

**POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY CONSTRUCTS AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN SOUTH
AFRICAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A SCOPING REVIEW**

by

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DECLARATION

I, Liezel Naidoo (18342389), have obtained, for the research described in this document, the applicable and necessary research ethics approval. I declare that I have observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's Code of Ethics for researchers and the Policy Guidelines for responsible research. The current research is a product of my own work and has not been submitted to any other institution for examination. Furthermore, I confirm that all sources have been fully referenced and acknowledged. Lastly, I declare that a qualified and experienced language editor edited this dissertation.

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“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (King James Version, Matthew 11:28-30). It is by the grace of my saviour Jesus Christ, I completed this qualification. Through every trial, tribulation, and obstacle, He was by my side, leading, guiding, teaching, and comforting me. I am forever grateful and hopeful because of His love.

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SUMMARY

The increasing popularity and a widening scope of interest within the field of positive psychology have led to a plethora of multidisciplinary studies in the education domain. Education, in particular, academic success, has been linked to various benefits for individuals and communities. Secondary school learners in South Africa face many challenges in pursuit of academic success. A positive psychology approach to understanding and promoting academic success may be an effective and suitable response to educational challenges on multiple levels.

Most research on academic success in secondary school seems to have been conducted in Western individualistic contexts, which may not apply to a non-Western collectivist society, such as South Africa. There is a need to investigate positive psychology constructs relevant in a South African context to facilitate current understanding, culture-activity fit, and future research. Then the current study implemented a scoping review to establish what is known about positive psychology constructs identified in association with academic success, specifically in South African secondary schools.

Electronic databases, reference lists, key journals, institutional repositories, and relevant organisations were consulted to identify published and unpublished literature relevant to the topic. A quality search strategy was used to comprehensively cover the topic. A list of 46 possible positive constructs was identified from dominant positive psychology literature. Each data source was searched multiple times using a new search string for each positive construct of interest. Studies were included in the final results if they were conducted within the last 15 years with South African secondary school learners or parents or staff members working directly with secondary school learners. The studies had to report on positive constructs associated with academic success.

Fifteen studies were identified using the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The results showed that only 25 out of 46 potential positive constructs had been investigated in South African secondary schools. The construct most often identified in association with academic success was social support. Achievement motivation, hope, love of learning, self-regulation, creativity, self-efficacy, altruism, autonomy, bravery, grit, honesty, meaning and purpose, and resilience were all identified by more than one study. The remaining positive constructs were only identified by one study each. These were merely the current positive constructs found in South African literature. However, they are not exhaustive or indicative of constructs most strongly related to academic success.

The results highlighted a gap in the literature about positive psychology constructs identified in association with academic success in South African secondary schools. Robust and replicable studies are needed to advance knowledge on the positive psychology constructs associated with academic success in South African secondary schools.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APA: American Psychological Association

COVID-19: Coronavirus Disease 2019

DBE Department of Basic Education

NWU: North-West University

PPI: Positive Psychology Intervention

PRESS: Peer Review of Electronic Search Strategies

PRISMA-ScR: Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews

PYD: Positive Youth Development

SAJE: South African Journal of Education

SCT: Social Cognitive Theory

SDT: Self-determination Theory

TIMSS: Trend in Mathematical and Science Study

UIS: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

UJ: University of Johannesburg

UN: United Nations

UNESCO: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UP: University of Pretoria

VIA: Values in Action

Chapter 1: Introduction, Problem Statement and Overview

1.1 Introduction

Flourishing and succeeding despite adversity or humble origins is a familiar plotline in many stories, probably dating back as long as humans have told stories (Masten, 2014). Researchers have become increasingly interested in navigating and negotiating everyday resources for the ordinary person to achieve the good life (Ungar, 2018). The last two decades revealed a surge in the number of studies conducted within the field of positive psychology. The increasing popularity of the field and widening scope of interest led to many multidisciplinary studies on positive psychology in the education domain since academic success has been linked to well-being (Lomas et al., 2021). Hendriks et al. (2019) found that 78.2% of positive psychology research in various domains was predominantly conducted in Western countries. They noted, however, that there had been a steady increase in the number of publications from non-Western countries since 2012. The overarching purpose of this study is to empirically evaluate the status of research on positive psychology constructs associated with academic success in South African secondary school contexts.

This first chapter introduces the research topic of education and well-being using a positive psychology framework. First, the background and rationale for the study will be explored to highlight the importance of education as a determinant of well-being, followed by the research question and aim of the study. The theoretical framework and research paradigm that guided the study will then be detailed. Next, terminological distinctions will be made to orient the reader to the linguistic nuances in positive psychology and the current study. Finally, an overview of the chapters included in this study will be provided.

1.2 Background, Rationale and Problem Statement

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, aimed to eradicate poverty and other deprivations worldwide (United Nations [UN], 2020). From 2015 until 2019, the global poverty rate decreased by 1.2% through various interventions that targeted multiple domains, such as the economy, ecosystem, climate, food sustainability, education, and more. However, since the pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), the UN reported that the goal to end poverty by 2030 had slowed. The economic impact of the pandemic has driven tens of millions of people back into poverty (UN, 2020). The global poverty rate increased by 0.6% from 2019 to 2020 (UN, 2020). These statistics reflect the importance of implementing robust social protection systems to safeguard well-being.

