

**The experience of psychological well-being
amongst high school Life Orientation teachers
within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District**

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SUMMARY

The experience of psychological well-being amongst high school Life Orientation teachers within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District

Keywords: Psychological well-being, Life Orientation, teachers, high school, phenomenology, South Africa

Life Orientation teachers play a significant role in conveying essential knowledge, skills and attitudes about life skills to millions of learners in South Africa, and they are therefore at the forefront of addressing issues such as the development and optimization of learner well-being. One of the core components of the Life Orientation curriculum is the development of optimal well-being amongst learners; however, while some studies have focused on the general well-being of educators in South Africa, very few have focused on the psychological well-being of South African Life Orientation teacher in particular.

This qualitative research study utilised a phenomenological research design which aimed to identify, through the use of in-depth interviews, high school Life Orientation teachers' experiences of psychological well-being within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District in the North West Province, South Africa. A purposive sampling method was utilised in order to glean a sample of seven high school Life Orientation teachers, four females and three males, from four different schools who participated in this research study. Participants were between the ages of 24 and 62.

The research data was analysed thematically, and the following main themes were identified: intrapersonal experiences of identity as a Further Education and Training Life Orientation teacher; experiences of contextual factors and their effects on experiences of psychological well-being, such as time constraints, lack of resources, a lack of commitment and motivation on the part of learners with regard to L.O. as a subject, the perception of L.O. as a trivial subject, work overload and work pressure causing stress, physical health, and experiences of a lack of support; protective factors enhancing Life Orientation teachers' psychological well-being, such as participants' perceived importance of L.O. as a subject, L.O. teachers' being driven by

compassion for learners' well-being, L.O. teachers' internal motivation to teach and bring about change, rewarding learner interactions as motivation, and a sense of belonging; and how Life Orientation teachers' psychological well-being plays a role in the classroom. These findings could possibly provide important data regarding the ways in which Life Orientation teachers experience their own psychological well-being within the school context, and how this could play a role in the Life Orientation learning environment.

This research study is one of the first studies to explore the experiences of psychological well-being amongst high school Life Orientation teachers specifically. It may therefore provide a point of departure for future research studies in this field. This research study highlighted the importance of psychological well-being amongst high school Life Orientation teachers, and how this psychological well-being can play a role in the Life Orientation classroom. It also identified the situations that influence the L.O. teachers' experiences of psychological well-being within the school environment. This research study suggests that high school Life Orientation teachers might be an important target for interventions to promote psychological well-being within the school environment.

PREFACE

- This mini-dissertation follows the article format specified by the North-West University.
- The article will be submitted for possible publishing in *The Journal of Psychology in Africa*.
- This mini-dissertation follows the guidelines established by the American Psychological Association (APA, 6th edition). Section 2 of this mini-dissertation was compiled in accordance with the author guidelines specified by the *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, in which it might be published.
- The page numbering is chronological, starting with Section 1 and ending with Appendix C.
- A qualified language practitioner conducted the language editing of this mini-dissertation.
- Data collection for the research study (the in-depth interviews) was conducted in the language that was preferred by the participants.
- Consent for the submission of this mini-dissertation for examination purposes (in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master's degree in Counselling Psychology) has been provided by the research supervisor, Prof Werner de Klerk.
- This mini-dissertation was submitted to Turn-it-in and fell within the acceptable norms regarding similarities.

PERISSION LETTER FROM SUPERVISOR

I, Prof Werner de Klerk, herewith give permission for Michelle Nel to submit her mini-dissertation for examination purposes entitled: *The experience of psychological well-being amongst high school Life Orientation teachers within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District.*



Prof Werner de Klerk

21/11/2019

DECLARATION

I, Michelle Nel, declare that this research study, *The experience of psychological well-being amongst high school Life Orientation teachers within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District*, is initial work done by myself. This study is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for my Master's degree in Counselling Psychology conducted at the North-West University in Potchefstroom. This work has never been submitted for examination. The necessary consent of all relevant parties was given to conduct this research study, and throughout this mini-dissertation the required acknowledgment was given to all reference material.



Michelle Nel

17/11/2019

Student number: 28778979

STRUCTURE OF RESEARCH MINI-DISSERTATION

This mini-dissertation comprises three sections. Section 1 (see page 1 of mini-dissertation) is the literature overview, which endeavours to provide the necessary and relevant information regarding this research study. Section 2 presents the article (see page 18 of mini-dissertation), which contains the methodology, findings, discussion of the findings and the conclusion. The last section, Section 3 (see page 52 of mini-dissertation) is the researcher's critical reflection on her research study, together with an overview of the contributions and possible wider applications of the research study.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Overview of Literature

The effective implementation and teaching of Life Orientation could drastically change the future of South Africa (Prinsloo, 2007; Strydom, 2011). This is a bold statement to make, but Life Orientation is the only subject in the National Curriculum that directly and explicitly addresses issues that impact on the effective functioning of the country as a whole (Department of Education [DoE], 1995; Maree & Ebersöhn, 2002). This research study first introduces education in South Africa and then describes the subject of Life Orientation. The reasons why Life Orientation was introduced into the South African education system are presented, and its importance is discussed. The well-being of educators in South Africa is then discussed, and psychological well-being in particular is defined. The psychological well-being of South African educators in general, and that of Life Orientation teachers in particular, are then described.

Basic Education in South Africa

Education plays an essential role in developing and contributing towards the South African economy and in contributing towards a thriving, positive society as a whole (Daniels & Strauss, 2010; DoE, 1995; Peral & Geldenhuys, 2016). It may be said that the value and potential of the country are bound up with the effectiveness of its education system (Daniels & Strauss, 2010; Peral & Geldenhuys, 2016). The education system of the country is of vital importance, and basic education is expressed as a basic human right in the Constitution (DoE, 1995; DoE, 2003).

Education in South Africa has undergone a great deal of change and transformation, as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) laid down a new foundation for transformation and development within the education system (DoE, 2003). This transformation that South African schools have undergone over the past two decades has been experienced as a stressful undertaking for teachers (Daniels & Strauss, 2010). Continually changing curricula, multiculturalism and multilingualism have been some of the challenges that educators have had to navigate since the transformation of the education system (Daniels & Strauss, 2010).

South Africa has approximately 12.4 million learners attending 23 800 schools, where they are taught by nearly 400 000 educators (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2017). As of 2016, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) identified 29 749 public and independent education institutions in South Africa (DBE, 2018). Among this number, 6 186 secondary schools were identified, with 140 532 educators (DBE, 2018). The term “secondary schools” is used to identify and define high schools in South Africa. Public schools make up 92.7% of the education system in South Africa (DBE, 2018). The North West Province has the seventh largest number of educators, with 26 108 educators working in the province (DBE, 2018). It also has the seventh largest number of schools, with 1 534 schools identified in the province as of 2016 (DBE, 2018). Of these, 352 in total are high schools, both public and independent, with the North West Province having the seventh largest number of secondary schools in the country (DBE, 2018). Within the province, there are 8 082 educators teaching at high schools (DBE, 2018). The Dr Kenneth Kaunda District (the population focus of this research study) has a total number of 4 129 educators, and 236 schools (independent and public schools combined), of which 20 of these are high schools (DBE, 2018). Learners in the North West Province comprise 6.4% of the national total, educators in this province make up 6.2% of the national total, and schools in the North West Province comprise 6% of the national total (DBE, 2018).

South African citizens have expressed dissatisfaction with the education system, with the system reportedly failing to produce competent learners equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to proceed to first-year university or to read, write and comprehend at a satisfactory level (DoE, 2008; Peral & Geldenhuys, 2016). South Africa’s 2018/19 budget for Basic Education is R230.4-billion, which is approximately 14% of the country’s total budget (National Treasury, 2018); however, 78% of South African Grade Four learners cannot understand what they are reading in either their home language or English, compared to 4% internationally (Mullis, Martin, Foy, & Hooper, 2017; Roodt, 2018). Thus, despite the large monetary investment in basic education in South Africa, which is one of the highest rates of public investment in education in the world

(Dormehl, 2019), the quality of education provided appears to remain problematic (Naidoo & Botha, 2014; Roodt, 2018). Factors such as a lack of resources, poor infrastructure (De Klerk & Nienaber, 2011), learner violence, a shortage of skilled personnel, a lack of government support, and educator strikes are some of the issues that play a role in education in South Africa (Naidoo & Botha, 2014). On an international scale, South Africa performed poorly in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS), where learners are tested in maths and science proficiency (Roodt, 2018). Learners' performance in the TIMMS study shed light on several challenges that South African education is experiencing.

The TIMMS study revealed relatively large differences in learners' performances based on province and whether they attend a no-fee school, a fee-paying government school, or an independent school (Roodt, 2018). For example, North West and the Eastern Cape were the two most poorly performing provinces, and the Western Cape and Gauteng – the two richest provinces in the country – were the two best-performing provinces (Roodt, 2018). Learners attending independent schools performed better (13% better in maths) than those attending fee-paying government schools, and even better (nearly 40% better) than those attending no-fee schools (Roodt, 2018).

Other issues brought to light by the TIMMS results included the fact that learners performed better if they had running water and flush toilets at home, and if the tests were administered in a language that learners spoke at home (Roodt, 2018). School infrastructure also affected learners' performance, as learners who attended schools with a library scored approximately 16% higher than those without a library on the school property (Roodt, 2018). However, what is of great concern is the fact that over 60% of schools in South Africa do not have libraries (Roodt, 2018). It is clear that education in South Africa faces several challenges that need to be addressed in order to improve the quality of education provided.

Life Orientation

Life Orientation (hereafter referred to as L.O.) is a compulsory subject for all learners matriculating in South Africa (DBE, 2011). The subject was introduced into the education system on a grade-by-grade basis, along with the implementation of Curriculum 2005 and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (DoE, 1997). Its subject matter focuses on the holistic development of the learner (de Lange, 2016) and the acquisition of necessary life skills, with the aim of preventing, and protecting the learner from, a multitude of possible negative outcomes and influences (DoE, 2003; Manyau, Cronje, & Mokoena, 2018). The DoE defines L.O. as being “concerned with the personal, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, motor and physical growth and development of learners” (2003, p.9). Within the Further Education and Training (FET) band, L.O. has four focus areas (DoE, 2003): Personal well-being; Citizenship education; Recreation and physical activity; and Careers and career choices. L.O. focuses on the learner within society, the development of effective problem-solving skills, how to make informed choices, and how to be a productive member of society (DoE, 2003).

Manyau et al. (2018) investigated the main themes emerging from literature on L.O. published in South Africa and abroad between 2000 and 2017. Their findings revealed that the major themes investigated in the field include the nature of L.O., L.O. policies, L.O. content, challenges in L.O., and L.O. teaching strategies (Manyau et al., 2018). Some of the challenges identified in the literature findings regarding L.O. include the implementation of L.O., qualifications for educators, and sexuality education and teaching (Manyau et al., 2018). Issues of too little teaching time, lack of resources, lack of support, and a negative attitude from other staff members towards L.O. were also highlighted in the literature findings (Manyau et al., 2018). The findings also revealed that educators struggle to switch roles and ‘wear different hats’ in the school context, such as changing from the role of an educator to that of a parent, or social worker, or counsellor, depending on what the context requires (Manyau et al., 2018). The challenge of switching roles was also discussed by Wasserman (2014). Taking into account the considerable

number of challenges identified and experienced in L.O., it is significant that Manyau et al. (2018) did not identify literature on the psychological well-being of the South African L.O. teacher.

