UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK TO ADDRESS THE HOLISTIC NEEDS OF ADOLESCENTS FROM MIDDLE-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

by

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A full thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Work
in the Department of Social Work,
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences,
University of the Western Cape

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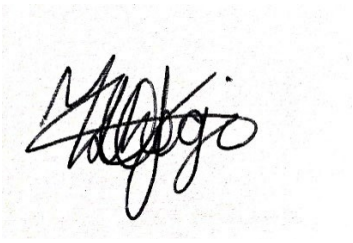
Submission date: 30 September 2024

DECLARATION

I, Tshegofatso Goitseone Maleka, declare that this thesis titled "**School social work to address the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households**" is my own work and all sources that were utilised have been acknowledged in-text and in the reference list.

This thesis is being submitted for a Master of Social Work degree in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, Department of Social Work at the University of the Western Cape. This work has never been submitted to any other institution for examination.

Signed:  Date: 30 September 2024

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households and how they can be supported through school social work services to successfully transition into young adulthood. The study focused on the socioeconomic challenges faced by these families in South Africa, highlighting their vulnerability to falling into poverty due to limited opportunities, a situation further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Utilising the subjective holistic well-being theoretical framework and an interpretive research paradigm, a qualitative research approach was adopted. This approach was complemented by descriptive and contextual research designs. Non-probability purposive sampling was employed to select participants from two research populations: adolescents from middle-income households and their educators. Data were collected through individual interviews with adolescent participants and focus groups with educators. Ethical considerations included obtaining ethical clearance from the University of the Western Cape, permission from the Department of Basic Education and school principals, informed consent and assent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, and data management. Thematic analysis yielded descriptions of the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of adolescents from middle-income households, the challenges they face, and how school social workers can support their holistic well-being.

Keywords: Adolescence, holistic needs, middle-income, social work, school social work

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the following individuals who helped bring this study to fruition:

- **My research supervisor:** I would like to thank my research supervisor. Professor M. Van Der Westhuizen. Prof, your coaching and guidance exceeded all my expectations for my research journey. Often during the moments where I was at my lowest and struggled to believe in my capabilities, your positivity, commitment and determination towards my development has really humbled me. I am in awe of how you consistently stood by my side and advocated for my research project. Thank you so much for everything.

- **My thesis editor:** I would like to give gratitude to my editor, Dr Lee-Anne Roux. Thank you for working tirelessly to make sure that my thesis is edited and ready on time for submission.

- **My parents:** Mama and Papa, thank you for your unwavering support. Without your firm guidance, I would not have even aspired to pursue a Master of Social Work.

- **My late maternal grandmother:** The matriarch of my universe, thank you for holding me accountable and ensuring that I completed my degree, despite the financial challenges we faced. Without your influence, I wouldn't have been able to apply for this master's course.

- **My late maternal grandfather:** Thank you for teaching me the value of education. Your wisdom and example continue to inspire me.

- **Kelebogile Thebe, my soulmate:** Thank you for always being by my side. Your support and sacrifices have meant the world to me.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my younger siblings and cousins:

Thabang Maleka, Omphile-Lethabo Moganedi, Katlego Ntoele, Khanyisile Kelebogile Masechaba, Ofentse Mothle, and my dearest late Twinny, Lesedi la ha Yende.

Your adolescent journeys have inspired the concept of this thesis. The resilience, courage, and bravery with which you face life's challenges are a true reflection of the incredible young adults you are becoming. Your strength, willpower, and tenacity continually inspire me to be a better older sister. You are smart, you are kind, you are important, you are worthy, and you are limitless.

When I grow up, I want to be like all of you.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

CCMA	Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration
DBE	Department of Basic Education
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IASSW	International Association of Schools of Social Work
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
MDT	Multidisciplinary Team
NYP	National Youth Policy
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SASA	South African Schools Act
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UWC	University of the Western Cape

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH TOPIC

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigated school social work as a specialised field within social work, focusing on social work services for adolescents from middle-income households within the school system. In South Africa, these households represent a small segment of society (Zizzamia et al., 2016) and are often overlooked by social services, as interventions primarily target the poorest of the poor (World Bank, 2018; James, 2014; Visagie & Posel, 2013).

The middle-income class in the country has evolved since the end of apartheid. Burger et al. (2015) argue that, in order to build a just society, the needs of the new middle-class profile in post-apartheid South Africa should be explored and addressed. In this study, the researcher contends that to ensure adolescents from middle-income households do not become a 'forgotten group' in services provided by school social workers, their holistic needs must be explored, described, and interpreted to develop effective ways of empowering them to transition successfully into young adulthood (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2020a).

This chapter introduces the research topic by outlining key concepts, providing a preliminary literature review, and presenting the theoretical framework that guides this study. It defines the research problem, followed by the research questions, aims, and objectives. The chapter ends with a discussion of the significance of this study and an overview of the structure of the thesis.

1.2 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

This section defines and connects the key concepts central to this study, including adolescence, holistic needs, middle-income, social work, and school social work.

1.2.1 Adolescence

“Adolescence” is the early stage of youth. The National Youth Policy (NYP) (RSA, 2015; 2020a) defines youth as the age group from 14 to 35 years. This policy is based on the premise that if holistic needs are not met early in youth development, it will impact the youth's ability to move towards independence and holistic well-being during early adulthood. In support of this, De Lannoy and Mudiriza (2019) highlight the ages of 15 to 24 years as a crucial period for adolescents and youth, during which they must prepare for the transition into young adulthood. For the purpose of this study, adolescence refers to the ages of 15 to 18 years. It is envisaged that identifying the holistic needs of adolescents within the school system could contribute to school social work services that empower adolescents to successfully transition to young adulthood after they finish school.

1.2.2 Holistic Needs

“Holistic needs” refer to all aspects of an individual’s functioning, including physical, social, psychological, economic, cognitive/educational, and spiritual well-being (RSA, 2015). Focusing on the well-being of adolescents, a study by De Lannoy et al. (2018) identified family and community life, self and aspirations, education, and economic opportunities as important aspects for adolescents in the Western Cape, where the study was conducted. The authors recommend further investigation into comprehensive support forms for adolescents to address their holistic needs. This study aimed to identify the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income homes to guide support through school social work interventions.

1.2.3 Middle-Income

The term “middle-income” is commonly used by various authors to refer to individuals or social classes who fall above the poverty line but below the upper class (Kroeker et al., 2018; Zizzamia et al., 2016; Keeley, 2015). Visagie and Posel (2013) note that this label refers to a range of income classes positioned in the middle of a country’s income distribution. However, this classification is context-specific and cannot serve as a universal definition of the middle-income class. For example, in South Africa, a country characterised by extreme poverty and inequality, the median income earner often falls below the poverty line (Zizzamia et al., 2016).

Visagie (2013) further argues that defining the middle-income class is especially complex in South Africa due to the country's diverse social structure. The World Bank (2018) also recognises South Africa's significant inequality, describing the middle-income group as particularly vulnerable. This group, which constitutes a small fraction of society, bears the burden of supporting a large population living in poverty and is frequently overlooked in policy interventions. This study focuses on the middle-income class, drawing on Burger et al.'s (2015) observation that the post-apartheid era has seen a rapid expansion of the Black middle class. This emerging group faces specific vulnerabilities that must be addressed to foster a "more just, dynamic and integrated society".

1.2.4 Social Work

The Draft Social Service Practitioners Bill (RSA, Department of Social Development, 2019) defines "social work" as services provided by a registered social worker, with a focus on individuals, groups, and communities. The primary goals are to promote social change, enhance social functioning, and build capacity through human relationships. The Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training further highlight that effective social work practice must be grounded in an understanding of how social determinants affect individuals, particularly the holistic well-being of adolescents. Social work should also take into account personal life experiences and aim to foster the development of individuals' potential (International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW] & International Association of Schools of Social Work [IASSW], 2020).

1.2.5 School Social Work

Frey et al. (2012) describe "school social work" as a specialised field within social work that places the child at the centre. In this role, the social worker establishes links between the child, the school, the community, and the family, leveraging available resources to support the holistic development of school-aged children, particularly adolescents. This includes providing comprehensive support not only to the children but also to all stakeholders involved in their lives. The focus of this study on school-based social work is guided by the NYP (RSA, 2020a), which underscores the importance of adolescent-friendly services in all areas of life, including schools.

The key concepts outlined above formed the foundation for a preliminary literature review, which aimed to explore the existing knowledge on the research topic.

1.3 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

The researcher began by reviewing literature that defines the middle-income class in South Africa and examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this group. Next, the focus shifted to exploring the holistic needs of adolescents from these households. Following this, the researcher examined school social work as a service designed to meet these needs. Finally, the theoretical framework most suitable for this study was identified and described.

1.3.1 Middle-Income Class in South Africa

Burger et al. (2015) assert that the definition of income class depends on the theoretical framework that underpins it. For example, middle income can be described in terms of occupation and/or skills, vulnerability, income polarisation, or subjective social status. This study focuses on income polarisation and the vulnerabilities of the middle-income class in South Africa. In support of this focus, the World Bank (2018) describes the South African context as follows:

> South Africa also has a high concentration of low-income earners (the poor) and a few very high-income earners (the rich or elite), but only a small number of middle-income earners, resulting in a high level of income polarization. This high level of income polarization slows the growth of the middle class. (World Bank, 2018, p. xviii)

From the above description, the middle-income class in South Africa lies between a small section of the high-income class, comparable to developed countries, and a large proportion of the low-income class. Their vulnerabilities include risks and uncertainties related to the socioeconomic situation in the country. The risk of job loss and the inability to receive income support, combined with rising living costs, place such families at risk of descending into poverty (Burger et al., 2015). An example of this vulnerability is that these families do not qualify for reductions in school fees, yet they may struggle to meet all their family's needs.

In post-apartheid South Africa, the profile of the middle-income socioeconomic class has changed as some members of previously disadvantaged groups have gained access to economic opportunities. It was envisaged that these groups would become empowered and self-sufficient (Burger et al., 2017). However, Visagie (2013) notes that the high rate of inequality in South Africa continues to prevail (cf. World Bank, 2018). As a result, the middle-income class in South Africa has fewer opportunities to grow and prosper (Visagie, 2013).

One must also consider that traditional notions of the term “middle class” should be challenged by incorporating traditional values, perceptions, and lifestyles into the description of the middle class in a post-colonial and post-apartheid era. James (2014) concurs with this view, asserting that the new middle class must be empowered and viewed as central to the decentralisation of socioeconomic and political systems in a post-apartheid world.

This study explored the holistic needs of adolescents from the middle-income class. It is assumed that, while their families can provide for basic needs, socioeconomic challenges may place these adolescents at risk of not being perceived as vulnerable enough to warrant preventative and support services. This focus is informed by, among others, Visagie and Posel (2013), who argue that much-needed emphasis is placed on poverty and inequality in South Africa, while little attention is given to the nature of the middle-income class in the post-apartheid era. These authors contend that, although the middle-income class is viewed as representing the middle strata of society, this does not hold true in the polarised South African context. The plight of middle-income households became even clearer during the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, when many households lost their income, which will be discussed below.

1.3.1.1 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the middle-income class in South Africa

The global COVID-19 pandemic hit South Africa hard. The country was placed under a state of emergency and entered a national lockdown on 26 March 2020 (Hamzelou, 2020). President Ramaphosa (2020) announced an initial 21-day lockdown aimed at decreasing COVID-19 infection and death rates through regulations such as social distancing and self-quarantine (Ramanathan et al., 2020). The lockdown led to the

closure of all non-essential services, resulting in significant challenges for the middle-income class due to a lack of, or reduced, income for an uncertain period. The initial lockdown period was extended, introducing specific levels that determined, among other factors, which economic activities could continue. This unstable situation made the middle-income class increasingly vulnerable to falling into poverty (Arndt et al., 2020). Therefore, post-pandemic, the new challenges faced by this income class need to be considered when examining the holistic needs of adolescents.

1.3.2 Holistic Needs of Adolescents

Jaworska and MacQueen (2015) describe adolescence as a time that entails the transition from childhood to adulthood. During this period, adolescents undergo various biological changes, including the development of the brain (Sackman & Terway, 2016). These changes influence the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social development of the adolescent (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019). The changes experienced during adolescence result in a variety of needs, which are often influenced by the context in which the adolescent operates (Alderman & Breuner, 2019). The fulfilment of these needs will impact both the holistic development of adolescents and the adults they become (cf. RSA, 2020a). It is important for those who work with and interact with adolescents to be aware of the many changes they experience, as well as their unique contextual needs. To address adolescents' developmental needs holistically, the different domains of development should be considered.

Boynton (2014) expresses concern that, while social work focuses on holistic development and well-being, many services for youth only address one aspect, such as social behaviour or emotional support. Services that concentrate solely on one area of well-being risk failing to support sustainable positive change. This concern is echoed by Thorburn (2015), who notes that adolescent development within the school system often prioritises cognitive needs and does not consider how the other developmental domains interact with one another. This oversight can hinder the overall development process.

Fletcher (2014, p. 12) explains that “holistic youth development is the most important for transformation programmes to be successful”. For this reason, this study focused on the following domains, as discussed by Sackman and Terway (2016):

- *Physical Development*: Adolescent physical development includes an increase in physical growth, enhanced motor competencies, and sexual maturation. These physical changes may impact the adolescent’s behaviour as they become more aware of their changing bodies. As a result, adolescents may feel uncomfortable and inept while learning to navigate their new physical identities (Sackman & Terway, 2016).

- While physical development is common among most adolescents, it is important to note that not all adolescents experience physical changes at the same time. Therefore, some adolescents may feel self-conscious and be wary of not fitting in, as they may not look like their peers. Due to the variance in the pace of physical development, those who appear more physically mature may be exposed to and/or pressured to engage in risky behaviour, while those who look physically immature may be treated like younger children or face bullying (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019). This illustrates the vulnerability associated with the physical development of adolescents.

- *Cognitive Development*: The adolescent brain undergoes changes that enable them to become cognitively liberated individuals. Development in this domain is important to support the transition to adulthood, as it prepares adolescents to make informed decisions and function independently. Moreover, adolescents develop skills that enable them to think more effectively (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019). Sackman and Terway (2016) suggest that cognitive development relates to the ability to comprehend, reason, and make sense of the world adolescents live in. This requires abstract thinking, advanced reasoning, and metacognition that support decision-making and impulse control (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019).

- *Emotional Development*: The adolescent developmental period is marked by an increase in self-reflexivity, leading to an awareness of themselves as individuals,

which supports a move towards independence (Sackman & Terway, 2016; Fletcher, 2014). On the one hand, emotional development occurs when adolescents employ skills that enable them to effectively manage their emotions. On the other hand, when adolescents face stressful situations and lack the skills to cope effectively with their emotions, they become vulnerable to making emotional decisions and acting impulsively (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019). Sackman and Terway (2016) note that one of the prominent characteristics of emotional development is that adolescents' behaviour becomes more erratic due to mood swings. Therefore, the ability to understand their emotions and develop skills to express them effectively is an important contributor to holistic well-being.

- *Social Development*: This aspect of development prepares adolescents for adulthood as they learn to fulfil larger roles within society (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019). Peers become the platform for adolescents to develop their social skills. However, peer pressure can lead to adolescents trying to fit in, making them vulnerable to losing their individual identity (Sackman & Terway, 2016; Fletcher, 2014). Sackman and Terway (2016) argue that family functioning influences social relationships and an adolescent's ability to build strong and positive peer connections. It is within the family that adolescents learn how social interactions occur. Similarly, Fletcher (2014) emphasises the importance of maintaining healthy family relationships, which equip adolescents with the skills to sustain relationships outside the family.

- *Moral/Ethical Development*: Sackman and Terway (2016) describe moral development during adolescence as the formation of an individual's sense of values and ethical behaviour. This is connected to social development, as adolescents develop morally based on their immediate environment. For adolescents to become aware of social behaviour that can affect others and to act empathetically, they need to experience empathetic responses towards themselves. Guyer and Horstmann (2015) explain that positive feedback and exposure to positive social behaviour, grounded in an empathetic view of others, contribute to an optimistic state of mind. Moral development is also linked to

cognitive development, as it emerges from abstract thinking skills (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019).

The interrelatedness of the developmental domains is illustrated above. In this study, the focus was on how school social work can contribute to the development of all these domains. It was argued that school social workers can help raise awareness of and address the specific context-related needs of adolescents. Therefore, it is important for school social workers to involve caregivers, educators, and parents to empower them to provide the necessary support to adolescents (Alderman & Breuner, 2019).

1.3.3 School Social Work

The newly published regulations concerning the conditions for registration of a specialty in school social work (RSA, 2020b, p. 75) define school social work as "a specialised field in social work that focuses on holistic social work services as an integral part of the education context, addressing psycho-social barriers to learning experienced by learners in educational institutions" (cf. Van Sittert & Wilson, 2018). Expanding on this, Vergottini (2019) explains that holistic social services in educational settings involve various key role players, including:

- Learners,
- Parents,
- Educators, and
- The school as community.

The holistic approach to school social work further involves creating and developing an environment that supports the full potential of learners by addressing the following barriers to learning:

- Social,
- Emotional,
- Socioeconomic, and
- Behavioural barriers.

In this way, school social work becomes a support system for the school community.

In the South African context, school social work has seen many developments. For instance, the Western Cape province, where this study was conducted, experienced an increase in the employment of school social workers from four in 1982 to 116 in 2017. In 2017, the Free State province had a total of 32 employed school social workers, 28 more than in 2010. Similarly, the Gauteng province went from having four employed school social workers in 2010 to 27 in 2015 (Vergottini & Weyers, 2020). Despite these developments, Reyneke (2020) postulates that many learners still lack access to school social workers due to the ratio of appointed school social workers compared to the number of schools they must serve. This author argues that all children have a right to access school social work services, while, on the other hand, school social workers are burdened with high caseloads. Consequently, the work ethic, competence, and professionalism of school social workers have been compromised.

However, school social work has now been acknowledged as a specialised field in social work, which means that greater emphasis will be placed on providing South African children with access to social workers in the school context. The scope of practice, according to the published regulations, includes.

1) “assessments to inform services to address social, emotional and behavioural barriers to learning, experienced by learners taking into cognisance cultural diversity;
2) direct and indirect social work methods of intervention to support parents, families and learners to overcome barriers to learning;
3) guidance and support to educators, parents and families to best meet the learning, physical, social and emotional needs of a learner;
4) advocate for quality, equitable, just, inclusive and supportive education environments for learners to enable them to realize their full potential through learning;
5) functioning within a multidisciplinary team (MDT) within the education context, addressing psycho-social barriers to learning experienced by learners in educational institutions; and
6) providing expert evidence and opinion” (RSA, 2020b, p. 77).

The theoretical framework to support this study, which explores how the holistic well-being of adolescents could be supported through school social work, will be presented next.

1.3.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the subjective holistic well-being theoretical framework. Tinkler and Hicks (2011) describe this framework as focusing on individuals' self-assessed evaluations of their own well-being. Within this approach, individuals define their well-being based on key domains that outline subjective holistic well-being. The primary domains identified in this framework include physical, spiritual, psychological, and social well-being. Each of these domains is briefly discussed below, along with an explanation of their relevance to this study.

- *Psychological well-being* is best understood as how individuals cognitively and affectively evaluate their lives. Cognitive evaluation involves a thoughtful assessment of one's life satisfaction, while affective evaluation refers to the expression of emotions related to different life experiences (Choudhury & Barman, 2014). In this study, the psychological well-being of adolescents from middle-income households was explored through both cognitive and affective evaluations, as expressed by the adolescents themselves and their educators.

- *Physical well-being* involves maintaining a lifestyle that includes regular exercise, proper nutrition, and a balanced state of body, mind, and spirit (Choudhury & Barman, 2014). Van Lier et al. (2017) note that physical well-being is closely tied to holistic well-being, as a balanced physical state positively impacts all aspects of an individual. This study explored how adolescent physical well-being can be enhanced through school social work services, contributing to their overall holistic well-being.

- *Social well-being* is reflected in an individual’s ability to interact and engage with those around them. Choudhury and Barman (2014) highlight the importance of the competence required to communicate and build relationships with others. In this

study, social well-being was explored in terms of what adolescents from middle-income households need to effectively relate to and engage with peers and other significant individuals in their lives. Consistent with Choudhury and Barman's (2014) perspective, this study also examined the quality of the relationships these adolescents require within their society and community.

- Choudhury and Barman (2014) use the term "wholeness" to describe spiritual well-being, referring to how individuals interact with themselves, others, and their environment. These interactions play a crucial role in shaping an adolescent's ability to develop a value system that fosters moral and ethical growth (Sackman & Terway, 2016). This study focused on understanding what adolescents need to cultivate a value system that supports their holistic well-being, including the development of meaningful relationships and effective decision-making skills.

The preliminary review of the literature helped the researcher identify the research problem for this study.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

After a thorough review of the literature and relevant resources, a clear research problem has been identified. A research problem refers to a gap, contradiction, or challenge uncovered by the researcher through the literature review. Hernon and Schwartz, as cited by Miles (2019), define a "problem statement" as a concise and precise declaration of what the research will investigate. The preliminary literature review allowed the researcher to pinpoint key gaps and challenges, leading to the formulation of the research problem outlined below.