One of the strategies identified for ending poverty is ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education. Education's benefits across multiple life domains have been well-documented (Dursun et al., 2018; Reynolds & Ou, 2010). Education is a fundamental determinant of health, quality of life and social and occupational status (Dragic et al., 2014; UN, 2020). The benefits of education are far-reaching and extend beyond economic dimensions to various components of holistic well-being (Scharf et al., 2019). Well-being is viewed here as a state of complete physical, spiritual, mental, and social health interconnected in multiple dimensions of life (Wissing, 2020).

The positive relationship between education and optimal functioning is clear. However, the educational challenges and barriers faced by policymakers, schools, teachers, parents, and learners worldwide are significant. Educational challenges include high learner dropout rates from school, low numeracy and literacy rates, chronic school disengagement and a high number of learners unable to meet minimum academic proficiency levels (Dupont

et al., 2015; Eloff, 2013; Zhang, 2014). These challenges are often symptomatic of more considerable contextual challenges such as poverty, violence within the community, a limited sense of belonging within a school environment, political conflict, family processes, COVID-19 and more (Azevedo et al., 2021; Eloff, 2013; Masten, 2014; Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021).

Academic dropout and low achievement rates are pervasive challenges at all levels of the education system (Dupont et al., 2015). Impaired academic functioning and low levels of educational attainment result in significant disadvantages that extend well into adulthood (Omidire, 2019; Rüppel et al., 2015). Education is a safeguard that can buffer youth against the negative spiralling effects of adversities, such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment (Masten, 2014; Mosang & van Schalkwyk, 2019; Theron & Theron, 2014). More than ever, enabling educational attainment in school settings is vital for well-being (Khumalo et al., 2012; Mosang & van Schalkwyk, 2019).

There is a natural affinity between the central tenets of positive psychology and the educational principle of working with strengths and capacities. A positive psychology approach is an effective response to the challenges faced in education today (Eloff, 2013), especially with the current excessive global focus on the adverse effects of the pandemic with an unbalanced consideration for resilience processes in mass media (Abbas et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021; Su et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2021; Zhao & Zhou, 2020).

Scientific research investigating the link between positive psychology and academic success has grown exponentially over the past two decades (White & Kern, 2018). The associations between positive psychology constructs, such as mindfulness, self-determination, grit, and academic attainment, have been explored and evaluated extensively (Duckworth, 2016; Gush & Greeff, 2018; Rusk & Waters, 2013). However, most research

was conducted in Western individualistic contexts (Hendriks et al., 2019), and previous reviews on positive psychology literature in non-Western countries were broadly focused on positive psychology interventions (PPIs) in various domains (Guse, 2022) without specific consideration of the positive constructs in a school setting. Understanding the link between academic success and positive psychology constructs in South Africa could have a significant impact on the overall understanding of the determinants of academic success, policy development, and PPI implementation. However, it is unclear what information is available in literature about which positive constructs have been identified in association with academic success. For these reasons, the current study implemented a scoping review (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005) to establish what is known about positive psychology constructs identified in association with academic success in the context of South African secondary schools.

1.3 Research Question and Aim

The central research question for the study is: *What literature is available concerning positive psychology constructs that have been identified in association with academic success in South African secondary schools?* The study aims to explore and describe the following elements of the existing research on positive psychology constructs associated with academic success in South African secondary schools:

1. The type of research output (e.g., journal article or unpublished dissertation).
2. The location where the research was conducted.
3. The sample used.
4. The research design and framework.
5. The aims of the research.

6. The outcomes and specific constructs identified in association with academic success.

1.4 Positive Psychology as Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of a research study provides a broad orientating lens with which to approach the research topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Specifically, it highlights the author's philosophical assumptions (epistemology, ontology, and axiology) and worldviews (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016) that underpin the selected study methods, data collection, interpretation, and communication of the findings (Bryman, 2016; Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009).

The current study is positioned within a positive psychology framework. Positive psychology is the scientific study of optimal human functioning and aims to discover factors that enable individual, group, and communal well-being (Lomas et al., 2021). Over time, the field of positive psychology underwent various development phases, shaping the definition of well-being to become more diverse and nuanced (Lomas et al., 2021; Lomas & Ivtzan, 2016; Tweed et al., 2021; Wissing, 2022). Each phase of the framework's development has relevance to the current topic of study and will be outlined in three distinct phases.

Kuhn (1996), a philosopher of science, theorised that any significant change in a theory implies a corresponding change in how science is practised, how problems can be solved, and the standards for solutions altered. Akin to the conceptualisations by Kuhn (1996), the current framework originated through metatheoretical, theoretical and empirical shifts from mainstream psychology. Positive psychology's inception was a change in focus from psychology's emphasis on dysfunction to well-being (Lomas, 2016). In line with the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2022), proponents of positive psychology encourage that

health is not merely the absence of illness but a complete state of physical, psychological and social well-being. The field's focus is centred around human strengths and potential that could be harnessed for well-being (Wissing, 2020).