Reasons why Life Orientation was introduced. The primary reason for the introduction of L.O. was to address the needs of South African children and adolescents, and to make a positive difference in the lives of the next generation of learners (DoE, 2003; Prinsloo, 2007). Risky behaviour, HIV/AIDS, violence and crime are just some of the issues which propelled the development of the L.O. programme (Magnani, MacIntyre, Karim, Brown, & Hutchinson, 2005; Maree & Ebersöhn, 2002). L.O. was hence also introduced with the aim of implementing preventative strategies and equipping learners with adequate life skills to effectively navigate their lives once they leave the education system (Manyau et al., 2018; Maree & Ebersöhn, 2002). Maree and Ebersöhn (2002) argue that the very definition and conceptualisation of L.O. make it one of the most important subjects offered in schools. It has been argued that L.O. has the capacity to equip learners with a “survival kit” of sorts, in order to successfully negotiate the complexities of the twenty-first century (Maree & Ebersöhn, 2002; Wasserman, 2014).

The importance of Life Orientation. L.O. addresses many important issues experienced in the South African context and South African society (Adewumi, 2012; Roux, 2013; Wasserman, 2014). It adopts a preventative stance in addressing these issues, which is what makes it such an important subject. Adolescents in particular are considered to be a vulnerable population group, being at a higher risk of engaging in risky forms of behaviour and, as a result, initiating an ongoing cycle of dysfunction (Adewumi, 2012; Maree & Ebersöhn, 2002). Strydom (2011) conducted a study which investigated the support needs of L.O. teachers in the FET band. It was argued that, because of the limited number of health care professionals available in South Africa to provide the necessary support for adolescents, the preventative nature of the L.O. programme is particularly important (Strydom, 2011). However, there is a limited amount of research on L.O as it relates specifically to the FET phase, possibly because L.O. was only

officially included as a compulsory subject to be taken through to matric in 2008, meaning that the subject in the FET phase is only ten years old.

One of the core components of the L.O. curriculum is the development of optimal well-being amongst learners (DoE, 2003). Personal well-being is one of the four learning areas of the FET L.O. curriculum. This area focuses on self-concept, emotional literacy, social competency and life skills (DoE, 2003). The link between L.O. and psychological well-being lies in prevention and life skills development (Naudé, 2009). Psychological well-being has become an important health factor in professions such as education, owing to the fact that research has shown a strong association between the stress that teachers experience and well-being (Jackson, Rothmann, & Van de Vijver, 2006; Kok, 2013; Vazi et al., 2013, Willers, 2009). Research has also indicated that stress has a negative impact on an individual's functioning in the workplace, which would include teachers' functioning within the school environment (Boshoff, 2014; Kok, 2013). The psychological well-being of teachers is therefore important (Willers, 2009).

Recent developments in Life Orientation. The current Minister of Basic Education in South Africa, Angie Motshekga, appointed a task team to investigate whether History should be a compulsory subject in high school (Sobuwa, 2018). The report provided by the task team became available to the public on 31 May 2018, three years after the task team was appointed (Sobuwa, 2018). The recommendation made in the report was that History should become compulsory in grades 10 to 12, and that it should replace L.O. in these grades (Sobuwa, 2018). Life Orientation will be phased out of the Further Education and Training (FET) curriculum from 2023 to 2025; however, L.O. will remain compulsory until grade 9 (Sobuwa, 2018). Thus, although the process of phasing out L.O. will commence in 2023 within the FET band, the subject will still be taught and still be relevant to this research study, as L.O. will still be a compulsory subject up until grade 9, and will still be taught to grade 12 until the year 2023.

The Well-being of Educators

Studies have been conducted regarding the well-being of educators (teachers) in South Africa (see Burger, 2009; Collett, 2013; Daniels & Strauss, 2010; De Klerk, Temane, & Nienaber, 2013; Fouché, 2015; Jackson et al., 2006; Naidoo & Botha, 2014; Roux, 2013; Vazi et al., 2013). Most of these studies have been quantitative in nature. Their findings indicated that the psychological health or well-being of educators needs to be addressed within the school environment, and that interventions should focus on promoting well-being, as poor psychological well-being is a major contributor towards educator stress (Boshoff, 2014; Jackson et al., 2006; Naidoo & Botha, 2014; Vazi et al., 2013). Factors such as large classroom sizes, work overload, problematic learner behaviour, and time pressures are some of the stressors that teachers face and that may negatively impact their well-being in the school environment (Jackson et al., 2006; Peral & Geldenhuys, 2016).

First, the concept of psychological well-being needs to be discussed. The American Psychological Association (APA) defines well-being as “a state of happiness, contentment, low levels of distress, overall good physical and mental health and outlook, or good quality of life” (2007, p.996). However, the Association does not provide a definition for psychological well-being in particular. While there is much literature on well-being in the broader sense of the term, for the purposes of this research study the focus is specifically on psychological well-being. Literature on well-being has, in the past, been divided into two different approaches; the hedonic approach and the eudaimonic approach (Kok, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Vazi et al., 2013). The hedonic approach is associated with subjective well-being, whereas the eudaimonic approach is associated with psychological well-being. The eudaimonic approach defines well-being in terms of the degree to which the person is fully functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The hedonic approach defines well-being in terms of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

However, in recent years, the definition of psychological well-being has moved beyond the dichotomous nature of the hedonic / eudaimonic understanding of the concept (Kok, 2013). Some

of the literature has focused more on the dimensions of psychological well-being than on the definition; however, much of the literature that discusses psychological well-being is grounded in the positive psychology perspective (De Lange, 2016; Khumalo, 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Snyder & Lopez, 2005; Vazi et al., 2013; Wissing & Van Eeden, 2002; Wissing, 2013). From this perspective, psychological well-being is conceptualised as including a focus on strengths, capacities, and mental well-being, and having a positive effect on prevention and on the improvement of one's quality of life (Thekiso, Botha, Wissing, & Kruger, 2013). Snyder and Lopez (2005) present six dimensions of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, autonomy, and positive relations with others.

The definition of psychological well-being provided by Poole, Warren and Nunez (2007) states that psychological well-being is the degree to which a person feels that they have a purpose in life, and that they perceive their life to be pleasant and meaningful. It appears that there is no universal understanding or agreement as to what exactly defines psychological well-being, although definitions appear to be merging into a more integrated understanding of the term in recent years (Kok, 2013).

Owing to the phenomenological design of this research study, a set definition for psychological well-being is not necessarily required. The very nature of phenomenology is to explore the participants' experience (and therefore, understanding) of a particular phenomenon. As psychological well-being is the particular phenomenon to be explored in this research study, a set definition of the term goes against the principles of phenomenology (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). The same phenomenological principles apply in respect of a theoretical framework for this research study. The study is atheoretical, as the research design is phenomenology. One of the key concepts of phenomenology is the term 'bracketing', denoting the way in which the researcher sets aside their own experiences or theory about the phenomenon being studied, in order to approach it from a fresh perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A set theoretical framework would therefore go against the phenomenological concept of bracketing.

The General Psychological Well-being of Teachers in South Africa

The general psychological state of teachers in South Africa appears to be marked by stress and burnout, as aspects of professional, situational and personal stressors negatively impact their psychological well-being (De Klerk et al., 2013; Fouché, 2015; Jackson et al., 2006; Kok, 2013; Naidoo & Botha, 2014; Vazi et al., 2013; Willers, 2009). Fouché (2015) conducted a study in which the aim was to investigate the psychological well-being of a sample of secondary school teachers in North West Province, and to determine its antecedents and outcomes. Fouché's (2015) findings suggested that teachers with healthy psychological well-being are more likely to focus on the meaningfulness of the work they are doing, and that the most important positive factors likely to improve psychological well-being at work are meaningfulness and inspiration. Her findings also suggested that supervisor support plays a significant role in the engagement and retention of employees (Fouché, 2015).

Given the fact that teachers educate the nation, and that education plays a large role in the economy and functionality of a nation, teachers' mental health and well-being should be of vital importance to the country (Daniels & Strauss, 2010; Wasserman, 2014). Daniels and Strauss (2010) argue that, while there are many South African studies about factors contributing towards stress in the workplace, there appears to be a lack of research on teachers' understanding of their own emotional well-being within the school context.

The Psychological Well-being of the Life Orientation Teacher

Very few studies have focused on the psychological well-being of the South African L.O. teacher in particular (see De Lange, 2016). De Lange (2016) looked at the psychological well-being and character strengths of Life Skills teachers who teach the subject to grade 4 to grade 6 learners. De Lange's (2016) study utilised a mixed-method approach with nine participants from four primary schools within the North West Province. The general objective of the study was to identify the character strengths of the Life Skills teachers, and to discover whether these strengths can help the teachers to maintain their psychological well-being (De Lange, 2016). According to De Lange

(2016), it is important for L.O. teachers to be aware of their own psychological well-being in order for them to function optimally as teachers. The lack of research focusing on psychological well-being amongst South African teachers, and even more so amongst high school L.O. teachers, is a point of concern, given the high stress environment of the education context (Boshoff, 2014; Kok, 2013). It therefore appears that there is a gap in the literature exploring the experiences of psychological well-being amongst high school L.O. teachers in South Africa.

Problem Statement

One of the core components of the L.O. curriculum is the development of optimal well-being amongst learners; however, very few studies have focused on the psychological well-being of the South African L.O. teacher in particular (see De Lange, 2016). Therefore, this research study aimed to explore and describe the essence of the experiences of psychological well-being amongst high school L.O. teachers in the North West Province (Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, JB Marks Area). These findings could possibly provide important data about how L.O. teachers experience their own psychological well-being within the school context, and how this could play a role in the L.O. learning environment.

The L.O. teacher is arguably the primary ‘tool’ for facilitating and developing the positive psychological well-being of learners within the school context (see De Lange, 2016). In fact, the L.O. teacher is the staff member allocated to achieving this goal, as they are required to cover personal well-being in the L.O. curriculum (Daniels & Strauss, 2010; DoE, 2003). The L.O. teacher may hence be immensely influential in learners’ lives (see De Lange, 2016). While there are set structures and guidelines stated in the L.O. curriculum, the L.O. teacher is given a degree of creative freedom as to how to present the material set out in the curriculum (DoE, 2003). Therefore, it is important to explore the psychological well-being of L.O. teachers, as well as how they think it may impact on how they present the material and how their well-being plays a role in the classroom (Daniels & Strauss, 2010). Psychological well-being may lead to a domino effect, in which teachers’ psychological well-being affects how they teach the subject; this in turn may have

an impact on how the learners receive and understand the key concepts, which may then affect their holistic development; this, then, may potentially impact the functioning of the broader school system. This hypothesis has a perpetuating cyclical effect, which requires that, in order to understand the broader system, one has to understand the source. With topics such as substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, personal well-being and career choices being dealt with, it is imperative that the subject be taught effectively, which means that the L.O. teacher is of great importance (DoE, 2003). If these topics are not conveyed effectively, this may impact broader society (DoE, 2003).

