal attainment, achievement of a balanced life, schooling to develop sensing, imagination, and play, and support from the family, school, and community to provide control.

Theme 1: Career choice based on values

Learners cited various careers as desirable: supermodel, clinical psychologist, air hostess, medical doctor, businesswoman, social worker, singer, and wrestler. When delving into their career choice, especially careers rooted in the humanities, it was clear that their choices were motivated by the need to help others and give back. They wanted to form meaningful relationships with others. All career choices, including the humanities, were viewed as a source of self-expression, enhancing their individualism and uniqueness. Learners wanted to be involved in something beyond the here and now. They wanted to contribute to the future of something valuable. They all showed a desire for new knowledge, experience, and skill. This included learning new languages and acquiring expertise and knowledge in their chosen field. Financial income was a secondary objective that served to sustain what they valued.

Learner 14: *“I want to become a supermodel. I love fashion, photography, and beauty. I want to create my fashion line. This will allow me to be creative and travel.”*

Learner 15: *“I want to be a clinical psychologist to help others with mental health and make a positive difference.”*

Learner 17: *“I want to be a Doctor and Businesswoman. I want to own property, robotics, and farms. I want to be a surgeon because doctors inspire me. I want my income to fix schools in the Eastern Cape. I don’t care for money, but I want to help others. That makes me calm.”*

Learner 20: *“I value music. I want to become a rapper. I want to study sound engineering first. I am good at rapping. It is a stress reliever and allows me to relax. I would be the first in my family to do it. It pays a lot, so I can support my mum and pay for university. I value keeping people close, and I want to pay everyone back for their love.”*

Theme 2: Enabling lifestyle

Learners identified capabilities that enabled a valued lifestyle. They highlighted work ethic, goals, well-being, and money. To learners, work ethic was being dedicated and disciplined. Many learners mentioned being focused and paying attention in class as valued capabilities. They believed that goals were attainable if they were dedicated, hard-working, and committed. They stressed wanting to make a positive difference in their lives. They valued working together to achieve their goals.

Learner 6: *“It would help if you were hard-working and had goals in life, in which you must be ethical and committed. I will need to get into a good varsity and get a degree.”*

Learner 9: *“Academic achievement plays a significant role in achieving future goals, hard work and dedication to tasks, motivation, positive peer pressure, having the right mindset. A safe environment.”*

Learner 6: *“I study every afternoon and ensure that I have a balanced life.”*

Learner 15: *“I have been through much stuff, so I want to help other going through similar things. I want to donate it to people, travel and buy a house and car with my income.”*

Theme 3: Affiliation (ubuntu) for goal attainment

Learners indicated that parental, school, and community support and advice were important factors. They wanted to surround themselves with supportive and positive people. This was in both their goal achievement and motivational levels. They valued the importance of a positive

mindset and personal growth. To learners, their social network could enhance this. Furthermore, their love for their families and communities and their value in providing for them influenced their goals. They wanted to help those they cared about physically as well as emotionally.

Learner 14: *“I need support from my family and teachers to recognise my strengths and weaknesses. They must see me grow and give me life lessons.”*

Learner 10: *“I want to do medicine because I want to help sick people. I want to help them get better. Some people go to the hospital but don’t get help and have no money. I want to open a surgery. I want to help my family who are poor. I want to build my mum a house, help my siblings and find my dad.”*

Learner 15: *“I have been through much in my life, so I want to help others going through similar things. I want to donate to people, travel and buy a house and car with my income. I like the peace that someone got helped by me.”*

Learner 21: *“I value helping people who are going through difficult times and challenges. I want to stop people from doing bad things and I want them to achieve their dreams. I want to become a psychologist. This will also help my mum financially.”*

Theme 4: Achievement of a balanced life

Learners wanted to have a well-rounded life. They valued having financial stability, knowledge, taking care of their families, living in a safe and clean environment, and independence in their futures. They believed that doing well at school would help them achieve these desired futures. Again, the notions of working hard, being committed, and being dedicated to their goals featured. To learners, achieving a well-balanced life would allow them to realise their full potential.

Learner 5: *“I would like to pass high school and get my degree so that I will be able to get a well-paying job and stable income.”*

Learner 6: *“It would help if you were hard working and had goals in life in which you must be ethical and committed. I will need to get into a good varsity and get a degree.”*

Learner 9: *“I have tried hard in all my classes, and I can see that it has been paying off. I try to help everyone who needs help. I also have time with my friends as they are pushing me to strive.”*

Learner 17: *“I want to be a Doctor and a Businesswoman. I want to own property, robotics and farms. I want to be a surgeon because doctors inspire me. I want my income to fix schools in the Eastern Cape. I don’t care for money but want to help others. That makes me calm.”*

Theme 5: Schooling to develop sensing, imagination, thought, and play

Learners mentioned two central capabilities proposed by Nussbaum for human dignity. The first was the ability to use the senses, imagination, and thought to organise experience and education in an informed and autonomous manner. Understanding this self-expression was protected by political, artistic, and religious freedom. Some students used dance, music, and singing as escapism and means of self-expression. Many times, these forms of art were intertwined with future plan. They highlighted a second career to support their true passion in pursuing the arts in some form. The second capability was play – the capability to laugh, play, and enjoy recreational activities. Learners valued sports and outdoor activities as a source of entertainment as well as a source of character building. They enjoyed interacting with peers and friends on a social basis.

Learner 7: *“Working hard in terms of academics, sports and cultural activities to create an application for university.”*

Learner 5: *“Putting a lot of effort in academics (tuition and extra classes), playing sport and participating in cultural activities.”*

Learner 7: *“I strive to do better in my work. Attending class everyday. I try to push myself to be a hard worker in class. Participate in activities that make a difference. I don’t have a narrow mindset. I try to look at all solutions, not just one.”*

Learner 12: *“I work hard at sports as I want to be scouted first. I study hard at school so that I can go to university.”*

Theme 6: Support from the family, school, and community to provide control

Learners viewed support from their social network to bring order and control into their lives. The family, school, and community could help learners with the mastery of connecting with others, behaviour control, and respecting themselves and others in society. Learners learned control mechanisms by observing the behaviour from these social networks. They were also willing to test these proposed behaviours when they believed they were protected and supported

by their social network. The support provided a source of inspiration and motivation to learners, especially in preparation for the world of work.

Learner 12: *“I would need encouragement from my friends and family. The school needs to make the grounds safer and more balanced. School can give us extra material on how to prepare for exams.”*

Learner 18: *“My family can advise me to be more confident and show me how to do things. They can help me financially as I want to do a six-month course. School can teach us how to be co-operative with others. The community can help reduce crime and violence. There are mental effects from this.”*

Learner 19: *“The school should offer career guidance. There is nothing my family can do. The community can help by telling you what to do and not do. The community is unsafe and there is drugs.”*

Learner 21: *“My school needs to offer more subjects and help us more academically. They need to teach us how to deal with the outside world. My parents can help to share and understand my dreams. They can help me understand things I do not understand. The community can be more open to a therapist or psychologist.”*

Discussion

This study aimed to explore what capabilities were valued by secondary school learners in previously disadvantaged areas. Furthermore, the study aimed to establish what capabilities learners could develop and what support they would need within an educational context. Learners identified six capability themes: career choice based on values, enabling lifestyle, affiliation for goal attainment, achievement of a balanced life, schooling to develop sensing, imagination, and play, and reciprocal support from family, school, and communities to provide control.

People lead good lives when they oversee their own lives and values are not dictated to them by others (Robertson & Egdell, 2018). A perceived good life is associated with flourishing in doing well and feeling good (Thomas et al., 2022). Learners placed importance on career choice, in other words, choosing the right vocation based on their perceived interests, values, strengths, and social network influence. Learners valued careers that offered them autonomy. Furthermore, they saw income as a means of helping others because they valued giving back to people they cared about or people who needed assistance.

Career aspiration is positively associated with hopefulness and self-efficacy, both of which are important aspects of well-being (Dudovitz et al., 2017). Choosing a career is a continuous and developmental process. According to Bromley (2004), the primary motivation in choice of career is instant gratification such as money and liking for the job. All learner responses were associated with careers that the learners believed they would enjoy and that would allow them to express themselves. The second motivation is altruistic rewards (Du Plessis & Ahmed, 2020), which was evident in learners' responses. There was a strong sense of personal and communal responsibility within and among the youth. The third motivation is what the job can indirectly offer, such as status from the products one can buy from earnings or from the job title. Parental educational aspirations and family income are other factors that shape learners' career aspirations, ambition value, and educational performance (Du Plessis & Ahmed, 2020). The learners indicated that their career choices were rooted in wanting to provide for their families.

Career choice appeared to offer learners a sense of autonomy. Individuals' autonomy – the freedom to live their lives as they see fit – greatly influences their well-being and life satisfaction (Steckermeier, 2021). As a critical factor for mental and physical development and functioning, autonomy is key to individual change and self-actualisation. This is particularly important from a CA perspective where active agents have real freedoms or opportunities to pursue what they value (Steckermeier, 2021). Interestingly, learners may cognitively adjust their career aspirations to accommodate the structural or systematic barriers (Du Plessis & Ahmed, 2020). Often, their aspired careers are not supported by their current reality (Du Plessis & Ahmed, 2020).

To find success and realise their learning activities, learners must be committed to ethics and ideals such as working hard and character discipline (Jayadi et al., 2019; Mendick et al., 2015). Goal setting is a process of formulating clear learning objectives. Task-focused goal orientation has an intrinsic focus that students can adopt, such as learning. It is also possible to adopt an ability-focused goal orientation with an extrinsic focus: good marks (Moeller et al., 2012). It has been found that goal setting is associated with higher achievement behaviours and failure avoidance. However, setting goals alone is not indicative of future achievement. It requires elements such as quality of goals and a conducive environment to lead to goal attainment (Moeller et al., 2012). Money was an important factor, as it could determine whether learners

could afford to study in a chosen career field. Also, it can persuade learners to choose a career based on their potential income (Shumba & Naong, 2013).

The element of “ubuntu” featured strongly in the responses. Learners were willing to seek the assistance of others or offer their assistance to work towards a common goal. Aside from personality traits, ubuntu also encompasses values, norms, and moral standards. The ubuntu philosophy emphasises relationships, customs, respect for others’ expectations, restorative justice, reconciliation, and harmonious relationships (Fetvadjev et al., 2015). Ubuntu is the role others play in the creation of a learner’s humanness and morals. It is the harmony of living with others and pursuing goals that do not jeopardise others. As ubuntu served as an ethical framework for learners, it is important to understand when the breach of an ethical principle can occur and when it is justifiable (Ewuoso & Hall, 2019).

Parents, in conjunction with the school and community, play an integral role in their child’s education (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020). Students who perceived their parents as supportive reported higher levels of self-worth, psychological well-being, and physical well-being (Hoferichter et al., 2021). Parents can support adolescents emotionally (through expressions of love, empathy, warmth, and concern), informally (through information, guidance, or advice), and materially (Bonjoc et al., 2021). Parents affect the education and upbringing of their children (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). They can also monitor academic progress at home and engage in joint activities with learners’ teachers at school. Parent support is a protective measure against mental health risks such as depression, antisocial behaviour, and delinquency (Attar-Schwartz et al., 2019; Profe & Wild, 2017; Poudel et al., 2020). Learners’ love and respect for their parents often motivate them to achieve future financial stability for themselves and their parents (Cheang & Goh, 2018). Learners’ ability to influence their families’ lives makes them connected agents (Cheang & Goh, 2018).