During the first phase, the field actively advocated for the “positive.” Various facets of well-being were differentiated (such as character strengths, positive emotions, mindfulness, meaning, and many more; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Fredrickson, 2009; Peterson & Seligman, 2004), and theories of well-being developed (Lomas, 2016; Wissing, 2020, 2022). Similarities and differences between positive constructs were delineated, and higher-order integrations were suggested (e.g., positive emotions were classified as hedonic and meaning in life or spirituality as eudaimonic – cf. Keyes, 2002). The philosophical underpinning of research was individualistic and naturalistic (Lomas & Ivtzan, 2016). Donaldson et al. (2015) revealed that 78% of the research in this phase was situated within the positivistic paradigm using quantitative designs. Researchers assumed they were objective and “value-free.” However, critiques of the field highlighted that the views on well-being in the first phase were narrowly defined by westernised, dichotomising, industrialised, and democratic worldviews (Donaldson et al., 2015; Henrich et al., 2010; Wissing, 2022; Wong, 2011).

The first phase ignited hope within psychology and provided an alternative to the narrative of dysfunction, which continues to enthuse researchers (Lomas et al., 2021). So, although this worldview has shifted with the second and third phases of development, it is essential to note that many positive psychology research studies still have their conceptual roots in this first phase (Wissing, 2022). The current study makes a concerted effort to focus on non-Western and contextual understandings of the topic, which aligns with the development of the field.

Following the plethora of research stimulated by the first phase of positive psychology, the field was critiqued for the “tyranny of the positive,” which often did not consider the contextual complexity of emotional states (Held, 2002, p. 965). There was a concern that the field was dichotomising the positive and the negative, thus implying that the negative was inherently undesirable (Lomas, 2016; McNulty & Fincham, 2012; Wong, 2011). These critiques propagated the second phase of the development of the field; researchers recognised the subtle dialectical interplay between negative and positive phenomena about well-being (Lomas & Ivtzan, 2016). Negative life experiences were recognised for the fortifying role they could play in well-being given specific contexts, and appraisals of what is constituted as “positive” or “negative” became contextually dependent (Lomas & Ivtzan, 2016; Wong, 2011). During this phase, worldviews became more constructivist, interpretivist, and holistic in understanding human well-being (Wissing, 2022). Thus, giving prominence to the role that subjective experiences play in flourishing (Lomas et al., 2021). Understanding this dance between the positive and the negative and contextual understandings of well-being becomes important when defining positive psychology constructs in Chapters 2 and 3 of this study.

The third phase of development within the field again showed shifts concerning the empirical foci, metatheoretical assumptions, and methods applied in research (Wissing, 2022). It represents an expansion in the scope (epistemology) and the methodologies (Lomas et al., 2021; Wissing, 2022). The expansion of scope included approaches rooted in field-specific ethical guidelines (Vella-Brodrick, 2014); culturally and linguistically informed; contextual (cf - Bronfenbrenner, 2006); and systemically guided (Lomas et al., 2021). An important dimension of this phase is the inclusion of non-Western and cross-cultural perspectives and multi-(inclusion of several academic disciplines), inter-(unity in frameworks), and transdisciplinarity (inclusion of non-academic stakeholders; Lomas et al.,

2021; Wissing, 2022). These shifts in scope aptly recognise the complexity and interplay of context, emotions, and well-being (Wissing, 2020). Qualitative inquiry and mixed-method designs have been increasingly implemented in methodology to aid in acquiring knowledge (Lomas et al., 2021; Wong, 2011)

Each phase of development in positive psychology made fundamental shifts in how well-being is understood. Well-being has become more interconnected, contextual, and transdisciplinary. Positive psychology can be applied across multiple domains of life, including schools, community development, and more (Lomas et al., 2021; Wissing, 2020). This framework was well suited to answer the current study's research question.

1.5 Terminological Considerations

The following section acts as a brief orientating segment for readers to understand the terminology used in this study. The terms outlined in this section will be further defined and explored in later sections and chapters.

1.5.1 Academic Success

Academic success was conceptualised as a passing grade for previously failing learners, an increase in marks from a previous baseline, the acquisition of a school diploma, or academic performance that enables the pursuit of higher education. Such a wide definition of academic success was necessary to be exhaustive in finding which positive constructs were associated with academic performance. A broad definition of academic success also facilitated the search for non-Western literature as it considered context. For example, including “a passing grade” criterion is essential in a South African context since research showed that many South African school learners are not meeting the minimum levels of a passing grade (Albien & Naidoo, 2018; Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021).

1.5.2 Well-being

Positive psychology was the framework for this study. It is the scientific study of what enables individuals and communities to function at their optimum (Wissing, 2020). This optimal functioning is often termed well-being in positive psychology literature. Well-being is understood in this study as a dynamic state of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal factors that work in harmony to enable individuals, communities, and the environment to flourish (Galderisi et al., 2017; Wissing, 2022). Research in the field, especially during the first phase of positive psychology, often approached well-being from two perspectives. Hedonic well-being involves happiness, positive affect and satisfaction with life (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011). Eudaimonic well-being pertains to optimal functioning in psychological and social domains (Keyes, 2013), whereby well-being involves a long-term process of meaning-making, identity development, and relational development (Delle Fave et al., 2011).

1.5.3 Context

The definition of well-being and the transdisciplinary nature of the field further necessitates an understanding of the term context. The term was used in this study refers to multiple dimensions of life, including but not limited to spirituality, culture, country, physical and social environments, life domains, life phases, gender, and ecosystem (Wissing, 2020).