Given that the target population of L.O. in high school is adolescents, it makes the effective teaching of the subject even more important (Ahmed, Flisher, Mathews, Mukoma, & Jansen, 2009). If topics such as teenage pregnancy, substance abuse and other risky behaviours are effectively addressed in L.O. classes, adolescents can be equipped to leave school with effective tools and strategies to cope with life after school (Adewumi, 2012). L.O. can also be an important preventative tool incorporating psycho-education in an attempt to address the current problems that adolescents are facing in South Africa. Another reason why it is important to explore L.O. teachers' psychological well-being is that they are required to teach about well-being in their lessons (DoE, 2003). If the L.O. teacher is experiencing poor psychological well-being, how then will this impact the L.O. objective of facilitating the development of a healthy personal well-being amongst the learners?

Aim of the Study

The present research study aimed to explore and describe the essence of the experiences of psychological well-being amongst high school L.O. teachers in the North West Province (Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, JB Marks Area). These findings could possibly provide important data regarding how L.O. teachers experience their own psychological well-being within the school context, why they experience their psychological well-being in this particular manner, and how this could play a role in the L.O. learning environment.

Research Question

This research study therefore aims to answer the following research question: *What are the experiences of psychological well-being amongst high school Life Orientation teachers within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District (JB Marks Area)?*

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SECTION 2: ARTICLE

The experience of psychological well-being amongst high school Life Orientation teachers within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District

2.1 Guidelines for Authors: Journal of Psychology in Africa

This article will be submitted for possible publication in *Journal of Psychology in Africa*.

Thus, there will first be a summary of the author guidelines for this specific journal, followed by the article.

Instructions for Authors

Manuscripts

Manuscripts should be written in English and conform to the publication guidelines of the latest edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) publication manual of instructions for authors. Manuscripts can be a maximum of 7 000 words.

Submission

Manuscripts should be prepared in MSWord, double spaced with wide margins and submitted via the journal's Editorial Manager system. Before submitting a manuscript, authors should peruse and consult a recent issue of the *Journal of Psychology in Africa* for general layout and style.

Manuscript Format

All pages must be numbered consecutively, including those containing the references, tables and figures. The typescript of a manuscript should be arranged as follows:

- Title: this should be brief, sufficiently informative for retrieval by automatic searching techniques and should contain important keywords (preferably <13).
- Author(s) and Affiliation(s) of author(s): The corresponding author must be indicated. The author's respective affiliation where the work was done must be indicated. An e-mail address for the corresponding author must be provided.

- **Abstract:** Articles and abstracts must be in English. Submission of abstracts translated to French, Portuguese and/ or Spanish is encouraged. For data-based contributions, the abstract should be structured as follows: Objective – the primary purpose of the paper, Method – data source, participants, design, measures, data analysis, Results – key findings, implications, future directions and Conclusions – in relation to the research questions and theory development. For all other contributions (except editorials, book reviews, and special announcements) the abstract must be a concise statement of the content of the paper. Abstracts must not exceed 150 words. The statement of the abstract should summarise the information presented in the paper but should not include references.
- **Text:** (1) Per APA guidelines, only one space should follow any punctuation; (2) Do not insert spaces at the beginning or end of paragraphs; (3) Do not use colour in text; and (4) Do not align references using spaces or tabs, use a hanging indent.
- **Tables and figures:** These should contain only information directly relevant to the content of the paper. Each table and figure must include a full, stand-alone caption, and each must be sequentially mentioned in the text. Collect tables and figures together at the end of the manuscript or supply as separate files. Indicate the correct placement in the text in this form <insert Table 1 here>. Figures must conform to the journals style. Pay particular attention to line thickness, font and figure proportions, taking into account the journal's printed page size – plan around one column (82 mm) or two column width (170 mm). For digital photographs or scanned images the resolution should be at least 300 dpi for colour or greyscale artwork and a minimum of 600 dpi for black line drawings. These files can be saved (in order of preference) in PSD, PDF or JPEG format. Graphs, charts or maps can be saved in AI, PDF or EPS format. MS Office files (Word, Powerpoint, Excel) are also acceptable but DO NOT EMBED Excel graphs or Powerpoint slides in a MS Word document.

Referencing

Referencing style should follow latest edition of the APA manual of instructions for authors.

- References in text: References in running text should be quoted as follows: (Louw & Mkize, 2012), or (Louw, 2011), or Louw (2000, 2004a, 2004b). All surnames should be cited the first time the reference occurs, e.g., Louw, Mkize, and Naidoo (2009) or (Louw, Mkize, & Naidoo, 2010). Subsequent citations should use et al., e.g. Louw et al. (2004) or (Louw et al., 2004). ‘Unpublished observations’ and ‘personal communications’ may be cited in the text, but not in the reference list. Manuscripts submitted but not yet published can be included as references followed by ‘in press’.
- Reference list: Full references should be given at the end of the article in alphabetical order, using double spacing. References to journals should include the author’s surnames and initials, the full title of the paper, the full name of the journal, the year of publication, the volume number, and inclusive page numbers. Titles of journals must not be abbreviated. References to books should include the authors’ surnames and initials, the year of publication, full title of the book, the place of publication, and the publisher’s name. References should be cited as per the examples below:

Journal Article

Peltzer, K. (2001). Factors at follow-up associated with adherence with adherence with directly observed therapy (DOT) for tuberculosis patients in South Africa. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 11(2), 165–185.

Book

Gore, A. (2006). *An inconvenient truth: The planetary emergency of global warming and what we can do about it*. Emmaus, PA: Rodale.

Edited Book

Galley, K. E. (Ed.). (2004). *Global climate change and wildlife in North America*. Bethesda, MD: Wildlife Society.

Chapter in a Book

Cook, D. A., & Wiley, C. Y. (2000). Psychotherapy with members of the African American churches and spiritual traditions. In P. S. Richards & A. E. Bergin (Ed.), *Handbook of*

psychotherapy and religiosity diversity (pp 369–396). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Magazine Article

Begley, S., & Murr, A. (2007, July 2). Which of these is not causing global warming? A. Sport utility vehicles; B. Rice fields; C. Increased solar output. *Newsweek*, 150(2), 48–50.

Newspaper Article (Signed)

Landler, M. (2007, June 2). Bush's Greenhouse Gas Plan Throws Europe Off Guard. *New York Times*, p. A7.

Unpublished Thesis

Appoh, L. (1995). The effects of parental attitudes, beliefs and values on the nutritional status of their children in two communities in Ghana (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Trondheim, Norway.

Conference Paper

Sternberg, R. J. (2001, June). *Cultural approaches to intellectual and social competencies*. Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Society, Toronto, Canada.

2.2 Article:

Running Head: PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING – HIGH SCHOOL LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS

The experience of psychological well-being amongst high school Life Orientation teachers within
the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District

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Abstract

One of the core components of the Life Orientation curriculum is the development of optimal well-being amongst learners; however, very few studies have focused on the psychological well-being of the South African Life Orientation teacher in particular. This qualitative research study utilised a phenomenological research design which aimed to identify, through the use of in-depth interviews, high school Life Orientation teachers' experiences of psychological well-being within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District in the North West Province, South Africa. A sample of seven high school Life Orientation teachers, four females and three males, from four different schools participated in this research study. The research data was analysed thematically, and the following main themes were identified: intrapersonal experiences of identity as a Further Education and Training Life Orientation teacher; experiences of contextual factors and their effects on experiences of psychological well-being; protective factors enhancing Life Orientation teachers' psychological well-being; and how Life Orientation teachers' psychological well-being plays a role in the classroom. These findings could possibly provide important data regarding how Life Orientation teachers experience their own psychological well-being within the school context, and how this could play a role in the Life Orientation learning environment.

Keywords: Psychological well-being, life orientation, teachers, high school, phenomenology, South Africa

Contextualisation

Education plays a crucial role as a vital tool for developing knowledge, skills and character in those who have access to it (Daniels & Strauss, 2010). Literature has discussed the moral and ethical functions of education, as well as how it can instil desirable attributes in the youth of South Africa (Daniels & Strauss, 2010). It may be argued that, as a profession, education plays a significant role in society, as the value of a nation is linked to how effectively its citizens are educated (Daniels & Strauss, 2010). For educators to continue performing their jobs effectively, their well-being should be regarded as being of great importance, given that they educate the nation (Daniels & Strauss, 2010; Peral & Geldenhuys, 2016). The effective implementation and teaching of Life Orientation (hereafter referred to as L.O.) could drastically change the future of South Africa (Prinsloo, 2007; Strydom, 2011). This is a bold statement to make, but L.O. is the only subject in the National Curriculum that directly and explicitly addresses issues which impact on the effective functioning of the country as a whole (Department Of Education [DoE], 1995; Maree & Ebersöhn, 2002).

L.O. is a compulsory subject for all learners matriculating in South Africa (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2011). The subject was introduced into the education system on a grade-by-grade basis, along with the implementation of Curriculum 2005 and the National Curriculum Statement (DoE, 1997). Its subject matter focuses on the holistic development of the learner (see De Lange, 2016) and the acquisition of necessary life skills, with the aim of preventing and protecting the learner from a multitude of negative possibilities and influences (DoE, 2003; Manyau, Cronje, & Mokoena, 2018). The DoE defines L.O. as being “concerned with the personal, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, motor and physical growth and development of learners” (2003, p.9). Within the Further Education and Training (FET) band, L.O. has four focus areas (DoE, 2003): Personal well-being; Citizenship education; Recreation and physical activity; and Careers and career choices. L.O. focuses on the learner within society, the development of effective

problem-solving skills, how to make informed choices, and how to be a productive member of society (DoE, 2003).

The primary reason for the introduction of L.O. was to address the needs of South African children and adolescents, and to make a positive difference in the lives of the next generation of learners (DoE, 2003; Prinsloo, 2007). Risky behaviour, HIV/AIDS, violence and crime are just some of the issues that drove the development of the L.O. programme; hence, the primary intention of the implementation of L.O. was to teach learners knowledge, skills and values to make informed decisions in their lives (Francis & DePalma, 2015; Magnani, MacIntyre, Karim, Brown, & Hutchinson, 2005; Maree & Ebersöhn, 2002). L.O. was therefore also introduced with the aim of implementing preventative strategies as well as equipping learners with adequate life skills, to enable them to effectively navigate their lives once they leave the education system (Manyau et al., 2018; Maree & Ebersöhn, 2002). Maree and Ebersöhn (2002) argue that the very definition and conceptualisation of L.O. make it one of the most important subjects offered in schools today. It was further argued that L.O. has the capacity to equip learners with a “survival kit” of sorts, in order to successfully negotiate the complexities of the twenty-first century (Maree & Ebersöhn, 2002; Wasserman, 2014).

Problem Statement

Teachers are expected to fulfil a supportive, pastoral role within the school environment (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 2015). The L.O. teacher is arguably the primary ‘tool’ for facilitating and developing the psychological well-being of learners within the school context (see De Lange, 2016). In fact, the L.O. teacher is the staff member allocated to achieving this goal, as they are required to cover personal well-being in the L.O. curriculum (Daniels & Strauss, 2010; DoE, 2003). The L.O. teacher may therefore be immensely influential in learners’ lives (see De Lange, 2016). While there are set structures and guidelines laid down in the L.O. curriculum, the L.O. teacher is given a degree of creative freedom in how to present the material set out in the curriculum (DoE, 2003). Therefore, it is important to explore the

psychological well-being of L.O. teachers and how they think it can impact on how they present the material, or how it plays a role in their classroom (Daniels & Strauss, 2010). This can lead to a domino effect, in which the teachers' psychological well-being may impact how they teach the subject, which in turn impacts how the learners receive and understand the key concepts; this may then affect the learners' holistic development and ultimately have an impact on the functioning of the broader school system. This hypothesis has a self-perpetuating cyclical effect, which requires that, in order to understand the broader system, one has to understand the source. With topics such as substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, personal well-being and career choices being dealt with, it is imperative that the subject be taught effectively, which means that the L.O. teacher is of great importance (DoE, 2003). If these topics are not handled effectively, this could have an impact on broader society (DoE, 2003).