Learners wanted to achieve a balanced life. In general, achieving life balance refers to being content in various important areas of your life. Individuals engaging in multiple roles in their life are likely to experience better life balance and higher levels of life satisfaction than those who engage in only one role (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). People who are highly involved in basic needs (health, love, family, and material) and growth needs (society, work, leisure, and culture) will likely be more satisfied with their lives (Sirgy & Lee, 2018).

In a society, capabilities are owned, firstly, by the individual and then, secondly, by the group. Similar to Nussbaum, I identified the role of sensing, imagination, and thought as resulting in valued capabilities. Also, the capability of play was an important capability among our sample group. The ability to play and imagine significantly makes human life worth living (Storli & Hansen Sandseter, 2019). Learners need to use their senses to think, imagine, and reason. These capabilities are enhanced by traditional education and exposure to art and music. These capabilities allow for the expression of the self (Storli & Hansen Sandseter, 2019). The capability of play allows learners to enjoy physical activities, be it through competitive sports or for recreation (Storli & Hansen Sandseter, 2019). The community can help learners acquire the skills to interact with one another and the environment. It can teach learners self-regulation skills and mechanisms to control their emotions and behaviour (Grant & Ray, 2018).

To the best of my knowledge, asking secondary school learners directly about capabilities that they valued and what support they required to enable these capabilities had not been done in previously disadvantaged communities in South Africa. Thus, these findings identified capabilities in a new context. Perhaps not surprisingly, the capabilities identified by these learners were similar to those identified in other studies, mentioned earlier, conducted in different contexts. After all, all human beings strive towards a ‘good life,’ one of quality and dignity (Greco et al., 2015). Capabilities might be labelled differently, but the underlying meaning was the same. Learners, like adults worldwide, wanted to have the freedom to be autonomous. They wanted to set goals for themselves that would enable them to have a good life and attain well-being. They wanted a well-balanced life that would allow for using all their senses. Most importantly, collectivism was a part of their being, where they wanted to support and be supported by their communities. Learners wanted to be active agents of their own future and wanted to pay their ‘good life’ forward (Du Plessis & Ahmed, 2020).

Table 4

A Comparison of Identified Learner Capabilities Compared to Previous Lists of Capabilities

Nussbaum Life	List of human rights (UDHR) Life, liberty, and security, including prohibitions on slavery, torture, and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment	This study <i>Enabling lifestyle</i> : the action and mindset of goal attainment, leading to overall well-being. This involves having work ethics, being hard-working, having dedication, and having discipline. Social networks can assist one in achieving the desired end state.
Bodily health	Right to an adequate standard of living and social security	Not applicable
Bodily integrity	Right to freedom of movement and residence within a state and right to marry and found a family	<i>Career choice based on values</i> : choosing careers that allow for self-expression, individualism, and uniqueness. The need to acquire new knowledge, experience, and skill. The desire to create meaningful relationships, contribute, and be a part of something greater than oneself.
Senses, imagination, and thought	Right to education, right to participation in cultural life, and right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion	<i>Schooling to develop sensing, imagination, thought, and play</i> : the ability to use senses, imagination, and thought to organise experience and education in an informed and autonomous manner. The capability to laugh, play, and enjoy recreational activities.
Emotions	Not applicable	<i>Support from the family, school, and community to provide control</i> : support from the social network to bring order and control in one’s life. The mastery of connecting with others, behaviour control, and respecting oneself and others.
Practical reason	Right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion	<i>Enabling lifestyle</i> : the action and mindset of goal attainment, leading to overall well-being. This involves having work ethics, being hard-working, having dedication, and having discipline. Social networks can assist one in achieving the desired end state.
Affiliation	Protection from arbitrary interference with one’s privacy, family, home, or correspondence	<i>Affiliation (ubuntu) for goal attainment</i> : the need for parental, school, and community support and advice in goal attainment. Social networks act as a source for a positive mindset and personal growth. The desire to help those one cares about physically as well as emotionally.
Other species	Recognition as a person before the law and equal protection of the law	Not applicable
Play	Right to rest and leisure	<i>Schooling to develop sensing, imagination, thought, and play</i> : the ability to use senses, imagination, and thought to organise experience and education in an informed and autonomous manner. The capability to laugh, play, and enjoy recreational activities.
Political and material control over one’s environment	Right to freedom of expression and opinion, right to peaceful assembly, and association right to political participation and universal suffrage Right to own property “alone as well as in association with others”, right to work, free choice of employment, and other work-related rights, and no subjection to arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile and related legal rights	<i>Achievement of a balanced life</i> : the striving for a well-rounded life, one that allows for financial stability, knowledge gain, supporting families, and living in a safe and clean environment. A future that encourages independence and the realisation of full potential.

Limitations

This study had various limitations. Firstly, the sample size was small and limited to one province. Therefore, it is essential to replicate this study with more learners in different areas. Secondly, the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this may have had an impact on learners' responses regarding their lifestyle change. Due to the small sample size, I, with the assistance of an independent researcher, re-evaluated and recoded the themes until they made sense. Therefore, normative assumptions on capabilities were made. A future study testing the credibility, authenticity, criticality, and integrity of these findings in the form of a questionnaire is suggested.

Conclusions

This study aimed to identify what learners most valued in life and the capabilities needed to achieve what they valued. Learners identified six themes: career choice based on values, enabling lifestyle, affiliation for goal attainment, achievement of a balanced life, schooling to develop sensing, imagination, and play, and support from the family, school, and community to provide control. Our capability list showed close similarities to other capability lists, although this study focused on learner capability. Unfortunately, personal, and external circumstances and conversion factors may not allow for all capabilities under these six themes to exist in learners' lives. The role of parents, school, and the community in capability building is critical. This study highlighted that learners required support and guidance from their social network to realise, fulfil, and maintain their full potential.

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CHAPTER 4

MANUSCRIPT 3

Social Support and Well-being of Adolescent Learners: A Latent Profile Analysis

Abstract

This study focused on identifying adolescent learners' (in two school grades) social support profiles based on their self-reports regarding four sources of social support (i.e., parental, classmate, teacher, and close friend support) and associations of such profiles with their mental health. A biographical questionnaire, the Social Support Scale for Children, and the Mental Health Continuum – Short Form were administered to a sample of 770 learners from previously disadvantaged schools in South Africa. Using latent profile analyses of parental, classmate, teacher, and close friend support, three social network support profiles were identified, namely the connected, moderate, and isolated profiles. Social support profiles were associated with mental health. The most desirable mental health outcome was associated with the connected profile (moderate parental support, and high classmate, teacher, and close friend support), while the lowest levels of mental health were observed in the isolated profile (low close friend, teacher, and classmate support). The results confirmed that teacher, close friend, and classmate support, in addition to parental support, were vital for adolescent learners' mental health in the South African context.

Keywords: mental health, social support, adolescents, well-being, latent profile analysis, South Africa

Introduction

Core values for many in South Africa are related to ecological variables beyond the individual adolescent level: family, classmates, educators, and close friends (Romero et al., 2018). Intergenerational relationships (Attar-Schwartz, 2015), interdependency (Ye & Ye, 2020), socio-centrism, and conformity with social expectations (Legare & Nielsen, 2015) affect the adolescent. This study focused on the social environments in which adolescents negotiate their lives in South Africa and how their experiences of these environments relate to their mental health. Focusing more explicitly on socio-ecological perspectives calls for exploring the dynamic relationships of adolescents with their contexts.

Adolescence is a developmental period that marks the transition from childhood to adulthood (Jaworska & MacQueen, 2015). According to Moreira et al. (2017), adolescence can be categorised into three developmental stages, namely, early adolescence (10 to 14 years), middle adolescence (15 to 16 years), and late adolescence (17 to 21 years). Increased risk-taking behaviours and emotional reactivity occur during adolescence (Casey et al., 2008). Furthermore, adolescents spend less time with parents and more with peers (Jaworska & MacQueen, 2015).

A caring environment is essential for adolescents. Unfortunately, this is not the reality in South Africa. Many adolescents experience poverty, HIV/AIDS of parents, and acts of violence at home, at school, or within their communities, which affect their well-being (Hendricks et al., 2019; Lake et al., 2019). Exacerbating the situation is the disparity in the education system between the affluent and previously disadvantaged areas (Arends et al., 2017; Kubow, 2017). Disparities in schools still exist in infrastructure, skilled educators, and learning resources (Engelbrecht et al., 2015). Therefore, previously disadvantaged areas have schooling systems with high dropout levels and low pass rates. The poor education system does not develop learners' potential or economic opportunities and, subsequently, prevents higher-skilled employment and impairs self-efficacy (Kubow, 2017). Prioritising the mental health of adolescents will help them to become contributing and engaged community members who drive positive outcomes such as building the economy and developing social cohesion (Hendricks et al., 2019; Lake et al., 2019; Majee et al., 2020).

A crucial task is to identify factors that can support adolescents as they strive to reach their full potential and contribute to society within the current context (Keyes, 2002). Different sources and types of social support can help alleviate some of the stressors experienced by adolescents and promote mental health (Scheier & Brissette, 2002; Romero et al., 2018; Tennant et al., 2015). Research has shown that interpersonal relationships are valuable sources of social support that contribute to adolescents' well-being and development (Camara et al., 2017; Hendriks et al., 2021; Lee & Yoo, 2014). Adolescents use social support if such sources are familiar, trustworthy, friendly, and mature.

Mental Health: Emotional, Psychological, and Social Well-being

Two perspectives on well-being are evident in the literature. Firstly, the hedonic perspective denotes well-being as the presence of positive emotions and life satisfaction. It, furthermore, conceptualises well-being as the absence of negative emotions (Diener et al., 2018). In this case, well-being is subjective and does not account for how people measure utilities and the rewards associated with pleasure (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Secondly, the eudaimonic perspective views well-being as the presence of personal skills, social skills, and abilities that lead to optimal functioning (Ryff, 2018). Well-being is achieved when people live according to their true selves (Waterman, 1993). Keyes's model is holistic because it considers both optimal functioning and hedonic well-being (Keyes, 2005).

A person's psychological, social, and emotional well-being is at the core of holistic health as described by the World Health Organization (Keyes, 2005; World Health Organization, 1948). Emotional well-being (EWB) refers to the presence or absence of positive feelings about life (Keyes, 2002). Psychological well-being (PWB) refers to adolescents' perceptions of their quality of functioning. There are six dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others and self-acceptance. Social well-being (SWB) refers to fulfilling social tasks in social structures such as communities, groups, and institutions and consists of five dimensions (Keyes, 2013). These dimensions are social integration, social contribution, social coherence, social actualisation, and social acceptance (Keyes, 2013). High levels of well-being lead to high levels of flourishing (Schotanus-Dijkstra et al., 2016).

Keyes (2002) introduced the dual continua model of mental health and mental illness. The mental health status of adolescents can be classified in terms of languishing, moderately flourishing, and flourishing. One continuum indicates the presence and absence of positive mental health, while the other reflects the presence and absence of mental illness symptoms (Keyes, 2005). Flourishing, languishing, and moderate mental health are not stable or permanent states (Keyes, 2002). To be deemed flourishing, adolescents must exhibit high levels of one of the six hedonic constructs. Furthermore, they need to measure high levels on at least six of the positive functioning constructs. Languishing adolescents have low levels of one of the hedonic constructs. Additionally, they have low levels on a minimum of six of the positive functioning constructs. Moderately happy adolescents do not fit the criteria of flourishing or languishing (Keyes, 2005; Keyes, 2013).