1.5.4 Positive Psychology Constructs

This study is specifically interested in positive psychology constructs associated with academic success. A comprehensive delineation of positive psychology constructs will be addressed in Chapters 2 and 3. In the interim, the taxonomical components of a positive psychology construct are that it should be concerned with (a) positive characteristics, (b)

healthy processes, and (c) positive outcomes (Du Plessis, 2014). Operationalisation of these positive constructs refers to a systematic procedure in which they are delineated and conceptualised, made observable through the implementation of an activity or intervention, and made measurable (for example, using valid indicators such as the Children's Hope Scale; Guse et al., 2016) at an empirical level (Bryman, 2016).

1.5.5 Positive Education

Finally, since the inception of positive psychology as a discipline, researchers increasingly examined the school context from a positive psychology perspective to increase learner well-being, school performance, and promote optimal development. The synergy between the education domain and positive psychology is called positive education. It is an umbrella term to describe research, interventions, and programmes within education from a positive psychology perspective/discipline that impacts well-being (Kern & Wehmeyer, 2021).

1.6 Overview of Study

This study consists of five chapters. In Chapter 2, literature on the interplay between academic success and positive psychology is explored. It will explore the paradigm shift of deficits to well-being; outline the current state of education in the world, the association between education and well-being; and finally, the delineation of positive psychology constructs. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used to answer the research questions. The chapter concludes with the ethical considerations taken into account. Chapter 4 presents the results from the scoping review. Last, Chapter 5 discusses the research findings, which aim to consolidate the findings with previous chapters and relevant literature. Chapter 5 concludes with the study's limitations and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Humans have a natural propensity toward learning and making sense of the environment through processes of internalisation and integration. This proactive human nature takes the form of curiosity, interest, passion, and synthesis – experiences that can be intentionally cultivated to promote school well-being (Niemic, 2022). Seligman et al. (2009) argued that positive psychology, which facilitates such experiences, should be directly infused into school curricula to implement better learning practices that lead to well-being and improved academic performance. This directive increased the implementation of comprehensive research investigating the links between positive psychology principles and academic success (Niemic, 2022).

The current chapter begins by outlining the current state of education in the South African context, highlighting the need for a positive psychology focus within the education domain. The shift in focus from problem-orientated research to strengths-based research is discussed, followed by an exploration of the link between academic success and positive psychology. Integrating positive psychology constructs and interventions within the field of education will be discussed, contextualising the type of data included in this research study. Finally, the chapter diverges into delineating positive psychology constructs widely used in the field and forms the basis for the current study.

2.2 Education in Context

The vision statement for the Department of Basic Education in South Africa is to facilitate access to lifelong learning and education, which they believe will contribute to the quality of life for citizens and a peaceful and prosperous South Africa (Department of Basic

Education [DBE], 2021a). Research has shown that education is a vital domain in life that leads to a higher standard of living and subjective quality of life (Cadime et al., 2016; Omidire, 2019). Higher educational attainment is associated with sustainable development, better health, increased civic engagement, decreased crime and violence, and reduced poverty (Albien & Naidoo, 2018; Ngalo-Morrison, 2017; Omidire, 2019).

Although academic success is associated with so many benefits, in South Africa, it is not simplistic to reach goals of academic success. South Africa is a middle-income country characterised by a long history of structural disadvantage, inequality, and poverty propagated by the apartheid system (Albien & Naidoo, 2018). From 1948 until 1994, South Africa was governed by the apartheid system which instituted discriminatory policies and structures in all spheres of life based on racial groups (Norling, 2020). These policies led to differential access to educational and vocational opportunities (Albien & Naidoo, 2018). Specifically, in 1953 the Bantu Education system was officially instituted in South Africa. The purpose of this system was to ensure the superiority of the white racial group and to disempower the non-white racial groups. White education received more funding, higher quality and level of teacher training, more resourced schools (called Model C schools), more support and better service delivery. Meanwhile Bantu Education was designed to discourage professional advancement for non-white learners beyond manual labour and menial jobs (Glaser, 2018).

The end of the apartheid system also meant that the Bantu Education system was abolished, however, remnants of it can still be seen today. For example, various forms of protests were common under apartheid and research has found that exposure to protests in apartheid before the age of 14 years was associated with 2.7% fewer years of completed school; further perpetuating the cycle of poverty and unequal opportunities (Norling, 2020). Several White Papers have been written in the education domain to redress these imbalances

and uplift previously disadvantaged racial groups. However, since 1994, there has only been a small shift in the black South African workforce towards more skilled and semi-skilled employment (Sulla & Zikhali, 2018). This is related to the spill over effects of Bantu Education, as well as challenges such as limited access to quality education, continued poverty, parental unemployment, limited career guidance, and health challenges such as HIV and AIDS (Albien & Naidoo, 2018).