Given that the target population of L.O. in high school is adolescents, it makes the effective teaching of the subject even more important. If topics such as teenage pregnancy, substance abuse and other risky behaviours are effectively addressed in L.O. classes, adolescents will be equipped to leave school with effective tools and strategies to make informed decisions (Adewumi, 2012; Francis & DePalma, 2015). L.O. can also be an important preventative tool, one that incorporates psycho-education in an attempt to address the current problems that adolescents are facing in South Africa. Another reason why it is important to explore L.O. teachers' psychological well-being is that they are required to teach about well-being in their lessons (DoE, 2003). If the L.O. teacher is experiencing poor psychological well-being, how then will this impact on the L.O. objective of facilitating the development of healthy personal well-being amongst the learners?

Goal of the Study

The present research study aimed to explore and describe the essence of the experiences of psychological well-being amongst high school L.O. teachers in the North West Province (Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, JB Marks Area), South Africa. These findings could possibly provide important data regarding how L.O. teachers experience their own psychological well-being within

the school context, why they experience their psychological well-being in this particular manner, and how this could play a role in the L.O. learning environment. This research study therefore aimed to answer the following research question: *What are the experiences of psychological well-being amongst high school Life Orientation teachers within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District (JB Marks Area)?*

Method

Research Approach and Design

For the purpose of this research study, a qualitative research approach was followed (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a) with a phenomenological research design (specifically psychological phenomenology, also known as transcendental phenomenology) (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b). The end goal of phenomenological research (specifically psychological phenomenology) is to describe the essence of how the phenomenon is experienced by all participants who have experienced, or are currently experiencing, the particular phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b). Phenomenology is therefore suitable for this research study, as the researcher aimed to explore the participants' (L.O. teachers') unique lived experiences of psychological well-being within the school context, and how this could play a role in the L.O. learning environment.

Participants and Research Context

In order to achieve the aim of this research study, the participants had to meet certain criteria. The participants (high school L.O. teachers) had to be currently employed at a school within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, JB Marks Area, North West Province, South Africa. The participants in this research study had to be qualified teachers, be teaching L.O., and have had at least one year of full-time teaching experience. This was to ensure that the participants had covered the full L.O. curriculum set out for the year, as some schools allocate different teachers every year to teach the L.O. curriculum. In addition to the above-mentioned criteria, the L.O. teachers had to be willing to participate in the research study, by signing the informed consent form, and be able to communicate in English or Afrikaans. The final research sample consisted of seven L.O. teachers

who voluntarily participated in the research study, of whom four participants were female and three male. The participants came from four different schools in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District (JB Marks Area). Five of the participants were African, and two participants were White. Their years of teaching experience, and years of teaching L.O. specifically, varied greatly from participant to participant. This is illustrated in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1
Demographic Information of Participants

Participant number	Age	Race	Gender	Home language	Years of experience in teaching	Years of experience teaching L.O.
P1	50	African	Female	Setswana	24 years	18 years
P2	62	White	Male	Afrikaans	39 years	33 years
P3	24	African	Male	Tshivenda	2 years	2 years
P4	25	White	Female	Afrikaans	2 years	2 years
P5	43	African	Male	isiXhosa	11 years	11 years
P6	50	African	Female	Setswana	18 years	7 years
P7	32	African	Female	Sesotho	5 years	3 years

Data Collection

Demographic questionnaires, in-depth interviews and field notes were used as part of the data collection for this phenomenological research study. A *demographic questionnaire* was given to each participant at the commencement of the in-depth interview. This was used to gather basic information about the participant, such as age, gender, qualifications, ethnicity, number of years of teaching experience, and years of L.O. teaching experience. The reasoning behind the use of a demographic questionnaire was that it could provide significant insight into the shared experiences of participants with specific demographic qualities.

In accordance with the phenomenological design of this research study, *in-depth interviews* were used (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In-depth interviewing is particularly appropriate when the research aims to highlight subjective human experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Probing and clarification were used in the in-depth interviews in order to encourage participants to provide detailed descriptions of their experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b). Three open-ended questions were

asked during the in-depth interviews: *How do you experience your psychological well-being within the school environment? Why do you think you experience your psychological well-being in this manner? And; How do you think your psychological well-being plays a role in your classroom?*

Field notes were used in this research study in order to address the phenomenological process of ‘bracketing’. Bracketing is the self-reflective process of recognising and temporarily setting aside the researcher’s own knowledge, beliefs and assumptions in order to gather data with an open mind (Van Manen, 1990). Therefore, the primary researcher made use of field notes during the data collection and analysis process in order to ‘bracket’ her own possible biases.

Data Analysis

The in-depth interviews were audio recorded (with permission from the participants), after which they were transcribed verbatim by the researcher herself. Following this, thematic analysis was conducted using the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The *first phase* involved familiarising oneself with the data by reading and re-reading all the data collected. The *second phase* involved generating initial codes, in which data was collated. The *third phase* involved searching for themes by collating the codes into possible themes. The *fourth phase* involved reviewing the themes. The *fifth phase* defined and named the themes that were found. This thematic analysis was an ongoing process until the experiences of psychological well-being amongst high school L.O. teachers had been richly described and was better understood. Then, in accordance with the phenomenological design of this research study, two further procedures were followed in order to describe the essence of the lived experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Following the identification of themes, a *textural description* was provided of what the participants experienced in terms of their psychological well-being (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Then a *structural description* was provided of how the Life Orientation teachers experienced their psychological well-being within the school context (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Trustworthiness

The conceptual model of Lincoln and Guba, as described in a research article by Krefting (1991), was used to evaluate the trustworthiness of this research study. Lincoln and Guba's model identifies four aspects of trustworthiness: truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality (Krefting, 1991).

Truth value refers to the degree of confidence the researcher has in the findings of the research, based on the research design, the participants, and the context of the study (Krefting, 1991). The researcher should therefore describe the lived experiences of high school L.O. teachers accurately, in order to uphold truth value (Krefting, 1991). In this research study, all data collected from the in-depth interviews was transcribed verbatim (by the primary researcher herself), and field notes were duly and carefully recorded. There was active engagement with the data through the coding and re-coding of all the data collected. A research psychology intern at the School of Psychosocial Health (North-West University), registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA], also acted as a co-coder to ensure truth value in this research study.

Applicability in qualitative research is found when the findings of a research study hold a degree of similarity to other contexts outside the particular research study (Krefting, 1991). It is hence the researcher's duty to provide adequate descriptive data in order to allow comparison between contexts (Krefting, 1991). In this research study, the methodology was accurately and fully recorded. Demographic data was also collected from all participants in order to provide a comparison of the sample.

Consistency refers to how consistent the research findings would be if the research inquiry were to be replicated in a similar context (Krefting, 1991). In this research study, consistency was ensured by asking the same three questions of all participants in the research study during the in-depth interviews. Consistency was also ensured during data analysis, in which the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) were scrupulously followed.

Neutrality refers to the degree to which the research findings are representative of the participants and not of other biases or subjective influences (Krefting, 1991). The objectivity of the researchers is therefore imperative, and this was ensured by implementing an audit strategy (Krefting, 1991). Field notes were included in this research study.

Ethical Considerations

This research study has institutional ethical approval from the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the North-West University (NWU-00055-18-S1), as well as approval from the District Director of Education and Sport Development, Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, North West Province, South Africa.

Once approval had been obtained from all relevant legal authorities, school principals were approached for permission to conduct the research study at their schools. Each principal signed a letter of support granting permission. After permission was granted, the primary researcher assigned a mediator (the independent person involved in the research study), who provided the L.O. teachers (participants) with a consent form to complete if they agreed to participate in the research study. Both the participant and the mediator signed the consent form in each other's presence. An eyewitness was also asked to sign the consent forms.

The participants were informed that their identity would be protected and that they could withdraw from the research study at any time with no consequences. In addition, the anonymity of each participant was maintained at all times by assigning each one a participant number during the data analysis process. Each school provided an appropriate room for the purpose of conducting the in-depth interviews. These rooms were furnished, and the researcher placed a "Do not disturb" sign on the doors in order to maintain privacy and avoid disruption while the in-depth interviews took place. Participants were informed that the North-West University would accept full responsibility for the keeping and safeguarding of all collected data, and that when the findings are published, all identifying information will be omitted.

Findings

Through the process of thematic analysis, four core themes were identified: intrapersonal experiences of identity as an FET L.O. teacher; experiences of contextual factors and their effects on experiences of psychological well-being; protective factors enhancing L.O. teachers' psychological well-being; and psychological well-being and the role it plays in the classroom; with their subthemes (see table 2). The appropriate verbatim quotations were also provided as support for the themes.

Table 2

Themes and Subthemes Regarding Life Orientation Teachers' Experiences of Psychological Well-being

Theme 1:	Intrapersonal experiences of identity as FET L.O. teacher
Subthemes:	1.1 FET L.O. teachers' experiences of responsibility and accompanying guilt 1.2 L.O. teachers fulfilling the role of guardian or parents 1.3 The personal and professional identity of the L.O. teacher 1.4 Powerlessness
Theme 2:	Experiences of contextual factors and their effects on experiences of psychological well-being
Subthemes:	2.1 The adverse impact of time constraints 2.2 Lack of resources inhibits the ability to teach L.O. adequately. 2.3 Lack of commitment and motivation on the part of learners with regard to L.O. as a subject and L.O. perceived as a trivial subject 2.4 Work overload and work pressure causing stress 2.5 Physical health 2.6 Experiences of a lack of support
Theme 3:	Protective factors enhancing L.O. teachers' psychological well-being
Subthemes:	3.1 Participants' perceived importance of L.O. as a subject 3.2 L.O. teachers driven by concern for learners' well-being 3.3 LO teachers' internal motivation to teach

	and bring about change
	3.4 Rewarding learner interactions as a source of motivation
	3.5 Sense of belonging
Theme 4:	Psychological well-being and the role it plays in the classroom
Subthemes:	4.1 Positive psychological well-being improves overall learning environment and learner interaction.
	4.2 Negative psychological well-being detracts from optimal learning environment.

Theme 1: Intrapersonal Experiences of Identity as FET L.O. Teacher

During the data collection process, it became apparent that certain intrapersonal experiences of identity were common amongst the participants. Experiences of responsibility as an L.O. teacher were apparent, and not meeting these intrapersonal responsibilities led to accompanying feelings of guilt being experienced. There appeared to be the expectation that, as an L.O. teacher, one would fulfil the role of parent or guardian to the learners, as a by-product of the role. There was also the theme of the personal and professional identity of the L.O. teacher as living by example, in connection with the L.O. content curriculum, and often not being qualified to teach L.O., but being requested to teach it, nevertheless.