Adolescents with low well-being in the absence of mental illness and adolescents with a mental illness diagnosis and low well-being are at equal risk for academic and behavioural problems at school (Antaramian et al., 2010). A study of clergy in America revealed that increasing levels of flourishing and maintaining flourishing levels decreased the potential for mental illness (Keyes et al., 2020). Research conducted among Setswana-speaking South Africans revealed that psychosocial assets were higher in flourishing individuals than in those who were moderately mentally healthy or languishing (Keyes et al., 2008). Furthermore, psychopathology issues were lower in flourishing individuals than in those who were moderately mentally healthy or languishing. This reaffirms that flourishing individuals function better than languishing individuals or those with moderate mental health (Keyes et al., 2008). It is essential to nurture adolescents' well-being by encouraging positive emotions, fostering a loving parent-adolescent relationship, and creating a supportive school environment. We must determine the factors that enhance adolescent flourishing (Keyes, 2002; Keyes et al., 2020).

Social Support

Social support is a valuable resource to use when faced with difficulties. It helps adolescents know that they are cared for, loved, and valued (Wissing, 2013). The regulatory effectiveness of support (RES) theory postulates that social support motivates adolescents to feel effective in different dimensions of their lives. Support helps adolescents understand and manage situations. This, in turn, empowers them to develop behavioural and psychological behaviours such as motivation, utilising past best practices, and regulating their moods to navigate their

needs (Zee et al., 2020). Therefore, social support affects an adolescent's mental health. It acts as a mitigating factor against symptoms associated with victimisation and health problems such as mental distress and anxiety (Cook et al., 2002; Davidson & Demaray, 2007; Lam et al., 2007).

The social network concept refers to the sources that provide support (Tardy, 1985). These sources include parents, community members, peers, friends, and teachers (Profe & Wild, 2007; Tennant et al., 2015). Stronger familiarity with a social network leads to a stronger network (Demaray et al., 2010). Conservation of resources (COR) theory can be used to conceptualise the effects of social network support on adolescents' well-being. According to Hobfoll (2011), individuals seek to obtain, protect, and retain resources, for example, social support, that they value. COR theory posits that people's well-being will suffer when valuable resources are threatened by loss, when such resources are lost, or when people fail to gain these (despite significant efforts to gain them). Rather than existing in isolation, resources aggregate to produce positive outcomes. The four types of social support in an adolescent's schooling life (parental, teacher, classmate, and close friend) may combine in multiple ways, resulting in different consequences (Ciarrochi et al., 2017). Specific combinations of social support in latent profiles may result in mutual reinforcement of their effects on adolescents' mental health. However, it is also possible for divergence across social support sources to occur because of the inability of some sources to provide social support or because of destructive conflict with such sources.

Parental social support has beneficial effects on adolescents' psychological well-being (Chentsova Dutton et al., 2020). Parental support entails the extent to which parents understand their children, care about their feelings, want to listen to their problems, treat them like they matter, like them how they are and make them feel that what they do is important (Harter, 1985). Parents can support adolescents emotionally (expressions of love, empathy, warmth, and concern), informally (information, guidance, or advice), and by offering material assistance (Chentsova Dutton et al., 2020). Parent support acts as a protective measure against mental health risks such as depression, antisocial behaviour, and delinquency (Attar-Schwartz et al., 2019; Poudel et al., 2020; Profe & Wild, 2017). Parental support and parents' understanding of their adolescents' school activities have a positive impact on their learning and academic results (Hendricks et al., 2019; Modisaotsile, 2012).

It is important to note that biological parents in South Africa are not necessarily the primary caregivers for adolescents because of a high HIV prevalence. However, according to Hosegood (2009), studies showed an increase in extended, multigenerational household types despite the deaths of adults who suffered from the illness. Most orphans and non-orphans live with surviving parents. She found no evidence for a substantive increase in child-headed households. Grandparents take on responsibilities to complement the parental care and, in some cases, take over the duties of the primary caregiver (Ben Shlomo & Taubman-Ben-Ari, 2016; Grobbelaar & Jones, 2020; Hoffman, 2019). However, studies have shown that adolescents raised by grandparents (compared with single mothers) have lower socio-emotional and psychological well-being levels, which often lead to behavioural problems in adolescents (Kelley et al., 2011; Pilkauskas & Dunifon, 2016). In a study of families affected by HIV in the South African context, Knight et al. (2016) found that social forces (e.g., social obligation and conditional reciprocity) are critical determinants of families' ability "to rely on social capital withing the kinship network" (p. 26).

Teacher support refers to the extent to which adolescents' teachers help them when they are upset, assist them to do their best, care about them, are perceived to be fair to them, and treat them as human beings (Harter, 1985). Teacher support has three characteristics: positive affect, balanced power, and complete reciprocity (Ibrahim & Zaatari, 2020). Positive teacher support is associated with lower levels of conflict, higher engagement, increased favourability of school, and higher academic achievement among learners (Tennant et al., 2015). A study conducted by Demir and Leyendecker (2018) showed that teacher support positively affected the quality of life, school engagement, and perceived self-competence of Grade 4 to 8 learners. The study showed that teacher support was more critical in the lower grades. Teachers acted as roles models and had an impact on the quality of life of learners. This was opposed to the higher grades, where there were different teachers for specific subjects. Assisting teachers with stress associated with curriculum completion and institutional and parental demands can help them free time to connect with their learners in meaningful ways and on activities other than academia (Ibrahim & Zaatari, 2020).

Classmate support refers to the extent to which an adolescent's classmates like them the way they are, are friendly, listen to what they say, refrain from embarrassing them and invite them to join in play or games (Harter, 1985). Classmate support assists adolescents to fulfil their needs, in particular those for relatedness and acceptance (Brown, 2004). It is negatively

associated with psychological pathologies (Coyle et al., 2019; Poudel et al., 2020). Demir and Leyendecker (2018) found that classmate support positively affected quality of life, school-related engagement, and self-concept in the lower grades. In later school years leading up to Grade 8, classmate support had a positive impact on quality of life and none on school-related factors. This could be attributed to the transformation of friendships during the transition to higher grades. Classmate support did not affect learners in Grade 8 (Demir & Leyendecker, 2018).

Close friend support is different from the other three types of support. It entails whether the adolescent has a close friend who responds in certain ways toward the self (Harter, 1985). Close friend support concerns whether the adolescent has a close friend who they can share their problems with, who shows understanding, with whom they can share things that bother them, who listens to what they say, and who they can spend time with.

Not all studies have revealed positive correlations between social support networks and mental health. A study among Grade 9 and Grade 10 learners from 23 schools in Canada (Attar-Schwartz et al., 2019) revealed that classmate and educator support correlated negatively with school disengagement. Disengagement could present in poor academic results, poor attendance, and psychosocial problems. The perception of classmate support played a more influential role in adolescents' lives in secondary school than educator support. This could be attributed to adolescents moving their focus away from educator attention to their peers. Peer recognition and approval became essential in higher grades.

Research has shown that gender influences adolescents' perceptions of support from their network. Female adolescents perceive more support from classmates and close friends than males. However, both genders perceive similar support from parents and teachers (Malecki & Demaray, 2003). There is no gender difference in the perception of educator support. However, females perceive classmate support more strongly than males. This could be due to females' traditional norms investing more emotionally in relationships (Kendrick et al., 2012).

Current Study

Studies (e.g., Camara et al., 2017) have shown that social support leads to desirable well-being outcomes for adolescents. Moreover, when considered in isolation, different types of social

support benefit adolescent well-being. The effects of social support on adolescents' well-being can be studied using variable- and person-centered approaches. Previous studies have used a variable-centred approach to study social support. According to Caesens et al. (2020), this approach focuses on the relations among variables as they occur on average in a sample. It does not consider the possibility that relations among variables can differ among different subpopulations (e.g., different latent profiles of social support) in a sample. Variable-centred results can be affected by the existence of small subpopulations with extreme scores. Using tests of interaction effects in variable-centred approaches does not solve the problem of subpopulations in a sample because such tests assume that the interaction effects will apply equally to everyone (Caesens et al., 2020).

Person-centred approaches (such as latent profile analyses) assume that subgroups of samples (profiles) come from a heterogeneous population (Ahlborg et al., 2019; Caesens et al., 2020; Ciarrochi et al., 2017). The person-centred approach can identify complex relationships among variables that will ordinarily not be detected using a variable-centred approach. Caesens et al. (2020, p. 691) suggest that person-centred analyses can be used to “explore the underpinnings of unexpected or inconsistent variable-centred associations”. Ng and Sorensen (2008) argue that different social support sources should not be studied in isolation. Different sources of social support have compensatory or mutually reinforcing effects. Studies have not focused on the combined effects of different sources of social support on adolescent learners' well-being. Consequently, little is known about the patterns that characterise the combination of different types of social supports and their effects on adolescent learners' well-being.

Research by Ciarrochi et al. (2017) provided evidence for convergence and divergence in students' social support. They found that a third of students received no social support from any source. Other students found social support from some sources, while yet others received social support from all sources. Furthermore, difficulties were associated with the socially isolated profile, while increasing the benefits was associated with moving to more sources of social support. Indeed, COR theory suggests that the detrimental effect on people's well-being of a resource loss is disproportionately greater than the beneficial effect of a comparable gain in resources (Hobfoll, 2011). Given the importance of adult role models and positive relationships with peers, using different social support sources will benefit adolescents' well-being. Ciarrochi et al. (2017) confirmed that high levels of peer support and moderate parental and teacher support levels were beneficial to adolescents.

I could find two published studies on social support of adolescents for the period 2013 to 2020. The first study was a longitudinal person-centred perspective on youth social support in relation to psychological well-being among a group of Australian adolescents (Ciarrochi et al., 2017). The second study examined the distinct profiles of family, school, and peer social capital in terms of health in Sweden (Ahlborg et al., 2019). To the best of our knowledge, latent profiles of social support, including educator, peer, parent, and colleague support, examining the impact of well-being have not been researched in a developing country. Therefore, research is needed regarding the associations between social support profiles and well-being in the South African context.

This study adopted a person-centred approach to a) identify adolescent support based on four support types and b) examine the associations between these combinations (profiles), demographic variables and mental health of adolescents.

Objective

The objectives of this research study were:

- To investigate the patterns that characterise the combination of different types of social supports and their effects on adolescent learners' well-being,
- To understand the effects of social support on adolescent learners' well-being

Method

Participants

The sample comprised 770 learners from four secondary schools in previously disadvantaged areas. Stratified systematic sampling was used to select male and female learners from Grades 10 and 11 from each school. The learners' ages spanned the adolescent development stages. The characteristics of the participants are reported in Table 1.

The greatest percentage of learners reported their gender as female (47.60%) and their age as between 15 and 16 (50.60%). The learners were evenly split into Grade 10 and Grade 11. Furthermore, most of the learners had only their mother as their legal guardian (44.68%).