Deficits characterise the educational foundation for many South African school learners in various areas. School success is hierarchical in nature, where later attainment is built on foundations laid down in early life (Taylor et al., 2015). For example, low socioeconomic status influences early cognitive development through poor nutrition, limited healthcare, an absence of early cognitive stimulation, and a lack of resources in schools and communities. Such cracks in educational foundations increase as years of schooling progress (Taylor et al., 2015). Taylor (2011) demonstrated that by Grade 5, learners from historically disadvantaged schools accumulated learning deficits equivalent to over two years. These Grade 5 learners were operating on Grade 2 or Grade 3 levels of functioning. This can be seen in secondary school since many school attending learners seem to have challenges achieving a passing grade, let alone certificates of improvement, diplomas, or distinctions. In South Africa, only 36.4% of learners who wrote the National Senior Certificate exam for 2021 achieved the Bachelor's pass necessary to pursue higher education (DBE, 2021b).

Passing grades and pursuing higher education in the last year of schooling are only half the challenge in the education domain. The compounding effect of poor academic performance (related to foundational deficits) and multiple interrelated facets such as poverty, parental absence, and social ills often leads to grade repetition and school dropout (Ramsdal et al., 2015; Weybright et al., 2017). Grade repetition has historically been used to address

low performance. In South Africa, 52% of learners are retained at least once before Grade 10, and 9% repeat a grade three or more times (Weybright et al., 2017). However, research has shown that repeated grade retention does not contribute positively to academic success (Grossen et al., 2017). Rather grade repetition and poor academic performance are related to increased school dropout.

Globally, 258.4 million children do not attend school (UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS], 2019). Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rates of educational exclusion, with almost 60% of youth aged 15 to 17 years not attending school (United Nations [UN], 2020). School dropout rates are more significant in low-income and middle-income countries than in high-income countries (UIS, 2019). In South Africa, it was estimated that approximately 60% of primary school children ultimately dropped out of school before completion (Naidoo et al., 2019; Weybright et al., 2017). Subsequently, one of the DBE's goals is to have an 80% to 90% school retention and completion rate (National Planning Commission, 2012). As discussed, mere school retention does not translate to academic success or successful school completion. This raises the question of whether anything can be done to alleviate poor academic performance.

2.3 A Refocusing: Academic Success

The current response to poor academic performance and educational challenges in South Africa shows an inclination towards problem-focused approaches (as illustrated by various governmental proposals, legislative mandates regarding school attendance, learner dropout, and underachievement; Albien & Naidoo, 2018; Ngalo-Morrison, 2017). South Africa is not alone in this approach as educational systems worldwide develop and enforce policies and practices that compare student abilities, focus on correcting underachievement,

emphasise deficiencies that need correction, and promote competitiveness (Kern, 2022; Ngalo-Morrison, 2017; Pronk et al., 2020).

Problem-focused trends in scholarship regarding education have highlighted important difficulties that learners worldwide face regarding school engagement, school dropout, and poor school performance. In a critical review of school dropout literature, De Witte et al. (2013) analysed student-related, family-related, school-related, and community-related factors linked to drop out and poor school performance. This study analysed three decades' worth of scholarship from various countries. The researchers concluded that student dropout was the cumulative result of various multidimensional factors. For example, factors associated with a higher dropout rate included low academic success; grade repetition (and being of an older age average for the grade); low levels of engagement; limited school support; and the absence of a positive school climate.

Although the deficits approach provides valuable insights into understanding the extent of the problem, it is limited in changing the outcomes of educational challenges. For example, when stakeholders focus on preventing learner dropout instead of promoting academic engagement and success, it leads to an unintended consequence of prejudicing and labelling some learners as inherently deviant or destined to drop out of school, which often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (De Witte et al., 2013). Contrary to the expected outcome of this focus, it increases student disengagement, excluding learners who fail to conform and increasing challenges such as depression, school violence, and attention deficiencies (Kern, 2022). Various surveys have shown that addressing weaknesses do not necessarily improve future performance (Hodges & Clifton, 2004). In alignment with Seligman et al. (2009) and the positive psychology movement, De Witte et al. (2013) recommended that scholars shift

focus from dropout, underachievement and school difficulties to a more solution-orientated approach.

Educational and school psychologists have endorsed a strength-based perspective for a long time (Eloff, 2013). With the rise of the positive psychology movement, there have been a growing recognition and emphasis on embracing a more strengths-based perspective among practitioners and researchers. Educational practitioners propose that nurturing strengths, rather than remedying problems and deficits, promotes well-being and academic performance more effectively (Boniwell & Kibe, 2015). In a review of PPIs within a school context, Waters (2011) systematically evaluated 12 school-based PPIs in terms of effectiveness. She found that positive psychology programmes, which promote strengths were significantly related to improved academic performance, student well-being and relationships.

Cumulative research has shown that a shift in perspective regarding school achievement from deficits to strengths is more geared towards an understanding of “what works” and has the potential to transform practice and policy (Weaver, 2018). Such a shift capacitates schools to provide opportunities for meaningful social-emotional development, promote academic success, ensure the well-being of their students and help learners become productive global citizens (Paz & Kim, 2022). So, although learners from disadvantaged backgrounds often show deficits in their conscious awareness (the process of gaining knowledge), cognitive and metacognitive engagements (active learning and knowledge about how to gain knowledge more effectively), and information processing due to foundational gaps in early schooling, evidence-based practices have shown these challenges can be ameliorated through a strengths-based perspective (Fourie & Schlebusch, 2021).