FET L.O. teachers' experiences of responsibility and accompanying guilt. The data gathered appeared to reflect the experience of a deep sense of responsibility for learners' well-being, and this responsibility was often reflected in the participants' desire to lead by example, as seen in this quote: *Because when you teach people about certain aspects of life they must see it in you, it must reflect, so it's easier for them to learn from you.* (P5), and: *...in terms of LO, in terms of the health issues, you know it talks about psychological health and everything like that, so I also do the same, I try to lead while I teach* (P5), and echoed by this participant as well: *...and then I also have to be their example. I have to lead by example.* (P7). This sense of responsibility was also accompanied by learner expectations and accompanying guilt: *You always feel guilty because there*

are certain something [sic] that you didn't deal with, certain topics. So, you get worried, are they going to make it? (P7), and: They will expect you to give them advice or encourage them or motivate them. Sometimes I wouldn't know what to say (P7).

L.O. teachers fulfilling the role of guardian or parents. Several participants discussed how they perceived themselves as fulfilling the role of guardian or parent for their learners, as seen in the following statements: *I see myself as a father, doesn't matter race or gender, uh, and they approach me with all their problems.* (P2). This parental role is discussed as leading by example by this participant: *You know when we are teaching we are dealing with children, it's basically what I do with my own kids at home, and I always try to show them you know what, [when] children don't learn by what you tell them, but what they see.* (P5). The multiple roles fulfilled by this participant were described in this quote: *I'm a teacher, I'm a guardian to the learners I teach, I, I'm a parent... and I'm a nurse even though I was not trained for that.* (P6). The role of the watchful guardian or parent can be seen in this statement: *...We always tell them, when you are at school away from your parents, we are your parents. We are watching over you. So, we have to play the part.* (P7).

The personal and professional identity of the L.O. teacher. It became apparent from the data gathered that the professional boundaries of the L.O. teacher are more permeable than those of other teachers, as the L.O. teacher is understood and expected to be approachable to learners for them to disclose their personal troubles, as seen with this comment: *They will expect you to give them advice or encourage them or motivate them. Sometimes I wouldn't know what to say.* (P7). The professional, and therefore personal, identity of the L.O. teacher is also one of being psychologically strong: *I think as an L.O. teacher you need to be psychologically strong.* (P3). The permeable boundary is also due to the personal nature of the curriculum content of L.O.: *Especially in Life Orientation, when we go through some of the topics, like proper planning, sometimes when I'm teaching them these topics, I also learn from the topics, and I see oh this is what I have to do, how I have to plan, when we have – how to solve problems, problem-solving OK... Then I will also – sometimes, I will – some of the things I will tell them about my experiences in life, as an example.*

I will use myself as an example to help them understand and see, oh, it's not only us. I tell them, no, we go through the things some of you go through. (P7).

Powerlessness. The recurring theme of powerlessness may be seen in terms of contextual factors such as departmental issues, as well as participants' feeling powerless about learners' personal home circumstances and well-being. One participant simply stated: *There won't be change. (P1).* The same participant hoped that this research study would bring about some kind of positive change: *...to the Department...bring some changes...hear us L.O. teachers. Because you know, we've been complaining and asking for extra time. (P1).*

Several participants expressed the feeling that, even when they attempt to voice their concerns to relevant departmental authorities, they do not feel heard and they do not see change. As one participant stated: *At our school, I will say that you just carry on and you do not moan about anything, because nothing will be done about it, you can go and complain and then they will just say OK, they will do something about it, but that never really happens. (P4).* Another participant echoed this sentiment: *Nothing will change. I've complained, a lot, but my complaints were not considered. (P6);* and a sense of not being included in the decision-making could be seen in this statement: *Even if I ask questions, no reasons are given. (P6).* One participant's sense of powerlessness was succinctly stated: *You just continue because it is beyond your control, you cannot change anything. (P6).*

This sense of powerlessness extends to the participants' feeling powerless about their learners' personal circumstances. They are often the sounding board for learners' personal problems, yet with that appears to come a sense of powerlessness in not being able to assist to the best of their abilities, as stated by this participant: *They will expect you to give them advice or encourage them or motivate them. Sometimes I wouldn't know what to say. (P7),* and this: *It affects me badly to see that there are a lot of learners who are struggling out there, who are facing worse situations... (P7).*

Theme 2: Experiences of Contextual Factors and their Effects on Experiences of Psychological Well-being

The data that was gathered revealed several contextual factors that appeared to play a role in the participants' experiences of their own psychological well-being. These contextual factors included time constraints, lack of resources, L.O. being perceived as a trivial subject, work overload and stress, physical health, and experiences of a lack of support.

The adverse impact of time constraints. Most participants expressed concern regarding the lack of time in covering the L.O. syllabus and having to make personal sacrifices due to the lack of time, which adversely affected them. One participant expressed not being able to go into depth regarding L.O. content owing to the limited time allocated to the subject in the curriculum: *Um, we don't discuss it in so much depth, because, obviously, we have certain time constraints – constraints with regard to that.* (P3). The same participant reiterated: *With most schools you have, at most, two periods, or lessons, of Life Orientation a week. And you have to get as much work done in those two periods as possible.* (P3). Another participant discussed how the time constraints affect his personal life and lead to making sacrifices: *It also affects my personal lifestyle choices outside, in the sense that now, instead of going to the gym, like three times or four times, I can only go once...* (P5). The same participant discussed the frustration of marking and its related time management difficulties: *You know especially when it comes that time of marking, these different subjects, it's frustrating* (P5), and: *But that's why I'm saying you know, that's why I get my sacrifices up, because of this lot of marking of different subjects now I've got less time to focus on also what I love the most* (P5).

Lack of resources inhibits the ability to teach L.O. adequately. The lack of adequate resources appeared to negatively affect the participants' experiences, in particular when it came to teaching L.O. effectively, as stated by this participant: *Firstly, Life Orientation – we must have some time for physical education, for instance, and yet when schools are built in our areas, there's no facilities for physical activity, and that is a part of the curriculum* (P5). Another participant reaffirmed this difficulty: *Because we don't have the space for learners to do their exercise, it's*

difficult. (P7), and: *Yes because we don't have – You did, you saw our school...we don't have the space, the sporting....We don't have balls to play, we don't have anything.* (P7).

Lack of commitment and motivation on part of learners with regard to L.O. as a subject and L.O. perceived as a trivial subject. Participants perceived that the subject of L.O. was not taken seriously by either learners or other staff members who do not teach L.O. It was the participants' experience that L.O. was perceived by others as an 'easy' subject that is not as important as other subjects, as shown by this statement: *People take Life Orientation like it is a very easy subject. No, no, no, no... People glorify other subjects and they dress the level of Life Orientation down... And because it is L.O. they expect the learners to excel in that little time which is not realistic.* (P1).

This sentiment is also seen when L.O. is treated as a 'free period': *When the teacher does not have enough periods, you can give them L.O., you can give them L.O., and they do nothing. They are not making an effort in that period. They take it as a free period.* (P1). The negative perceptions regarding L.O. are also seen amongst the learners, as depicted by this statement: *And, specifically, when it comes to L.O., they know that it doesn't count towards their APS. So, they just go with the motion... with a subject like Life Orientation – very little [sic] learners actually care about it.* (P3). There also appeared to be the issue that, because L.O. was not taken seriously, the teaching of the subject would be allocated to whichever teacher was available to teach it: *When it comes to Life Orientation, because you know I teach Life Orientation, the biggest mistakes done by the schools, they think Life Orientation can be given to just any teacher. Ja, they don't look at the qualities that makes [sic] a very good Life Orientation teacher.* (P5). It was also apparent that teachers who do not teach L.O., had misperceptions of what the L.O. curriculum entails, as seen in the following statements: *Yes and some teachers here don't take Life Orientation seriously... The ones who don't teach anything, they say ah we just take the learners out and play with them.* (P7).

Work overload and work pressure causing stress. Stress, and its impact on the L.O. teachers, was a pervasive theme throughout. It was apparent that the participants felt overwhelmed

by the workload and the demands of the job, as seen in the following quotes: *It's too much. I had thirteen (classes) before, and I can't take it. If I have to teach the child and I have to mark these scripts with forty learners in class – one class. It affects you emotionally and physically – it affects you.* (P1); and: *It's burn-out stage.* (P1); and: *You can see a lot of stress and headaches.* (P1). The stress of not just teaching, but also having to be involved in extracurricular activities and large class sizes, took its toll on this participant: *...because remember that we now have fewer teachers, so now, there is a thousand activities and then each one must say do five activities and then you do a little bit of everything* (P4), and, *For example, my specific L.O. class must have 43 children, 43 is hellish many, it is very disordered* (P4). The stress appeared also to be related to balancing different subjects, and the demands that each subject brings: *When I got here in the North West, in this school specifically, they gave me other subjects to teach, and that makes it difficult to balance between now teaching Life Orientation plus language plus another thing. So that's where I say there's a problem, where the problem is, trying to teach too many different subjects.* (P5); and: *...because you end up now going home late every day because of different heads of department or supervisors wanting to see people after school* (P5). As can be seen, the stress does not just come from teaching the subject: *The frustration of having to attend too many workshops and all those things to try to learn new things on these new subjects, it's a bit challenging and difficult.* (P5). Often the teacher teaching L.O. has not been trained in the subject, which adds to the stress experienced: *You are given another subject, new subject to you. You need to learn the subject. New subject of which you, you are not trained for. They somehow discouraged you.* (P6).

Physical health. The physical health of the participants appeared to be a negative experience for them, as illustrated by the following quotes: *You can see a lot of stress and headaches.... After marking, sometimes I have to go to my doctor to give me something for energy, you see, give me something. I'm done here. I can't take it anymore. I have to rest. I have to rest for a few days.* (P1). When asked what happens when her psychological well-being is not experienced as good, this participant responded: *It affects your health.* (P1). The effects of the job on one's

health were of concern to this participant, as illustrated by the following: *And marking all day, it cannot be good for the health. That's when our chosen profession becomes a hazard to one's health, when we are working like that.* (P5). This participant felt that her physical health had a detrimental effect on her learners: *It makes me sad. Sometimes because of my illness now, I can't, they miss out. The learners miss out.* (P7).

Experiences of a lack of support. Participants appeared to have negative experiences of support from various channels of communication and networks. This participant's experience was one of isolation and lack of support from fellow staff members and the principal: *If you feel that you are not coping, then others just say OK, but I am also not coping, I also have too many things to do, so you must also, but no one really helps each other out, it is just like everyone must just swim and carry on ... And the principal who is so busy... Big problem. Because his door is always closed... You can't go there.* (P4), and: *I feel that he thinks that everyone is just a number.* (P4). Poor communication within the school environment was emphasised: *Many teachers are leaving this year because of communication* (P4).

Theme 3: Protective Factors Enhancing L.O. Teachers' Psychological Well-being

The data that was collected revealed certain protective factors that enhanced the participants' psychological well-being. These factors included the participants' perception of the importance of L.O. as a subject, their compassion for learners' well-being, their internal motivation to teach and bring about change, rewarding learner interactions, and a sense of belonging.