Table 1

Characteristics of Participants (n = 770)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	302	39.2
	Female	367	47.6
	Did not disclose	101	13.1
Age	13-14	22	2.8
	15-16	390	50.6
	17-18	303	39.3
	19 and over	53	6.9
	Did not disclose	2	0.2
Grade	10	385	50
	11	385	50
Guardian	Grandparent(s)	63	8.18
	Both parents	281	36.49
	Father	38	4.94
	Mother	352	45.72
	Relative(s) and siblings	27	3.51
	Did not disclose	9	1.17

Measuring Instruments

The empirical study utilised the following instruments: a biographical questionnaire, the Mental Health Continuum – Short Form (MHC-SF), and the Social Support Scale for Children (SSSC). A biographical questionnaire was used to capture information about the gender, age, grade, legal guardian, and guardian’s relationship to the learner.

The Mental Health Continuum – Short Form (MHC-SF; Keyes, 2009) was used to assess flourishing versus languishing among learners. The MHC-SF consists of three items measuring emotional well-being, including questions such “How often does the learner feel happy?”. Six-

item scales measure the six dimensions of psychological well-being. One of the questions posed in this subsection is “How often does the learner like his/her personality for the most part?”. Finally, there are five-item scales that measure social well-being. These include a question on how often the learner believes that his/her life has meaning. The items are each rated from 1 to 6 on a Likert scale. The MHC-SF has an internal consistency of greater than .80. It has discriminant validity in adolescents (ages 12 to 18) and adults in many countries, including South Africa. The MHC-SF test-retest reliability over a three-month period is .68 and is .65 over nine months (Lamers et al., 2010). Research by Keyes et al. (2008) in a South African context have shown that the original three-dimensional factor structure fits the data the best. The scale shows full configural, convergent, and metric invariance between the genders. The MHC-SF also shows excellent internal consistency and discriminant validity in adolescents (ages 12 to 18) in South Africa (Keyes, 2005; Lamers et al., 2010).

The Social Support Scale for Children (SSSC; Harter, 1985) was used to measure the support and positive regard that adolescents felt they received from the people in their lives. There are 24 questions and four subscales in the measure: parents, teachers, classmates, and close friends. Each subscale investigates different contents. Parent scales, for example, are used to measure how much parents care about their children, how well they understand their problems, how much they care about their feelings, how well they treat them, how much they like them, and what matters to them is important to them. It is a structured alternative instrument where a learner is first asked to decide which kind of child is most like him or her; for example, “Some kids have parents who treat their child like a person who really matters, but other kids have parents who don’t usually treat their child like a person who really matters”. The learner is then asked to go to the side of the statement that is most true for him or her, before deciding whether this statement is only somewhat true for him or her or completely true. Each statement is coded from 1 (really true for me) or 2 (sort of true for me) when one of the options of the first part of the statement was chosen and 3 (sort of true for me) or 4 (really true for me) in the event of choosing the second statement. The scale has excellent content, criterion, and construct validity; internal consistency scores range from .72 to .88 (Harter, 1985).

Research Procedure and Ethics Clearance

As part of the research procedure and ethics considerations before the commencement of the study, permission was obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) and the

Department of Education of KwaZulu-Natal for research to be conducted in Gauteng West and Newlands, respectively. The Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC) of the North-West University granted ethics approval for the study (NWU-HS-2018-0125). Approval letters from the GDE to conduct the study were issued from 4 February 2019 (the first school quarter) to 30 September 2019 (the third school quarter). Approval letters from the Department of Education of KwaZulu-Natal were issued from 11 December 2018 to 2 June 2021.

The logistics of the study were discussed with key stakeholders (principals, gatekeepers, and probable participants) from the four secondary schools within the stipulated regions. All data collectors were trained in data collection. Consent was obtained from the principal and learners before questionnaires were administered. The consent form briefed participants on the nature of the research, the requirements of participation, the implications of participation, the use of the data collected, how it would be reported, and whom to contact if there were any questions about the research. Participants could withdraw from participating at any point of the research.

Statistical Analysis

The descriptive statistics were computed with SPSS 26.0 (IBM Corp, 2017). Full information maximum likelihood (FIML) was used to handle missing values in the dataset in Mplus 8.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 2009-2020; Van Buren, 2018). Latent profile analysis (LPA) was used to determine whether distinctive profiles relating to perceived social support could be found in the data (Wang & Wang, 2020). The competing models were compared based on their Bayesian information criterion (BIC), Akaike information criterion (AIC), and sample-size adjusted BIC (ABIC) values. Entropy was used to assess the level of profile verification in the latent profile analyses (Geiser, 2013). The Lo-Mendell-Rubin test (LMR LR), the adjusted Lo-Mendell-Rubin test (ALMR) test, and the bootstrapped likelihood ratio test (BLRT) were used to determine the optimal number of profiles (Wang & Wang, 2020).

Measurement models of social support and well-being were tested using Mplus 8.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2020) by conducting a confirmatory analysis (CFA). The robust maximum likelihood estimator (MLR) was used to estimate the model. Model fit was assessed by means of chi-square statistics, standardised root mean residual (SRMR), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and comparative fit index (CFI).

Relationships between variables were studied through Pearson correlation coefficients. Point estimates of scale reliability were determined with coefficient omega (ω) (Raykov, 2009). A cut-off score of .70 was used.

To determine the mean of a distal continuous outcome across latent profiles, the automatic Bolck, Croon, and Hageaars (BCH) method was employed (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014; Bakk & Vermunt, 2016). Types of social support were used to determine the latent profiles. The means of the auxiliary variables, across the different profiles, were determined with the BCH approach (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014; Wang & Wang, 2020). The distal outcomes well-being, gender, age category, and grade (as covariates) and the BCH weights were used in the USEVARIABLES option in Mplus 8.4. BCH weights were used as training variables in the TRAINING option of the VARIABLE command.

Results

Identifying Latent Profiles

Confirmatory factor analysis

Prior to conducting a confirmatory factor analysis, I used one-way analysis of variance to test whether statistically significant difference existed in terms of parent support as experienced by adolescents with different types of parents (also including guardians if they did not have biological parents). No differences were found between adolescents who had both biological parents, a mother only, a father only, grandmother/grandfather or other family members as guardians (parents) ($F = 2.22$, $df = 4$, $p = .07$).

Using CFA, a four-factor measurement model was tested. Survey items served as indicators of latent variables, and the model was made up of the following variables: (1) parental support, a first-order latent variable (measured by three items); (2) classmate support, a first-order latent variable (measured by three items); (3) teacher support, a first-order latent variable (measured by three items); and (4) close friend support, a first-order latent variable (measured by three items). Correlations were allowed among the latent variables of the measurement model. The measurement model was tested for the best statistical fit and compared with competing models.

The following fit statistics were obtained for the measurement model: AIC = 27274.92; BIC = 27472.46; $\chi^2 = 69.78$ ($df = 48$, $p = .02$); RMSEA = .02 [.01, .04]; CFI = .98; TLI = .97; SRMR = .03. The standardised loadings for the four types of social support varied as follows: from .48 to .72 for parental support, from .42 to .50 for classmate support, from .47 to .60 for teacher support, and from .60 to .72 for close friend support.

Latent profile analysis

Latent profile analyses were conducted on the responses of the 770 learners. Mplus 8.4 was used to analyse their responses to the dimensions of the SSSC.

Table 2

Comparison of Different Latent Profile Analysis Models

Model (profiles)	AIC	BIC	ABIC	LMR LR test <i>p</i> -value	ALMR LR test <i>p</i> -value	BLRT <i>p</i> -value
1	4000.78	4038.22	4012.82	n/a	n/a	n/a
2	3214.48	3275.33	3234.04	.00**	.00**	.00**
3	2901.80	2986.05	2928.90	.00**	.00**	.00**
4	2822.57	2930.23	2857.19	.01**	.01**	.00**

AIC, Akaike information criterion; BIC, Bayesian information criterion; ABIC, adjusted Bayesian information criterion; LMR LR, Lo-Mendell-Rubin test; ALMR LR, adjusted Lo-Mendell-Rubin test; BLRT, bootstrapped likelihood ratio test; ** $p < .01$

Profile 1 had the following fit indices: AIC = 4000.78; BIC = 4038.22; BIC (ABIC) = 4012.82. The fit indices showed significantly better fit for Profile 2 when compared with Profile 1 (Δ AIC = 786.30; Δ BIC = 762.90; Δ ABIC = 778.77). The LMR LR ($p < .01$), ALMR ($p < .01$), and BLRT ($p < .01$) for Profile 2 were also statistically significant. Regarding the fit of the three-profile model, the fit indices showed significantly better fit compared with Profile 2 (Δ AIC = 312.68; Δ BIC = 289.27; Δ ABIC = 305.15). The LMR LR ($p < .01$), ALMR ($p < .01$), and BLRT ($p < .01$) for Profile 3 were also statistically significant.

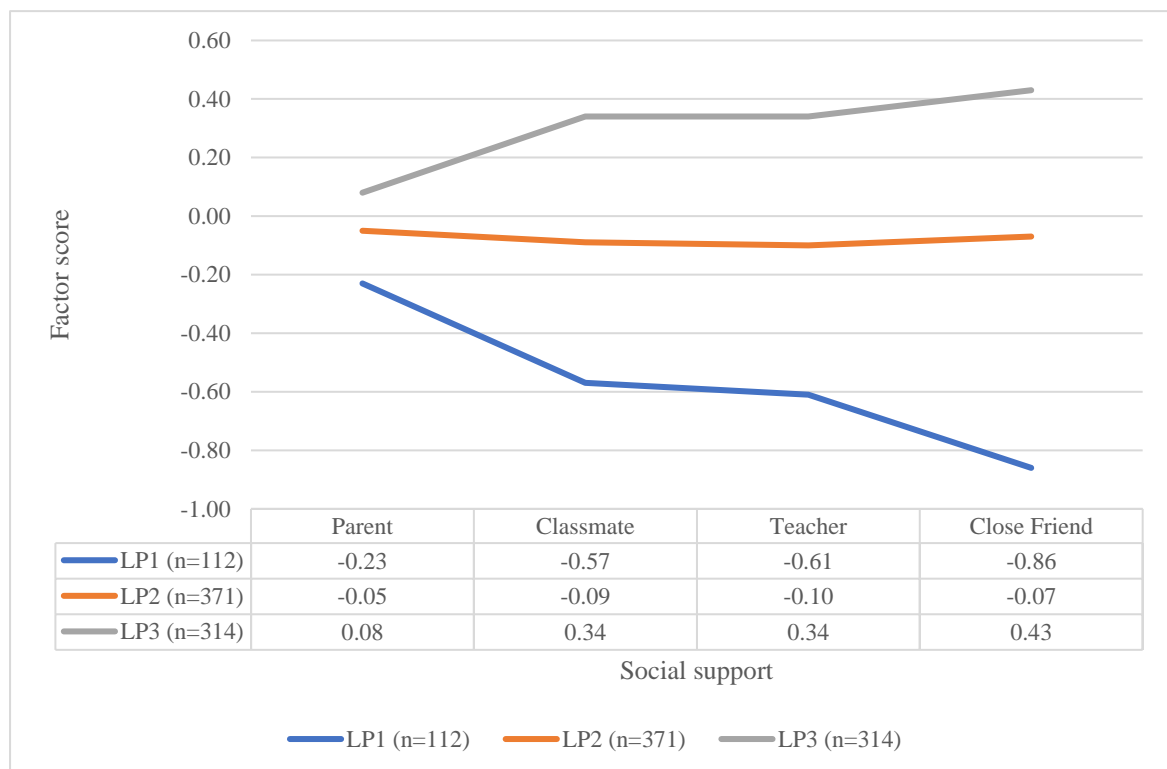
The entropy values determined the quality of each profile. The entropy values for the different profiles were as follows: 2 Profiles = .81; 3 Profiles = .80; and 4 Profiles = .80. The average

latent class assignment probabilities for the three profiles were .91, .90, and .92. Learners were classified with high certainty into their most likely latent profile. The LMR LR and ALMR LR tests were statistically significant ($p > .01$) for the four-profile model. However, the model did not converge. The three-profile model was preferred.