2.4 Positive Psychology and Academic Success

In the initiation of positive psychology and the subsequent phases of development within the field, many scholars focused on the beneficial outcomes related to an intentional increase in well-being, especially in education (Lomas et al., 2021). The change in focus from deficits to strengths was a shift supported by extensive empirical research. Optimal schooling experiences can contribute to critical developmental and learning milestones for learners, such as identity development, health, school retention, and overall academic success (Huebner et al., 2022). Focusing on academic success and well-being in the school setting has a spill over effect in reducing challenges, such as dropout and failure (Huebner et al., 2022).

Education as an institution endeavours to provide a positive outcome for communities by training learners to become informed and functional citizens who can interact knowledgeably with their society (Fineburg & Monk, 2015). There is a natural synergy between education and positive psychology since education aims to enact positive change in individuals through learning and the promotion of strengths and resources already available within a context (Eloff, 2013; Fineburg & Monk, 2015). This synergy can be seen in data from ethnographic studies in South Africa, which have shown that education is a central source of well-being and quality of life for young and old (Ebersöhn, 2013, 2014). Schools in low resourced communities were rated as one of the most significant protective resources in areas where unemployment, poor infrastructure, and limited quality services abound. Schools are esteemed as communal riches since they are sources of hope, optimism, and development.

The school setting has become one of the main areas of investigation among positive psychology researchers (Lomas et al., 2021). Froh et al. (2011) examined the content of psychology literature in schools to determine the nature and degree of attention given to different research areas. At the time of the study, data showed that approximately 27% of all

school psychology articles focused on positive constructs in schools. These findings suggest that positive psychology and academic success have been of consistent interest in the field, which has yielded numerous studies on the topic. The fusion of positive psychology and education is called positive education (Lomas et al., 2021).

Positive education is the development of an educational environment that combines best-practice teaching and the science of positive psychology to support and encourage schools and individuals to flourish within their communities (Kern & Wehmeyer, 2021). Adding positive psychology principles to education is a vital factor in increasing academic success since, more often than not, schools following a standard curriculum without additional social, emotional, or cognitive support do not have a substantial positive impact on the academic outcomes of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds (Taylor et al., 2015).

Initially, positive education focused on creating programs and curricula for classrooms, based on the science of positive psychology to enable flourishing in a school setting. It was found that focusing on individual learner well-being and happiness was beneficial, however, insufficient due to a variety of other contextual influences (Kern & Wehmeyer, 2021). Subsequently, the positive education movement progressed beyond developing specific programs and skills to the creation of holistic learning environments that support the well-being of multiple role-players within the school context as well as underlying school ethos (White & Kern, 2018). This shift encouraged the inclusion of multiple approaches and frameworks that are positively orientated and does not necessitate an approach to be overtly situated within a positive psychology framework. Positive education recognises schools as complex human social systems and embraces multiple approaches that align with the values and goals of positive psychology (Kern & Wehmeyer, 2021).

Research conducted in the school setting specifically showed that academic success is positively related to increased well-being (Gevrek et al., 2015). Similarly, research indicated that student well-being is positively correlated to increased academic success (Cadime et al., 2016; Saab & Klinger, 2010; Waters, 2011). The causal pathway of well-being is not straightforward since the route between well-being, and life outcomes is often bidirectional. In a large ongoing longitudinal study in England, Gutman and Vorhaus (2012) reported that increased levels of well-being influence learner confidence levels and motivation to do well in school, which is significantly correlated with later academic success. Concurrently, school achievement seems to increase satisfaction, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and autonomy (Gutman & Vorhaus, 2012; Khumalo et al., 2012).

Academic success and positive educational outcomes are associated with various benefits in later life (Gilman et al., 2014). Reynolds and Ou (2010) conducted a 20-year longitudinal study in high-poverty Chicago neighbourhoods with participants who attended early childhood well-being interventions beginning in preschool. As adults, learners who reported more positive school experiences reported higher physical and mental health levels. They were also less likely to engage in risky behaviour as adults (Locke & Newcomb, 2004; Sofija et al., 2020). Academic achievement has also been shown to impact indicators of success, such as social status and income in adulthood (Rüppel et al., 2015), as higher education levels are strong predictors of employment and decrease susceptibility to poverty (Naidoo et al., 2019).

Experiencing well-being leads to beneficial outcomes in various domains, such as health, the economy, and the environment. Academic success and well-being are intricately linked and are vital resources for increasing quality of life, both in the present and long-term.

Positive educational outcomes involve becoming a functional member of society and subjectively satisfied with life (personal, emotional, and social well-being) (Omidire, 2019).

2.5 Positive Psychology in Schools

Since an increase in well-being is linked to academic success and subsequent positive life outcomes, the question arises, “Can well-being levels be increased in learners?” Research has shown that while genetic and circumstantial factors impact well-being, for the most part, individuals can enhance their levels of well-being through intentional activities (Bolier et al., 2013; Ferguson & Sheldon, 2013; Vella-Brodrick et al., 2020). Since the inception of positive psychology was rooted in naturalism, many studies have aimed to identify what well-being is and how to build it. Through this approach, numerous PPIs were developed and implemented with varying degrees of effectiveness in enhancing well-being and academic success at school (Kern & Wehmeyer, 2021).