Participants' perceived importance of L.O. as a subject. It became apparent that most of the participants valued L.O. as a subject, and enjoyed engaging with the L.O. content, as seen by this comment: *I was never trained but I love the subject.... I've learned so many things in Life Orientation.* (P6). Several participants highlighted their impression that L.O. teaches unique life skills that are not addressed by the rest of the schooling curriculum: *And let me tell you, the more I teach L.O., the information that is in there. It's like a life skill. It's a real life skill... That is what these learners are going to have when they leave us – how they need to live when they leave school.*

All these other subjects – it's fine. But L.O. it's like a Bible, they are going to live what's inside. It's like a textbook, the skills that are written there they are going to have up until they die. (P1).

Another participant echoed this statement with the following: *And I'll tell them Life Orientation is very-very important. Because there is no book that teaches you about life or how to live, so Life Orientation just, it meets you halfway because I saw that there are so many topics, it's not only about life it teaches you about tax, and it has history, democracy, elections. It teaches you a lot.*

(P7). Another participant reaffirmed his belief in the importance of L.O., while touching on the recent developments regarding the phasing out of L.O. in the school curriculum: *And I think that Life Orientation is the most important subject, and, uh, it's sad for me to understand that they want to remove it in 2022 (P2).* Another participant appeared to have a sense of pride in teaching L.O., and discussed L.O. teachers having certain characteristic qualities: *Even, my principal once said, oh but you can teach L.O., anyone can teach L.O. I was like, and I corrected him, and said no, no, not everyone can teach this. We need people who have a certain kind of character to be able to come and teach this subject. (P5)*

L.O. teachers driven by compassion for learners' well-being. It became apparent that several participants went above and beyond the call of duty regarding learners' well-being. For example, one participant's compassion can be seen in the following quote: *I would drop them at home. Some of them they are sleeping by [sic] my house, especially when they are about to write exams... I was cooking for them. I didn't mind driving to places, cooking, taking money out of my pocket. Going around shops and asking for bags of porridge and potatoes and what-what. (P1).*

Another participant also allowed a learner to live with her: *They kicked her out and she had nowhere to go. I took her, for a week into my house, she was with me. (P7).* The participants' compassion was often linked to the learners' emotional well-being, as seen in the following statement: *Sometimes I will even cry with them when they tell me their problems. (P7).* This participant also expressed compassion regarding academic support: *Sometimes I will even call them before they are writing, just let them explain to me what they are explaining, so at least there's*

something, yes. (P7). Participants' expression of compassion towards the learners appeared to have a significant impact on them, as seen by this comment: *...and I also promised her [that] 'I will help you with nails and hair and all'. I ask her 'do you have shoes to wear?' She said yes. When she walked out of my class she was smiling.* (P7).

L.O. teachers' internal motivation to teach and bring about change. The data gathered indicated participants' passion for education and, connected to this, their desire to bring about change through education and through their interactions with their learners. Words such as 'passion' and 'calling' were common amongst the participants, as seen in the following statements: *That I want to be different. I want to see change, change that is with you, you understand? ...Because if you go there and you are going to start something different, you know you want to bring a difference.* (P1); and: *Because education is my passion, I haven't got a job. So, I live my passion, and, try to motivate learners to reach their, their abilities, and to reach their goals, uh, with a positive way.* (P2). The same participant described his profession as a calling: *...because I know I've got a calling on my life and that changes my whole point of view* (P2). This participant describes his passion for teaching as his main motivation: *I have a passion for teaching, that's what keeps me here.* (P6). Lastly, this participant discusses how she perceives her profession as being able to bring about change in her learners' lives: *What I am able, I'm capable of doing to learners, changing their lives, changing the way they think, changing the way they see life.* (P7)

Rewarding learner interactions as motivation. The data gathered indicated the motivational impact that positive learner interactions had on participants. The positive learner feedback acts as a motivation for this participant: *...in Life Orientation, that's a blessing for me, uh I've got contact with my school kids from 1981 still, so that's also motivation for me, they send me letters, WhatsApps... And, that is the biggest reward you can get. They thank you, for, you will be there, you was [sic] there when I need help or motivation or direction. So that's, that's, that's me keeping on... if you see the results, and the feedback, uh, that's, uh, the best rewards I can have* (P2). Participants who feel that they have had a positive impact on learners' lives then in turn feel

positive themselves, as seen by this participant: *So it's important for me and I become happy because it shows that I made an impact, and shows that they are happy to see me watching them doing whatever they are doing, just to show me that they are also doing something.... so it shows it's important for them, for me to be there and watch them. It's a nice feeling when I hear them inviting me to come and watch them.* (P5). The positive learner feedback has the same effect on this participant: *It makes me feel happy. It makes me, when I wake up in the morning, I, I wake up with pride, I come to work with pride.* (P7)

Sense of belonging. The sense of belonging appeared to be a protective factor for participants. This sense of belonging was achieved through participants' experiencing support in various forms, as described by this participant: *I think being supported by, you know, the staff members you work with, um, and having a headmaster that's very open-minded, or well, I almost want to say – has an open-door policy – so should there be any problems, or issues, he's very willing to, you know, accommodate us. And listen, and give an ear, and stuff like that.* (P3). It was also seen in the family-like atmosphere experienced by this participant: *...very supportive, such a close family. A small school, so it makes it so much easier to be able to support one another.* (P3). Support from fellow staff members appeared to be a buffer: *And we support each other, that is why we stay firm* (P6).

Theme 4: Psychological Well-being and the Role it plays in the Classroom

It became apparent after analysing the data that experiences of positive psychological well-being improve the overall learning environment and the quality of learner interactions with participants. In contrast, experiences of negative psychological well-being detract from the experience of an optimal learning environment.

Positive psychological well-being improves overall learning environment and learner interaction. Positive psychological well-being appeared to affect the overall learning environment as well as learner interactions. This participant felt that she could give more of herself when her psychological well-being was good: *Listen, if my psychological well-being is good, at the right*

level, the right basis, I can give them more than the result I can give them now. I push a lot. I give more strength, more power. (P1). When this participant experienced positive psychological well-being, she was able to access internal resources such as the strength to make an extra effort: *I enjoy it, it is a pleasure, like I love it when I see that I have grade 9 Afrikaans next then it gives me pleasure. I will also take extra trouble, prepare much more for the class* (P4). This participant discussed the effect that positive psychological well-being has on his interactions with his learners, as well as intrapersonal effects: *If I'm in a better state, you know, it will be easier, eh, it will be easier for me to interact with my learners. I will have more energy, I'll be able to, to be the best that I can be in front of my learners.* (P5). This participant also expanded on the connection between learner interactions and positive psychological well-being: *I think it plays an important role in the classroom, through the support that I give to my children. The encouragement that I give them, the motivation that I give them.* (P6), and: *That is why they are able to, to... what can I put it [sic] in that way, to confide, to confide in me.* (P6).

Negative psychological well-being detracts from optimal learning environment.

Experiences of negative psychological well-being appeared to lead to feelings of pervasive irritability, as described by this participant: *This term, the third term, for me it feels that there was not one day that I was not irritable, the whole time irritable, the whole time.* (P4). The same participant described how her irritability also lead to sarcasm in the classroom: *So, I am very irritated and then the children who just throw the papers down, that irritates me. Actually everything. Their little jokes irritate me. Yes, it is not... Every morning I get up then I am like I am going to answer every question properly and not be sarcastic. Then I am sarcastic, I am very sarcastic.* (P4). Related to these experiences, another participant had this to say about how negative experiences of psychological well-being may impact on the learning environment: *It might have an impact on how I handle some of the situations, you know I might be a bit too rude sometimes if maybe I'm not well, you know, so...* (P5). Negative experiences of psychological well-being were seen to also affect participants' engagement with their learners: *But without that it means that now I*

might even deprive the children, you know of, I won't be able to really focus on them if I'm not well (P5), and: *...when you not well, not, even not being rude but just being reserved and not really focusing on the kids can also affect the teaching and learning.* (P5). This participant described how her negative experience of her psychological well-being affects her expectations and perceptions of her learners: *I will expect negativity from the learners. They will always be angry, they will always be upset or badmouth in my lessons, and that shows there is a problem in class. Learners will also complain to the other educators.* (P6).

Discussion

This qualitative research study with a phenomenological research design aimed to explore the experience of psychological well-being amongst high school Life Orientation teachers within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District in the North West Province. The following research question directed this study: What are the experiences of psychological well-being amongst high school Life Orientation teachers within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District (JB Marks Area)? Four core themes with subthemes were identified: intrapersonal experiences of identity as an FET L.O. teacher; experiences of contextual factors and their effects on experiences of psychological well-being; protective factors enhancing L.O. teachers' psychological well-being; and psychological well-being and the role it plays in the classroom.

The participants described several experiences involving their psychological well-being. In Vazi et al.'s (2013) study on the relationship between well-being indicators and teacher psychological stress in the Eastern Cape, it was found that stress is prevalent amongst teachers, a finding that was also confirmed by this research study. Vazi et al.'s (2013) study suggested that interventions aimed at increasing psychological well-being amongst teachers would assist in more effective stress management overall (Vazi et al., 2013). The suggested interventions included enhancing autonomy, positive relations with others, and environmental mastery, to name a few (Vazi et al., 2013). Thus, enhancing psychological well-being would act as a protective factor against teacher stress, according to Vazi et al. (2013). The findings of this research study confirm

Vazi et al.'s findings, in that a sense of belonging was a protective factor for psychological well-being, and feelings of powerlessness and experiences of a lack of support were negative experiences of psychological well-being. Naidoo and Botha's (2014) study on work-related well-being for educators in KwaZulu-Natal also confirms the themes of powerlessness and lack of support, as their study found empowerment and organisational support to contribute towards educator well-being. In terms of environmental mastery, as mentioned by Vazi et al. (2013), it was interesting to note that several participants were not qualified to teach L.O. and therefore felt apprehension at having to teach the subject.

The participants' experiences of contextual factors and their effects on their experiences of psychological well-being included themes such as time constraints, a lack of resources, a lack of support, physical health and work overload. The results of a study conducted by Jackson, Rothmann and Van de Vijver (2006), in which a model of work-related well-being for educators in South Africa was developed, suggested that job demands need to be reduced and job resources need to increase, in order to prevent burnout and a deterioration of health. In particular, the workload of educators needs to be addressed (Jackson et al., 2006). The findings of this research confirm those of Jackson et al. (2006), in that there was a prominent theme of work overload and work pressure which caused stress, as well as a theme of physical health being negatively affected. Job demands such as time constraints, as well as a lack of resources and organisational support, also tie in with Jackson et al.'s (2006) findings. Naidoo and Botha's (2014) study confirms the theme of work overload. A study conducted by Hartell, Mosia, and Steyn (2013) also identified a lack of resources and a lack of support as challenges experienced by high school L.O. teachers.

Fouché's (2015) research on the well-being of teachers in secondary schools revealed findings which suggest that teachers with healthy psychological well-being are more likely to focus on the meaningfulness of the work they are doing. Fouché (2015) suggested that the most important positive practices to improve psychological well-being at work are those that foster a sense of meaningful work and inspiration. Fouché's (2015) findings revealed that a calling orientation and

co-worker relations explained a large percentage of the variance in experiences of meaningful work amongst the teachers in the study. These findings are reflected in the findings in this research study, in that the L.O. teachers' internal motivation to teach and bring about change was often described as a calling and a passion, which provided the participants with meaning. It can also be linked to the finding that rewarding learner interactions provided a source of motivation, as this contributed to the participants' experiences of providing meaningful work and inspiration. Co-worker relations, as found in Fouché's (2015) study, can be linked to the theme of the sense of belonging which was found in the current study.