The profiles were labelled according to their factor scores on each of the social support constructs: parental support, classmate support, teacher support, and close friend support. Profile 1 – labelled isolated social support (characterized by low social support) comprised 112 (14.05%) of the learners, Profile 2 – labelled moderate social support comprised 371 (46.55%) of the learners, and Profile 3 – labelled connected social support (characterised by strong social support) comprised 314 (39.40%) of the learners.

Figure 1

Types of social support reported by learners of the three latent profiles



Learners in Profile 1 (Isolated social support) had low to moderate parental (or guardian) support, and low classmate and teacher support, and extremely low close friend support. In Profile 2 (Moderate social support) learners had moderate parental (guardian) classmate,

teacher, and close friend support. Profile 3 (Connected social support) had medium levels of parental support, and high classmate, teacher, and close friend support.

Associations between Latent Profiles and Mental Health

Next, the associations between the three latent profiles and the mental health continuum of well-being were analysed.

Testing the measurement invariance of the MHC-SF for Grade 10 and Grade 11

To determine the MHC-SF measurement invariance for learners in Grades 10 and 11, configural, metric, and scalar invariance were computed. Configural invariance investigates whether the same overall factor structure holds for the two comparison groups. Metric invariance exists when factor loadings are constrained to be equal across the groups. Scalar invariance indicates that the factor loadings and the indicator intercepts are equal across groups (Campbell et al., 2008).

The measurement models for Grades 10 and 11 were specified as follows: emotional well-being consisted of three observed variables, psychological well-being consisted of six observed variables, and social well-being consisted of five observed variables. The three variables were allowed to correlate. Table 3 presents the results of the measurement invariance testing.

Table 3

Measurement Invariance for the Mental Health Dimensions for Learners in Grades 10 and 11

Models compared	χ^2	df	p
Metric against configural	14.40	11	.211
Scalar against configural	25.71	22	.265
Scalar against metric	11.07	11	.437

Table 3 shows evidence for the configural, metric, and scalar invariance. Based on this finding, it was decided to pool the data for Grades 10 and 11 for the remaining analyses.

Testing the measurement model of mental health in the pooled sample

The following fit statistics were obtained for the measurement model of mental health: $\chi^2 = 163.09$ ($df = 73$, $p = .00$); RMSEA = .04 [.03, .05]; CFI = .93; TLI = .91; SRMR = .04. The standardised loadings for the three scales of the MHC-SF varied as follows: from .43 to .63 for emotional well-being, from .25 to .64 for psychological well-being, and from .15 to .65 for social well-being. The standardised regression coefficients of the three scales of the MHC-SF were .87 (EWB), .77 (PWB), and .56 (SWB). The reliability of the MHC total score was .73.

Latent profiles and distal outcomes

Table 4 shows the differences between the mental health of different social support profiles.

Table 4

Latent Profiles and Mental Health

	Mean	SE
Profile 1 – Isolated social support	-.22	.04
Profile 2 – Moderate social support	-.06	.02
Profile 3 – Connected social support	.15	.02
	χ^2	p
Overall test	106.24	.00**
Profile 1 vs Profile 2	14.02	.00**
Profile 1 vs Profile 3	77.30	.00**
Profile 2 vs Profile 3	45.16	.00**

** $p < .01$

Statistically significant differences existed between the mental health of different profiles ($\chi^2 = 106.24$, $p < .01$). First, a significant difference was found between Profiles 1 (isolated social support) and 2 (moderate social support): $\chi^2 = 14.02$, $p < .01$. Secondly, Profiles 1 (isolated social support) and 3 (connected social support): $\chi^2 = 77.30$, $p < .01$. Thirdly, Profiles 2 (moderate social support) differed statistically significantly from Profile 3 (connected social support): $\chi^2 = 45.16$, $p < .01$.

Figure 2

The Mean Scores of the Three Latent Profiles on Mental Health

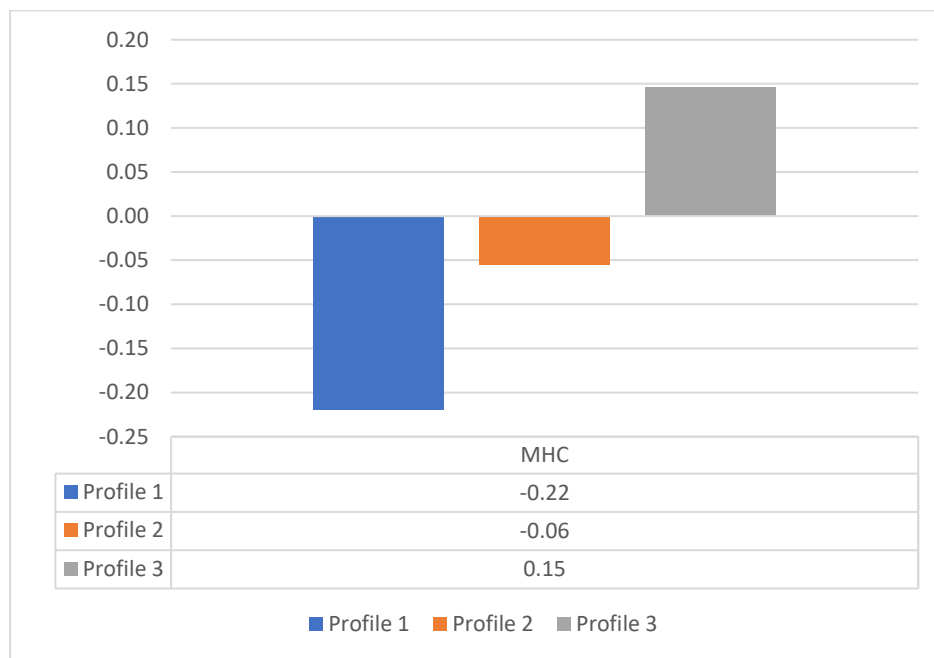


Figure 2 shows that learners in latent Profile 1 obtained low scores on mental health. Learners in Profile 2 obtained moderate scores on mental health. Profile 3 had high scores on mental health.

Differences between demographic groups in different profiles

An auxiliary model that involved the latent profile, covariates, and distal outcomes was set up using the BCH approach (Wang & Wang, 2020). The model consisted of two separate runs. Firstly, the measurement model (LPA) was estimated using only the latent profile indicators (i.e., the sources of social support). The BCH weights were computed and saved together with the distal outcome (i.e., mental health) and three covariates (namely, gender, age category, and grade). Secondly, the saved data from the first run was retrieved for further analysis. Two regression models were tested using the MLR estimator. a) The first regression was a multinomial logit model in which the three covariates were used to predict latent profile membership. b) The second model was a linear regression in which the three covariates were

utilised to predict mental health. The regression slope coefficients and associated parameters were restricted to be the same across all latent profiles in the latter model. The equality restriction on the regression parameters in the specific profiles was removed in the within-class model specification. Grade had a negative effect on mental health in Profile 2 (estimate = $-.11$, $p < .01$). No other statistically significant effects were found.

Discussion

The study utilised a person-centred multidimensional conceptualisation of social support (parent, teacher, classmate, and close friend) as perceived by Grade 10 and 11 adolescent learners in previously disadvantaged schools in the South African context. Studies (e.g., Harter, 1985; Lipski et al., 2014) showed that while the dimensions of social support are distinctive, they are positive related. However, few person-centred studies have been conducted (see Ciarrochi et al., 2017 for an exception) to focus on the joint effects of different sources of perceived social support on adolescent learners. The person-centred analyses I utilised in this study provided a way to determine the effects of four types of social support on learners in the African contexts, and to study the consequences of profile membership in terms of mental health. Using a multidimensional conceptualisation of social support of adolescents, this study extended past variable-centred research findings (e.g., Lipski et al., 2014). The results showed that adolescents perceive social support that generalises across parental, teacher, classmate, and close friend support. However, the results showed that adolescents also experience different levels of social support across sources. Different social support profiles were associated with different levels of mental health.

The profiles showed diverging levels of social support across different sources. All three profiles showed moderate to high levels of parental support. Perceived social support did not show matching levels of social support in the three profiles. In the high social support profile, classmate, teacher, and close friend support were slightly higher than parental support. Profiles 1 (the isolated social support profile) and 3 (the connected social support profile) diverged from the moderate social support profile. Compared to the flat moderate perceived social support profile, the high support profile showed increasingly higher classmate, teacher, and close friend support, with close friend support as the strongest. Parental (guardian) support was the highest within the low perceived social support profile. This profile also diverged from the other two perceived social support profiles and showed a downward trend for classmate, teacher, and

close friend support. In line with the accumulation principle of COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), resources seemed to aggregate rather than operate in isolation. The results of this study support the variable-centered results of Harter (1985) and Lipski et al. (2014) that adolescents can perceive different sources of social support.

The study also sought to identify how the profiles varied in terms of the three categories of mental health (Keyes, 2005). The research showed that three latent profiles existed among Grade 10 and Grade 11 learners. There were statistically significant differences between mental health of different social support profiles. The three latent profiles scored differently on each of the social support constructs: parental support, classmate support, teacher support, and close friend support. Profile 1 comprised 14.37% of the learners, Profile 2 comprised 39%, and Profile 3 comprised 38%.

Interestingly, while close friend support seemed to be a vital source of social support for adolescents, it was also associated with classmate and teacher support. This finding suggests that the school environment, through the effects of classmate and teacher support plays an essential role in adolescents perceived social support.

Profile 1 learners had low parental (guardian) support, low classmate and teacher support, and extremely low close friend support. Profile 1 learners could be categorised as languishing (Keyes, 2005). They had experienced one of the three hedonic well-being symptoms “never” or “once or twice” in the past month. Grade had a negative relationship with social well-being in Profile 1. This meant that as the adolescents progressed through secondary school, they experienced lower levels of social support. The lower grade reported higher levels of social well-being than the higher grade in the latent profile. Furthermore, they had experienced six of the 11 positive functioning symptoms “never” or “once or twice” in the past month. Profile 2 learners had moderate parental, classmate, teacher, and close friend support. They appeared to be moderately flourishing (Keyes, 2005). Profile 3 learners had medium levels of parental support and high classmate, teacher, and close friend support. They appeared to be flourishing and, thus, could be classified as mentally healthy. Grade had a negative effect on mental health in Profile 2.

The findings of this study showed that learners experienced social support differently from one another (Harter, 1985). The three social support profiles were strongly associated with well-

being like many previous studies. Emotional support from teachers has been negatively associated with school related problems, internalising of problems, disengagement, and emotional issues (Tennant et al., 2015). It is positively associated with personal adjustment of adolescents (Tennant et al., 2015). Research with Canadian adolescents showed that parent support was a greater influencer of externalised learner behaviour than classmate support (Attar-Schwartz et al., 2019). This finding is aligned with previous studies (Demir & Leyendecker, 2018). However, unlike the current study, Attar-Schwartz et al. (2019) found that classmate support reduced internalised behaviours more significantly than the effects of parental and teacher support.