> Middle-income families are often excluded from intervention strategies, as services tend to focus on supporting the most vulnerable members of society (Burger et al., 2015). However, South African middle-income families are also considered vulnerable due to a polarised society where they have fewer opportunities to grow and prosper (World Bank, 2018; Visagie, 2013). This vulnerability became even more pronounced during

the COVID-19 pandemic (Arndt et al., 2020). As a result, the needs of adolescents from middle-income families are often deprioritised by social workers, including school social workers. This study aims to investigate the specific needs of adolescents from middle-income households to achieve holistic well-being and how they can be effectively supported through school social work services.

The need for this study lies in developing school social work interventions that address the needs of adolescents who are often not recognised as at-risk, empowering them to transition successfully into young adulthood after completing school. This need is further substantiated by literature indicating that adolescents from middle-income households are at risk of being overlooked due to the perception that their families can meet their basic needs. However, the socioeconomic challenges faced by these families expose their vulnerability to falling into poverty because of limited opportunities (Arndt et al., 2020; Visagie & Posel, 2013). The research problem informed the research questions, aims, and objectives proposed for this study.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A research question provides a clear focus, ensuring the feasibility of the study by clearly outlining the question that needs to be answered. It serves as the primary guide throughout the research process (Ratele, 2014). The research questions that directed this study are:

- What are the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households?
- How can school social workers address these holistic needs?

These research questions informed the development of the study's aims and objectives.

1.6 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

1.6.1 Aims

The terms ‘research aims’ and ‘research objectives’ are often used interchangeably, as both describe what the researcher intends to achieve through the study (Fouché & De Vos, 2011). However, for the purpose of this study, the research aim is defined as the intended outcome, while the research objectives are the specific steps taken to achieve that outcome (Fouché & De Vos, 2011). With this distinction in mind, the following aims are aligned with the research questions guiding this study:

- To describe and interpret the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households.
- To describe and interpret what is needed for school social workers to contribute to the holistic well-being of adolescents from middle-income households.

1.6.2 Objectives

The objectives supporting the achievement of these aims were:

- To conduct individual semi-structured interviews with adolescents from middle-income households to explore and describe their holistic needs to be addressed through school social work services.
- To conduct focus groups with educators to explore and describe their perceptions of the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households to be addressed through school social work services.
- To make recommendations for school social work practices that address the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study highlighted the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income families, who are often a 'forgotten' group in social work services. Additionally, the researcher aimed to contribute to the development of school social work as a new specialisation within the social work discipline by presenting findings that emphasise what adolescents need for holistic well-being and how school social workers can facilitate their holistic development.

1.8 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: This first chapter introduced the study by means of definitions of the key concepts, a preliminary literature review, and a description of the theoretical framework. The research problem was provided, together with the research questions, aims, and objectives. The significance of the study was also described.

Chapter 2: The second chapter outlined the chosen research methodology and its application in this study, along with the study's limitations.

Chapter 3: The third chapter provided an in-depth literature review to explore what is known about the topic of this study. This information, together with the information in the preliminary literature review, was used to compare and contrast the research findings.

Chapter 4: The fourth chapter discussed the findings related to adolescents from middle-income families and the descriptions of their holistic needs.

Chapter 5: The fifth chapter focused on the findings related to educators' descriptions of how school social work can support the holistic development of adolescents from middle-income families.

Chapter 6: The final chapter summarised the study's findings, provided some final conclusions, and suggested recommendations based on insights from the research.

1.9 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

In order to identify the research problem and the focus for the study, this first chapter concentrated on defining the key concepts and related these definitions to the focus of the study. This was followed by a preliminary review of the literature to identify what is known about the research topic and what requires further exploration. The theoretical framework that guided the approach of the study was also discussed. The research problem, questions, aims, and objectives informed by the preliminary literature review were described, and the significance of the study was presented. The chapter concluded with an outline of the research document. The next chapter describes the research methodology that was employed in this study.

CHAPTER 2
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter introduced the research study through a preliminary literature review that provided a focus for the study and the theoretical framework that supported the researcher in formulating the research problem, questions, aims, and objectives. The significance of this study was also presented.

This chapter describes the methodology that was employed in this study. Daniel et al. (2018) conceptualises the term “methodology” as a scientific exploration of the processes employed to collect the data. Thus, this chapter is dedicated to describing the methods and techniques used to enable the researcher to collect and analyse the data in a scientifically sound manner.

2.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The *research paradigm* of a study is influenced by the researcher’s perception of the world. Lather, as cited by Sönmez (2013), states that a research paradigm illustrates our perceptions of the society we inhabit and the society we aspire to create. Thus, the research paradigm reflects how researchers think and what they believe. In this study, the researcher adopted an *interpretive paradigm*. This paradigm encourages the inclusion of diverse perspectives from individuals within a specific context and acknowledges the significance of their descriptions of subjective experiences (Bryman, 2016). Within the theoretical framework of subjective holistic well-being, the interpretive research paradigm was deemed relevant for interpreting the subjective experiences and perceptions of adolescents from middle-income households and their educators regarding what is needed for their holistic well-being (Neuman, 2014).

2.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Aligned with the *interpretive research paradigm*, the researcher employed a *qualitative research approach* to address the research questions (Jensen, 2016) by exploring the experiences and perceptions of individuals relevant to the research topic and context

(Robson & McCartan, 2016). This approach allows participants to share their subjective experiences, consistent with the interpretive paradigm (Bryman, 2016). According to Bryman (2012), qualitative research seeks to understand how participants perceive and interpret their social worlds. In this study, adolescents from middle-income households and their educators provided insights into their experiences and perceptions regarding what is needed for these adolescents to achieve holistic well-being.

The characteristics of this approach, as discussed by Mohajan (2018), include:

- Qualitative research supports a form of social action that emphasises how people interpret their realities. In this study, adolescents from middle-income households and their educators were given the opportunity to share their experiences and understanding of their holistic needs, which acknowledged their descriptions and interpretations of their realities.
- Interviews, diaries, observations, focus group discussions (FGDs), and other forms of expressive data collection methods are used to ensure that participants direct the findings of the study. In this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews and FGDs to collect verbal data.
- Qualitative studies are often used to explore the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of a phenomenon through the descriptions of people associated with the research topic. In this study, the researcher aimed to explore ‘what’ the subjective holistic needs of adolescent participants were in order to describe ‘how’ school social work could support them. Nassaji (2015) also highlights the qualitative researcher’s interest in describing the ‘what’ of a phenomenon in terms of a holistic description of the situation provided by the participants. Mohajan (2018) asserts that the descriptions of participants assist the researcher in obtaining a detailed understanding of their social world. In this study, understanding what adolescents from middle-income homes need to experience holistic well-being was essential in order to make recommendations for school social work services.
- The exploration of the lived experiences of participants contributes to the interpretation of social reality, which aligns with the interpretive paradigm that informed this study.

This approach influenced the researcher's choice of research designs.

2.4 RESEARCH DESIGNS

The selection of a research design is influenced by the purpose of the research study (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Essentially, the research design assists the researcher in executing the research inquiry; in other words, the design is aimed at answering the research questions and achieving the research aims. Based on the research questions and aims of this study, the researcher employed descriptive and contextual research designs, as described by Ritchie and Ormston (2014) and Ormston et al. (2014).

The descriptive research design was chosen as it supports explorations aimed at developing an understanding of a situation, environment, process, or relationship (Ormston et al., 2014). Nassaji (2015) explains that descriptive research studies are holistic in nature and require a rich collection of data from a variety of sources. This design was therefore selected to support the researcher's choices regarding the populations relevant to this study, as well as the methods of data collection and analysis.

In this study, the research design facilitated the exploration of the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households within the school context. This led the researcher to incorporate a *contextual research design*, which seeks to gather detailed data within the specific environment of the participants. Oliveira Machado and Pacheco (2020) describe the contextual research design as a user-centred approach that supports the collection of data, enabling a deeper understanding of a situation and informing innovative practice. To ensure that the recommendations for school social work focused on addressing the holistic needs of adolescents, as described by the adolescents themselves, the researcher utilised this design to guide the sampling and data collection processes.

These designs served as a guide to identify the methods and techniques best suited for this study.

2.5 RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods refer to those methods and techniques that assist the researcher to obtain and analyse data to answer the research questions and achieve the research objectives (Morrison, as cited by Daniel et al., 2018). This section describes the research methods in terms of the research population, sampling method and technique, and methods of data collection, analysis, and verification.

2.5.1 Population and Sampling

A *research population* is a target group within the general population that is most relevant to the research topic (Majid, 2018). According to Thacker (2020), a research population consists of individuals with specific characteristics pertinent to the topic, while a sample is a representative subset of that population. In this study, the characteristics of the population allowed the researcher to select participants who were best suited to answer the research questions.

The research populations of this study were:

1) Adolescents from middle-income households, and
2) Educators of adolescents from middle-income households.

To obtain a representative sample from the population (Thacker, 2020; Majid, 2018), the *non-probability sampling* method was utilised, meaning that not all members of the population had an equal chance to participate (Elfil & Negida, 2017). To select participants from the population to answer the research questions, the *purposive sampling technique* helped the researcher formulate inclusion criteria to identify those individuals who would be best able to answer the research questions (Sharma, 2017). To access adolescents from middle-income households, the researcher identified three schools in the Cape Town area located in middle- to low-income communities. Two schools agreed to participate. To protect the privacy of the schools and their learners, these institutions were referred to as ‘School A’ and ‘School B’.

The inclusion criteria for the adolescents were:

- All adolescents between the ages of 15 and 18,
- Who were attending the identified schools, and
- Did not qualify for the exemption of school fees.

The exclusion criteria were adolescents younger than 15 and older than 18, and those who qualified for exemption of school fees.

The inclusion criteria for the educators were:

- All educators of adolescents between the ages of 15 and 18
- At the identified schools.

Exclusion criteria were educators who taught other age groups at the identified schools, or educators who did not teach at these schools.

After obtaining ethical clearance from the University of the Western Cape (UWC) (Annexure A), the researcher requested permission to conduct the research at the selected public schools from the Western Cape Department of Education (Annexure B). Following this approval (Annexure C), the schools were contacted via email and/or a telephonic or face-to-face conversation with the principals. Both school principals who were contacted agreed to participate. These principals provided the researcher with the names and contact details of educators who met the inclusion criteria. The educators were approached with an information letter inviting them to participate and support the researcher in gaining access to the learners (Annexure D). Those educators who agreed to participate were asked to sign informed consent (Annexure E) and focus group binding forms (Annexure F). They were also asked to provide information letters to learners who met the inclusion criteria and their parents (Annexure D), allowing them to decide whether to participate. In this way, the educators acted as gatekeepers, providing the researcher with access to adolescent participants.

Those parents and their adolescents who agreed to participate were then contacted individually by the researcher and asked to sign informed consent and assent forms (Annexure E). They were also given opportunities to ask questions to enable them to make an informed decision.

The researcher aimed to include between 12 and 20 participants, following Omana's (2013) guidelines for sample sizes in qualitative studies. However, the primary goal was to reach data saturation – where no new insights emerge from interviews or FGDs – to ensure the collection of rich, comprehensive data (Jensen, 2016). Data saturation was achieved after the third FGD with nine educators, although the researcher initially planned to conduct one additional interview. Due to access limitations, with only one school granting permission to engage with educators, conducting another interview was not possible. In the case of the adolescent participants, data saturation occurred after six interviews, with a seventh interview conducted to confirm that no new information surfaced. Consequently, the final sample size consisted of nine educators and seven adolescents.

2.5.2 Data Collection

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher adhered to the relevant regulations during the data collection period. Given the sensitivity of the research topic, the researcher believed that privacy and confidentiality might be compromised on online platforms. Therefore, she conducted the interviews when contact was possible, ensuring that social distancing protocols, the wearing of masks, and sanitisation measures were followed.

To obtain data from the adolescent participants, the researcher employed individual interviews. This type of interview involves the use of a few predetermined questions, followed by techniques that encourage participants to elaborate on their responses. Follow-up questions can then be utilised to further explore topics that participants raise, which may not have been included in the planned questions. In this study, the researcher established some research questions to ensure that the interviews remained focused on the research topic while allowing participants to fully explore each question, giving them the opportunity to share all the information they deemed necessary. An interview guide with semi-structured open-ended questions (Annexure

F) directed the interviews to maintain focus on the research questions without limiting the adolescents' responses (Devlin, 2018; Pollock, 2020). The questions posed during the interviews were aligned with the theoretical framework that guided this study and are presented below.

Questions focusing on physical well-being

- What do you think adolescents need to be healthy?
- What do you think makes it difficult for them to be healthy?
- What types of activities or programmes at the school can help adolescents to have a healthy body?

Questions focusing on emotional well-being

- What do you think adolescents need to feel good and happy?
- What do you think makes it hard for adolescents to feel good and happy?
- What types of activities or programmes at the school can help adolescents to feel good and happy?

Questions focusing on social well-being

- What is important for adolescents to have a good social life?
- Who is important in adolescents' social life?
- What can make adolescents' relationships with friends, family, and other social groups (such as church and sports clubs) difficult?
- What types of activities or programmes at school can help adolescents have a good social life?

Questions focusing on spiritual well-being

- What is the role of religion/spirituality in adolescents' lives?
- What could harm adolescents' religious/spiritual lives?
- What types of activities or programmes at school can help adolescents have a good religious/spiritual life?

A registered social worker was recruited to provide debriefing and counselling to participants if needed.

FGDs were conducted to collect data from the educator participants. The researcher facilitated interactive discussions about experiences and perceptions related to the research topic using open-ended questions from an interview guide (Annexure J) (Cyr, 2019). This approach allowed the research participants to express themselves freely. The following questions, aligned with the theoretical framework, guided the interviews:

Questions focusing on physical well-being

- In your opinion, what do you think will contribute to the physical well-being of adolescents in general?
- What challenges do adolescents from middle-income households experience that affect their physical well-being?
- What do they need to experience physical well-being?
- What role players and resources do they need to experience physical well-being?
- How do you think school social workers could support their physical well-being?

Questions focusing on emotional well-being

- In your opinion, what do you think will contribute to the emotional well-being of adolescents in general?
- What challenges do adolescents from middle-income households experience that affect their emotional well-being?
- What do they need to experience emotional well-being?
- What role players and resources do they need to experience emotional well-being?
- How do you think school social workers could support their emotional well-being?

Questions focusing on social well-being

- In your opinion, what do you think will contribute to the social well-being of adolescents in general?
- What challenges do adolescents from middle-income households experience that affect their social well-being?

- What do they need to experience social well-being?
- What role players and resources do they need to experience social well-being?
- How do you think school social workers could support their social well-being?

Questions focusing on spiritual well-being

- In your opinion, what do you think will contribute to the spiritual well-being of adolescents in general?
- What challenges do adolescents from middle-income households experience that affect their spiritual well-being?
- What do they need to experience spiritual well-being?
- What role players and resources do they need to experience spiritual well-being?
- How do you think school social workers could support their spiritual well-being?

One of the benefits of collecting data through a FGD is that the natural setting enables the research participants to freely share their opinions and ideas about the research topic (Neuman, 2014).

All the participants were asked for permission to audio record the interviews and FGDs. The researcher also made field notes to document non-verbal data during the data collection process. Directly after the interviews and FGDs, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings and included the field notes in the transcripts.

A pilot interview with an adolescent and a FGD with educators were conducted to ensure that the responses of the participants addressed the research questions. After the pilot interviews were analysed, the researcher and her supervisor confirmed that the research questions were suitable for attaining the research aims (Bryman, 2016).

2.5.3 Data Analysis

In qualitative data analysis, the researcher repeatedly engages with the collected data, breaks it down into smaller parts, and synthesises it into information that can be understood (Terre Blanche et al., 2014). Through this analysis process, the researcher

interprets the data, develops a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem, and seeks answers to the research questions.

In this study, the researcher and an independent coder utilised the following eight steps proposed by Tesch (in Creswell, 2014) for qualitative data analysis:

- ***Step 1: Identifying key ideas***: The researcher read through all the transcripts and made notes of ideas that came to mind. These ideas were documented on a separate piece of paper. She then grouped similar ideas together, such as those related to specific descriptions within the theoretical framework.
- ***Step 2: Plotting key topics in the margin****:* The researcher then went through all the transcripts again, this time making notes of key ideas in the margin next to the verbatim quotes in each transcript.
- ***Step 3: Listing the key topics****:* Returning to all the transcripts, the key topics and ideas that had been collected were written down on a separate page.
- ***Step 4: Grouping similar topics together****:* In this step, the researcher grouped the key ideas according to their similarities to identify the main topics that emerged from the data. Each main topic was given a code and included in the margin next to the relevant verbatim quotes.
- ***Step 5: Identifying sub-topics****:* Each topic was reviewed to group sub-topics together. These sub-topics focused on specific aspects within each main topic. The sub-topics also received codes that were placed in the margins of the transcripts next to the relevant quotes.
- ***Step 6: Describing every topic as a theme and sub-topics as sub-themes***: The researcher then described each topic in terms of the focus of the descriptions provided by the participants, aligning this with the theoretical framework. These descriptions were identified as the main themes. The sub-topics were then also converted into descriptions of their focus and listed as sub-themes under the relevant themes. Some sub-themes included further topics that described the sub-theme, which were then identified as categories within the sub-theme.
- ***Step 7: Linking themes, sub-themes, and categories with verbatim quotes***: In this step, the researcher returned to the transcripts and identified the relevant

quotes for each theme, sub-theme, and category according to the codes in the margin. These descriptions were then placed under each theme, sub-theme, or category.

- ***Step 8: Final decision on themes to include presenting the findings***: The researcher, the independent coder, and the supervisor compared the two sets of data analyses and reached an agreement regarding the themes, sub-themes, and categories that had been identified and that were best suited to answer the research questions.

The findings were used to achieve Objective 3, which sought to make recommendations for school social work practices that address the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households.

To ensure the scientific validity of the findings, careful attention was given to the verification of the qualitative data.

2.5.4 Data Verification

The trustworthiness of a study relates to the verification of the data, which determines the extent of confidence in the collected information (Connelly, 2016). To ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative data in this study, the researcher employed the criteria for data verification outlined by Schurink et al. (2011), namely *credibility, transferability, dependability,* and *confirmability.*

2.5.4.1 Credibility

To inquire about the *credibility* of a research study means to determine the extent to which the findings represent a true reflection of the data. Lietz and Zayas (2010) describe credibility as the degree to which the research data express the true opinions of the research participants. In this study, credibility was attained through the triangulation of methods of data collection and data sources, member checks of the field notes, the use of interview guides, and the incorporation of verbatim responses from participants. Data saturation further supported the authenticity of the data (Jones, 2013).

2.5.4.2 Transferability

The *transferability* of the research relates to whether the findings can be applied in other settings and contexts. Lincoln and Guba, as cited by Lietz and Zayas (2010), describe the concept of transferability as the extent to which the research findings can be applied in various contexts in the future. In this study, transferability was supported through a comprehensive description of the choices and implementation of the research methodology, the theoretical framework that guided the study, and triangulation of data sources (Schurink et al., 2011).

2.5.4.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of the research over time (Anney, 2014). The following strategies proposed by Anney (2014) were employed to ensure dependability in this study: Firstly, the researcher conducted an audit trail of the implementation of the research methods, as discussed in this chapter. Secondly, the use of an independent coder ensured that the researcher and the independent coder could compare the respective outcomes of the analyses to determine the themes, sub-themes, and categories identified by both. Thirdly, triangulation of data sources contributed to the dependability of the findings presented in the chapters to follow.

2.5.4.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is achieved when other researchers can verify the findings derived from the collected data (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). This ensures that the research findings reflect the opinions of the participants rather than those of the researcher. In this study, confirmability was supported by using transcripts and verbatim quotations from the participants, the process of data analysis, and the involvement of an independent coder. Additionally, the findings were compared and contrasted with existing literature.

2.5.4.5 Reflexivity

Reflexivity involves the researcher being aware of how their own opinions and background can influence the research process and the interpretation of the data. Anney (2014) notes that reflexivity is an inquiry into the possible impact of the researcher's background, perceptions, and interests on the qualitative research process. In this study, the researcher also incorporated reflexivity to ensure her

neutrality (Ormston et al., 2014) by reflecting on the research process and the interpretation of the findings. This was achieved through constant planning of the methodology's implementation and the use of the supervisor's input and guidance. Through discussions with the independent coder and the supervisor, the researcher's own bias was acknowledged when interpretations were made (Harding, 2019; Devlin, 2018).

The research methodology described above was implemented with ethical considerations and practices, which will be detailed in the next section.

2.6 ETHICS

The treatment of human research participants must be conducted ethically, with a primary focus on safeguarding their well-being. Wassenaar (2014) emphasises that the purpose of research ethics is to protect the welfare of participants. In qualitative research, ethical considerations ensure that participants are treated with the utmost care and respect. In this study, the researcher adhered to key ethical principles, including avoiding harm to participants, providing debriefing, ensuring voluntary participation, obtaining informed consent and assent, maintaining anonymity, ensuring confidentiality and privacy, and securely managing and storing the research data.