One of the experiences of contextual factors identified in this study was the fact that learners do not seem to take L.O. seriously as a subject. In a qualitative study on L.O. as experienced by learners, Jacobs (2011) found that learners suggested that the L.O. subject is irrelevant, unnecessary, and a waste of time. While Jacobs (2011) does point out that little or no research has been done to examine the actual successes of the implementation of L.O., the findings do chime with the findings in this research study, where the theme of lack of commitment and motivation on the part of learners with regard to L.O. as a subject, and the perception of L.O. as a trivial subject, was identified.

The roles, expectations and innate characteristics of the L.O. teacher found within this research study were those of a parent or guardian, one who is filled with concern for learners' well-being, and one who is approachable. Helleve, Flisher, Onya, Mukoma, and Klepp (2011) conducted a study which explored the perceived desirable characteristics of South African Life Orientation teachers for teaching sexuality and HIV/AIDS. Helleve et al.'s (2011) findings revealed that L.O. teachers took on roles such as those of friend, parent, counsellor or social worker for the learners. These findings are in line with the findings of this research study, where the theme of L.O. teachers fulfilling the role of guardian or parent was identified. It can also be linked with the theme identified as the L.O. teachers being driven by concern for learners' well-being, as compassion has a caretaker component to it.

De Lange's (2016) research focused on the psychological well-being and character strengths of Life Skills teachers. De Lange's (2016) findings revealed that a teacher's psychological well-being influences learners within the classroom. De Lange (2016) described that when participants experienced positive psychological well-being, learners were positively influenced, and the classroom environment became a co-operative environment. The same was found in this research study, where experiences of positive psychological well-being improved the overall learning environment and learner interactions. De Lange's (2016) study found that a positive attitude towards the profession improved the psychological well-being of the teacher. However, the researcher of this study found that the participants' positive experiences and perceived importance of the L.O. subject in particular improved their experiences of psychological well-being.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, De Lange's (2016) research found that negative psychological well-being will influence learners negatively within the classroom. In the present research study, participants identified that they become more irritable and sarcastic in the classroom, and that this affected how they interact with the learners.

Limitations and Recommendations

One of the limitations of this research study is the small number of participants, not making it possible to generalise the findings to the broader Dr Kenneth Kaunda District. Another limitation may be that, for most of the participants, English and/or Afrikaans was not their native or home language. It is hence possible that some of what they wished to express may have been lost because they were not able to express it in their home language.

Possible recommendations for further research regarding this topic include exploring the experiences of psychological well-being amongst high school Life Orientation teachers in other districts and provinces in South Africa, in order to determine whether the experiences are similar in other areas of the country, as there is limited available research on this topic. Furthermore, it is recommended that a wider variety of participants be included to enable the generalisation of the findings to the population of high school L.O. teachers in South Africa. Intervention plans and

programs designed to improve the psychological well-being of L.O. teachers are also recommended, whereby the protective factors identified in this research study may be enhanced and the contextual factors identified as hindering the L.O. teachers' experiences of psychological well-being may be addressed and effectively managed.

Conclusion

This qualitative research study with a phenomenological research design aimed to explore the experience of psychological well-being amongst high school Life Orientation teachers within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District in the North West Province. In explaining the experiences of psychological well-being amongst high school L.O. teachers, four core themes were identified: intrapersonal experiences of identity as an FET L.O. teacher; experiences of contextual factors and their effects on experiences of psychological well-being; protective factors enhancing L.O. teachers' psychological well-being; and psychological well-being and the role it plays in the classroom. The researchers found that psychological well-being plays an important role in the educational experiences of L.O. teachers, and that there are contextual and protective factors that influence these experiences of psychological well-being. The researchers also found that these experiences of psychological well-being played a role in the classroom in various ways, as discussed in the findings of this research study.

Life Orientation teachers within the school system are well placed to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and skills to equip learners with the necessary life skills and tools to effectively navigate adulthood; it is therefore imperative to explore and address their experiences of psychological well-being, as it plays a role in the South African classroom. This can be done through further research and through the implementation of programs designed to improve the psychological well-being of L.O. teachers, whereby the protective factors identified in this research study may be enhanced and the contextual factors identified as hindering the L.O. teachers' experiences of psychological well-being may be addressed.

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SECTION 3: CRITICAL REFLECTION

Section 3 of this research study involves the researcher's personal reflection regarding her overall experience of the research study.

Critical Reflection

This critical reflection will include a discussion of each step of the research process, including the data collection process, data analysis, and the findings of this research study. For the purposes of this qualitative research, an interpretive, phenomenological perspective was utilized. This represented a commitment to understanding the experiences of psychological well-being in context and as lived, using contextual, experiential terms and categories (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). Understanding human phenomena in context is arguably at the core of qualitative research (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). In opting to conduct a qualitative, phenomenological research study, there was an unspoken assumption that it would be a more natural progression than attempting to do quantitative research, since it would not involve the mathematical skills required to conduct quantitative research. After all, qualitative research involves human capacities that come naturally to us, such as observation, listening, and asking questions (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). However, throughout the journey of completing this research study, I have come to learn that qualitative research requires the acquisition of specialized skills in order to be an effective qualitative researcher. What follows will be a discussion of the data collection process, data analysis, and the findings of this research study.

Data Collection

In qualitative research the researcher herself is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). This is an enormous responsibility, as one requires skills such as listening, observing, questioning, and interpreting; these are skills that are not easily taught, but rather acquired over time and with practice and experience. Terre Blanche & Kelly (2002) discuss the importance of engaging with research participants in an open and empathetic way. In phenomenological research, the researcher presents herself as the listener and

asks participants to give accounts of their experience of the phenomenon (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Probing questions are asked in order to encourage the participant to elaborate on details to gain a deeper understanding and to stay close to the lived experience (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). This whole data collection process was entirely new to me, and therefore I was excited to engage in a new learning process and acquire new skills. Thus, before embarking on the data collection journey, I first had to follow the necessary steps and procedures which would then allow me to begin data collection.

Gaining permission from the schools to conduct my research was a frustrating process. I made initial contact with high schools by sending emails with attachments of the District Director's approval, ethics approval letter and goodwill permission letters. Many schools did not respond to the emails, some indicated that they were not interested in participating, and some schools did not have working internet to receive emails. My next strategy was to make appointments with school principals in order to explain my research in person. Many of these schools were in rural areas that were quite a distance from where I lived. At times, I would arrive for a scheduled appointment with a principal only to find out that he was no longer available, and the appointment needed to be rescheduled. Nevertheless, when I was able to meet with principals and discuss my research with them, they were happy to grant permission.

Once participants had signed the informed consent forms, an appropriate room within the various schools had to be identified in order to conduct the interviews. As interviews could only be conducted when the teachers were available, it was often during the school break period or just after school had ended, which resulted in contending with noise factors. These were unplanned, uncontrolled variables which allowed me to hone my skills in being resourceful, making a plan, and listening with patience and context in mind.

In conducting research interviews, Seidman (1991) outlined the following points to keep in mind: listen more, talk less; follow up on what the participant says, ask questions when one does not understand something, and explore instead of probing (as cited in Terre Blanche & Kelly,

2002). As an intern counselling psychologist at the time of data collection, I had acquired certain therapeutic skills, and was actively engaging in psychotherapy on a daily basis. I therefore had to remind myself to step out of the therapeutic framework and step into the research framework in order to be an effective researcher. I used to practise as a high school English and Life Orientation teacher myself, and I therefore also had to be mindful of my personal biases as a former L.O. teacher during the in-depth interviews. Although I could relate to some of the participants' experiences, I knew that I had to remain objective and stay within the research framework and remember my research objectives. It was helpful to have a standardised 'interview schedule' which consisted of the three open-ended questions, as this kept the interview process on track, while still allowing participants to openly share their personal experiences of their own psychological well-being. I also found it helpful that I wrote 'process notes' during the interview, as a reminder to come back to critical themes expressed during the interview.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

One of the key concepts of phenomenology is the term 'bracketing', in which the researcher sets aside their own experiences and feelings about the phenomenon being studied, in order to approach it from a fresh perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thus, bracketing was important throughout the research process, but particularly during the analysis and interpretation phase.

The first step in thematic analysis as described by Clarke and Braun (2013) involved familiarisation with and immersion in the data. I found that transcribing the interviews verbatim myself aided the familiarisation process, although it was time consuming. Identifying codes and themes was a daunting, challenging task. This process involved much back and forth with my supervisor, who served as my co-coder. Although I could clearly 'see' the themes, it was difficult to accurately name them in the most succinct and concise way possible.

Findings

This research study aimed to explore the experiences of psychological well-being amongst high school Life Orientation teachers. It was an affirming experience to discover that the findings of

this study confirmed some of the findings of other studies (see De Klerk, Temane, & Nienaber, 2013; De Lange, 2016; Fouché, 2015; Hartell, Mosia, & Steyn, 2013; Helleve, Flisher, Onya, Mukoma, & Klepp, 2011; Jackson, Rothmann & Van de Vijver, 2006; Jacobs, 2011; Naidoo & Botha, 2014; Vazi et al., 2013). In particular I found that the theme involving the protective factors which enhance L.O. teachers' psychological well-being gave me hope and motivated me. It was enriching to see these protective factors emerge from the data gathered, especially after identifying the contextual challenges that these teachers experience. From a therapeutic standpoint, as an intern counselling psychologist, it was enlightening to find that compassion for learners' well-being and rewarding learner interactions acted as protective factors for these L.O. teachers. My own compassion is utilised in therapy, and when there is therapeutic growth, this improves my own experiences of psychological well-being. It was also interesting to note that all the participants perceived L.O. as a subject of vital importance, and that this was a protective factor for them. It revealed to me that, if one believes in the importance of what one is doing, one can withstand most challenges.

Personally, I have learned that the empathy I have for both L.O. teachers and learners in diverse schools contributed towards my motivation and perseverance during this research study. I believe that I developed as a researcher and gained valuable experience regarding aspects of ethical procedures, data collection, data analysis and the dissertation writing process. I also gained experience in qualitative data analysis. I realised the importance of reading, re-reading and reflecting until the themes gradually emerge to become major themes and sub-themes rooted in the evidence provided by the data. I realised the importance of research to address the challenges that teachers face at schools in South Africa.

Embarking on this research study contributed to my personal growth as well as my academic development. It encouraged me to reflect on my own experiences of psychological well-being and how it may play a role in my work as an intern counselling psychologist. I learned a lot about resilience and perseverance through completing this research study.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consent form: Participants



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INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS WITHIN THE DR KENNETH KAUNDA DISTRICT

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY: The experiences of psychological well-being amongst high school Life Orientation teachers within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District.

ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBERS: NWU-00055-18-S1

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr Werner de Klerk (Project Head: Registered Research Psychologist)

POST GRADUATE STUDENT: Ms Michelle Nel (MA Counselling Psychology Student)

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Faculty of Health Sciences
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Potchefstroom
2520

CONTACT NUMBER: 074 880 3824

You are being invited to take part in a **research study** that forms part of my (Michelle Nel) Masters Research Mini-Dissertation in Counselling 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 (independent 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 (prior to data analysis), 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-00055-18-S1)** 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. Permission from the District Director (Mr B.E. Monale) was also obtained on 18 July 2018.

What is this research study all about?