The isolated social support profile was associated with the worst mental health outcome in this study, while the connected social support profile was associated with the best mental health outcomes. Therefore, it seems that mental health of adolescent learners are associated with the presence or absence of support. However, it seems that the sources of social support, and specifically close friend support, as well as classmate and teacher support, are critical factors for the flourishing of adolescent learners.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study took place in the beginning of term one and this may have produced a skewed analysis of learner well-being. There were other activities taking place at this time and learners were still familiarising themselves with the school year including their subject choices. School timetables made it challenging to conduct the research on a stratified random sample of learners and I had to use a stratified systematic sampling. This may have affected responses as learners were familiar with each other. Even though the process was anonymous, they may have felt the need to misrepresent themselves. The applicability of the Social Support Scale for Children in a South African context was not scrutinised.

As moderate parental support is a predictor of mental health, parents' involvement in learners' schooling life needs to be explored and perhaps formalised. Parents can be offered professional training to enhance support of their children in all facets of their lives (Hirisave et al., 2019). Well-structured and scientific parenting programmes can also help mitigate the effects of violence to which adolescents may be exposed (Cluver et al., 2017). Although parental support is important, it is essential to capitalise on the support important to adolescents and which

seems to effectively work for them. Current programmatic interventions focussing only on one of the stakeholders – usually either parental or peer programmes are not sufficient and should be researched.

Parent-teacher partnerships can be fostered by creating supplementary programmes such as literacy workshops to assist learners. This is particularly of value for children from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Hillier-Brown et al., 2019). In addition, it is important to acknowledge the role of grandparents in child rearing. An analysis of parenting interventions for grandparents revealed that such interventions had merit, such as home visits, empowerment programmes, and support groups for grandparents (Choi et al., 2016; Sherr et al., 2018). Furthermore, teacher support can be enhanced by offering them motivational and coaching training.

It seems the isolated social support profile was almost alienated from intragenerational support. Therefore, intragenerational support (in addition to intergenerational support) seems to be extremely important and such programmatic interventions should be explored. Lacking in programmes are an intra/intergenerational perspective (i.e., a generational perspective within and across generations) across the whole range of levels for programming.

The strength of each social support construct predicted the level of mental health (i.e., emotional, psychological, and social well-being). It was challenging to conduct stratified random sampling for Grade 10 and Grade 11 due to school timetables. Children who are comfortable asking their classmates for support are likely to be comfortable asking their teachers (Hamilton, 2013). This is especially true if a precedent has been set, and therefore, this relationship should be investigated further.

Conclusion

The study compared the social support experienced by adolescents with their levels of mental health. Three social network support profiles were identified. The first profile, low social support, showed moderate to low parental support, low classmate support, low teacher support, and low close friend support. The second profile, moderate social support, showed moderate parental, classmate, teacher, and close friend support. The third profile, high social support, showed moderate parent support, and high classmate, teacher, and close friend support.

Differences were found between the three profiles in relation to the mental health of adolescents. Moderate parental support and high classmate, teacher and close friend support showed the strongest associations with mental health of adolescent learners. This study showed that mental health of adolescents is associated with social support of a community of people. The African adage that it takes a village to raise a child seems true!

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, conclusions are presented based on the outlined objectives of the three manuscripts presented in this thesis. The limitations of this study are addressed, followed by recommendations for future research and contributions to industrial and organisational psychology.

5.1 Conclusions

The general aim of the study was to investigate the capabilities and functioning of secondary school learners in a sub-Saharan African context. This involved: a) identifying, from literature, capability themes and enablers of capabilities in secondary schools in sub-Saharan Africa; b) determining what capabilities South African secondary school learners value in their lives and why do they value them; and c) determining the associations between the social support and flourishing of a sample of secondary school learners from different demographic backgrounds in South Africa.

Reported capabilities and enablers of capabilities relevant to secondary school learners in sub-Saharan Africa

Learners in sub-Saharan Africa are faced with many adversities, which influence their social and biological development (Doane et al., 2023, Waigel & Lemos, 2023). Social support and structural institutions can either act as adversities or enablers to youth well-being (Doane et al., 2023). The importance of recognising and utilising the possibilities for growth and innovation of the youth is key to the well-being of youth and the growth of an economy (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). Learning, growth, and development are primarily facilitated by schools, which aim to strike a balance between protection of learners and participation, making it vital that learners in these institutions acquire the relevant knowledge, skills, and values to have fulfilling lives (Hart & Brando, 2018). To advance knowledge, we need to build and understand what previous work was conducted on the subject (Xiao & Watson, 2019). Reviewing relevant literature enables us to better understand what has already been done and identify gaps that need to be filled (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

This thesis's first objective was to source empirical information on secondary school learners regarding what capabilities and enablers of capabilities were needed for them to flourish in a sub-Saharan African educational environment. A systematic review of the literature on learner capabilities and enablers of capabilities in schools in sub-Saharan Africa was conducted. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) process was applied to the study. Electronic search databases were accessed through the NWU's access platform. These included Google Scholar and African Journals (Sabinet), ensuring that research articles from various disciplines applicable within the sub-Saharan African context were included. Machine Learning (ML) was used in the review process for maximum time, efficiency, and accuracy. The Artificial Intelligent (AI)-aided screening tool, Active Learning for Systematic Review (ASReview) was used to screen relevant articles. The data was summarised using theme-based structural and pattern coding. Coding and structural analysis of the data were based on thematic structures and patterns.

The study revealed limited studies were conducted on secondary school learners from the capabilities approach (CA) in sub-Saharan Africa – only two qualitative articles were studied utilising the CA. Some articles did not explicitly call out the concepts of capability, functioning, and flourishing in a secondary school setting. It was possible to make reasonable deductions from the values, enablement, implementation, and well-being in discussed in these articles.

Study 1 identified the following nine capabilities under two sub-categories: technical capabilities (numeracy and science, knowledge, and cognition and ideation): behavioural capabilities (affiliation, autonomy, confidence, morals, resilience, and a growth mindset). Four groupings related to secondary school learners' resources, capabilities, and functioning's were identified: leadership, quality education, a policy framework, and conversion factors. Leadership improves and transforms educational institutions' performance by impacting capabilities and functioning. Learners' capabilities, functioning, and flourishing are developed by leaders who encourage them to identify and value all the benefits that education provides (Baxen et al., 2014; Waller et al., 2016). Quality education prepares learners to become economically active citizens by encouraging them to pursue their own interests and expression amid constraints (Naidoo, 2021). A policy framework helps steer innovation and ensures essential skillsets and capability development amongst all educational stakeholders. It should adopt a Batho Pele principle where the education system serves the learners and parents as opposed to the government (Modiba, 2019). Conversion factors allow learners to convert

available resources into capabilities and functioning using personal, social or environmental conversion factors (Baxen et al., 2014). The four factors and the capabilities associated with it should be included in a model that enhances secondary school learners' capabilities to promote their well-being and employability.

Qualitative measurement of what was valued by secondary school learners and the capabilities that could be developed and supported in a South African context

The second study utilised the capability model to illustrate the process whereby a learner can convert resources, environmental factors, and demands into opportunities to have valuable capabilities that allow enablement and are achievable. In an academic context, value refers to the learner deeming something important. Enablement empowers the learner, and achievement refers to the learner achieving what the learner has identified as valuable. To ensure that learners flourish, it is important to understand what flourishing looks like for them. This is of particular relevance in the sub-Saharan African countries where its context does not allow for a generalised global approach. It is essentially to thoroughly understand what capabilities they value in life and why. This understanding will form the basis for offering relevant support to learners.

A purposive sample of 21 learners in secondary schools in Gauteng, South Africa, participated in semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted face to face. I analysed the responses from 21 semi-structured interviews for qualitative content using the coding strategies by Saldaña (2021). ATLAS.ti Version 22 (the latest version released in December 2021), a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software package was used to identify six themes and corresponding sub-themes relevant to the research question. The six themes were identified: career choice based on values, enabling lifestyle, affiliation for goal attainment, achievement of a balanced life, schooling to develop sensing, imagination, and play, and reciprocal support from the family, school, and communities to provide control. Career choice reflects future hope and self-efficacy, both of which are important well-being aspects (Dudovitz et al., 2018). Career choices were associated with instant gratification like money, altruistic motivations like community responsibility, and indirect gratification like increased status amongst community. Goal setting was either task-focused with an intrinsic motivation, like learning, or ability-focused, which was extrinsically motivated, like attaining good marks. The concept of “ubuntu” was strongly featured among learners, emphasising the importance and respect of relationships (Fetvadjev et al., 2015). Learners indicated the need for a well-rounded

life. Similar to Nussbaum (2011), sensing, imagination, and thought were valued capabilities. Learners wanted to use their senses to think, imagine, and reason. Sports was an activity that featured across all themes.

My capability list showed close similarities to other capability lists, although this study focused on learner capability. Unfortunately, personal, and external circumstances and conversion factors may not allow for all capabilities under these six themes to exist in every learner's life. The role of parents, school, and the community in capability building is critical. This study highlighted that learners required support and guidance from their social network to realise, fulfil, and maintain their full potential.

A quantitative study investigating social support and well-being of adolescent learners using a latent profile analysis

Research has shown that social support is positively associated with adolescents' well-being. Different types of social support promote adolescent well-being individually (Camara et al., 2017). A person-centred approach was used to ensure that differences among the sub-populations were factored into the study (Caesens et al., 2020). The third study was a quantitative study that compared the social support experienced by adolescents with their levels of well-being. The sample comprised 770 learners from four secondary schools in previously disadvantaged areas in South Africa. Stratified systematic sampling was used to select male and female learners from Grades 10 and 11 from each school. The empirical study utilised the following instruments: A biographical questionnaire, the Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF) and the Social Support Scale for Children (SSSC). A biographical questionnaire was used to capture information about gender, age, grade, participation in sports in school, participation in sports outside school, legal guardian, and their relationship to the learner. The descriptive statistics were computed with SPSS 26.0 (IBM Corp, 2017). The full information maximum likelihood method (FIML) in Mplus 8.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2020) was used to deal with the few missing values in the dataset (Van Buren, 2018). Latent profile analysis (LPA) was used to determine whether distinctive profiles relating to youth engagement with cultural resources could be found in the data (Wang & Wang, 2020). Prior to this study, few work focused on the combined effects of different sources of social support on adolescent learners' well-being. Consequently, little was known about the patterns that characterise the combination of different types of social supports and their effects on adolescent learners' well-being, making this study very important.

The study showed that while the dimensions of social support were distinctive, they were positively correlated. All three profiles showed moderate to high levels of parental support. Perceived social support did not show matching levels of social support in the three profiles. In the high social support profile, classmate, teacher, and close friend support were slightly higher than parental support. Three social network support profiles were identified. The first profile, low social support, showed moderate to low parental support, low classmate support, low teacher support, and low close friend support. The second profile, moderate social support, showed moderate parental, classmate, teacher, and close friend support. The third profile, high social support, showed moderate parent support, and high classmate, teacher, and close friend support. Differences were found between the three profiles in relation to the well-being of adolescents. Moderate parental support and high classmate, teacher, and close friend support showed the strongest associations with mental health of adolescent learners.