This study was conducted after the researcher obtained ethical clearance from UWC (Annexure A) and permission to conduct the research at the selected schools from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) (Annexure B).

2.6.1 Avoidance of Harm and Debriefing

The principle of *avoidance of harm* requires ensuring that no harm is inflicted on research participants (Wassenaar, 2014). This includes crafting research questions that are not likely to cause distress or discomfort. In this study, the researcher recognised the possibility that participating adolescents might experience emotional responses while sharing their experiences and perceptions. To address this, individual interviews were conducted in a private, familiar location within the school setting, with participation being entirely voluntary. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Additionally, a registered social worker was available for *debriefing* or counselling, if needed, to provide immediate support (Devlin, 2018). The researcher arranged for this support in advance to ensure direct and timely referrals as needed.

2.6.2 Voluntary Participation and Informed Consent/Assent

Voluntary participation refers to the research participants being invited to take part in the study and not coerced into doing so (Iphofen & Tolich, 2018). Thus, the research participants should engage in the study of their own free will. Additionally, participants must provide *informed consent* to indicate their voluntary participation. Informed consent means that the researcher must provide the participants with information about the research regarding the aims, methods, risks, and benefits (Wassenaar, 2014) so that the participants can make informed decisions about whether to participate in the study. Informed consent was obtained from the participating educators and the parents or legal guardians of the participating adolescents (Annexures E, H, and I). Since adolescents are under the legal age (i.e., younger than 18 years) to provide consent, the researcher obtained assent from the participating adolescents (Iphofen & Tolich, 2018). Therefore, the adolescents whose parents provided the researcher with consent were given information pertaining to the study, and those who assented to participate voluntarily completed an informed assent form (Hein et al., 2015).

In this study, adolescents, their parents, and educators were given the opportunity to ask questions before deciding whether to participate. Emphasis was placed on their right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any negative consequences. Educators who agreed to participate and parents who consented to their adolescents' participation signed formal consent forms. The adolescents, in turn, signed an assent form, acknowledging their voluntary participation (Arifin, 2018; Devlin, 2018).

2.6.3 Anonymity, Confidentiality, and Privacy

Privacy refers to the personal information of participants that should remain private and not be shared, while *confidentiality* pertains to the contributions made by the participants, which must be handled in such a way that it does not harm them in any

way. *Anonymity* is one way to support confidentiality by ensuring that the presentation of contributions does not impact the confidential nature of data collection (Bless et al., 2013).

Confidentiality and anonymity were upheld through the use of pseudonyms in the transcripts. The participants' details were linked to the pseudonyms on a separate sheet that was only accessible to the researcher and her supervisor. The educator participants were requested to sign FGD consent forms to further support confidentiality during the discussions in focus groups. Individual responses were not linked to the participants but to their pseudonyms in the description of the findings (Harding, 2019). In addition, the findings were presented as a collective narrative so that individual contributions could not be traced to specific participants. Privacy was ensured through the storage and management of data (Bless et al., 2013).

2.6.4 Data Storage and Management

The documents containing personal information and audio recordings were stored in a locked space or on a password-protected computer. Only the researcher and her supervisor have access to these documents. The independent coder used the transcripts without any personal details. The documents will be kept for five years after the completion of the study and then disposed of in an appropriate manner (Bless et al., 2013).

2.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Ross and Zaidi (2019) explain that, in order to understand the findings of a study within the specific context it was conducted, limitations must be presented in terms of their implications and how the researcher attempted to mitigate them. The findings of this study should be interpreted in light of the following limitations encountered:

Firstly, the data were collected during 2022 and 2023, which coincided with and followed the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the descriptions provided by the participants may have been influenced by their experiences during this period. While this could have affected the descriptions, the researcher believes that the findings also

reflect the needs of adolescents during challenging times, such as the pandemic. This could be viewed as an advantage. However, the pandemic made it difficult to gain access to the participants, resulting in data collection taking longer than originally planned.

Secondly, the adolescents who participated in this study were primarily female, leading to an under-representation of male adolescents. Participation in the study was voluntary, which limited the researcher's influence over the gender distribution of the participants. This aspect was considered when she made recommendations for further research in the final chapter of this report.

Thirdly, it was challenging to arrange FGDs with educators due to their busy schedules. This resulted in an extended data collection period, as some scheduled FGDs were cancelled when participants indicated they could no longer attend due to other work-related responsibilities. The FGDs that did take place had to be conducted within a restricted time frame for the same reason, which meant that participants did not fully explore all the questions presented to them. Ultimately, the researcher was only able to arrange FGDs at one school. Consequently, the findings do not represent a variety of educational contexts. As with the previously mentioned limitation, this was also addressed in the recommendations of this study.

2.8 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter outlined the research paradigm, approach, designs, and methodology, detailing the choices made and discussing the characteristics of each choice that assisted the researcher in attaining the study's aims. This was supported by an examination of how the methodology was implemented. Additionally, the ethics and limitations of the study were addressed.

The following chapter provides the literature review which explores the concepts of middle-income households, adolescence, and school social work. This information will be used to compare and contrast the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 3
LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provided the background for this study through a preliminary literature review, emphasising the need for this research. It also introduced the research questions, aims, and objectives. According to Sylvester et al. (2013), a preliminary literature review involves an initial exploration of existing works to establish a context for the research topic and to identify gaps that warrant further investigation. These gaps help shape the research problem. The research problem identified in Chapter 1 guided the selection of the research methodology, which was detailed in Chapter 2, including the implementation of specific methods and techniques.

Chapter 3 provides an in-depth literature review, exploring the existing information on the research topic. Paré and Kitsiou (2017) suggest that a comprehensive literature review serves as a crucial part of the research study, where existing works are examined in greater depth. The goal is to synthesise the relevant literature and compare it with the study's findings. Through this process, the research aims to contribute to the broader body of knowledge (Oliver, 2012). The discussion below presents literature focusing on the following key concepts: middle-income households, adolescence, social work services for adolescents, and school social work practices.

3.2 MIDDLE-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the concept of “middle-income class” is rooted in the fact that this group of households lies between the few higher income-earning and the larger lower income-earning classes (World Bank, 2018). This description assumes that middle-income households are situated in the middle of these two polarised income groups. Nemeckova et al. (2020), however, argue that in the African context, it is insufficient to measure the middle class exclusively in terms of income. Melber (2022) concurs and refers to other characteristics that define the middle class in the African context, including:

- Profession, means of living and the sustainability thereof,

- Social status,
- Education,
- Cultural norms,
- Networks,
- Religion, and
- Language,

Melber (2022) further argues that the aforementioned factors also influence inequality, social structure, and processes of differentiation. In addition, the middle class is often 'forgotten' in service delivery, as their vulnerabilities are under-emphasised. Furthermore, studies have shown that a clear definition of middle-income households in South Africa is highly dependent on the context of their experiences (Zizzamia et al., 2016; Burger et al., 2015; Visagie, 2013). In this study, the researcher focused on the vulnerabilities experienced by adolescents in middle-income households.

3.2.1 Vulnerabilities of Middle-Income Households

Havrilla (2017) describes vulnerability as a dynamic state influenced by resilience or risk factors that impact the well-being of individuals, groups, communities, or populations. Chunga et al. (2018) further explain that both risk and protective factors affecting vulnerability levels among adolescents from middle-income households can be categorised as follows:

- **Self-status**: Factors like self-esteem and belief systems
- **Behaviour**: Risk-taking behaviours versus informed decision-making
- **Family**: Parental presence or absence, involvement, parenting styles, family communication, and norms
- **Peers**: Peer pressure for high-risk behaviours versus peer support, rejection versus acceptance
- **School**: Academic performance, dropout rates, and support within the school system.

- **Neighbourhood**: Exposure to or protection from violence/crime, access to youth clubs, church activities, socio-cultural events, entertainment, and social support infrastructure.
- **Macro-level**: Socio-economic support and recognition of vulnerability by service providers.

Havrilla (2017) further asserts that all humans are at risk of being vulnerable to particular situations, circumstances, or events, depending on their access to positive internal and external resources, or the risks that arise from a lack thereof.

Team and Manderson (2020) refer to structural vulnerabilities resulting from disparities in class, gender, sex, and race, while Bourgois et al. (2017) assert that these vulnerabilities arise from a combination of socioeconomic and demographic factors. Thus, structural vulnerability relates to stratification within society, which contributes to the challenges faced by middle-income households.

Farkas and Romaniuk (2020), focusing on the ethical responsibility of the social work profession to respond to vulnerabilities, argue that social workers must be competent in identifying the factors that may support vulnerability in order to uphold the principles of social justice and dignity. These authors explain that certain ecological factors may contribute to vulnerability, including socioeconomic factors, culture, race, gender, and sexual orientation (cf. Team & Manderson, 2020; Bourgois et al., 2017). The presence of these factors manifests in inequality, affecting individuals, groups, or communities.

In examining the vulnerabilities of middle-income households in South Africa, it is imperative that social workers remain cognisant of the effects that high levels of inequality have on society. Zizzamia et al. (2016) argue that despite middle-income households in South Africa being above the poverty line, they are still confronted with significant inequality. This stands in stark contrast to the fact that South Africa is a developing country (Jain et al., 2020) with one of the most progressive constitutions in the world (Melber, 2020). These inequalities are most evident in the income

polarities among the various households within South African society (Ramudzili, 2019; Adam, 2021; Machema, 2019).

The emergence of democracy has resulted in the growth of middle-income households in South Africa, with the expectation that this would enhance their development (Southall, 2017). Despite a decline in poverty levels, Zizzamia et al. (2016) noted before the COVID-19 pandemic that households in South Africa remained polarised and highly unequal, and that due to the vulnerabilities experienced by middle-income households, they are one of the most affected groups in society. Supporting this viewpoint, López-Calva and Ortiz-Juarez (2014) highlight that middle-income households often rely on income from semi-skilled work, which may lead to employment insecurity. Additionally, Schotte et al. (2017) position middle-income households just above the poverty line. Implicitly, according to these authors, despite being above the poverty threshold, many middle-income households struggle to acquire basic goods. Altman (2022) reports that the pandemic further negatively impacted the middle class, with only 42% of the working-age population formally employed in 2021. The loss of employment during the pandemic thus adversely affected the financial circumstances of the middle-income class.

The description of middle-class households in South Africa and their vulnerabilities frames the exploration of the concept of adolescence presented next.

3.3 ADOLESCENCE

In this section, for the purpose of this study, the characteristics of adolescent holistic well-being will be unpacked, focusing on the age group of 15 to 18 years, and further described in terms of adolescent vulnerabilities.

3.3.1 Characteristics of Adolescent Holistic Development and Well-being

Wild and Swartz (2016) describe the adolescent period in human development as a transition from childhood to adulthood. These authors assert that the changes adolescents experience manifest in their cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and

moral/ethical development. Additionally, these changes influence adolescent behaviour and holistic well-being.

3.3.1.1 Cognitive development and well-being

According to Alderman and Breuner (2019), the structural changes in the brain that occur during adolescent development impact adolescent behaviour. These authors explain that one of the structural changes in the brain involves a decrease in grey matter and an increase in white matter. This results in an enhanced ability to perform tasks that require more adept functioning. In line with this description, Galotti (2017) emphasises that adolescent cognitive development is more about the enhancement of existing skills and abilities rather than the acquisition of new ones. The various experiences that adolescents encounter necessitate applying skills and abilities that require a more advanced functioning of the brain. Furthermore, due to cognitive development, adolescents become capable of focusing their attention on an activity or task for longer periods. Younger children often struggle to maintain focus on a single task, whereas adolescents can do so. Berthelsen et al. (2017) add that adolescents are now able to provide feedback on what they have experienced and learned, and they are ready to start developing skills such as conceptualising ideas, planning, goal-setting, and monitoring progress. In summary, Galotti (2017) identifies the following components of cognitive development during adolescence:

- Attention and executive functioning,
- Working memory,
- Perception,
- Reasoning, and
- Problem-solving skills (Galotti, 2017).

Galotti (2017) further explains that working memory is used to access current information stored in the adolescent brain and supports adolescents in performing daily tasks and responsibilities. This description is expanded upon by Berthelsen et al. (2017), who argue that working memory develops through a process of acquiring skills such as self-monitoring, providing feedback, and relational reasoning. Reasoning, or the ability to consider various pieces of information and ideas to form an opinion, is

influenced by life experiences. Galotti (2017) provides the example of adolescents reflecting on the skills they have applied to previous situations to help explain current experiences. Thus, this author explains that adolescence is marked by reasoning based on the ability to rely on long-term memory.

In addition to working memory and reasoning, problem-solving skills are also developed and matured during the adolescent years in order to identify problems and devise solutions (Galotti, 2017). Sagone et al. (2020) assert that problem-solving skills are essential for meeting the demands of everyday life, supporting adolescents' independent functioning. Portela-Pino et al. (2021) include the interpersonal skills needed to solve problems, which must also develop during adolescence. In this way, adolescents become capable of identifying problems, discussing them with others, and finding solutions.

The skills highlighted by Galotti (2017) further relate to the development of critical thinking competencies. Ku et al. (2019) assert that critical thinking becomes evident when adolescents are able to gather information and develop arguments through reasoning on a more independent level, relying on their own perceptions and opinions. The authors add that this competency includes the ability to consider other perspectives. This, in turn, results in the capacity to assimilate a variety of ideas, opinions, and perceptions that affect adolescents' understanding of specific concepts or situations. Thus, adolescents can obtain other perspectives while forming their own without becoming confused. As such, they can make enhanced judgements and decisions independently (Hardman, 2016).

Notably, adverse childhood experiences may affect cognitive development during adolescence, which, in turn, impacts the behaviour and health of adolescents (Alderman & Breuner, 2019). Relevant to the context of this study, Alderman and Breuner (2019) assert that these behaviours, rooted in prior adversities, are often evident in environments such as schools.

3.3.1.2 Physical development and well-being

The physical development of adolescence is often marked by changes in hormones, referred to as puberty or biological growth. Physical changes are frequently initiated

by the gonadotropin hormone released by the hypothalamus within the endocrine system (Best & Ban, 2021; Sawyer et al., 2018). Sawyer et al. (2018) explain that the release of these hormones leads to physiological changes that result in the physical growth and sexual maturation of adolescents. Wood et al. (2019) add that physical development is influenced by the adolescent's environment, as well as gender-specific development. For example, the rapid increase of testosterone in boys and oestrogen in girls results in differentiation between internal indicators of puberty (Blakemore, 2019).

In terms of physical development, girls undergo hormonal changes that lead to sexual maturity and fertility (Best & Ban, 2021), including physical changes such as breast development and the onset of menstruation (Norris et al., 2022; Ejedimu, 2020; Sawyer et al., 2018).

Similarly, adolescent boys experience physical changes, such as hair growth in different areas of the body (Ejedimu, 2020; Wood et al., 2019; Dahl et al., 2018). Boys also experience testicular enlargement and a rapid growth spurt, resulting in increased height and muscle size due to bone growth (Wood et al., 2019). Other physical development milestones experienced by boys include broadening of the chest and changes in their voice (Ejedimu, 2020).

Importantly, Dahl et al. (2018) emphasise that the increase in muscle mass is experienced by both genders. As the above descriptions of physical development highlight, adolescent physical development prepares individuals for adulthood (Blakemore, 2019) and for becoming parents of the next generation (Patton et al., 2018).

3.3.1.3 Social development and well-being

Adolescent social development is often marked by a continuation of the socialisation experienced during childhood. Balleys et al. (2020) note that the first instances of socialisation occur through the adolescent’s family and friends; this is one of the initial ways in which development begins. As Grundmann (2021) describes, socialisation is

based on the experiences that different generations use to interact and engage in various social relationships. In this way, a young child's first form of learning occurs through the relationships in which they engage, contributing to the adolescent's social development. This author further links the social development of adolescents with enhanced cognitive processes and abilities that enable them to experience and demonstrate an improved understanding of others' perceptions and self-reflection.

Also drawing a connection between social and cognitive development, Gallotti (2017) refers to the development of social skills as part of cognitive development during adolescence. The ability to understand others' perceptions is a consequence of cognitive developmental functioning, such as self-referential processing, executive control, and mentalising (Orben et al., 2020). Additionally, the adolescent acquires the ability to perform self-reflective tasks by learning from and observing those around them. Grundmann (2021) also emphasises that the first form of education in a child's life is through their social relations with others. For this reason, adolescents become reliant on the relationships they engage in for their social development. This is also evident in the extent to which they are highly sensitive to social peer relationships.

Various authors speak of the importance of peer relationships during adolescence (Fuligni, 2019; Orben et al., 2020; Balleys et al., 2020; Rapee, 2019; Crone & Achterberg, 2022). This is often illustrated by the way adolescents prioritise their peer relationships above those with their families (cf. Orben et al., 2020). In addition, adolescents' well-being is affected by a strong need to belong and to be accepted by peers (Crone & Achterberg, 2022). When an adolescent's need to belong and to be accepted is not fulfilled, their well-being may be negatively impacted. For example, social deprivation in adolescence has a strong correlation with high stress levels (Orben et al., 2020). Implicitly, adolescent social development is dependent on the nature and well-being of peer relationships, including acceptance by peers. Peer relationships also serve to maintain an enhanced form of autonomy and, as such, promote identity formation during adolescence (Cavicchiolo et al., 2022). Cavicchiolo et al. (2022) further assert that adolescents can learn from their peer relationships, making these relationships conducive to social development. These authors also describe peer acceptance as an indication of an adolescent's level of inclusion in the

group. Therefore, an adolescent's social well-being affects their emotional development.

3.3.1.4 Emotional development and well-being

Relationships and socialisation provide a platform through which adolescent emotional development occurs. As such, adolescents' emotional development is influenced by their external environments. Through interactions with others, adolescents develop the ability to become aware of their emotions (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019). Schoeps et al. (2018) describe emotional development during adolescence as not only the ability to identify one's own emotions but also those of others. During this period, the ability to perceive, evaluate, and cope with emotions continuously improves through relationships with others (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019).

Various skills facilitate emotional development during adolescence. Firstly, self-reflection is described by Ardelt and Grunwald (2018) as a skill that leads to adolescents becoming aware of themselves and gaining knowledge and understanding of their own identities. These authors assert that adolescent self-reflection skills encourage emotional and social development through the ability to reflect on how society affects them and how they affect society. Secondly, Gómez-Leal et al. (2020) refer to self-awareness as a form of emotional intelligence. Awareness of oneself requires self-reflection (Ardelt & Grunwald, 2018) and entails that adolescents become more conscious of their behaviour when faced with conflicting emotions. Self-aware adolescents are also able to recognise, describe, and manage intense and/or complex emotions (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019). Thirdly, self-management skills assist adolescents in handling intense emotions. Consequently, the manner in which an adolescent manages their emotions may be regarded as an indicator of emotional well-being (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019). According to the above description, the presence of self-reflection, self-awareness, and self-management skills contributes to emotional well-being, while their absence can lead to emotional challenges during adolescence.

3.3.1.5 Moral/Ethical development and well-being

Sackman and Terway (2016) refer to moral development as the evolution of personal values and ethics. The authors explain that adolescent moral development is necessary for ethical behaviour, and that this is dependent on their perceptions of their own values. Within this framework, adolescents who are clear about their beliefs and values will be better equipped to act ethically. The Office of Adolescent Health (2019) cites the example of youth becoming environmental and social justice activists. Through the application of cognitive, social, and emotional skills, they develop a value system that becomes the driving force behind their environmental and social concerns, serving as motivation for their actions.

Moral/ethical development is closely linked to cognitive development, where abstract and logical thinking, as well as reasoning skills, impact the formation of beliefs, values, and ethical behaviour. These skills also support social development by guiding adolescents in their interactions with others based on personal beliefs and values (Andrews et al., 2021). As mentioned, emotional development is bolstered by cognitive and social development, where the ability to understand oneself and manage emotions – based on social interactions and cognitive processes of self-reflection and awareness – results in the formation of personal beliefs and values (Sackman & Terway, 2016).

Andrews et al. (2021) summarise the connections between moral/ethical, cognitive, social, and emotional development by explaining that experiences during adolescence shape how moral/ethical development occurs and how personal values are formed. These experiences arise from social interactions that lead to emotional experiences, which inform how working memory and reasoning guide responses or behaviours. Through emotional development, adolescents can self-reflect, become self-aware, and manage emotions that impact their behaviour. The cognitive ability to mentalise further influences how adolescents develop their personal values. By mentalising, adolescents can consider how their own behaviour affects the well-being of others. Empathetic skills enable them to act ethically while regulating their own emotions and considering the well-being and needs of others.

As a result of moral/ethical development, adolescents feel a need to make positive contributions to those around them, leading to prosocial behaviour (Sackman & Terway, 2016). Fuligni (2019) provides examples of prosocial behaviour stemming from moral/ethical development, such as offering emotional support to others, contributing to their households through chores or financial resources, and volunteering with community-based initiatives or organisations. In this way, moral/ethical development facilitates the transition from childhood to adulthood.

The holistic development of adolescents is affected by vulnerabilities, which will be discussed next.