PPIs aim to increase individual and group well-being through intentional activities that encourage a shift away from negative experiences, thoughts, and circumstances (Guse, 2020), although not without acknowledging their impact and resilience promoting potential (Lomas et al., 2021). Parks and Biswas-Diener (2013) synthesised a broad conceptualisation of PPIs that must be met to classify an intervention as a PPI. PPIs (a) emphasise positive topics; (b) function through a positive mechanism or target a positive outcome variable; and (c) promote wellness rather than attempt to correct a problem. The criteria necessitate an increase of a positive variable, such as subjective well-being, eliminating the promotion of avoidant or self-indulgent behaviour. The criteria also ensure that empirical evidence shows that the intervention successfully alters the target variable and will lead to a positive outcome. This sets PPIs apart from typical self-help strategies and ineffective approaches to well-being (Parks & Biswas-Diener, 2013). As indicated by the criteria put forth by Parks and Biswas-

Diener (2013), PPIs are often designed or centred around a positive construct, such as hope or meaning, which is then operationalised (i.e., delineated, implemented through an activity, and measured for a successful outcome).

Practically, an example of such a PPI is Valdez et al.'s (2022) research with Filipino secondary school learners. Valdez et al. (2022) implemented a PPI aimed at increasing gratitude to optimise effective learning outcomes (a – it emphasised a positive topic namely gratitude and positive learning outcomes). The PPI took the form of Facebook-based gratitude activities (b – it functioned through positive activities). The intervention promoted social support, motivation, positive thinking, and altruism. The outcomes were increased learning motivation and positive learning processes (c – the aim and the outcome of the PPI was to promote wellness rather than attempt to correct a problem).

PPIs have successfully been employed in educational settings and resulted in positive behavioural, social, psychological, and academic outcomes among learners (Proctor, 2014). School-based PPIs integrate positive psychology with educational practices to promote learner well-being and academic success. PPIs within the school system can then be implemented at a whole-school level or with specific classes (Kumar & Mohideen, 2021). They can be presented by an external source or teaching strategies that teachers could implement as a dedicated intervention or as soft skills integrated into daily classroom activities (Fineburg & Monk, 2015).

Research has found that actively including PPIs in school can enhance learner academic performance, increase school attendance and engagement, reduce disruptive behaviours, and lead to academic success (Gush & Greeff, 2018; Muro et al., 2018; Upadyaya & Salmela-Aro, 2013). In one such study, Muro et al. (2018) operationalised positive psychology constructs, such as gratitude, positive emotions, savouring, and personal

strengths as part of a PPI to enhance the academic performance of failing learners. The intervention was presented over five years and included low-achieving high school learners. The findings showed that the intervention effectively increased motivation to study, and it promoted an improvement in academic performance (Muro et al., 2018).

The core qualities of successful PPIs in school settings specifically require clear aims and objectives that respond to the needs and context of a school and demonstrate sustainable long-term outcomes (Waters & Loton, 2019). There are multiple examples of Western PPIs implemented in schools. However, PPIs may not be equally effective across cultures. The rapid rise in well-being research and empirical studies on PPIs has predominantly been conducted in highly industrialised, democratic, high-income, Western countries with well-educated populations (Hendriks et al., 2019; Henrich et al., 2010). PPIs focused on individualistic values may be less effective in more collectivistic societies. However, some studies in collectivistic societies that have operationalised more internally focused positive constructs in school-based PPIs have had effective outcomes. For example, the Shamiri intervention in Kenya consisted of three elements (growth mindset, gratitude and value affirmation) that were implemented through activities and measured in randomised control trials with secondary school learners. The intervention improved perceived social support and academic success (Venturo-Conerly et al., 2021).

Then understanding school-based PPIs in South Africa is vital and may reveal important information on the culture-activity fit of PPIs in the current context. However, as it stands, there is a lack of school-based PPI research in South Africa. As reported by Guse (2022) in a scoping review and by Dormehl (2018) in a critical review, there are no overt PPI studies in South Africa targeted at improving academic success for secondary school learners. The relevant and effective implementation of school-based PPIs may increase academic

success, school retention, and decrease dropout. However, to be relevant to the context, PPIs in South Africa cannot merely be modelled after Western PPIs. During the initial phase of positive psychology, researchers mostly examined learners' inner experiences and resources that led to academic success (Lomas et al., 2021). For example, the role of strengths (Lopez & Louis, 2009), hope (Lopez & Snyder, 2003), gratitude (Bono & Froh, 2009), flow (Shernoff & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009) and many other such concepts about well-being and academic success at school. This overemphasis on the inner experiences of learners without understanding the impact of context was critiqued (Ciarrochi et al., 2016). Subsequently, in the third phase of positive psychology, researchers are refocusing to include more contextually orientated research. So, although, as in the Shamiri intervention (Venturo-Conerly et al., 2021), some internally focused constructs are relevant to non-Western cultures, it does not indicate that a one-size fits all approach will be effective in South Africa. There is a need to investigate which positive constructs are relevant in a South African context as it relates to academic success in secondary school (van Schalkwyk & Wissing, 2010).

2.6 Positive Psychology Constructs

The term "positive," used to describe positive psychology constructs, is loaded with complexity since it has many meanings in various fields. In positive psychology alone, the term has at least half a dozen meanings (Pawelski, 2016a). It is crucial then to delineate the meaning of this foundational term to contribute to the clarity and precision of empirical research.