The three studies illustrate that learners need to understand what capabilities are valued by sub-Saharan Africa to enable them to achieve, therefore, flourish in life. It is important to understand and utilise the enablers of capabilities and functioning, including social networks and sports, to develop and enhance learner well-being. Contextual factors, like isolated social support can lead to languishing. Moderate social support leads to moderate flourishing whilst connected social support leads to flourishing and, thus, could be classified as mentally healthy. The results of the studies helped create a framework to measure secondary school learner capabilities within the sub-Saharan African context that is depicted in Figure 1.

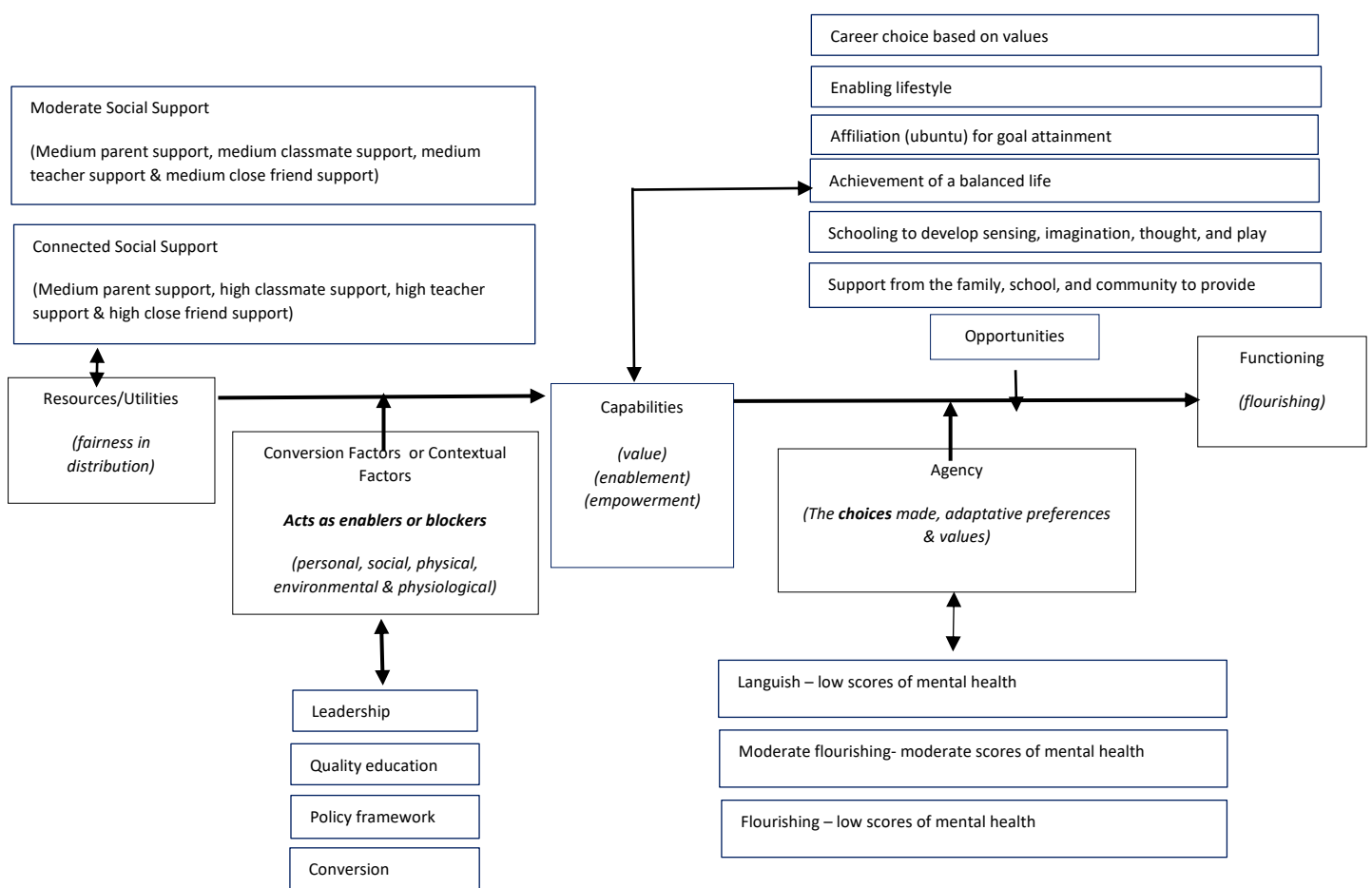
It is possible to contextualise and measure secondary school learners' capabilities further with this integrated framework, and users are free to integrate it into any existing educational initiative or strategy in secondary schools or other institutions that cater to adolescents. In order to ensure optimal levels of flourishing, learners may need different interventions and solutions depending on the context in which they find themselves. Interventions and solutions need to be a collaborate effort by all role players in the learner's life and must address capabilities they have identified as most valuable. These capabilities confirmed what studies have alluded to.

The framework further allows for additional variables to be included, making it a dynamic and organic framework with which to stay informed about the educational institution and its stakeholders' well-being. This framework can be applied to all learners and can, at a minimum, be used as a baseline to measure, build, and test these variables in different adolescent learning institutions. This tool provides users with critical insights into their current well-being based

on their perspective, allowing them to gain critical insight into their situation. The data also provides information that can be used to determine what areas need development (conversion factors) and what ones need strengthening (nourishing agency). It can be used in institutions and policies that affect a learner’s educational life, like Departments of Education in government.

Figure 1:

Secondary school learner capabilities within the sub-Saharan African context



5.2 Limitations

Firstly, most of the articles did not use the capability approach. Therefore, capability concepts were not explicitly discussed but were deduced. Also, only peer-reviewed articles were included, thus posing a source bias. Definitions of capability, agency, and functioning were applied generally across the analysis of the studies and the nuances of the countries and the effect it may have had on the studies were not considered. The capabilities mentioned in the

articles were rather limited and many lacked a comprehensive analysis of concepts. However, this study was the first attempt in literature to scientifically analyse recent data on learners' capabilities and functionings in secondary schools in sub-Saharan Africa from a CA. The study was able to identify common capability themes and link this to enablers that can improve these capabilities. It made a case for the commonly used CA frameworks to be expanded to include factors common in a secondary school setting like policy frameworks. It also allowed for a generalised framework to be used across a sub-Saharan Area in the absence of area-specific research on the topic. This is based on the premise from this study that countries in sub-Saharan Africa share many commonalities. In study two, the sample size was small and limited to one province in South Africa. This resulted in re-evaluating and recoding the themes until they made sense. Furthermore, the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and may have produced irregular responses from learners due to the new challenges in their context. A questionnaire testing the capability themes will assist testing whether these findings can be replicated in future. This study was important as it applied the findings of study one and asked learners themselves to describe what they valued and why. I was able to extract rich and relevant data. For example, social support and the concept of ubuntu was the foundation for all learners realising their potential. It also illustrated that well-being of learners is a part of a bigger ecosystem that includes government entities. In study three, the timing of the research, which was the beginning of the year, may have produced a skewed analysis of learner well-being. School timetables made it challenging to conduct the research on a stratified random sample of learners. The applicability of the SSSC in a South African context was not scrutinised. The study was able to successfully show that social support profiles were associated with different levels of mental health. It also showed that social support differed in value and priorities for learners. For example, friend support was the most important support and was associated with classmate and teacher support. The use of a person-centred approach allowed me to make these conclusions as it takes into consideration the complex relationships between variables.

All studies focused on investigating capabilities and functioning's of secondary school learners. Not all capability concepts were equally investigated. Concepts like agency and opportunity had limited focus in this study. The study was initially going to focus on South Africa, but the lack of empirical research in this country broadened the scope to sub-Saharan Africa. Only one qualitative study was done investigating learner capabilities in South Africa. Capability concepts and the questions asked in the questionnaire required explanation and

rephrasing to learners. Some learners may not have asked for help but incorrectly interpreted the questions. Some of the data collection took place during the COVID-19 pandemic and these delayed aspects of the study. For example, a few individuals involved in either the data gathering, or analysis were incapacitated. It required additional resourcing and conversations to attain access to learners, process the data and to ensure that the safety protocol for all stakeholders was observed in every step of this study. Critically, COVID-19 affected everyone's well-being differently and may have affected how participants responded. It makes comparing results difficult when comparing it with other studies outside this period, including this study itself. This is bearing in mind that not all the data collection was done during COVID-19. The study is based on cross-sectional data, thus the sustainability of the findings was not investigated.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations to Solve Research Problems

The pursuit of overall well-being has long been an important goal in human life (Witten et al., 2019). Keyes (2002) defined flourishing as being free from mental disorders, moderately mentally healthy, and not languishing (Witten et al., 2019). As adolescents flourish, it is crucial to study mental health, protective factors, as well as objective success measures (such as academic confidence, social support, physical health, resilience, and school grades) (Witten et al., 2019).

The capabilities identified by the learners were similar to those identified in other studies conducted in different contexts. Unfortunately, personal, and external circumstances may not allow for all capabilities to exist in learners' lives. The role of parents, school, and the community in capability building is critical. This study highlighted that learners required support and guidance from their social network to realise, fulfil, and maintain their full potential. Learners experience different levels of social support across different sources. The study showed that all stakeholders across the educational value chain play a role in the capability building of learners. Their roles need to be integrated and aligned to ensure an optimal level of functioning. It is therefore recommended that a thorough understanding of this ecosystem and the relationship of its parts need to be studied. Training and support need to be given to these stakeholders so they can fulfil their duties to learners. Some stakeholders, like grandparents, do not feature in the educational ecosystem but are extremely important in the

current social context. It is therefore recommended that intragenerational programmatic interventions should be explored.

The study showed that learner's perceptions of valued capabilities are mostly aligned to those identified by international and national literature. A few global capabilities were not considered as a priority, like the recognition of a person before the law and equal protection. Another was the right to an adequate standard of living and social security. These capabilities need to be delved deeper into to understand why they are viewed as less valuable in a Sub-Saharan African context. Furthermore, capabilities like affiliation were viewed as very critical but not only the need to belong but to make a difference in one's community. This means that the definition of valued capabilities must be interrogated as the definitions are not the same across contexts. Studies of why these capabilities are prominent in a sub-Saharan context need to be investigated from the perspectives other than that of secondary school learners. Furthermore, activities that encourage these identified capabilities need to be invested in. For example, social support, particularly classmate support, was identified as important, therefore, peer support group or learner mentoring may prove valuable. Career guidance and support need to incorporate these findings as learners have shown that their career aspirations stem from wanting self-expression and individualism. All of which is supported by an enabling and well-balanced life.

Researchers can apply the findings to create interventions that emphasise building on existing capabilities and addressing perceived deficiencies in a constructive manner to foster successful educational ecosystems. The CA can be used as a framework for various stakeholders to enhance conversion factors like social support and other activities like sports during the entire secondary lifecycle of a learner.

To ensure a measurable impact with behaviour change, longitudinal studies with the same sample of stakeholders would be encouraged. This would allow for a baseline prior to intervention to be compared with the results post the intervention. It will also be beneficial to have a control group and examine what the results would look like without any inputs to the natural schooling ecosystem.

5.3.2 Recommendations for Future Research

More studies of the enablers of capabilities, capabilities and learners flourishing need to be conducted from a CA perspective. The studies showed that there was limited research

conducted that explicitly called out the CA in a secondary school setting in sub-Saharan Africa. It is also clear that other capability factors like resources, conversion factors, opportunities, and agency are as important as capabilities and functioning-focused studies. Future studies can investigate these factors and their impact on flourishing in different education settings across Sub-Saharan Africa.