3.3.2 Vulnerabilities of Adolescence in South Africa

As discussed above, adolescence is marked by a variety of changes that result in a sensitive stage of human development. This sensitive stage, according to Boyden et al. (2019), may be viewed as a vulnerability in itself. Shlafer (2014) adds that the vulnerabilities of adolescents are highly influenced by external and internal experiences and changes. The discussion above examined the internal development that impacts adolescent well-being. For the purpose of this study, adolescent vulnerabilities in the South African context are discussed in this section as external factors that affect holistic development.

Adolescents who experienced health problems or a lack of healthcare during the pre-adolescent stage become vulnerable, as this impacts their further development during adolescence (Jansen & Stroud, 2016). Often, according to Jansen and Stroud (2016), the impact of physical health problems on holistic development during childhood and pre-adolescence only becomes visible during later developmental stages. These authors refer to the example of a primary school child's learning difficulty not being diagnosed, which then leads to negative experiences within the school system when the child is not experiencing success. During adolescence, a lack of motivation is rooted in a lack of experiences of success, which affects further cognitive, social, and emotional development.

In line with the example by Jansen and Stroud (2016), the NYP (RSA, 2020a) highlights concerns about the high dropout rates among adolescents. Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) (2021) reports that 29,3% of 18-year-olds and 46,3% of 19-year-olds in the school system drop out of school. The reasons behind this trend have been reported as illness and disability, poor performance and a lack of academic progress, and insufficient funds to pay school fees. Adolescents who drop out of high school do not have access to tertiary education institutions, and often also lack access to other forms of education and skills development. As a result, they lack the qualifications and competencies necessary for employment (StatsSA, 2021).

Youth unemployment has been identified as an alarming trend in South Africa. Between 2021 and 2022, unemployment among youth with less than matric qualifications increased. In the same period, male youth unemployment rose from 40,5% to 42,6%, while female unemployment decreased from 48,1% to 47,4% (Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration [CCMA], 2022). Unemployment remains highest among individuals without matric qualifications in the country (RSA, 2020a).

The high youth unemployment rate contributes to elevated poverty levels, with limited participation in the economy (RSA, 2020a). Adolescents living in poverty often have excessive free time and a lack of access to sports and cultural activities, leading to further vulnerability to high-risk behaviours such as substance use, violence, and peer pressure (Jansen & Stroud, 2016). The NYP (RSA, 2020a) draws a link between substance use and high rates of violence. Youth exposed to violence become vulnerable to physical injuries and health problems (Alderman & Breuner, 2019), as well as mental health disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (Rivara et al., 2019).

Orben et al. (2020) report that many mental health challenges experienced during adulthood first show indications during adolescence. According to de Miranda et al. (2020), COVID-19 has made adolescents even more vulnerable to developing poor physical and mental health, which may impact their adulthood if not addressed during adolescence.

In addition to the dropout rates, employment and poverty statistics, and health challenges mentioned above, South African youth, as noted in the NYP (RSA, 2020a), face several persistent challenges. These include low skills levels or a mismatch between skills and employment opportunities, insufficient entrepreneurial skills, limited access to cultural and creative industries, and a lack of social and active citizenry. This policy highlights that youth development and services to youth are under-resourced. Within the social work profession, school social work has become a specialised field, aimed at the holistic well-being of children and adolescents.

3.4 SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK

As discussed in Chapter 1, school social work has evolved into a specialised field within the broader social work profession (Frey et al., 2012). However, despite the persistent challenges faced by South African adolescents, there is a significant shortage of school social workers to effectively address their holistic needs (Reyneke, 2020). Additionally, Van Sittert (2016) highlights the lack of supervision and support from the DBE for the development of this critical field.

In South Africa, school social work is regulated by the Regulations Relating to the Requirements and Conditions for Registration of a Speciality in School Social Work (RSA 2020b). As discussed in section 1.3.3, the scope of practice for school social workers is broad and follows a holistic approach (Vergottini, 2019), aiming to integrate social work as an essential part of the education system.

The implementation of social work services within schools is determined at the provincial level. Vergottini (2019) illustrates the structure of school social work in South Africa, where the national DBE oversees the nine provincial departments. Social workers are employed at district or circuit levels, often in full-service or special schools, either by the provincial departments or school governing bodies.

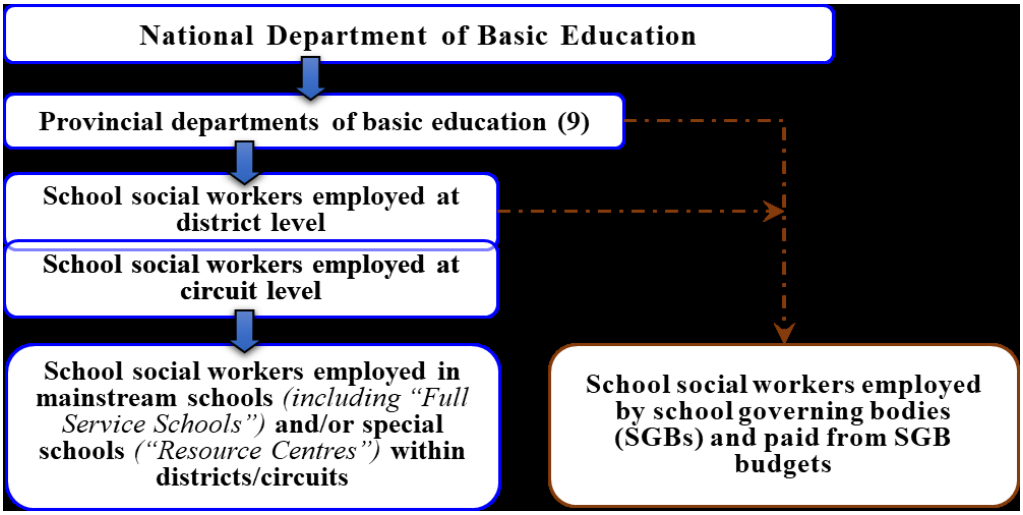

Figure 1: Basic South African school social work structure

(source: Vergottini, 2019, p. 35)

School social work utilises principles and methods of social work for the benefit of the school environment (Kemp, 2014), which affect adolescent development in the context of this study. Van Sittert (2016) found that school social workers primarily use micro and meso levels of intervention, while macro interventions are limited. However, the school social worker is required to act as a link between the adolescent, the family, the community, and the school (Kemp, 2014).

Models of school social work include:

- *The social interaction model*: The focus is on the interaction between the learner, the school, and the community. Within this model, school social workers become mediators between the three focus areas (Kemp, 2014).
- *The ecological model*: This model focuses on school social work aimed at changes within the school, the community, and groups of learners. Services are less aimed at individual learners, and more on creating changes within structures and interactions to promote holistic well-being (Kemp, 2014). Van Sittert (2016) argues that this model acknowledges that changes in one system will impact the other systems.
- *The community-school model*: The influence of the community and environment on the school and learners directs MDTs to respond to immediate needs

emanating from the community and the environment, and to develop and implement preventative and developmental services (Kemp, 2014).

In all of the models discussed, the focus of services is on addressing barriers that hinder holistic development. Interventions are based on thorough assessments and involve parents and other support systems to facilitate comprehensive growth. Within the school system, a MDT – including social workers, educators, and psychologists – collaborates to identify children and adolescents at risk. These students require interventions targeting cognitive/academic, physical, social, emotional, and moral/ethical challenges that obstruct their holistic development toward adulthood (cf. RSA, 2020b). According to Kemp (2014), the MDT within the school environment shares and complements each other's experiences and skills to achieve the school's developmental goals.

Kemp (2014) and Van Sittert (2016) identify key components for the roles and functions of school social workers:

1) Working with staff within the school system to identify learners at risk.
2) Conducting a holistic assessment of challenges and needs.
3) Reporting the outcomes of the assessment to the MDT and parents/guardians.
4) Developing and implementing a plan aimed at addressing the identified challenges and needs while providing regular feedback to the MDT and parents.
5) Developing and implementing prevention programmes in schools.
6) Consulting, collaborating, and coordinating the different support and services provided by the MDT.
7) Empowering and training educators.
8) Promoting parental involvement.
9) Encouraging community involvement.
10) Identifying and networking with internal and external resources that could support holistic development and well-being.
11) Developing an efficient administrative system to ensure effective services and proper feedback and evaluation.

This study was interested in understanding the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households to inform the above components further.

3.5 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter reviewed literature to provide a foundation for interpreting the research findings. First, the concept of middle-income households and their specific vulnerabilities was explored. Next, adolescence as a developmental stage was discussed, focusing on its key characteristics and the unique challenges faced by South African adolescents. Finally, an overview of school social work in South Africa was presented.

Chapter 4 addresses the first research question of this study: What are the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households? These findings are presented next.

CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH FINDINGS: THE HOLISTIC NEEDS OF ADOLESCENTS FROM MIDDLE-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Taylor and Triegaardt (2018) explain that the social welfare system is a country's response to socio-environmental issues and injustices that individuals and families face. Through this system, the government provides services aimed at helping citizens address these issues and injustices, and overcome their challenges. However, as mentioned in the previous chapters, the middle-income household population in South Africa is often excluded from social services (World Bank, 2018; James, 2014; Visagie & Posel, 2013). Implicitly, adolescents from middle-income households are frequently misconceived as not having vulnerabilities because their families can afford their basic needs. Thus, the research problem guiding this study is based on the identified need to explore how school social work interventions could support adolescents who are often not included as an at-risk group, in order to empower them to successfully transition to young adulthood after finishing school.

This chapter presents the findings related to the first aim of this study: to describe and interpret the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households. The biographical profile of the participating adolescents is provided, followed by the findings derived from data obtained from the participating adolescents.

4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE

The research population discussed in this chapter consists of adolescents from middle-income households. The researcher employed non-probability purposive sampling to select participants who met the inclusion criteria: all adolescents aged between 15 and 18, who were enrolled in two identified schools and who did not qualify for exemption from school fees.

The process by which the researcher gained access to the participants is detailed in Chapter 2. Data saturation was reached after six interviews and confirmed after seven. Table 1 below summarises the biographical profiles of the seven participating adolescents.

Table 1: Biographical information of adolescent participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Grade	School
1	18	Female	12	School A
2	17	Female	12	School B
3	18	Female	12	School B
4	16	Male	10	School A
5	17	Female	12	School B
6	18	Female	12	School B
7	18	Female	12	School A

Four participants represented School A, while three represented School B. School A is a private school in the Central Cape Town Metropole, and School B is a public school in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town. One male and six female adolescents participated in the study. This could be viewed as a limitation (see Chapter 2), as the findings predominantly reflect female voices.

The participants' ages ranged from 16 to 18 years. This age range represents the developmental stage of adolescence and falls within the age group that De Lannoy and Mudiriza (2019) describe in terms of the importance of preparation for young adulthood and independence. The NYP (RSA, 2020a) includes adolescence in its definition of youth, indicating that youth is viewed as the age group from 14 to 35 years. This position is based on the premise that if holistic needs are not met early in youth development (i.e., during adolescence), it will impact the youth's ability to move towards independence and holistic well-being in early adulthood.

The findings that emanated from the interviews with the participating adolescents are presented in the next section.

4.3 FINDINGS

To obtain data from the adolescent participants, the researcher conducted individual interviews to: 1) protect their privacy and anonymity, 2) provide a safe space for them to share their experiences and perceptions, and 3) enable referral for debriefing if necessary. Regarding the latter, none of the participating adolescents requested debriefing.

The participants were provided with semi-structured questions to share their experiences and perceptions related to their holistic well-being needs. The collected data were analysed using the eight steps of Tesch's framework for qualitative data analysis (in Creswell, 2014).

Table 2 below summarises the main themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis, in line with the theoretical framework of this study:

Table 2: Themes and sub-themes – adolescent holistic needs

Themes	Sub-themes	Categories
1. Physical Needs	1.1 Descriptions of what is needed to experience physical well-being	1.1.1 Why physical well-being is important
		1.1.2 What is needed for physical well-being
	1.2 Descriptions of barriers to physical well-being	
	1.3 Perceptions of services in the school to promote physical well-being	
2. Emotional Needs	2.1 Descriptions of what emotional well-being is	2.1.1 The value of support systems

		2.1.2 Relaxation activities
	2.2 Descriptions of challenges in achieving emotional well-being	2.2.1 Relationships
		2.2.2 Difficulty in managing stress
	2.3 Perceptions of services in the school that could assist in emotional well-being	
3. Social Needs	3.1 Descriptions of factors contributing to social well-being	
	3.2 Descriptions of challenges in achieving social well-being	
	3.3 Perceptions of services in the school that could assist in social well-being	
4. Spiritual Needs	4.1 Descriptions of factors contributing to spiritual well-being	4.1.1 Descriptions of religion
		4.1.2 Perception that spiritual well-being guides adolescents
	4.2 Descriptions of challenges in achieving spiritual well-being	
	4.3 Perceptions of services in the school that could assist in spiritual well-being	

The theoretical framework used in the study informed the data collection process, the analysis of the data, and the presentation of the findings. As such, the interpretation of the findings is framed within the theory of subjective holistic well-being, as described in Chapter 1. Tinkler and Hicks (2011) note that this theory serves as a framework for qualitative research when the researcher is interested in participants providing their

own descriptions of their holistic well-being and how their holistic well-being needs can be met. In this study, the research questions were formulated in a manner that enabled the adolescent participants to elaborate on their responses regarding their physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being. These aspects served as the main themes, supported by sub-themes and categories identified within each theme.

The verbatim quotations from the participants are used to describe the findings and are compared and contrasted with existing literature.

4.3.1 Theme 1: Physical Needs

The participating adolescents described their perceptions of 1) what is needed to experience physical well-being (sub-theme 1.1); 2) the barriers to physical well-being (sub-theme 1.2); and 3) the services in the school system to promote physical well-being (sub-theme 1.3).

4.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Descriptions of what is needed for physical well-being

In this sub-theme, the participants first explained why they believe physical well-being is important and then outlined what they think is necessary for them to experience physical well-being. These two aspects are presented in two categories.

Category 1.1.1 Why physical well-being is important

According to the participants, physical health supports fitness, which in turn aids learning. As Participant 1 noted, "*Being healthy will lead to them* (adolescents) *being able to learn better … and be fitter*". This connection between physical and cognitive well-being is supported by research, with various authors affirming that physical exercise contributes to cognitive development and enhanced executive functioning in adolescents (Haverkamp, 2020; Singh et al., 2019). Additionally, previous studies highlight the positive impact of physical activity on overall health and well-being during adolescence, as well as its long-term benefits for future well-being (Ng et al., 2020; Farooq et al., 2018). The participants also emphasised the relationship between physical well-being, self-image, and confidence.

> "*Being healthy will lead to them* [adolescents] *being more self-confident*" (P1).

> "*I think that we need to be physical healthy because it has an impact on how people see you, and if people see you in a wrong way, you will see yourself like that too*" (P2).

The statements above are supported by Fernández-Bustos et al. (2019), who note that physical activity provides both psychological and physiological benefits that support mental health. These authors explain that physical exercise enhances adolescents' self-concept, thereby promoting optimal mental health. Beyond explaining the importance of physical well-being, the participants also elaborated on what is required for them to experience and maintain physical well-being.

Category 1.1.2 What is needed for physical well-being

The participants referred to nutrition and daily exercise as important for physical well-being.

> "*Eat fruit*" (P3)

> "*Exercise and going outside every day*" (P4).

> "*Basic health needs, such as food and water, and also daily exercise*" (P5).

> "*Healthy food as well as physical exercise*" (P6).

> "*I think that adolescents need to exercise and eat more of the right food to be healthy*" (P7).

Similarly, Choudhury and Barman (2014) discuss physical well-being as encompassing daily exercise and proper nutrition, asserting that it entails more than just the absence of diseases or poor health.

Participant 7 added: "*Getting enough sleep*". This statement supports the viewpoint of De Zambotti et al. (2018) that sleep deprivation is one of the leading causes of ill health during adolescence.

While reflecting on the physical changes that occur during adolescence, a link was made between physical and emotional well-being through the following statements:

> "*To have affirmation and say it every day… to think positive*" (P3).

> "*A good mindset*" (P4).

> "*As well as gaining skills such as meditation and coping mechanisms that will assist us emotionally with our body changes… as well as learning how to communicate and listen could also assist with dealing with these changes*" (P7).

The comments above refer to adolescents becoming more self-aware due to their physical developmental milestones and the skills needed to cope with their feelings about themselves and the changes they experience (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019). The latter statement by Participant 7 also establishes a connection between physical and social well-being through communication skills. Similarly, Participant 6 emphasised the importance of the environment in which adolescents find themselves: "*Calm and healthy environment*" (cf. Wood et al., 2019).

4.3.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Descriptions of barriers to physical well-being

An adolescent participant referred to a lack of resources, including healthy food and exercise, as aspects that challenge physical well-being: "*Not being able to have access to resources that can make them healthy"* (P1). Jansen and Stroud (2016) also reported a lack of access to resources such as sports and cultural activities as a factor contributing to vulnerabilities among South African youth. This is further supported by the NYP (RSA, 2020a), which identifies a concern about under-resourced services aimed at developing South African youth.

Participant 6 alluded to a combination of insufficient exercise and inadequate nutrition: "*Not enough healthy food and no physical exercise*". This description is supported by Choudhury and Barman (2014), who refer to adequate nutrition as key to ensuring adolescent physical health.

In this study, the participating adolescents noted that a lack of time or poor time management skills negatively impacted their physical well-being.

> "*Not enough time*" (P5)

> "*I think having to deal with things such as life, school and schoolwork makes it difficult for them* [adolescents] *to be healthy*" (P7).

The latter statement highlights the stress from various tasks that affect physical well-being. Participants expanded on this by referencing stress, lack of motivation, and mental health challenges.

> "*Stress*" (P6).

> "*Not focusing on what I need to get done. Always thinking negative and self-doubt*" (P3).

> "*As well as a lack of motivation and bad mental health*" (P7).

Authors such as Jansen and Stroud (2016) and Orben et al. (2020) confirm that a lack of motivation among adolescents results in vulnerabilities, including the onset of mental health problems. The above statements highlight an interrelationship between physical and emotional well-being, as the participating adolescents concurred that when they face emotional challenges, they also struggle to attend to their physical well-being. Additionally, the participants noted that negative comments and high expectations regarding physical appearance are factors that challenge both physical and emotional well-being.

> "*Peer pressure and how parents set their standards on their children and how the media portrays 'healthy' bodies*" (P4).

> "*Negative comments from people who don't know you… Low self-esteem*" (P2).

This refers to what Balleys et al. (2020) describe as the early stages of socialisation, which take place through interactions with family and friends. Additionally, Grundmann (2021) emphasises that socialisation is shaped by the different modes of interaction between generations within various social relationships. In this study, the adolescents noted that these interactions can lead to low self-esteem, which in turn affects their physical well-being. To conclude this theme, the participants discussed the services within the school system that could support their physical well-being.

4.3.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Perceptions of services in the school to promote physical well-being

Sport and physical activities were mentioned as activities that could be organised within the school system that can support adolescent physical well-being.

> "*Sports because it's activity and it's good for your health*" (P3).

> "*Extra-mural activities like cricket, hockey, rugby… physical training*" (P5).

> "*Physical education, dance classes, aerobics*" (P6).

Positive socialisation, such as participating in sports or cultural activities within a social context, can support emotional well-being (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019). This perspective was supported by the participants, who drew a connection between physical activities and social and emotional well-being, particularly highlighting non-competitive physical activities.

> "*Exercise programme that promotes a healthy mind and body and breaks down the norms about their 'perfect' human body*" (P4).

> "*Cultural activities and events as well as breathing breaks or activities can help adolescents have a healthy body at school*" (P7).

> "*Sport… Just to help you believe in yourself. Like jogging or netball just for fun and company*" (P2).

Participant 1 added a suggestion of a mentorship programme to assist adolescents with physical well-being without judgement.

> "*They can have a mentorship programme allowing a free and non-judgemental space*".

This theme highlighted the connections between physical, social, and emotional well-being. The emotional needs of adolescents are explored in the following theme.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Emotional Needs

The participating adolescents described 1) what emotional well-being is (sub-theme 2.1); 2) challenges in achieving emotional well-being (sub-theme 2.2); and 3) their perceptions of services in the school that could assist in emotional well-being (sub-theme 2.3).

4.3.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Descriptions of what emotional well-being is

The adolescent participants described emotional well-being as feeling happy, positive, and having a good state of mind.

> *"It would contribute to having a good state of mind as feelings affect one subconsciously, without knowing. You would become unknowingly positive"* (P1).

> *"When I feel good and happy when I wake up"* (P2).

> *"Everyone benefits from being in a good mood and it helps with a good mindset"* (P4).

> *"I think one should find ways of managing the things that life brings to feel good and happy"* (P7).

The latter statement aligns with the viewpoint of the Office of Adolescent Health (2019), which suggests that adolescents develop the ability to recognise and identify their emotions through skills such as self-reflection.

The participants in this study specifically referred to the importance of support systems and relaxation activities for experiencing emotional well-being. These aspects are explored in the categories below.

Category 2.1.1 The value of support systems

According to Balleys et al. (2020), adolescent social development primarily occurs through interactions with family and friends. Supporting this viewpoint, Orben et al. (2020) highlight that social deprivation negatively affects adolescents' well-being. The participants emphasised the importance of their relationships with loved ones as a support system that contributes to emotional well-being and noted that such support can serve as motivation to succeed.