- This study will be conducted at various high schools within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District (JB Marks Area) of the North West Province, and will involve in-depth interviews with Life Orientation teachers currently employed at these high schools regarding their experiences relating to their own psychological well-being within the school context. The researcher (Michelle Nel) is trained in conducting in-depth interviewing, and a registered Research Psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) will lead this study.
- We plan to explore, identify and describe Life Orientation teachers' experiences with regard to their own psychological well-being within the high school context in the North West Province. These findings could possibly provide important data regarding how Life Orientation teachers experience their own psychological well-being within the school context, and how this could play a role in the Life Orientation learning environment, which has the potential to become a launching pad for future research and programme development within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, as well as other districts within the North West Province.

Why have you been invited to participate?

- You have been invited to be part of this research because you are a Life Orientation teacher, currently employed at a high school within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District (JB Marks Area) of the North West Province, who possesses valuable information about your experiences regarding your own psychological well-being within your school context.
- You also fit the research because you have a qualification in education, and have at least one year of experience teaching Life Orientation at a high school within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda district.
- In addition to this, you are also willing to participate in the study, sign an informed consent form and are also comfortable to be interviewed and audio-recorded during your interview.
- You will not be able to take part in this research if you do not possess a qualification in education, have less than one year teaching experience and are not employed at a high school within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District of North West Province. You will also not be able to take part in this research if you are not proficient in either English or Afrikaans, as these are the spoken languages of the researcher whom will conduct the interviews.

What will be expected of you?

- You will be expected to participate in an in-depth interview (of approximately 60 minutes) during which you will be asked to share your experiences with regard to your own psychological well-being within your school context. Please take note that the interview will be scheduled after school hours, during a time and date that best suits you and the researcher (Michelle Nel). You will not be expected to travel to the interview, as the researcher will arrange for the interview to take place at your school of employment.
- You will also be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire (of approximately 5min) for administrative purposes. During this questionnaire, you will be assigned a participant number which will ensure the anonymity of your information.
- It is also expected that you, as well as the independent person (who has provided you with this informed consent form), sign the consent form in one another's presence.
- Once the researcher (Ms Michelle Nel) has received all the informed consent forms from the independent person, she will directly make contact with you in order to schedule a suitable date and time for the interview.
- You will be provided with bottled water as refreshment during the interview.
- Before the interview starts, you will be informed once again that the interview will be audio recorded and transcribed (this is done in order to prevent any assumptions made by the researcher herself) and upon your permission, the researcher will start the audio-recording.
- It is important to note that the interview will take place 'after hours,' meaning, directly after school has ended, so not to interfere with contact time. It will be the responsibility of the participant to arrange his/her own transport after the interview has ended. If 'after hours' (directly after school) does not suit the participant then he/she will be welcome to suggest any other time that will be convenient.

Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?

- No direct benefits are foreseen in this study. The following indirect benefits, can, however, be anticipated for the society at large:
 1. The contribution to the existing body of knowledge regarding Life Orientation teachers' psychological well-being within the school context.
 2. An opportunity for recommendations for future research studies relating to this topic.
 3. Participants will have a reflective opportunity on their experiences with regard to their own psychological well-being within their school context.
 4. Upon request, participants will be granted the opportunity to receive the findings of the research study, which can possibly contribute to self-insight.

Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?

- The risk level of this study is classified as minimal due to the possibility of emotional discomfort while sharing your experiences. It is important to note that should a situation arise where you feel emotional discomfort or upset about anything discussed during the interview, the researcher will take the necessary steps to contain the situation within the interview. Debriefing and psychological services will be made available to you (free of charge) after the interview if you feel the need to make use of these services (one session). Due to the sensitive nature of the topic and content of the research, the researcher (Michelle Nel) will take extra precaution and care in acting empathically and in a professional manner. Confidentiality will also be of utmost importance.

- No foreseen risks of physical harm exist, as the in-depth interviews will be conducted in a secure and private room (identified by the school principal within your school).

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

- Anonymity of your findings will be protected through the allocation of participant numbers to all partaking individuals. The data will also be coded during transcription. The former, as well as the latter, will be done in order to ensure that no link can be made between the information received and a specific participant. Identifying data will therefore be changed during the transcription phase of the research to ensure confidentiality during data capturing.
- The voice recording of your interview on the audio recording device will be copied onto the researcher and project heads' computer where after it will be deleted from the audio recording device. The computers containing the audio recordings will be password protected and only the researcher and project head will therefore have access to the audio recordings. These audio recordings will be transcribed and each audio recording will be identified by only a participant number (as explained above) to ensure that all identifying data is changed.
- All findings will be reported as anonymous. It is therefore only the researcher (Michelle Nel) and the project head (Dr Werner de Klerk) who will have access to the findings. All other data and hard copies will be kept in locked cabinets within the project heads' office. Electronic data will consequently be password protected on the researcher and project heads' computer.
- All data will be stored within COMPRES (Community Psychosocial Research) at the North West University for seven years, after which it will be successfully destroyed by the North-West University.
- It is important to note that the HREC will also be monitoring the research process in order to ensure that the aspects within this research study adheres to approved protocol thereof.

What will happen with the findings or samples?

- This study is a once-off study and the data collected will therefore only be used and analysed in this study within South Africa. After the data has been analysed, the findings will be reported in a written article and summarized within a conclusion paragraph. This article will be submitted to an accredited scientific journal for possible publication.
- Please take note that all findings within this study will also be reported in the Masters Mini-Dissertation of the researcher (Michelle Nel) which forms part of her obtaining her MA Counselling Psychology degree at the North-West University of Potchefstroom.

How will you know about the findings of this research?

- We will give you the findings of this research (upon your request) after the data has been analysed and a mini-dissertation has been compiled. An electronic copy of this mini-dissertation will be sent to you if you wish to receive one. A summarised version of the findings can also be provided upon request. The researcher will furthermore contact you to arrange a suitable date and time for feedback of the study in person, should you wish to do so. If the submission of a written article for possible publication proves successful, the findings of this study will also be available after publication.
- You will be informed of any new relevant findings by means of an email.

Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?

- No, you will not be paid to take part in this study. You will, however, receive bottled water as refreshment during the interview..
- As mentioned previously, it will be the responsibility of the participant to arrange his/her own transport after the interview has been completed.

What is the role of the researcher within this study?

- The administrative duties will be the responsibility of an independent person (a Research Psychology intern within the School of Psychosocial Health). This person will therefore administer and collect your consent form as well as sign the informed consent form in your presence. The independent person will also be present when you – as the participant – sign the informed consent form as an undertaking of participation in this study. The signature of a witness will also be required.
- The researcher (Michelle Nel) will administer the demographic questionnaire herself as well as conduct the in-depth interviews. Due to the possible sensitive nature of this research topic, the researcher will take extra precaution and care to provide an empathic and comfortable environment for the participants to share their experiences. The interviewing process will take place in a secure, private and safe room which will be allocated by the principal within your school of employment. The interview time and date will also be scheduled according to your, as well as the researchers', convenience. The researcher will also travel to your school of employment for the conduction of the interview. Before the researcher starts with the interview, she will confirm your written consent to take part in this study, and ask your permission once again to audio record the interview. The researcher will also establish clarity of the participants' understanding with regard to the aim, purpose and procedure of the research, as well as the participants' understanding of what is meant by psychological well-being. If, at any time during the research process, you as the participant feel the need to withdraw, Michelle Nel will - without any prejudice - ensure and confirm your withdrawal. If the situation arises where you feel uncomfortable or emotional during the interviewing process, the researcher (Michelle Nel) will contain the situation if need be, where after debriefing and psychological services will be made available to you (free of charge), one session (if needed). Michelle Nel is furthermore responsible for ensuring the confidentiality of the data collected (as mentioned earlier in this document). Michelle Nel will also, as the researcher, conduct the data analysis and report her findings within her Masters Research mini-dissertation. This is done in accordance to the procedure of obtaining her Masters' degree in Counselling Psychology, and she will therefore also submit an article about the findings to an accredited scientific journal for possible publication. The researcher also has the responsibility to report the findings to you as a participating individual within this study and this will be done via email (upon your request) as well as in person (upon your request).
- The project head (Dr Werner de Klerk) will act as study leader for the research dissertation of Michelle Nel in order to ensure the adherence to all ethical aspects within this research study. Dr de Klerk will oversee that the researcher (Michelle Nel), as well as the independent person, act within their specified research roles and will also submit monitoring reports to the HREC referring to the progress of this research study.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- You can contact the independent person Mr Johan le Grange at 018 299 1621 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 (name and surname) agree to take part in the research study titled: The experiences of psychological well-being amongst high school Life Orientation teachers within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, JB Marks Area.

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, Michelle Francien Nel, declare that:

- I had it explained by who I trained for this purpose.
- I did/did not use an interpreter
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them
- I was available should he/she want to ask any further questions.
- The informed consent was obtained by an independent person.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as described above.
- I am satisfied that he/she had time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

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

.....
Signature of researcher

.....
Signature of witness

Appendix B: Approval Letter from District Director



Education and Sport Development

Department of Education and Sport Development
Departement van Onderwys en Sportontwikkeling
Lefapha la Thuto le Tlhabololo ya Metshameko
NORTH WEST PROVINCE

Isimane Building, R.O.P. Tembo Street,
Pretoriusburg
Private Bag X4250, Potchefstroom 0200
Tel: (010) 299-8216 / Fax: 294-8231
e-mail: bmonale@nw.gov.za
Online Manager: Linda Nelson - Tel: (010) 299-5264
e-mail: Lindson@nw.gov.za

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR Dr KENNETH KAUNDA DISTRICT

Enquiry: Motsepe Thomas; 018 289 8284

Tel: (018) 299 8264/8258

e-mail: tmotsepe@nw.gov.za

18 July 2018

To: **University of the North West**
Michelle Nel

From: **Mr. B. E. Monale**
District Director

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

TOPIC: "THE EXPERIENCES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONGST HIGH SCHOOL LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS WITHIN THE DR KENNETH KAUNDA DISTRICT, JB MARKS AREA"

Reference is made to your e-mailed correspondence addressed to the Department, which is a request for permission to conduct research under the above-stated topic.

Accordingly, permission is hereby granted for you to conduct the research as per your request, subject to the following provisions:

1. Considering that your research work will involve L.O. Educators in identified schools around J.B. Marks Sub-district, it is directed that you take active steps to ensure that the research work itself should not compromise the normal school functionality.
2. That the onus to make individual arrangements with your target schools and educators rests with you.
3. That the principle of confidentiality will be observed in its strictest terms.
4. That the research findings will be made available to the Department of Education & Sport Development upon request.

With our Best Wishes,

MR. B. E. MONALE
DISTRICT DIRECTOR
DR. KENNETH KAUNDA DISTRICT

Cc: **Mo. S. Yssel: J.B. Marks Sub-district Manager**
Mr. H. Molefhe: Matlosana Acting Sub-district Manager
Health Research Ethics Committee (North-West University)



"Towards Excellence In Education and Sport Development"

Appendix C: Declaration by the Language Editor

I, **Glenda Holcroft, (ID 5103060026082)**, a professional language practitioner, declare that I conducted the language editing of this dissertation, *The experience of psychological well-being amongst high school Life Orientation teachers within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District*, submitted by Michelle Nel.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Holcroft', written in a cursive style.

11/11/2019

Signature

Date