The study looked at capability from learners' perspective. Further studies can look at learner capability factors from different stakeholders' perspectives. Furthermore, the range of stakeholders and their specific impact on learner capability can be investigated, for example the role of school nurses were not investigated. Where stakeholders play a critical role in learner flourishing like that of grandparents, more support need to be invested in understanding these relationships and the appropriate programmatic interventions that can capitalise on these social bonds.

Each country is different with different past, current, and future challenges. It is critical for researchers to investigate country-specific learner capabilities to enable interventions that can bring about real change to that specific context. Furthermore, the capability list needs to be adaptative and renewed regularly to cater for the ever-changing global environment.

5.4 Contributions of this Study

This study has contributed new knowledge to industrial and organisational psychology in terms of informational, conceptual, and practical aspects. Using a latent profile analysis, the study innovatively investigated social support and well-being.

The study offered a new CA educational framework that can be applied to all educational ecosystems across the globe. The CA framework highlights the importance of each variable and the interdependence of all variables. The study provided a solid basis for comparing findings to other contexts and expanding on capability factors needing more attention.

From a career counselling and guidance perspective, these findings can help counsellors probe the prevalence of the identified capability sets and their enablers, allowing more informed career choices to be made. They can also work with learners to enhance and develop these factors. It is evident that the context in which a learner finds themselves affects their educational ecosystem.

From an organisational design perspective, the study illustrated that identifying the key stakeholders, having clear roles and responsibilities, understanding how the different functions or departments interact, leadership, authority, and accountability are critical in an educational ecosystem. Furthermore, the study highlighted that programmatic interventions that support creational activities and support groups for guardians other than parents need to be created.

From a training and development perspective, the material must be designed to enhance the relationships between stakeholders like the government and parents. This would lead to better synergies and collaboration amongst role players, enhancing the quality of education for learners.

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INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTATION FOR STUDENTS, TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS, SPORTS FACILITATORS & PARENTS

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY: CAPABILITIES AND FLOURISHING: THE
ROLE OF SPORTS AND SOCIAL NETWORK SUPPORT IN PREVIOUSLY
DISADVANTAGED AFRICAN COMMUNITIES**

ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBERS: NWU-HS-2018-0125

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: KALASHNI NARAINSAMY

POST GRADUATE STUDENT: 29928648

ADDRESS: 23 MANOR PARK PONGOLA AVENUE RANDPARK RIDGE

CONTACT NUMBER:082 9217915

You are being invited to take part in a **research study** that forms part of my PhD in Industrial and Organisational Psychology. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the researcher or person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to say no to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the **Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-HS-2018-0125)** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH, 2015) and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

What is this research study all about?

- *This study will be conducted at your school during your free period during the month of October and will involve a short semi-structured interview administered by experienced researchers trained in interviewing. Twenty-Four participants will be included in this study.*
- *We will conduct the interview with parents after school and after sporting matches.*
- *We will conduct the interview with students during their English and Physical Educational lessons*
- *We will conduct the interview with teachers during their free periods*
- *Please note that the date may be revised in the in event of exam timetables being revised.*
- *We plan to explore what critical capabilities can be offered to learners as the result of sports court and program being introduced to your selected schools. We want to then determine if these capabilities can assist learners in successfully completing higher school. At the end of the study we want to create a reliable and valid questionnaire that we can administer to learners.*
- *The questions asked by the researchers will follow a semi -structured interview process. This approach will ensure clearly focused discussion on issues related to the study. The flow of each interview will determine the order and inclusion of the questions. Additional questions may be asked to explore the themes.*

Why have you been invited to participate?

- *You have been invited to be part of this research because your school was selected as a beneficiary to receive sporting courts and the sporting program*
- *You also fit the research because you are a part of the learner's support structure and have insight/expertise on how best to support learners to be successful in their schooling careers*

What will be expected of you?

- *You will be expected to answer 12 questions in a 30 minute interview. The same questions will be asked to all participates, however the flow and structure of the interviews may vary. The researcher may ask you clarifying questions and you will also have the opportunity to do the same. Please note that the interview will be recorded and that the notes can be transcribed after the session. We will conduct the interviews during your free lessons. For parents we will conduct the session after school when you fetch your child or during the sporting matches that you come to watch. For students, we will conduct the sessions during your English or Physical Educational lessons.*

Are there any risks?

There are no economic costs as we will be going to the schools and using a 2 lessons. Free lessons in the case of teachers. Parents will indicate the time they are available but this will ideally be after school or over the weekend. The physical risk is that the participants may become tired thus we will work over two sessions thus giving students a break

There are no psychological risks

The social risk is that we will be utilizing the time of students and teachers. We will ensure that we will not infringe on their academic time by taking the lead from the teacher and ensuring that the modules are complete. Furthermore, we will ensure that the students do indeed have "free" time to meet with us.

Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?

- *The gains for you if you take part in this study will be that the learners have access to the sport courts, sporting facilitators and sporting programme. The latter includes training, coaching and playing matches.*
- *Furthermore, the learners are involved in a positive activities during and after school*
- *The other gains of the study is to build knowledge in communities and the research communities about the role of sports and social network support and building capabilities*

How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see your findings?

- *Partial anonymity of your findings will be protected by your identity being known only to the researchers and not being shared in any other form to any other party. Your privacy will be respected as your name will not be recorded on any data. The raw data will be kept confidential by researchers not sharing your details with anyone without your consent. Only the researchers and promoters of this study will be able to look at your findings without your personal details. Findings will be kept safe by locking hard copies in locked cupboards in the researcher's home and Optentia office, a electronic data it will be password protected. Data will be stored for 3 years.*

What will happen with the findings or samples?

- *The findings of this study will only be used for this study.*

How will you know about the results of this research?

- We will give you the results of this research when at the end of the studies by the February 2020
- You will be informed of any new relevant findings by communication from us

This study is not funded.

There will thus be no costs involved for you, if you do take part in this study.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- You can contact Kalashni Narainsamy at 0829217915 if you have any further questions or have any problems.
- You can also contact the Health Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Carolien van Zyl at 018 299 1206 or carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns that were not answered about the research or if you have complaints about the research.

- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own purposes.

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in the research study titled capabilities and flourishing: the role of sports and social network support in previously disadvantaged African communities

I declare that:

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in the best interest, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*)
20....

.....
Signature of participant

.....
Signature of witness

Declaration by person obtaining consent

I (*name*) declare that:

- I clearly and in detail explained the information in this document to
.....
- I did/did not use an interpreter.

- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I gave him/her time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*)
20....

.....
Signature of person obtaining consent

.....
Signature of witness

Declaration by researcher

I (*name*) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to students I had it explained by Kalashni Narainsamy who I trained for this purpose.
- Kalashni Narainsamy interpreted if necessary
- I encouraged learners to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them and Nkosana and myself were available should learners want to ask any further questions.
- The informed consent was obtained by an independent person.
- I am satisfied that learners adequately understands all aspects of the research, as described above.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*)
20....

.....
Signature of researcher

.....
Signature of witness

An Interview to determine what is most valuable in the Life of an Adolescent

Learner Questionnaire

Biographical Questions

Age	
Gender	
Grade	
Race	
School	
Who is your Legal Guardian?	
How many people do you live with?	

Questions pertaining to Value:

- 1.) What do you think is most valuable for you to be able to do or achieve in life?
You can include both personal and academic
- 2.) How are you able to achieve this?
- 3.) What are you doing to achieve this?
- 4.) Do you think you will achieve this?

Adolescent Mental Health Continuum-Short Form

The following questions are about how you have been feeling during the past month.

	Every day	Almost every day	About 2 or 3 times a week	About once a week	Once or twice	Never
In the past month, how often did you feel...:						
1. ...happy?	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. ...interested in life?	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. ...satisfied with your life?	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. ...that you had something important to contribute to society?	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. ...that you belonged to a community (like a social group, your neighborhood, your city, your school)?	1	2	3	4	5	6
In the past month, how often did you feel...:						
6. ...that our society is a good place, or becoming a better place, for all people?	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. ...that people are basically good?	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. ...that the way our society works makes sense to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. ...that you like most parts of your personality?	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. ...good at managing the responsibilities of your daily life?	1	2	3	4	5	6
In the past month, how often did you feel...:						
11. ...that you had warm and trusting relationships with others?	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. ...that you had experiences that challenged you to grow and become a better person?	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. ...confident to think or express your own ideas and opinions?	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. ...that your life has a sense of direction or meaning to it?	1	2	3	4	5	6

People In My Life

Name _____ Age _____ Boy Girl (check one)

	Really True for me	Sort of True for me		Sort of True for me	Really True for me		
Sample Sentence							
a.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids like to do fun things with a lot of other people	BUT	Other kids like to do fun things with just a few people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids have parents who don't really understand them	BUT	Other kids have parents who really do understand them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids have classmates who like them the way they are	BUT	Other kids have classmates who wish they were different	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids have a teacher who helps them if they are upset or have a problem	BUT	Other kids don't have a teacher who helps them if they are upset or have a problem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids have a close friend who they can tell problems to	BUT	Other kids don't have a close friend who they can tell problems to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids have parents who don't seem to want to hear about their children's problems	BUT	Other kids have parents who do want to listen to their children's problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids have classmates they can become friendly with	BUT	Other kids don't have classmates that they can become friendly with	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids don't have a teacher who helps them to do their very best	BUT	Other kids do have a teacher who helps them to do their very best	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids have a close friend who really understands them	BUT	Other kids don't have a close friend who really understands them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids have parents who care about their feelings	BUT	Other kids have parents who don't seem to care very much about their feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids have classmates who sometimes make fun of them	BUT	Other kids don't have classmates who make fun of them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Really True for me	Sort of True for me				Sort of True for me	Really True for me
11.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids do have a teacher who cares about them	BUT	Other kids don't have a teacher who cares about them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids have a close friend who they can talk to about things that bother them	BUT	Other kids don't have a close friend who they can talk to about things that bother them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids have parents who treat their child like a person who really matters	BUT	Other kids have parents who don't usually treat their child like a person who matters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids have classmates who pay attention to what they say	BUT	Other kids have classmates who usually don't pay attention to what they say	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids don't have a teacher who is fair to them	BUT	Other kids do have a teacher who is fair to them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids don't have a close friend who they like to spend time with	BUT	Other kids do have a close friend who they like to spend time with	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids have parents who like them the way they are	BUT	Other kids have parents who wish their children were different	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids don't get asked to play in games with classmates very often	BUT	Other kids often get asked to play in games by their classmates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids don't have a teacher who cares if they feel bad	BUT	Other kids do have a teacher who cares if they feel bad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids don't have a close friend who really listens to what they say	BUT	Other kids do have a close friend who really listens to what they say	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids have parents who don't act like what their children do is important	BUT	Other kids have parents who do act like what their children do is important	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids often spend their recess being alone	BUT	Other kids spend recess playing with their classmates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids have a teacher who treats them like a person	BUT	Other kids don't have a teacher who treats them like a person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids don't have a close friend who cares about their feelings	BUT	Other kids do have a close friend who cares about their feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Susan Harter, Ph.D., University of Denver, 2012