> *"Surrounded by people and things they love and care for, such as family and friends"* (P5)

> *"A strong support system*" (P6).

> *"Somebody to motivate you to do good"* (P3).

Sackman and Terway (2016) confirm that social interactions may lead to the development of personal values and beliefs. These authors further establish a connection to cognitive development, which can be enhanced through social interactions that shape their beliefs, values, and ethical behaviour. Andrews et al. (2021) note that while social relationships contribute to cognitive development, cognitive skills also shape adolescent social development, as adolescents interact with others based on their personal beliefs and value systems. A study by Offer (2013) confirms the correlation between adolescent emotional well-being and family support. Interestingly, this author found that shared leisure time and relaxing together particularly contribute to adolescent well-being. The significance of leisure and relaxation was affirmed in this present study, as discussed in the next category.

Category 2.1.2: Relaxation activities

The research participants expressed the importance of participating in hobbies and leisure activities as a way of achieving emotional well-being.

> *"…and participating in hobbies"* (P5).

> *"Have relaxing time...doing hobbies regularly that you enjoy"* (P6).

> *"People are usually happy and feel good when they do things that they enjoy and that do not stress them… enjoyable and manageable"* (P7).

Relaxation activities within the family were highlighted by Offer (2013). Vuletić and Krnjaić (2019) refer to leisure activities in general as a contributing factor to positive adolescent development. These authors found that such activities can lead to feelings of optimism.

4.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Descriptions of challenges in achieving emotional well-being

The key challenges to experiencing emotional well-being included relationships (category 2.2.1) and difficulty in managing stressful situations (category 2.2.2). These challenges are explored in more detail below.

Category 2.2.1: Relationships

Negative relationships affecting emotional well-being were described in terms of a lack of boundaries, feeling unvalued, and receiving negative comments.

> *"Having no personal space, lack of boundaries with others"* (P1).

> *"When people look down on you, give comments that hurt us. They don't know what you are going through, but they are quick to say something"* (P2).

Orben et al. (2020) explain that when one experiences an inadequate connection with others, both physical and mental health needs go unmet. Rather than recognising the

value of support in social relations as contributing to emotional well-being, the participating adolescents identified a lack of support and negativity in their social context as obstacles to experiencing emotional well-being.

> *"Not being around people that understand you"* (P1).

> *"Stress they* [others in the social context] *have … and they have a lot of negative thoughts in mind"* (P3).

> "*Not having someone to talk to*" (P6).

Relationships are key to adolescent social development (Balleys et al., 2020). In positive relationships, adolescents develop the ability to understand others' opinions while having their own understood, linking emotional, social, and cognitive development. Conversely, the absence of social support or negative experiences in social contexts can adversely affect an adolescent's social development and emotional well-being, as their need to belong remains unfulfilled (Crone & Achterberg, 2022).

Category 2.2.2: Difficulty in managing stress

Orben et al. (2020) highlight how adult mental health challenges were often initially experienced during adolescence. In this study, the participants referred to experiencing stress and drew a link to anxiety and depression.

> *"They might feel stressed or anxious"* (P5).

> *"I think that stress, anxiety, and depression make adolescents not feel good and happy"* (P7).

The participants' descriptions further highlight the experience of stress on various levels. In contrast to the activities that contribute to emotional well-being, discussed in the previous sub-theme, one participant mentioned emotional stress within the home environment, arising from peers, social media, schoolwork, and engaging in activities that are not perceived as enjoyable.

"Peers, school, social media, and my home situation" (P4).

"*Being under lots of pressure; having a lot of personal problems…"* (P6).
"As well as doing something that they do not enjoy" (P7).

Similarly, Shlafer (2014) identifies one of the vulnerabilities during adolescence as being emotionally affected by external and internal experiences and environmental changes.

4.3.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Perceptions of services in the school that could assist in emotional well-being

The participating adolescents specifically identified the need for expression. They expressed a desire both to speak with a trusted individual and to have access to a group where emotions can be openly shared.

"A place to talk with a trusted person" (P1).

"Someone trustworthy to confide in" (P6).

"Every day or once a week a group can come together, talk about their insecurities. Others help you if you need help to better yourself, this way nobody is left out" (P2).

"It is good for us to be in a good mood and to have a place where we can talk about how to feel good about your life" (P4).

"*Clubs that allow learners to express themselves in different ways, which they enjoy*" (P5).

"Communication groups so that people can express how they feel whenever they are not okay" (P7).

The significance of expression during adolescence is supported by Çutuk (2021), who found that school education programmes can provide learners with platforms to

express their emotions, addressing feelings of loneliness and hopelessness, and thereby serving as a preventative strategy for adolescent mental health problems. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, n.d.) asserts in this regard that adolescents are often overlooked when it comes to innovative ways to express themselves, and that interventions should focus on psychological and social skills to help them make sense of the rapid changes they are experiencing.

The participating adolescents, in line with UNICEF's (2019) position that adolescents need platforms where they are guided and supported, also mentioned that they require assistance in managing the stress associated with schoolwork and personal issues.

> "*Someone to help them with their schoolwork; having some off time to relax and to relieve the pressure of their schoolwork problems*" (P6).

> "*Activities that involve managing life problems, the implementation of activities that release people from having stress of any form of negativity within them*" (P7).

This theme contributed to an understanding of what is required for adolescents to experience emotional well-being. The next theme focuses on their social needs.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Social Needs

The participants again provided a description of 1) factors contributing to social well-being (sub-theme 3.1); 2) challenges in achieving social well-being (sub-theme 3.2); and 3) perceptions of services in the school that could assist in social well-being (sub-theme 3.3).

4.3.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Descriptions of factors contributing to social well-being

Adolescence is marked by an increase in the roles that the adolescent fulfils in their environment (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019). Implicitly, the relationships in which these roles are enacted become the platform for the development of social skills. Balleys et al. (2020) indicate that the first significant ways in which an adolescent develops social skills are through their family and peer relationships. Strong and positive relationships, as also mentioned when discussing physical and emotional

well-being above, were identified as drivers of social well-being. The participating adolescents highlighted that they could learn from people in their social context but also emphasised that this context should provide safety, as well as healthy activities and connections.

> *"Having good people around allows you to take the best parts of others to make it your own"* (P1).

> *"Being surrounded in a safe and healthy environment, making it easier for me to be social"* (P5).

> *"To have a healthy social life, to go to the movies, hang out with friends who have a positive influence on me"* (P6).

> *"Through a healthy connection as well as understanding between two people, good relationships are formed"* (P7).

The literature identifies the family as a primary reference point for social well-being. Family functioning influences adolescents' ability to establish strong and positive peer relationships (Sackman & Terway, 2016). Fletcher (2014) reiterates that maintaining healthy family relationships equips adolescents with the skills to sustain healthy relationships outside the family.

In this study, the participants indicated that a positive social context involves balance, kindness, and communication, which in turn helps to alleviate loneliness and contributes to emotional well-being.

> *"There should be a balance with having a social life because it helps one develop themselves around others"* (P1).

> *"People need to be kind; Caring from family and friends; loving from family; no harm done onto others"* (P2).

"Communication is what is important for adolescents to have a good social life. This is because communication helps people connect and to understand each other" (P7).

"Because a good social life to help with feeling of loneliness and to help keep a good mind set" (P4).

Sundqvist and Hemberg (2021) point to the rapid changes in contemporary society, linking these shifts to a rise in loneliness among adolescents and young adults. Their study found a clear connection between loneliness and adolescent mental health, recommending interventions that focus on developing coping and social skills to promote emotional well-being. This perspective is reinforced by Matthews et al. (2022), who found a correlation between loneliness during adolescence and poorer academic performance. Notably, their study also revealed that positive family influences can reduce the risk of loneliness. The challenges related to social well-being experienced by participants in this study are explored in the following sub-theme..

4.3.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Descriptions of challenges in achieving social well-being

Participant 1 highlighted that the development of beliefs and morals, when not accepted by family and friends, can challenge social well-being: "*Having friends and family that does not accept or try to understand my beliefs or morals. There will always be some sort of issue. I think that becoming an adult, one should realise to compromise and allow change for others".* During adolescence, an individual's sense of values is shaped through social interactions and experiences (Sackman & Terway, 2016). This process is closely tied to moral and spiritual development, as adolescents begin using abstract thinking to form their own values (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019).

The adolescents who participated in this study further indicated that experiences of being misunderstood or judged negatively affect their social well-being. They referred to being exposed to gossip and rumours, as well as the fact that specific characteristics may lead to being judged and excluded.

"Gossiping about each other and spreading rumours" (P3)

"Race, sexuality, culture, and disabilities all these things can make the adolescent feel like an outcast and in today's society we still struggle with judgemental people" (P4).

The references above may impact adolescents' self-esteem, which is influenced by approval from friends and family, as well as support from others around them (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019). Sackman and Terway (2016) and Fletcher (2014) believe that the fear of being judged may lead adolescents to succumb to negative peer pressure, which then puts them at risk of failing to develop their own identity. In this study, the participants confirmed this viewpoint through the following expressions.

"Family pressure - 'you need to pass with good grades. Friends – 'let's go party'. If I say no, then I'm called boring" (P2).

"You hide yourself just to fit in" (P3).

The literature highlights that socialisation is supported by relationships that begin in the family and move to peers (Grundmann, 2021; Balleys et al., 2020). Chunga et al. (2018) identify parental absence, lack of involvement, and norms as aspects that may contribute to the social vulnerability of adolescents. The participants confirmed this viewpoint, as articulated below.

"Not having enough time to spend with me and strengthen our relationship and not being good at communicating (P5).

"*Their differences and their problems* (conflict between parents)*, not attending events, being hurt and pressured by them"* (P6).

In conclusion of this sub-theme, one participant also mentioned that making poor choices and being intolerant toward others can negatively affect social well-being.

"The association with the wrong people and not being able to tolerate some people. As well as people who don't share the same love language or anything in common" (P7).

Support for social well-being within the school system is presented next.

4.3.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Perceptions of services in the school that could assist in social well-being

Participant 4 requested that adolescents be educated on how to engage with friends:

"*The school can make presentation on how friends should act and how to act in certain situations in today's social networks*" (P4).

Other participants suggested the establishment of formalised social groups, emphasising the need for a dedicated space for communication within the school.

"Allowing them to have the space to form bonds or create groups for them to bond" (P1).

"Talk to each other and come together in groups" (P2).

"Having social groups" (P7).

Peer and classroom groups play a vital role in helping members learn socially accepted behavioural norms and fostering strong social relationships (Toseland & Rivas, 2017). Educators and social workers can utilise group work methods to promote social well-being in these settings. Toseland and Rivas (2017) describe social peer groups as environments where adolescents can develop networking skills, build relationships, and experience the developmental benefits of participating in supportive social systems.

The two statements below highlight how social events within the school context could also contribute to social well-being.

"Extra-mural activities allow us to make friend with people who have similar interests as us who we might not have met normally" (P5).

"Dances, communication lessons, events that involve our participation" (P6).

The final theme presents the discussion on adolescents' spiritual needs.

4.3.4 Theme 4: Spiritual Needs

In this theme, the participants described 1) factors contributing to spiritual well-being (sub-theme 4.1); 2) the challenges in achieving spiritual well-being (sub-theme 4.2); and 3) their perceptions of services in the school that could assist in spiritual well-being (sub-theme 4.3).

4.3.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Descriptions of factors contributing to spiritual well-being

The adolescents who participated in this study distinguished between religion and how spiritual well-being could serve as a guide to adolescents. The categories that follow unpack their descriptions in this regard.

Category 4.1.1: Descriptions of religion

Participant 3 responded that religion is viewed as an important aspect of life: "*It is very important and to believe in religion in your life"*. This was further supported by other participants, who referred to religion as a means of strengthening their values and beliefs, a lifestyle that serves as a form of self-expression, and one that adds value to adolescents' sense of purpose in life.

"Strengthens their values and beliefs" (P6).

"Religion forms part of your lifestyle. Some adolescents take their religion to express themselves" (P1).

"Believing God chose us. This means he has a plan and purpose for us. It makes you feel special" (P2).

"Live up to the 10 commandments. It is a gate to heaven" (P2).

In line with the descriptions provided by the participants, Trommsdorf and Chen (2012) assert that religious beliefs and practices play a pivotal role in adolescent social and emotional well-being. Bond et al. (2012) further explain that religion supports the development of personal values in adolescents, and that this occurs within a social context. This, in turn, contributes to moral development. Additionally, these authors conclude that positive engagement with religion can enhance life satisfaction among adolescents, also alluding to emotional well-being.

A particular emphasis was placed on spiritual well-being as an important aspect that can guide adolescents in dealing with life's challenges. This is further explored in the next category.

Category 4.1.2: Perception that spiritual well-being guides adolescents

In the previous category, the connection between religion and cultural or social contexts was discussed (cf. Bond et al., 2012). Torralba et al. (2021) describe religious practices and cultural traditions as key references that help guide adolescents. Their study found that adolescents who actively participate in religious activities and practice their beliefs experience lower levels of stress and fewer mental health challenges. Additionally, the study emphasised that adolescents often look to their religious and spiritual beliefs as a compass for decision-making. The findings of this study align with these observations, as reflected in the comments below.

> *"To help us with our day-to-day life and to find peace of mind. It helps to carry on every day*" (P4).

> *"It helps lead and guide us in difficult times or in situations that we have to deal with*" (P5).

> "*Religion can guide you, and it gives you something good to focus on"* (P6).

> "*The role of religion is that it gives me answers, explanations and directions to what to do or how to manage life and what life brings upon me"* (P7).

Spiritual development during adolescence is supported by the adolescent's cognitive development, which enhances abstract thinking and encourages a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the world around them. Moral development also plays a role as adolescents begin to discern the difference between right and wrong, while exploring their role and purpose in society (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019).

Considering the importance of spiritual well-being, the participants also provided descriptions of those aspects that impact spiritual well-being negatively.

4.3.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2: Descriptions of challenges in achieving spiritual well-being

Negative responses to religious beliefs, as well as experiences of oppression and intolerance, were identified as factors that influence the participants' perceptions and experiences of challenges to their spiritual well-being.

> *"Not allowing you to practice your religion. Or punishing you for believing"* (P1).

> *"When other religious people from a different religious say what I believe is wrong. Like, negative comments or making fun"* (P2).

> *"Being judged about their religion, could make them uncomfortable to speak about it"* (P5).

> *Social standards… and peer pressure"* (P4).

> *"Being judged about their religion, could make them uncomfortable to speak about it."* (P5)

> *"…being hurt by someone near to them"* (P6).

> *"People in general"* (P7).

The reference to being judged relates to Verkuyten et al.'s (2019) description of prejudice as the criticism and rejection of those with different beliefs, which could

discourage a person from practising religious or spiritual traditions. Jensen (2021) further points out that contemporary popular cultures that do not support an adolescent's religious or spiritual practices may contribute to a decline in religiosity during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Participant 6 supported this perspective by saying: "*Not having interest anymore*…". Other comments highlighted a lack of self-worth, poor life choices such as substance use, challenging life circumstances, becoming aware of other religious beliefs, and not being actively involved in religious practices as factors that could impact spiritual well-being.

> *"I think lack of self-worth and substance abuse"* (P4).

> *"When things do not go your way and life starts falling apart. And also, the realisation of other beliefs"* (P7).

> *"Not doing what you supposed to do in your religion"* (P3).

In conclusion to the adolescent participants' findings, their suggestions on how school social work could support spiritual well-being are discussed in the final sub-theme.

4.3.4.3 Sub-theme 4.3: Perceptions of services in the school that could assist in spiritual well-being

One of the developmental milestones of adolescent moral and ethical development is that adolescents begin to explore and practise their religions, along with other religious beliefs and practices (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019). In the previous sub-themes, the participants indicated what they believe is important for achieving spiritual well-being and also described the challenges they face in attaining it. In this sub-theme, they identified spaces that allow different religious groups to participate, as well as religious studies and groups aimed at promoting spiritual well-being, as services in schools that could support their spiritual well-being.

> *"Allow for every religion to have a group or a programme or space to practice and gain information about that to better themselves"* (P1).

*"Having religious groups that inform students more about a specific religion and that allow them to practice some religious practices at school" (*P7).

"It would be good if we can talk about God, and how we can see the good in bad situations" (P2).

"The school could give religious class or give religious studies as a subject here at school" (P4).

"Religion could be implemented as a sort of extra-mural activity. Having support groups- where you can discuss religion or spiritual life freely" (P6).

Participation in religious or spiritual groups is highlighted by Torralba et al. (2021) as one way to support optimum health and well-being. The authors argue that such participation can enhance both self-esteem and personal satisfaction levels (cf. Bond et al., 2012). The South African Schools Act (SASA) (RSA, 1996) upholds the constitutional rights to freedom regarding beliefs and religious practices and emphasises that no person may be discriminated against based on their beliefs. However, Van Schalkwyk (2016) found that the law allows governing bodies to decide how religious practices will be included in the school, which can lead to not all religious groups being catered for, thereby excluding some children in the school system from the opportunity to engage in practices they learn at home or that align with their own beliefs. One participant indicated that the school does provide a space for praise and worship for religious groups. "*Every Wednesday the school has praise and worship, which allows us to spend time together and with our religion*" (P5). Participant 3 suggested that attendance at such sessions should be mandatory, contradicting the stipulations in SASA (RSA, 1996): "*Praise and worship they must attend*".

Finally, two participants suggested that personal space should be provided for attention to spiritual well-being within the school, and that services aimed at spiritual well-being should guide learners on how to pray and connect.

"*Allow them to have personal space*" (P1).

"*Show and teach how to pray*" (P2).

4.4 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter addressed the first aim of the study: *to describe and interpret the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households to be addressed through school social work services*. The adolescent participants offered valuable insights into their needs for physical, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being, as well as the challenges they encounter in these areas. A key strength of the findings is that the participants detailed how they believe school social workers can support their holistic well-being.

To build on these findings, the next chapter presents descriptions and interpretations of educators' perspectives on what is required for school social workers to effectively enhance the holistic well-being of adolescents from middle-income households.

CHAPTER 5
RESEARCH FINDINGS: EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK AIMED AT THE HOLISTIC WELL-BEING OF ADOLESCENTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The core business of educators, as emphasised by Ibrahim and El Zaatari (2020), is to cultivate learning, coach learners, and form relationships with them. These authors posit that the relationships adolescent learners have with their educators can contribute to a sense of belonging that positively impacts their overall well-being. Based on these relationships, educators can identify various needs and challenges experienced by learners. Similarly, this study aimed to describe and interpret the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households and discover how school social workers can contribute to their holistic well-being. Consequently, the viewpoints and experiences of adolescents were explored and described in the previous chapter. To develop a deeper understanding of what is needed for school social workers to provide effective services to these adolescents, this chapter presents educators' perceptions and experiences related to the aims of this study.

The biographical profiles of the educators who participated in this study are provided to give context for interpreting the qualitative data. This is followed by the findings that emerged from the data obtained from the participating educators.

5.2 BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE

The findings reported in this chapter are derived from data obtained from the educator research participants. The inclusion criteria required that the participants be educators of adolescents aged between 15 and 18 from middle-income households. A total of nine educators were purposively selected. The researcher gained access to these educators by seeking permission from school principals to conduct interviews. The table below summarises the profiles of the educators who participated in this study.

Table 3: Biographical information of the educator participants

Participant	Highest Qualification	Gender	Years' experience
1	Bachelor of Education, Post-Graduate Certificate in Education.	Female	7 years
2	Bachelor of Education in Senior Phase & FET Education, Honours Degree in Sociology	Female	1 year
3	Bachelor of Education in Intermediate and Senior Phase	Female	3 years
4	Master of Science & Post-Graduate Certificate in Education	Male	2 years
5	Master of Physical Sciences	Male	4 years
6	Bachelor of Science in Applied Mathematics and Physics, Diploma in Education	Male	26 years
7	Bachelor of Education specialising in Business Studies and Accounting; currently pursuing a Bachelor of Education Honours in Leadership and Management	Female	3 years
8	Bachelor of Education	Male	3 years
9	Bachelor of Theology	Male	3 years

A total of nine educators participated in the study, and not all of them held primary qualifications in education. Four of the educator participants had Bachelor of Education qualifications, while the others were specialists in their respective fields. Three participants obtained postgraduate certificates or diplomas, and two obtained postgraduate degrees, indicating diverse and substantial knowledge among the participants. In contrast to the adolescent participants, who were primarily female,

there were four female and five male educator participants. This gender distribution contributed to more varied perspectives, leading to a more in-depth description of the phenomenon under investigation (Nassaji, 2020). Additionally, the years of experience ranged from one to 26 years, further enriching the variety of perspectives regarding the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households. The findings obtained from the educator participants are presented in the next section.

5.3 FINDINGS

Arranging the focus group discussions (FGDs) with the educators who volunteered for this study proved to be quite challenging. First, the data collection process was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, once face-to-face FGDs became feasible, coordinating a time for all educators to meet was difficult due to their demanding teaching schedules. Third, when an opportunity for participation did arise, some educators had personal commitments. Despite these obstacles, three FGDs were successfully conducted. Participants 1 to 3 and 4 to 6 attended face-to-face FGDs, while participants 7 to 9 participated via Google Meet. All discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed.

The researcher, along with an independent coder, used Tesch's (in Creswell, 2014) data analysis framework. The analysis revealed four main themes related to holistic well-being, in alignment with the theoretical framework of this study, and various sub-themes and categories were identified under these main themes.
provides a summary of the findings.

Table 4: Themes and sub-themes – educators' contributions

Themes	Sub-themes	Categories
1. Physical well-being	1.1 Factors contributing to physical well-being during adolescence	1.1.1 Self-discipline to develop healthy lifestyles
	1.2 Aspects that challenge physical well-being during adolescence	
	1.3 Role players and resources needed for adolescents to experience physical well-being	
	1.4 How school social workers can support adolescent physical well-being	
2. Emotional well-being	2.1 Factors contributing to emotional well-being during adolescence	2.1.1 Needs of adolescents to experience emotional well-being
	2.2 Aspects that challenge emotional well-being during adolescence	
	2.3 Role players and resources needed for adolescents to experience emotional well-being	
	2.4 How school social workers can support adolescent emotional well-being	
3. Social well-being	3.1 Aspects that challenge adolescent social well-being	
	3.2 Role players/resources needed to achieve adolescent social well-being	

4. Spiritual well-being	4.1 What is adolescent spiritual well-being?	
	4.2 What is needed to achieve adolescent spiritual well-being?	

The semi-structured questions used in the FGDs were guided by and formulated within the subjective holistic well-being theoretical framework (Choudhury & Barman, 2014). Therefore, the main themes reflect the study's theoretical framework, namely: 1) physical, 2) emotional, 3) social, and 4) spiritual well-being. These main themes are presented through verbatim quotes from the participants and a comparison with the literature.

5.3.1 Theme 1: Physical Well-being

In this theme, the educator participants described a) the factors contributing to physical well-being during adolescence (sub-theme 1.1); b) the aspects that challenges physical well-being during adolescence (sub-theme 1.2); c) the role players and resources needed for adolescents to experience physical well-being (sub-theme 1.3); and d) how school social workers could support adolescent physical well-being (sub-theme 1.4).

5.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Factors contributing to physical well-being during adolescence

The educator participants shared their views on the key factors contributing to physical well-being during adolescence. As an introduction to this theme, one participant highlighted food and shelter as essential elements: "*The basic things… food and shelter to survive*" (P4). This aligns with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which identifies these as physiological needs – the most fundamental contributors to adolescent physical well-being (Hopper, 2020). Another participant emphasised that physical well-being can often be observed in the physical appearance of learners:

> *"The physical well-being of individuals is firstly recognised in their physical state"* (P8).

Other participants, similar to the participating adolescents, referred to exercise and nutrition as primary contributors to physical well-being. In Chapter 4 (category 1.1.2), the adolescent participants also stated the importance of eating healthily and exercising. In terms of exercise, the participants mentioned the following:

> *"I think they need to participate in sports"* (P5).

> *"Important is healthy exercise routines"* (P8).

The latter statement highlights that having a routine that includes exercise in daily activities could be viewed as a lifestyle that contributes to physical health. Although not mentioned by the participants, Fernández-Bustos et al. (2019) share the view that physical activity during adolescence can prevent and treat various mental health issues. This perspective links physical and emotional well-being.

Furthermore, emphasis was placed on regular meals, healthy diets, and eating habits, again pointing to a healthy lifestyle.

> *"Ensure that they have a healthy diet and healthy eating habits"* (P8).

> *"They need to have access to balanced and consistent meals to ensure that their physical well-being is looked after and protected"* (P8).

Ramkissoon (2016), in a research brief on behalf of the South African Human Rights Commission, argues that all citizens have the right to access food. This author determined that the provision of meals within the school system can contribute to healthy nutrition and advised that the Department of Health guide schools regarding menus for school nutrition programmes. Referring to healthy eating habits, the Office of Adolescent Health (2019) encourages parents to model these behaviours.

Additionally, Participant 6 emphasised the need for a healthy, balanced lifestyle whereby the adolescent gets enough sleep and does not consume harmful substances or engage in risky behaviour.

"These adolescents need to maintain a healthy quality of life that allows them to get the most out of their daily activities without undue fatigue or physical stress… And then they need also to avoid harmful behaviour and taking banned substances… And also, they need to have adequate sleep" (P6).

The NYP (RSA, 2020a) explains that risky behaviour and unhealthy lifestyles significantly contribute to poor health. Moreover, Participant 6 mentioned that it is important for adolescents to receive regular medical assessments by a general practitioner. In support of the response below, it has been noted that many adult health conditions are deeply rooted in adolescent lifestyles (RSA, 2020a).

"And also, they need constant check-ups medically to see if they are not sick… And they just need to understand their bodies' warning signs in general, where they recognise when they are ill, and when they need medical attention. And then it should be attended to early to avoid serious repercussions" (P6).

The participating educators also emphasised the importance of developing self-discipline to incorporate healthy exercise and eating habits into daily life. This aspect is further explored in the category below.

Category 1.1.1: Self-discipline to develop healthy lifestyles

The educators in this study explained that discipline at home and school plays a crucial role in helping adolescents adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles.

"Well, I think if there's more teaching them discipline that it will assist in a lot of things. For example, when it comes to physical exercise, and how much they should eat… literally anything. So, discipline forms self-discipline" (P1).

"And I feel that self-discipline needs a foundation in the form of support. So, it needs to come from the parents as well, assuming that parents are teenagers' main source of support. They're the ones who must ensure that their children live balanced lives, eat healthily, [and] get enough physical exercise. Whether that's through sport at school, or even if they work out on their own at home, or even just playing with friends or being outside of the house" (P2).

> *"Physical well-being is also learned through engaging and interacting with their parents or other adults who can give advice and lead to them making the correct choices with regards to their physical well-being"* (P8).

The above contributions highlight the role of parents and role models in supporting healthy lifestyles that contribute to physical well-being. According to Babey et al. (2015), adolescents who receive support from their role models and other influential adults are more likely to engage in physical activity and maintain a healthy body weight. Moreover, physically active parents not only benefit from participation but also enable the formation of stronger bonds with their physically active adolescents (Cozett & Roman, 2022).

In the next sub-theme, the participants explored the challenges adolescents face in achieving physical well-being.

5.3.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Aspects that challenges physical well-being during adolescence

Participant 8 argued that it is difficult for middle-income families to access fresh food.

> *"It's expensive to keep fresh food that can go off quickly. Near the end of the month, middle-income households tend to tighten the reigns of their spending so they might not be able to afford healthier foods for balanced meals. A lack of nutrition or nutritious meals leads to the lack of physical well-being as the child does not receive the necessary meals and nutrients that they should"* (P8).

In 2022, the United Nations reported on the food systems profile in South Africa and confirmed the above statement by asserting that a healthy diet costs almost 70% more than diets that are less nutritious (United Nations, 2022).

Furthermore, Participant 6 acknowledged a full academic programme and recognised that a lack of sufficient sleep negatively affects adolescent physical well-being and functioning.

"Sometimes they tend to study deep into the night and then their physical health will be affected, and lack of sleep will generally affect their overall performance" (P6).

Identifying a few available studies, De Zambotti et al. (2018) found that the effects of schoolwork pressure on adolescent insomnia need further investigation. This is supported by the fact that adolescents who get fewer hours of sleep experience difficulties with attention and have inadequate motivation during the day (De Zambotti et al., 2018).

Participant 8 further identified access to finances, transport, and full programmes as challenges for adolescent physical well-being:

"Due to the lack of effective transport and other financial issues, it might be inconvenient for adolescents to effectively use their time for other chores and responsibilities that assists their physical well-being. With travelling to and from school, homework and maybe household responsibilities such as chores and babysitting, they might be too tired to exercise or complete other tasks at home".

This viewpoint is supported by the study conducted by Ferreira Silva et al. (2022), which found that many adolescent participants did not have sufficient time and support to engage in physical activities. The authors also discovered that adolescents often lack motivation to participate in physical activities. Expanding on the aforementioned support, the next sub-theme describes role players and resources that could facilitate physical well-being.

5.3.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Role players and resources needed for adolescents to experience physical well-being

Ferreira Silva et al. (2022) mention that access to resources for sport or engaging in physical activities could benefit adolescents by providing physical and psychological advantages, such as preventing chronic illnesses and maintaining optimal mental health. The participants in the present study confirmed that access to resources for

sport and healthy eating is an important aspect of supporting adolescent physical well-being, and they particularly referred to community resources.

> *"They need sport, they need* [access to] *activities"* (P3).

> "*Physical well-being is also sought after in the community, focusing on ensuring that the people are fed and healthy"* (P8).

In terms of role players, and in line with statements in the previous sub-theme, a participant again referred to parents as important contributors to supporting physical well-being (cf. Babey et al., 2015; Cozett & Roman, 2022).

> *"Additionally, there are parents… there is need for them to be involved as primary role players in their children's well-being"* (P6).

Other participants included the school system and advised that resources and role players should promote a positive experience when engaging adolescents in physical activities.

> *"For example, have a section* [at school] *where there is mandatory exercise. But each week try and change it to something different. Something they might enjoy, like playing soccer or a tag or open the gates"* (P9).

> *"Yes, and to promote the joy of it. The best way to get someone to enjoy something is to promote the aspects they enjoy. For example, to some people, it might be jogging and the main thing that keeps them exercising is the fact that they want to jog. So, it's basically promoting an aspect of physical well-being that a learner would enjoy"* (P8).

The descriptions above emphasise that physical activity must be experienced and perceived as enjoyable, and that this can be promoted within the school system. On the one hand, Mikaelsson et al. (2020) found that adolescents are not interested in the types of physical activities that schools offer, concluding that one of the key factors motivating participation in physical activities during adolescence is that they are

enjoyable and fun. On the other hand, Babey et al. (2015) explain that adolescents who receive support from their educators and other adults in their school are more likely to be physically active. In line with the focus of this study, one of the participants identified a school social worker as a role player who enables adolescents to achieve physical well-being.

> *"School social workers have a fundamental role to play in maintaining the physical well-being of adolescents whilst they're at school"* (P6).

The participants were asked to further reflect on how the school social worker could support physical well-being, which concludes this sub-theme.

5.3.1.4 Sub-theme 1.4: How school social workers can support adolescent physical well-being

In this sub-theme, the participants highlighted the need for school social workers to provide guidance and advice to adolescents about their diet.

> *"Also, the school social worker can check on their eating habits …for example, advising them on nutrition to ensure they have balanced nutrition. And, most importantly, that they refrain from ingesting harmful substances like drug abuse and things that is very, very prevalent these days"* (P6).

> *"I believe that's social workers could serve to help out adolescents develop physically by advising them on, for example, their diet because diets naturally come into play with their growth"* (P9).

It was further noted that the school social worker needs to understand resistance to participate in physical or sport activities to be able to understand how the adolescent can be encouraged to participate.

> "*For example, if we have a learner who doesn't want to exercise because they might have a low self-esteem, or they might consider themselves to be overweight or anything like that, the social worker can focus on this aspect. Then, the great thing is encouragement and praise in what they are doing….*

promoting the little bit they achieve every day... the discipline of doing it every day" (P7).

This statement aligns with the viewpoints offered by Kemp (2014) and Van Sittert (2016) regarding the functions of school social workers, specifically in terms of a) conducting a holistic assessment of challenges and needs (e.g., contributing factors to resistance to engaging in physical activities), and b) developing and implementing a plan aimed at addressing the identified challenges and needs of the learners. Murfay et al. (2020) further emphasise that adults who work with adolescents must address challenges by identifying various enjoyable and beneficial physical activities that adolescents can engage in, and then praising them while they participate.

As mentioned in the preliminary literature review (Chapter 1), one of the roles of school social workers is to offer guidance and support to educators, parents, and families in order to meet the physical health needs of children (Vergottini & Weyers, 2020). However, the participants' statements below point out that school social workers need to be involved in the physical activity programmes at school as a means of meeting the physical needs of adolescents.

"It would be a vital aspect of social workers to be some degree involved in the physical activities at school" (P9).

"I think, establishing some kind of physical education programme at the school to better help learners to develop physically or maintain or develop a sense of health and fitness" (P8).

"There has to be school social work programmes to ensure that the kids have regular exercises because bodily training is very beneficial for their upbringing, there should be programmes set in place at the school to help them with that" (P6).
"Encouraging learners to do sports, or helping out with activities at the school" (P3).

In support of the aforementioned responses, Vergottini and Weyers (2020) stipulate that school social workers are responsible for delivering direct intervention services and collaborating with various stakeholders to adopt a more holistic approach to adolescent well-being. According to the educator participants in this study, school social workers should become more involved in the physical activities offered at school. Participant 6 emphasised that school social workers need direct contact to identify the students' needs.

> *"And the school social worker can assist adolescents by checking in with them… to keep in touch with the adolescents and check if they have enough physical activity, if they rest or sleep enough and so on"* (P6).

This is supported by Vergottini and Weyers (2020), who explain that one role of a school social worker is to continuously screen, identify, and assess learners to determine who needs social work services, as well as to advise educators and make referrals. The participants in this study emphasised awareness-raising as a function of school social workers that can promote physical well-being.

> *"The best thing that social workers can do is to better allow the learner to completely understand the importance of exercise. Furthermore, make them aware of the risks involved in improper health, such as poor diet, ill-disciplined exercise, things like that"* (P9).

Interestingly, little emphasis is placed in the literature on how school social workers can promote physical well-being as part of holistic well-being. For example, Maylea et al. (2019) explored social workers' roles in improving physical health within mental health services, but not specifically in assisting adolescents in school settings. Similarly, UNICEF (n.d.) refers to social work in schools aimed at child protection and mental health and psychological support services but does not mention the promotion of physical well-being.

This theme alludes to the link between physical and emotional well-being, which will be further explored in the next theme.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Emotional Well-being

In the second theme, the educators described a) the factors contributing to emotional well-being during adolescence (sub-theme 2.1); b) aspects that challenge emotional well-being during adolescence (sub-theme 2.2); c) the role players and resources needed for adolescents to experience emotional well-being (sub-theme 2.3); and d) how school social workers can support adolescent emotional well-being.

5.3.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Factors contributing to emotional well-being during adolescence

A participant identified academic performance as a factor contributing to emotional well-being.

> *"Academically, they need to perform academically at school to feel well"* (P3).

The literature also alludes to a link between mental health and academic performance. For example, in support of the above statement, White (2016) found that academic self-efficacy, as an outcome of emotional well-being, promotes academic success. In addition, Rehman et al. (2023) found that learners with depression, anxiety, and stress symptoms performed significantly worse than those with good mental health. Drawing a connection between emotional and social well-being, Evans (2021) investigated the effects of mental health on academic and social success, and identified childhood trauma, neighbourhood factors, and parental health as factors contributing to emotional well-being among adolescents. A participant in this study further linked physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

> *"The physical well-being of the adolescent contributes to the character, their personality, the emotional and spiritual well-being"* (P8).

Kor et al. (2019) found a strong connection between adolescent spirituality, subjective well-being, and a positive emotional state. This suggests that an adolescent's spiritual well-being influences their emotional well-being, and the two are mutually impactful.
While discussing the factors contributing to adolescents' emotional well-being, the participants highlighted specific needs that should be addressed. These are presented in the following category.

Category 2.1.1: Needs of adolescents to experience emotional well-being

The need for quality attention and discipline to provide structure were identified as aspects to be considered to promote emotional well-being among adolescents.

> *"Attention, focused attention… So, I would say emotional well-being in order for the child to perform at the optimal level, they definitely need a lot of attention from their parents"* (P1).

> *"What would contribute to emotional well-being of adolescence, in my opinion, I agree with the attention bit"* (P2).

> *"And also, I would say, sometimes a bit of tough love... discipline"* (P1).

A study by Pinquart and Gerke (2019) found that authoritarian and neglectful parenting is linked to lower self-esteem in children. The authors conclude that parents who give their children adequate attention, while being assertive and firm with discipline, tend to raise children with higher self-esteem.

The challenges related to adolescent emotional well-being are presented next.

5.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Aspects that challenges emotional well-being during adolescence

Two participants discussed the impact of insufficient parental involvement in adolescents' lives and how it negatively affects their emotional well-being.

> *"They* [parents] *tend to overlook what is happening to their child. Or they might only at a surface level understand the differences between their children. So, they raise them the same or, you know, give the same kind of attention to them, not taking notes of the fact that one child is more independent than the other or one child is more assertive than the other"* (P2).
>
> *"Due to parents working long exhausting hours to maintain a middle-income status, they might not always be as present or involved in their child's well-being and needs. They might also suffer from stress. Adolescents need a*

mentor and guide to teach them the tricks and trades of life and what to do in certain situations" (P8).

It has been found that there is a strong association between parental mental health challenges and an increase in childhood emotional and behavioural developmental needs (Evans, 2021). Supporting this, Spinelli et al. (2020) discovered that parents who experience high stress levels struggle to understand their children's needs and relate to them in a meaningful way, impacting the emotional well-being of children and adolescents in this study. The authors further argue that such home circumstances often leave children and adolescents feeling misunderstood by their parents. A participant suggested that schools and parents must work together to support adolescent emotional well-being.

"On the flip side, if parents and the school do not work together, hand in hand, it might have a severe impact on the well-being of the adolescent. If they work together there will be less gaps to support the adolescents to have good emotional health" (P8).

The above statement is supported by Evans (2021), who suggests that parent-teacher collaborations and interactions contribute towards the emotional well-being of learners.

Concluding this sub-theme, a participant noted how current technological developments have consequences on adolescent emotional well-being.

"Electronics are kind of ruining the youth. If I'm watching tick-tock all day, every day, I mean, I'm a well-off middle-class kid who's on my smartphone all day, and do nothing else" (P2).

Adolescents who participated in a study by O'Reilly et al. (2018) reported that social media use had negative consequences on their mental health. This, however, was later contradicted by Beyens et al. (2020), who found that the majority of adolescent participants in their study did not experience any short-term negative impact on their emotional well-being following various forms of social media use.

The next sub-theme presents the role players and resources that are needed for adolescents to experience emotional well-being.

5.3.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Role players and resources needed for adolescents to experience emotional well-being

The statements below highlight home circumstances and parents as key resources for supporting adolescent emotional well-being.

> *"And so, yeah, parents must be more attuned to their children's personalities from when they're young, so that by the time that they are teenagers, they are attended to enough. Then they do not have overcompensate for the lack of attention from when the children were younger. It's both the parents and the home. The adolescents must feel seen in the home"* (P2).

> *"These support systems start at home where the parent or parents are involved in their childhood, their teenage and adolescent stages of their lives."* (P8)

Expanding on the above statements, Sanders and Morawska (2018) suggest three ways parents can promote their adolescent children's well-being: 1) building and strengthening the parent-adolescent relationship; 2) encouraging appropriate behaviour while discouraging inappropriate behaviour; and 3) fostering autonomy.

Educators were also identified as key role players in supporting adolescent emotional well-being.

> *"To conclude, adolescents with good relationships with teachers will be able to identify key areas in life as they understand more and more why people make certain decisions. They will ask questions, ask a helping hand or even advice. And it is our responsibility to ensure that they are the best versions of who they can be, by providing care unconditionally!"* (P8).

Discussing the relationship between educators and learners, Ibrahim and El Zaatari (2020) found that learners often perceive educators as harsh, uncaring, and at times

cynical, while educators tend to believe that learners lack social skills and exhibit poor discipline. This indicates a gap in the emotional connection between educators and learners, which significantly impacts the emotional well-being of adolescents.

The role of school social workers in promoting emotional well-being among adolescents is discussed below, concluding this theme.

5.3.2.4 Sub-theme 2.4: How school social workers can support adolescent emotional well-being

Similar to the responses presented in sub-theme 2.2. above, the participants suggested that there needs to be a collaboration between school social workers and educators (cf. Evans, 2021).

> *"We need to work with the social workers to make sure we all help adolescents to have good mental health"* (P3).

> *"Report when you see something out of place. Talk to each other so that we become mentors and parents away from home"* (P8).

In Chapter 3 (section 3.4), various school social work models were discussed, with a particular focus on the ecological model, which emphasises the relationships between the school social worker and different members of the school community. As Kemp (2014) suggests, school social workers are meant to strengthen the connection between educators and learners. A strong partnership between school social workers and educators can ensure that adolescents' emotional needs are identified and effectively addressed.

The next theme discusses the findings related to adolescent social well-being.

5.3.3 Theme 3: Social Well-being

In this theme, the educator participants discuss the challenges to social well-being during adolescence, as well as the key role players and resources needed to promote social well-being. Participant 8 highlights how a lack of exercise can diminish adolescents' motivation to actively engage in social activities.

> *"A lack of exercise also leads to a lack of creativity, motivation and encouragement to participate in class, extramural activities and even other events hosted by the school"* (P8).

Interestingly, Murfay et al. (2020) note that high school students are more likely to engage in school-based physical activities when they feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. The authors also highlight a positive correlation between adolescent physical activity and participation in social activities. Additionally, Participant 8 points out that middle-income parents often struggle to balance their careers and home life, which limits their ability to guide their adolescent children in developing social skills and participating in social activities.

> *"Due to parents working long exhausting hours, to maintain a middle-income status, they might not always be as present or involved in their child's well-being and needs. Adolescents need a mentor and guide to teach them the tricks and trades of life and what to do in certain situations"* (P8).

While Preety and Rani (2023) found a positive relationship between parental involvement and both social skills and academic performance, Sanders and Morawska (2018) concluded that parents with demanding work schedules often experience high levels of stress, limiting their ability to provide social and academic support to their children. In this study, however, one participating educator acknowledged that educators can serve as role models to help support the social well-being of adolescents.

> *"But sometimes, when you are busy in the class, as part of the workforce, and you are on the ground or assisting learners with what they need to do in social situations, then that actually helps them better…"* (P3).

Supporting the above statement, Sparks et al. (2017) found that educators who offer task-related support foster a sense of care and connection among learners through their interactions during these tasks (cf. Murfay et al., 2020). However, the

participating educators did not elaborate on the role of school social workers in this context.

The final theme focuses on spiritual well-being.

5.3.4 Theme 4: Spiritual Well-being

Sackman and Terway (2016) describe spiritual well-being as moral development, where values and ethical behaviour are nurtured, closely linking it to social development during adolescence. In this study, one participant suggested that spiritual well-being is fostered when adolescents experience unconditional love and care in their homes.

> *"Adolescents need support systems where they can find care, love, and unconditional support from parents who create a safe space where the adolescent is taught to be responsible and held accountable"* (P8).

This viewpoint aligns with the stance of Guyer and Horstmann (2015) that positive feedback and modelling of empathy can support overall well-being. Sanders and Morawska (2018) further support the link between emotional well-being and spiritual development by explaining that low criticism, conflict, and emotional tension in the home foster a sense of care and emotional safety, while Andrews et al. (2021) suggest that spiritual well-being is ensured when experiences during adolescence shape the development of personal values. The statement above indicates that when adolescents feel safe while also being held accountable, they are given the opportunity to develop personal values without facing criticism or experiencing tension.

In contrast to the description of an environment that supports spiritual or moral development, a participant describes environments that can threaten this development and, therefore, spiritual well-being. This participant calls for a protective environment to support spiritual well-being.

> *"Giving them the protection or the restriction they need. Because they watch how many music videos with all sorts of sexualised images and all of that, which then overstimulates them in terms of exploring sexuality. Like I can give an*

example: Now they find themselves at a house party that looks a lot like what they saw in a music video. There are substances, there is alcohol, there's all those things that are in music videos. And that is what they recreate. Then they do not create their own reality, but just recreate what they see in a music video" (P2).

Similarly, Lin et al. (2020) conclude that exposure to sexually explicit media during adolescence, a vulnerable developmental stage, affects viewers' perceptions of sexuality and women. Drawing a link between the two viewpoints shared by Participants 8 and 2 above, Krcmar and Cingel (2020) found that moral development, which contributes to both spiritual and social well-being, can be influenced by media. On the one hand, exposure to media can promote antisocial behaviour, as indicated by Participant 2. On the other hand, it can foster altruism and social inclusion, resulting in prosocial behaviour based on positive moral values. These authors recommend that moral reasoning skills be developed among adolescents to encourage prosocial behaviour rooted in spiritual beliefs and values. Participant 2 adds that limitations on media use should be considered:

"*As well as cutting on screen time. Yes, take away the phones, take away the computers, all of that"* (P2).

This position is confirmed by a study done by Neophytou et al. (2021) that underlined the importance of parental monitoring and limiting of screen time among adolescents Additionally, parents need to encourage and teach their children about responsible and safe online use as part of developmental tasks (Office of Adolescent Health, 2019).

5.4 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter discussed the findings from the data gathered through the FGDs with educators of adolescents from middle-income households. These findings were framed within the theoretical framework of the study, contributing to the understanding of how school social workers could provide services to support the holistic well-being of these adolescents.

The findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5 enabled the researcher to interpret the experiences and perceptions of both the participating adolescents and educators, leading to a deeper understanding of the research topic.

The final chapter summarises and concludes the study, followed by recommendations for further research, policy development, and school social work practice.

CHAPTER 6
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The aims of this study were to describe and interpret: 1) the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households, and 2) what is needed for school social workers to contribute to the holistic well-being of these adolescents.

Chapter 1 introduced the research by discussing the definitions of key concepts and providing an overview of relevant literature. It also outlined the theoretical framework, research problem, questions, aims, and objectives, as well as the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 detailed the chosen research methodology, including the research paradigm, approach, and design, along with a description of the data collection and analysis processes. Additionally, the chapter addressed the ethical considerations adhered to, as well as acknowledged the limitations of the study.

The literature review presented in Chapter 1 was expanded in Chapter 3, where current and relevant literature on middle-income households and their vulnerabilities, adolescent holistic development and well-being, the vulnerabilities of South African adolescents, and school social work in the South African context were explored.

Chapter 4 presented the findings from the participating adolescents, while Chapter 5 focused on the findings from the participating educators.

This final chapter summarises and concludes the study's methodology, findings, and recommendations.

6.2 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This section provides a summary of the research methodology and findings, followed by the conclusions.

6.2.1 Summary and Conclusions of the Research Methodology

To provide context for the conclusions regarding the chosen research methodology, a summary is presented below.

6.2.1.1 Summary

This study was framed within the interpretive research paradigm, as it supported the theoretical framework of subjective holistic well-being (Bryman, 2016). To interpret the findings based on the descriptions of the subjective experiences and perceptions of the participants in this study, a qualitative approach was adopted to develop an understanding of the social world of the participants (Bryman, 2012). Descriptive and contextual research designs were employed to inform the choices of research methods and techniques.

The two populations chosen for this study were 1) adolescents from middle-income households, and 2) educators of adolescents from middle-income households. Using the inclusion and exclusion criteria presented in Chapter 2, the researcher approached three schools to access participants through non-probability purposive sampling, ensuring that the participants would be able to answer the research questions effectively (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020). Gaining access to participants was more challenging than expected due to the COVID-19 pandemic, fitting interviews with adolescents into their school programmes, and arranging FGD interview times that suited all the participants.

Data from the adolescent participants were collected through individual interviews and FGDs with the participating educators. Framed within the theoretical framework of subjective holistic well-being, the researcher formulated semi-structured questions that were included in an interview guide provided to the participants as part of the information shared with them prior to their decision to participate. These questions assisted the researcher in interpreting the findings based on the different domains of subjective holistic well-being. The interviews and FGDs were recorded, transcribed, and analysed using the eight steps for qualitative data analysis proposed by Tesch (in

Creswell, 2014). These steps were followed by the researcher and an independent coder to ensure trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness was maintained through the use of Schurink et al.'s (2011) description of criteria for data verification. *Credibility* was enhanced through the triangulation of methods of data collection and data sources, member checking of field notes, the use of interview guides, and the use of verbatim responses from the participants. *Transferability* was ensured through a full description of the choices and implementation of the research methodology, the theoretical framework that guided the study, and triangulation of data sources (Schurink et al., 2011). *Dependability* was achieved through an audit trail of the research methods and the use of an independent coder to identify and confirm themes, sub-themes, and categories that emerged from the data analysis. Achieving confirmability was supported by strategies including the use of transcripts and verbatim quotations from participants, the process of data analysis, and the involvement of an independent coder. Additionally, the findings were compared and contrasted with existing literature. Lastly, the researcher engaged in reflexivity during supervision to identify any areas where her own bias could impact the interpretation of the findings, ensuring that she remained neutral.

Ethical practice formed an integral part of the entire research process. Firstly, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from UWC, as well as permission to conduct research at the schools. Secondly, potential participants were provided with all relevant information pertaining to the study and their participation to enable them to provide informed consent. Thirdly, the research participants signed and completed consent and assent forms prior to data collection. The participants were informed that their participation was voluntary. Fourthly, during data collection, the researcher secured a private space to conduct the interviews FGDs to ensure that the participants felt safe and comfortable. Additionally, a social worker was available for debriefing; however, none of the participants requested debriefing. Fifthly, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through the use of pseudonyms in the analysed transcripts. Documents containing personal information and audio recordings were stored in a locked space or on a password-protected computer that could only be accessed by the researcher and her supervisor, which will be disposed of in an appropriate manner after five years.

6.2.1.2 Conclusions

The following conclusions are reached regarding the research methodology employed in this study:

- The interpretive research paradigm was an effective framework, guiding the researcher in selecting a research approach that allowed for the interpretation of the subjective experiences and perceptions of adolescents from middle-income households and their educators concerning what is needed for their holistic well-being (Neuman, 2014).

- The qualitative research approach was well-suited for capturing detailed descriptions of the participants' social world and for understanding how they interpret the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households, as well as their expectations of school social workers (Mohajan, 2018). It is concluded that the research paradigm and approach complemented each other effectively to achieve the aim of this study.

- Non-probability purposive sampling was successful, enabling the researcher to select adolescents who were able to answer the research questions and contribute to the achievement of the study's aim (cf. Sharma, 2017).

- Considering the challenges of arranging interviews and FGD times, it is concluded that researchers must take such challenges into account when planning their studies and allow for additional time. Researchers must also be aware of the difficulties in finding suitable times for FGDs with professionals who have tight work schedules. Despite the advantages of FGDs in stimulating discussions and encouraging a thorough exploration of the questions (cf. Cyr, 2019), it is concluded that researchers should consider using individual interviews as an alternative.

- The individual semi-structured interviews worked particularly well, as the participating adolescents could share their viewpoints without being influenced

or impacted by reactions from peers. Additionally, the questions guided them to remain focused on the aims of the study without restricting their responses (cf. Pollock, 2020). The researcher concludes that interview techniques should provide participants with the feeling that they are not being judged and that their viewpoints matter. Such techniques include encouragement and probing that indicate the researcher's interest in what participants have to say.

- The theoretical framework effectively assisted the researcher in developing a structure for the interviews (see interview guides) and in comparing the findings. The framework for data analysis proposed by Tesch (cf. Creswell, 2014) was effective in identifying sub-themes and categories within the main domains of the subjective holistic well-being theoretical framework. It also provided the researcher and the independent coder with a step-by-step guide on how to analyse the data in a similar manner, thereby supporting the trustworthiness of the findings.

6.2.2 Summary and Conclusions of the Findings

In this section, the summary and conclusions are presented together, informed by the theoretical framework of the study. The findings from both the adolescent and educator participants are integrated to provide a comprehensive description. To contextualise the findings, the biographical details of the participants are presented first.

6.2.2.1 Biographical detail of the participants

The researcher gained access to two of the three schools that were approached. Seven adolescents participated in this study: four from one school and three from another. Notably, only one male adolescent participated, which is identified as a limitation of this study. The participants' ages ranged from 16 to 18 years. These ages are considered to be part of the youth group, which ranges from 14 to 35 years (RSA, 2020a).

Three FGDs with nine educators took place at one school. As mentioned in the previous section, the researcher found it difficult to find times when educators could

participate in FGDs. Four female and five male educators participated in the FGDs. Four of the participating educators held Bachelor of Education qualifications, while the others were specialists in their respective fields of education. Three participants obtained postgraduate certificates or diplomas, and two obtained postgraduate degrees, indicating diverse and substantial knowledge among the participants. Additionally, the years of experience ranged from one to 26 years, contributing to a variety of perspectives on the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households.

6.2.2.2 Physical needs

Regarding the factors needed to experience physical well-being, the participating adolescents first explained why physical well-being is important. They emphasised that it helps adolescents stay physically fit, learn more effectively, and build self-confidence. This self-confidence was further explained as being shaped by how others perceive them, which in turn influences their own self-perception. The researcher concludes that physical well-being supports cognitive well-being and development (cf. Haverkamp, 2020; Singh et al., 2019) on one hand, while also being linked to social and emotional well-being (cf. Fernández-Bustos et al., 2019) on the other (cf. Fernández-Bustos et al., 2019).

The educator participants added that physical well-being is observable and highlighted basic needs such as nutrition and shelter (cf. Hopper, 2020), along with exercise and a balanced lifestyle, as key contributors to physical well-being (cf. RSA, 2020a). They specifically identified the need for adolescents to develop self-discipline to maintain a healthy and balanced lifestyle. The literature reinforces this, emphasising that lifestyles are influenced by role models (cf. Babey et al., 2015), and that parents who engage in healthy lifestyles tend to foster stronger parent-child bonds (cf. Cozett & Roman, 2022).

The participating adolescents mentioned that their physical well-being is hindered by a lack of resources and mental health issues, which demotivate them from focusing on their schoolwork. This underscores the connection between cognitive, mental, and physical well-being, as confirmed by various authors (cf. Stroud, 2016; Orben et al.,

2020). They also highlighted the pressure and expectations from peers and parents, as well as the influence of social media portrayals of what is deemed acceptable. The role of socialisation with peers and parents in shaping physical well-being, as emphasised by Balleys et al. (2020) and Grundmann (2021), was particularly noted. The educator participants also discussed the lack of resources, specifically pointing to the challenges middle-income families face in accessing fresh food (cf. United Nations, 2022). In terms of parental influences, the educator participants pointed out a lack of discipline to guide adolescents towards balanced lifestyles, such as not addressing inadequate sleep due to high academic pressure and demanding lifestyles.

Regarding services in schools that can assist with physical well-being, the adolescent participants mentioned an increase in sport and engagement in physical activities. They stressed the importance of including aspects of how adolescents view their bodies, linking physical and emotional well-being. The educator participants also suggested placing more emphasis on participation in sports activities. However, they highlighted the need for better access to sports activities and resources within the communities. This emphasis relates to the role of school social work that connects learners, educators, school systems, families, and community resources (cf. RSA, 2019).

In terms of key role players who can support adolescent physical well-being, the educators stressed the importance of parents engaging in physical activities with their adolescent children as role models (cf. Babey et al., 2015; Cozett & Roman, 2022). They further suggested that school social workers should provide guidance and advice on healthy diets and physical activities, as well as raise awareness about the impact of harmful substances on overall physical well-being. Additionally, educators recommended that school social workers conduct ongoing assessments of adolescent learners to stay informed about their needs, plan services accordingly, and raise awareness about what is required from the school, parents, and community resources. This description points to the ecological model for school social work, which recognises the interconnectedness of the home, school, and community (cf. Kemp, 2014; Van Sittert, 2016).

6.2.2.3 Emotional needs

The participating adolescents described emotional well-being as a state of happiness, positivity, and mental balance. They also emphasised the importance of positive relationships as essential support systems for emotional well-being (cf. Sackman & Terway, 2016). The findings confirm that social relationships significantly impact emotional well-being and underscore the value of social skills in fostering positive relationships, while also supporting adolescents in experiencing positive emotions (cf. Andrews et al., 2021). Additionally, the adolescents noted that engaging in hobbies and other relaxing activities contributes to their emotional well-being (Offer, 2013; Vuletić & Krnjaić, 2019).

The educators described emotional well-being in terms of contributing factors and specific needs of adolescents. They identified academic performance as a contributing factor to emotional well-being in adolescence, drawing a link between mental (cognitive) health and emotional well-being (cf. White, 2016; Rehman et al., 2023). Further, it was indicated that physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being in adolescence influence one another and contribute to experiences of holistic well-being (cf. Kor et al., 2019). Positive discipline from parents to provide adolescents with structure and support the development of self-esteem (cf. Pinquart & Gerke, 2019) was identified as a need among adolescents to experience emotional well-being.

When it comes to the challenges of emotional well-being, the adolescent participants identified negative relationships characterised by negative comments and judgement from others. It is concluded that, while relationships with peers and families can support emotional well-being, negative relationships can harm it (cf. Orben et al., 2020). In addition, the effects of stress, anxiety, and depression on emotional well-being were mentioned by the adolescents. They explained that not having someone to talk to and not being understood, as well as being exposed to stress experienced by others, impact their emotional well-being. This confirms the role of social connectivity and external environments in emotional well-being (Shlafer, 2014).

Similarly, the educator participants highlighted a lack of parental involvement, often due to parents' own mental health challenges, which affects their awareness of their adolescent children’s emotional needs, their parenting style, and ultimately, their

children's emotional well-being (cf. Spinelli et al., 2020; Evans, 2021). Additionally, the negative impact of social media and technological developments on adolescent emotional well-being was identified as a significant challenge. This viewpoint is supported by some studies (cf. O'Reilly et al., 2018), while others contradict it (cf. Beyens et al., 2020).

Aspects that could support emotional well-being and guide school social work practice include the need for platforms for self-expression and providing adolescents with access to someone they can trust and talk to within the school system (cf. Çutuk, 2021; UNICEF, 2021). It is concluded that this could serve as a preventive measure, as emotional well-being would be supported by opportunities to express themselves and discuss different ways to help them cope with the stress of academic pressure and challenging life experiences. The participating educators particularly emphasised the roles of parents and educators in supporting emotional well-being and stressed the importance of a good relationship between parents and educators, which can be facilitated by school social workers (cf. Sanders & Morawska, 2018). The educators further indicated that school social workers can help achieve adolescent emotional well-being by collaborating with educators, again alluding to the ecological model of school social work (cf. Kemp, 2014).

6.2.2.4 Social needs

A need for strong and healthy relationships, as well as learning from those relationships, was expressed by the participating adolescents. Describing what contributes to social well-being, they particularly emphasised the importance of being in a safe and healthy environment, good communication, experiencing connectivity and mutual understanding with peers, and spending time with peers to combat loneliness (cf. Sundqvist & Hemberg, 2021). The educators who participated in this study highlighted that adolescents need to engage in various physical activities that could also provide them with positive social experiences (cf. Murfay et al., 2020).

Feelings of being misunderstood by those around them were identified as a challenge for adolescents in experiencing social well-being. This leads to negative social experiences that impact their social development. The participating adolescents further described how gossiping, spreading rumours, and an inability to engage with

diversity, which leads to judgemental peer interactions, negatively affect their social well-being (cf. Sackman & Terway, 2016; Fletcher, 2014). Both the participating adolescents and educators mentioned a lack of parental attention, which results in social vulnerability to engage with negative peers (cf. Chunga et al., 2018). Focusing on adolescents from middle-income homes, the findings obtained from educators highlight that parents have to work hard to provide for their families, which causes them stress and leaves little time to guide their adolescents in understanding what to look for in positive relationships (cf. Morawska, 2018; Preety & Rani, 2023).

Looking at how social well-being can be supported within the school system, the educators spoke about their educational responsibilities that often lead them to pay little attention to the development of social skills in their teaching practices (cf. Sparks et al., 2017). In line with the educators' viewpoints, the adolescent participants suggested that social skills development in the classroom could provide them with opportunities to form social bonds (cf. Toseland & Rivas, 2017). In terms of the school social worker's role, the participating adolescents referred to extra-mural activities that allow adolescents to connect and socialise while participating. It is concluded that this suggestion supports the ecological model of school social work, where school social workers focus on macro interventions aimed at the development of social skills and well-being (cf. Kemp, 2014).

6.2.2.5 Spiritual needs

The participating adolescents acknowledged the importance of religion and posited that it is a way of strengthening their values and beliefs to guide their lifestyles. They also described religion as a form of self-expression and a means to establish a sense of purpose in life. It is concluded that this description points to a connection between emotional, social, and spiritual well-being (cf. Bond et al., 2012; Trommsdorf & Chen, 2012). Importantly, the reference to finding purpose in life indicates that spiritual well-being contributes to the overall development of adolescents, as it can support positive and effective decision-making (cf. Torralba et al., 2021).

On the one hand, the educator participants spoke about adolescents experiencing unconditional love and care in their homes as a way to enhance spiritual well-being (cf. Guyer & Horstmann, 2015). On the other hand, they emphasised the exposure to

media as a threat to adolescent spiritual well-being. The importance of parents managing and monitoring adolescents' exposure to media, as well as acting as role models for their children, was further highlighted (cf. Lin et al., 2020; Neophytou et al., 2021). It is therefore concluded that there is a link between social and spiritual well-being and moral development (cf. Krcmar & Cingel, 2020).

Also indicating a link between social and spiritual well-being, the adolescent participants highlighted how negative responses and judgement from others regarding their religious beliefs and practices pose a challenge to their spiritual well-being (cf. Verkuyten et al., 2019). They further commented that substance use, low self-esteem, and not actively practising religious beliefs challenge their spiritual well-being.

While the educator participants did not directly describe the role of the school and school social workers in the development of spiritual well-being, the adolescents particularly suggested that religious studies and opportunities to participate in extra-mural religious groups within the school system could assist them with socialisation opportunities and provide a space in which they could experience support and explore their spirituality.

Based on the above summary and conclusions, recommendations for further research, policy development, and school social work practice are made below.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.3.1 Recommendations for future research

To further contribute to the holistic well-being of adolescents from middle-income households, it is recommended that:

- Research be conducted at various schools in both rural and urban contexts to enhance the general understanding of how school social work can support the healthy and holistic development of adolescents from middle-income households.
- Future studies include male and gender-diverse learners to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of adolescent holistic needs.

- The viewpoints and experiences of parents and caregivers be explored in future research to deepen understanding of how school social work can contribute to the holistic well-being of adolescents from middle-income households.
- Research address the limitations in accessing certain populations, such as educators, who may have limited time to participate in FGDs. While online, after-hours FGDs could be an option, it is important to explore preferred methods for data collection by consulting the population during the proposal phase to determine what would be most feasible.

6.3.2 Recommendations for policy development

To contribute to the holistic well-being of adolescents from middle-income households, the following should be considered in policy development:

- Policies related to learner well-being, school social work, and social services for adolescents should be grounded in research that reflects the perspectives, experiences, and expectations of adolescents, their parents and caregivers, educators, and school governing bodies.
- The interpretation and implementation of existing policies should incorporate research findings that highlight the importance of addressing religion to support adolescents' spiritual well-being.
- Policies related to school-based support services should clearly define the roles, responsibilities, and functions of various role players, and outline how these stakeholders should coordinate and collaborate to ensure the holistic development and well-being of adolescents within the school system.
- School social workers should be available to all schools, not only to address immediate needs or challenges but also to conduct assessments, plan interventions, and be fully integrated members of the school system. School social work should be recognised in policies as a vital contributor to the holistic development and well-being of adolescents, requiring ongoing involvement.

6.3.3 Recommendations for school social work

Based on the findings from the participants, the following recommendations are proposed for school social work to support adolescents from middle-income households:

- The ecological school social work model should be considered to guide school social work practices, ensuring that services for adolescents are aligned and coordinated across various systems.
- This study highlighted the need for collaboration and MDTs to support holistic well-being among adolescents within the school system. The community-school social work model, which emphasises collaborative partnerships between parents, community resources, and the school, should be considered.
- School social workers should address the interplay between physical, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being. Therefore, school social work interventions should integrate these domains through individual and group activities, awareness-raising initiatives, and information-sharing interventions.
- Close collaboration between educators and social workers is essential, as highlighted by the educator participants. This can be enhanced through proper referrals of at-risk adolescents by educators to school social workers and regular discussion sessions between the two.
- Interventions should include activities that promote healthy lifestyles, identify positive role models, and create opportunities for participation in activities that support physical, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being.
- School social workers should assess all learners to identify needs within a particular school that may require either direct support from the social worker or referrals to external resources.
- To ensure effective referrals, school social workers should be supported by a robust resource base that provides access to necessary resources.
- The findings underscore the importance of including parents in school social work. While it may be challenging to engage with all parents, school social workers could participate in parent evenings to offer guidance and be available for consultations. Additionally, parents should be made aware of the role of the school social worker and how to contact them if needed. To make this feasible, more school social workers should be appointed to ensure manageable workloads and availability.

6.4 CONCLUSION

Middle-income households in South Africa confront significant inequalities across various levels of society. As a result, school social workers play a crucial role in

supporting the holistic developmental needs of adolescents from these households. This study aimed to explore the subjective experiences of holistic well-being among adolescents, the challenges they face, and how school social workers can effectively support their overall well-being.

Based on the findings of this study, conclusions were drawn, and recommendations were made for further research, policy development, and school social work practice. In conclusion, the researcher hopes that this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of how school social work can address the holistic needs of adolescents and promote their overall well-being, thereby reducing vulnerability among adolescents from middle-income households. Additionally, the researcher believes this study can inform school social work practice and advocate for the hiring of more school social workers to meet the holistic needs of adolescents.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

60 YEARS of hope, action & knowledge

15 July 2021

Ms TG Maleka
Social Work
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

HSSREC Reference Number:	HS21/5/24
Project Title:	School social work to address the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households.
Approval Period:	14 July 2021 – 14 July 2024

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

Please remember to submit a progress report by 30 November each year for the duration of the project.

The permission to conduct the study must be submitted to HSSREC for record keeping purposes.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse events and/or termination of the study.

Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape

Director: Research Development
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X 17
Bellville 7535
Republic of South Africa
Tel: +27 21 959 4111
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

NHREC Registration Number: HSSREC-130416-049

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE.

ANNEXURE B: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

FACULTY of COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE
Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
Tel: +27 21-959 2851, Fax: 27 21-959 2845
E-mail: **mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za**

Title of Research Project: School social work to address the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households

Dear Sir/madam

My name is Tshegofatso Maleka. I am a Masters of Social Work (MSW) student in the Department of Social Work at the University of Western Cape. For the purpose of this degree, I am conducting a research study that has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. The aim of this study is to describe and interpret the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households and to explore what is needed for school social workers to contribute to the holistic wellbeing of adolescents from middle-income households.

I am requesting permission to gain entry to schools in the Cape Town Municipal area to access educators and adolescents that could participate in this study. With your permission, I will contact schools in middle-income areas and request the school principles to support me to contact educators that adhere to the inclusion criteria. I will provide them with information pertaining to the research, and accentuate that participation is voluntary. I will ask those who are willing to participate to also assist me to contact parents of adolescents who adhere to the inclusion criteria. These parents will also be provided with relevant information to be able to provide me with informed consent. The adolescent children of these parents will then also be requested to participate and to provide me with assent, based on information related to the study and what participation would involve that I will provide them with. Voluntary participation will be accentuated during my initial interviews with possible participants. I will conduct individual interviews with the adolescents, and focus groups with the educators.

Your willingness to support me will be much appreciated. I am also providing you with the information letter to the participants, as well as proof of ethical clearance for you to be able to make an informed decision to support me.

Should you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the study supervisor, who is also the Head of the Department of Social Work or the Dean of the Faculty:

Prof Marichen van der Westhuizen Department of Social Work: Head of Department Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Tel: 021 9592851 Email: mvdwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za	Prof Anthea Rhoda Dean: Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Email: chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

Tel: 021 959 4111

E-mail: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

REFERENCE NUMBER: HS21/5/24

Thank you.

Tshegofatso Maleka

ANNEXURE C: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Western Cape Government
Education

Directorate: Research

meshack.kanzi@westerncape.gov.za
Tel: +27 021 467 2350
Fax: 086 590 2282
Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000
wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20210922-6118
ENQUIRIES: Mr M Kanzi

Ms Tshegofatso Maleka
147 The River Hamlet, Gie Road
Table view
Cape Town
7441

Dear Ms Tshegofatso Maleka,

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK TO ADDRESS THE HOLISTIC NEEDS OF ADOLESCENTS FROM MIDDLE-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **1 April 2022 till 31 May 2022.**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Mr M Kanzi at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards,
Meshack Kanzi
Directorate: Research
DATE: 1 March 2022

ANNEXURE D: INFORMATION SHEETS

UNIVERSITY *of the* WESTERN CAPE

FACULTY *of* COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY *of the* WESTERN CAPE

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE
Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
Tel: +27 21-959 2851, Fax: 27 21-959 2845
E-mail: **mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za**

INFORMATION SHEET: EDUCATORS

Title of Research Project: School social work to address the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households

What is this study about?

This research project will be conducted by Tshegofatso Maleka for a Master of Social Work degree at the Department of Social Work at the University of Western Cape. The research aim is to describe and interpret the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households and to explore what is needed for school social workers to contribute to the holistic wellbeing of adolescents from middle-income households. You are invited to participate in this study because you have been identified as a person who could provide relevant information on the topic to assist the researcher to attain the aim of this study.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

You are requested to participate in a focus group with other educators, as well as to assist the researcher to identify learners between the ages of 15 and 18 who are attending your school, and do not qualify for the exemption of school fees. You will be asked to participate in a focus group interview which will last between 45 minutes to an hour. During the focus group, you will be asked to share your experiences and perceptions on the topic school social work to address the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households. You will be provided with an interview schedule listing the questions that will be asked to you. Importantly, you can withdraw your participation at any time. The focus group will take place at your school. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the focus groups will take place with less than seven persons

present, keeping a distance of 1.5 metres from each other, wearing facial masks and hand sanitising prior to entering the ventilated room.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

You will be asked permission that the researcher can audio-record the focus group discussion. Should you choose not to give permission for this, your answers and contributions will be recorded by means of field notes. The recording will be transcribed immediately after the focus group, and the recording and transcripts will be saved on a password protected computer. The consent form that you will sign will be locked in a safe space to which only the researcher and her supervisor will have access. The researcher undertakes to protect your identity and the nature of your contribution. To ensure your anonymity, your name will not appear on the transcript of the focus group. A number will be assigned to your name, for example 'Participant 1", and a list will be made that links the numbers to the identity of the participants. This list will be stored on a password computer to which only the researcher will have access. All documents will be destroyed five years after the study was completed. If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected.

In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, any disclosure of abuse or harm made during the research process by you or any other participant, has to be reported. In this event, I will inform you that I have to break confidentiality to fulfil my legal responsibility to report to the designated authorities.

What are the risks of this research?

Discussing personal experiences and perceptions carry some amount of risks. The researcher will nevertheless minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your participation in this study. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to a suitable professional for further assistance or intervention.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the researcher to make recommendations for school social work to adolescents from middle-income households. In this way, adolescents from middle-income households could benefit from your participation.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalised in any way.

Is any assistance available if I am negatively affected by participating in this study?

Should you feel, at any stage during the interview uncomfortable to continue, your participation will be stopped even though you consented. Even though your experience and insight are valuable to this research, the researcher will respect your decision to terminate. Should you wish to terminate your participation because you feel uncomfortable due to any form of disclosure, the researcher will refer you for counselling.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Tshegofatso Maleka under the auspices of the Social Work Department at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research itself, please contact the researcher at: 0827760667 or at 3554238@myuwc.ac.za .

Should you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the study supervisor, who is also the Head of the Department of Social Work or the Dean of the Faculty.

Prof Marichen van der Westhuizen Department of Social Work: Head of Department Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Tel: 021 9592851 Email: mvdwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za	Prof Anthea Rhoda Dean: Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535 chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

Tel: 021 959 4111

E-mail: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

REFERENCE NUMBER: HS21/5/24

Thank you.

Tshegofatso Maleka

INFORMATION SHEET: PARENTS

Title of Research Project: School social work to address the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households

What is this study about?

This research project will be conducted by Tshegofatso Maleka for a Master of Social Work degree at the Department of Social Work at the University of Western Cape. The research aim is to describe and interpret the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households and to explore what is needed for school social workers to contribute to the holistic wellbeing of adolescents from middle-income households. Your child is invited to participate in this study because they could provide relevant information on the topic to assist the researcher to attain the aim of this study.

What will I be asked to do if I agree that my child may participate?

You are requested to give consent that your child can participate in an individual interview with the researcher at the school, after school hours to prevent your child from feeling exposed. Your child will also be asked to agree to participate and may withdraw this permission immediately. The interview will last between 45 minutes to an hour. You and your child will be provided with an interview schedule listing the questions that will be asked. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the interview will take place in a ventilated room, keeping a distance of 1.5 metres from each other, wearing facial masks and hand sanitising prior to entering the room.

Would my child's participation in this study be kept confidential?

You and your child will be asked permission that the researcher can audio-record the interview. Should you choose not to give permission for this, the answers and contributions will be recorded by means of field notes. The recording will be transcribed immediately after the interview and the recording will be saved on a password protected computer. The consent and assent forms signed by you and your child will be locked in a safe space to which only the researcher and her supervisor will have access. The researcher undertakes to protect your and your child's identity and the nature of their contribution. To ensure anonymity, names will not appear on the transcript of the interview. A number will be assigned to each name, for example 'Participant 1", and a list will be made that links the numbers to the identity of the participants. This list will be stored on a password computer to which only the researcher will have access. All documents will be destroyed five years after the study was completed. If I write a report or article about this research project, your child's identity will be protected.

In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, any disclosure of abuse or harm made during the research process by your child or any other participant, has to be reported. In this event, I will inform you that I have to break confidentiality to fulfil my legal responsibility to report to the designated authorities.

What are the risks of this research?

Discussing personal experiences and perceptions carry some amount of risks. The researcher will nevertheless minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your participation in this study. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to a suitable professional for further assistance or intervention.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help your child personally, but the results may help the researcher to make recommendations for school social work to adolescents from middle-income households. In this way, adolescents from middle-income households could benefit from your participation.

Does my child have to be in this research and may he/she stop participating at any time?

Your child's participation in this research is completely voluntary. He/she may choose not to take part at all. If he/she decides to participate in this research, he/she may stop participating at any time. If he/she decides not to participate in this study or to stop participating at any time, he/she will not be penalised in any way.

Is any assistance available if may child am negatively affected by participating in this study?

Should your child feel, at any stage during the interview, uncomfortable to continue, participation will be stopped even though you and your child consented. Even though his/her experience and insight are valuable to this research, the researcher will respect the decision to terminate. Should your child wish to terminate participation because he/she feels uncomfortable due to any form of disclosure, the researcher will refer him/her for counselling directly after the interview.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Tshegofatso Maleka under the auspices of the Social Work Department at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research itself, please contact the researcher at: 0827760667 or at 3554238@myuwc.ac.za .

Should you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the study supervisor, who is also the Head of the Department of Social Work or the Dean of the Faculty:

Prof Marichen van der Westhuizen Department of Social Work: Head of Department Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Tel: 021 9592851 Email: mvdwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za	Prof Anthea Rhoda Dean: Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535 chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

Tel: 021 959 4111

E-mail: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

REFERENCE NUMBER: HS21/5/24

Thank you.

Tshegofatso Maleka

INFORMATION SHEET: LEARNERS

Title of Research Project: School social work to address the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households

What is this study about?

This research project will be conducted by Tshegofatso Maleka for a Master of Social Work degree at the Department of Social Work at the University of Western Cape. The research aim is to explore the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households and to explore what is needed for school social workers to contribute to the holistic wellbeing of adolescents from middle-income households. You are invited to participate because you will be able to describe what adolescents need from school social workers.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

You will be asked to have an individual interview with me, which will last between 45 minutes to an hour. During the interview, you will be asked to share your experiences and perceptions on the topic school social work to address the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households. I will give you an interview schedule listing the questions that will be asked to you before our interview. Importantly, you can withdraw your participation at any time. The interview will take place at your school. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the room will be ventilated, we will keep a distance of 1.5 metres from each other, wear facial masks and sanitise hands before entering the room.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

You will be asked permission that I can audio-record the interview. Should you choose not to give permission for this, your answers and contributions will be recorded by means of field notes. I will write down what you shared with me immediately after our interview. The recording will be locked in a safe space to which only me and my supervisor will have access. I will protect your identity and the nature of your contribution. Your name will not appear on the form with your answers on. A number will be assigned to your name, for example ‘Participant 1”, and a list will be made that links the numbers to the identity of the participants. This list will be stored on a password computer to which only I will have access. All documents will be destroyed five years after the study was completed. If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected.

In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, any disclosure of abuse or harm made during the research process by you or any other participant, has to be reported. In this event, I will inform you that I have to break confidentiality to fulfil my legal responsibility to report to the designated authorities.

What are the risks of this research?

Discussing personal experiences and perceptions carry some amount of risks. I will nevertheless minimise such risks and assist you if you experience any discomfort during the interview. If you need it, I will refer you to someone to assist and support you after the interview.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help me to make recommendations for school social work to adolescents. In this way, adolescents could benefit from your participation.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalised in any way.

Is any assistance available if I am negatively affected by participating in this study?

Should you feel, at any stage during the interview uncomfortable to continue, your participation will be stopped even though you consented. Even though your experience and insight are valuable to this research, I will respect your decision to terminate. Should you wish to terminate your participation because you feel uncomfortable due to any form of disclosure, I will refer you for counselling.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Tshegofatso Maleka under the auspices of the Social Work Department at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research itself, please contact the researcher at: 0827760667 or at 3554238@myuwc.ac.za .

Should you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the study supervisor, who is also the Head of the Department of Social Work or the Dean of the Faculty:

Prof Marichen van der Westhuizen Department of Social Work: Head of Department Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Tel: 021 9592851 Email: mvdwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za	Prof Anthea Rhoda Dean: Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535 chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

Tel: 021 959 4111

E-mail: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

REFERENCE NUMBER: HS21/5/24

Thank you.

Tshegofatso Maleka

ANNEXURE E: INFORMED CONSENT AND ASSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY FORMS

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

FACULTY of COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE
Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
Tel: +27 21-959 2851, Fax: 27 21-959 2845
E-mail: mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za

Consent Form

Title of Research Project: School social work to address the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households.

The study has been described to me in a language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits.

I agree to participate in the research study _____

I do not agree to participate in the research study _____

I agree to be audio-recorded _____

I do not agree to be audio-recorded _____

Participant's name……..

Participant's signature…….

Date……

Assent Form

Title of research project: School social work to address the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households

Tshegofatso Maleka described the study to me and also why she asked me to participate. I know I can ask her questions if I am not sure about something. She has explained to me that I take part because I want to, and that I can stop taking part at any time. I also know that she will make a tape recording so that she can remember what I told her. She will not share this tape recording with other people and she will keep it in a safe place. She will destroy it after 5 years. I agree to take part in the research and to talk to Tshegofatso Maleka. I also agree that she can tape record my answers.

I want to talk to Tshegofatso Maleka about my experience……...

I do not want to talk to Tshegofatso Maleka about my experience……..

I agree to be audio-recorded……..

I do not agree to be audio-recorded……

Adolescent's signature…….

Parent/guardian's signature …….

Date:…….

Confidentiality Agreement

Research topic: School social work to address the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households.

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits. I understand that confidentiality is dependent on participants' in the focus group maintaining confidentiality. I hereby agree to the following:

I agree to uphold the confidentiality of the discussions in the focus group by not disclosing the identity of other participants or any aspects of their contributions to members outside of the group.

If you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study supervisor at the contact e-mail/number above.

I agree to maintain confidentiality of what is being discussed in the focus group.

Participant's name……..

Participant's signature……..

Date……

ANNEXURE F: INTERVIEW GUIDE

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

FACULTY of COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Title of Research Project: School social work to address the holistic needs of adolescents from middle-income households

Introduction:

The participating adolescents will be provided with information pertaining to school social work. The researcher will explain that she is interested in their descriptions of what adolescents from middle-income households need from school social workers to support them.

Questions to adolescent participants

Questions focusing on physical wellbeing

- What do you think adolescents need to be healthy?
- What do you think makes it difficult for them to be healthy?
- What type of activities or programmes at the school can help adolescents to have a healthy body?

Questions focusing on emotional wellbeing

- What do you think adolescents need to feel good and happy?
- What do you think makes it hard for adolescents to feel good and happy?
- What type of activities or programmes at the school can help adolescents to feel good and happy?

Questions focusing on social wellbeing

- What is important for adolescents to have a good social life?
- Who are important in adolescents' social life?
- What can make adolescents' relationships with friends, family and other social groups (such as church and sport clubs) difficult?
- What type of activities or programmes at the school can help adolescents to have a good social life?

Questions focusing on spiritual wellbeing

- What is the role of religion/spirituality in adolescents' life?
- What could harm adolescents' religious/spiritual life?

- What type of activities or programmes at the school can help adolescents to have a good religious/spiritual life?

Questions to educator participants

Physical wellbeing

- In your opinion, what do you think will contribute to physical wellbeing of adolescents in general?
- What challenges does adolescents from middle income households experience that affect their physical wellbeing?
- What do they need to experience physical wellbeing?
- What role-players and resources do they need to experience physical wellbeing?
- How do you think could school social workers could support their physical wellbeing?

Emotional wellbeing

- In your opinion, what do you think will contribute to emotional wellbeing of adolescents in general?
- What challenges does adolescents from middle income households experience that affect their emotional wellbeing?
- What do they need to experience emotional wellbeing?
- What role-players and resources do they need to experience emotional wellbeing?
- How do you think could school social workers could support their emotional wellbeing?

Social wellbeing

- In your opinion, what do you think will contribute to social wellbeing of adolescents in general?
- What challenges does adolescents from middle income households experience that affect their social wellbeing?
- What do they need to experience social wellbeing?
- What role-players and resources do they need to experience social wellbeing?
- How do you think could school social workers could support their social wellbeing?

Spiritual wellbeing

- In your opinion, what do you think will contribute to spiritual wellbeing of adolescents in general?
- What challenges does adolescents from middle income households experience that affect their spiritual wellbeing?
- What do they need to experience spiritual wellbeing?
- What role-players and resources do they need to experience spiritual wellbeing?
- How do you think could school social workers could support their spiritual wellbeing?

ANNEXURE G: EDITOR'S LETTER

PROOF-READING

DR LEE-ANNE ROUX

EDITOR | PROOFREADER

+27 82 825 7325
leeanne@proof-reading.co.za
www.proof-reading.co.za

PROFESSIONAL EDITING SERVICES

PHD PRACTICAL THEOLOGY (SU) • MTH PRACTICAL THEOLOGY (SU) • BA (HONS) PSYCHOLOGY (UNISA)
BTH (HONS) PRACTICAL THEOLOGY (UNISA) • BTH PASTORAL COUNSELLING (UNISA)

27 September 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: LANGUAGE EDITING

This letter serves to confirm that I have edited the thesis titled:

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK TO ADDRESS THE HOLISTIC NEEDS OF ADOLESCENTS FROM MIDDLE-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

By

Tshegofatso Goitseone Maleka

(This certificate does not cover any alterations made subsequent to the editing process).

Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Lee-Anne Roux