Pawelski (2016a, 2016b) provided insight and direction for researchers when selecting research constructs by outlining the criteria required for identifying positive constructs. A construct is defined as positive if its presence is preferred to its absence and the

following criteria are met: (a) sustainable across time; (b) sustainable across people; (c) sustainable across effects; and (e) sustainable across structures. According to these criteria, a construct is “positive” when it is preferable, long-lasting, relevant to many people, has positive flow-on effects, and is transferrable across contexts (Pawelski, 2016b).

Du Plessis' (2014) metatheoretical classification of positive constructs further provides guidance to identify constructs relevant to positive psychology research. He designed this classification system to facilitate the unifying systematisation of positive constructs. The taxonomical components of positive constructs that enable their identification are (a) positive characteristics; (b) healthy processes; and (c) positive outcomes. A construct should have positive characteristics that are enduring, trait-like, and pervasive across various contexts (Du Plessis, 2014; Snyder & Lopez, 2005). Further, positive constructs should enable healthy processes of living, behaviour, or cognition that could facilitate growth, adaption, and the fulfilment of needs. Such processes should lead to positive outcomes. Finally, positive outcomes are subjective experiences of eudaimonic or hedonic well-being (Du Plessis, 2014; Lopez & Snyder, 2003).

Character strengths are an excellent example of positive constructs that fit the criteria outlined by both Du Plessis (2014) and Pawelski (2016a). Character strengths were empirically explored as part of the Values-in-Action (VIA) classification system to determine what constitutes good character. The list of strengths was generated through brainstorming sessions, literature searches, an analysis of historical texts and current culture (e.g., song lyrics) and culturally diverse interviews. The 12 criteria for a trait to be listed as a character strength included elements, such as it having to be measurable and morally valued (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Since the publication of these strengths, numerous studies have researched the link between character strengths and academic success. For example, Wagner

and Ruch (2015) found that in a sample of Swiss secondary school learners, the strengths of perseverance, gratitude, hope, perspective, zest, and love of learning were associated with both positive classroom behaviour and academic success.

In terms of identifying relevant South African research that has studied the associations between positive constructs and academic success in secondary school, a distinction between positive psychology as a perspective and positive psychology as a discipline needs to be made. As a perspective, positive psychology can be a lens with which to analyse studies that align with the values and intentions of positive psychology without overtly identifying with a positive psychology framework, for example an assets-based approach. When used as a discipline, studies purposefully situate themselves within the framework of positive psychology (Kern & Wehmeyer, 2021). The current study will consider research that includes positive psychology as either a perspective or discipline to be exhaustive.

The list of positive constructs included in the current study, and the method of selection will be outlined in Chapter 3.

2.7 Conclusion

Academic success is vital for a higher standard of living, subjective quality of life and overall societal upliftment. However, as this review of South African statistics and literature has shown, the state of South African education is filled with challenges and obstacles that negatively impact academic performance. The country faces high rates of grade repetition, learner disengagement, and school dropout. Typically, this culminates in a repetitive cycle of destructive patterns, including social ills, like poverty. The standard response to solving these challenges is a problem-focused approach that research has shown is ineffective in alleviating

poor academic performance. Rather, a strengths approach that includes positive psychology practices has been proven effective in promoting academic success and improving overall well-being.

International literature has generated a vast amount of research on academic success in secondary school, identifying positive constructs and the effectiveness of PPIs. However, as this chapter demonstrated, there is currently no PPI research in a South African secondary school setting to increase academic success. Positive constructs are the foundational building blocks of PPIs and are important phenomena to understand beyond PPIs. There is a need to investigate positive constructs relevant in a South African context to facilitate current understanding, culture-activity fit, and future research. There is a significant value in conducting a scoping review of positive psychology constructs in South African literature to determine the extent to which the topic has been investigated in South Africa, summarise the results, and identify gaps in the literature. The next chapter discusses the research approach followed in the current study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The current chapter outlines the protocol followed in conducting the scoping review. The research question and aims are outlined first. Next, the research paradigm will be explored as an introduction to the methods followed in the review of the literature. Then, the research design of a scoping review will be described and discussed in the context. The scoping review process will then be outlined: ensuring the quality of the review; the process of forming the research question; identifying relevant studies; study selection; data charting; and data synthesis. Finally, ethical considerations and the trustworthiness of the data will be highlighted.

3.2 Research Question

The central research question for the study is: *What literature is available concerning positive psychology constructs that have been identified in association with academic success in South African secondary schools?* The study aims to explore and describe the following elements of the existing research on positive psychology constructs associated with academic success in South African secondary schools:

1. The type of research output (e.g., journal article or unpublished dissertation).
2. The location where the research was conducted.
3. The sample used.
4. The research design and framework.
5. The aims of the research.
6. The outcomes and specific constructs identified in association with academic success.

3.3 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm is closely related to the theoretical framework of the research study. It outlines a set of beliefs that guide the research and influence how knowledge is studied and interpreted (Weaver, 2018). It further extrapolates the ontology (assumptions about reality), epistemology (nature of knowledge), and methodology (techniques for obtaining knowledge) of the study (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016; Weaver, 2018).

In line with the third phase of the positive psychology movement, the current research study used a pragmatic paradigm from which to conduct the research. Pragmatism focuses on the practical understanding of knowledge and real-world psychological, social, and educational phenomena (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). Therefore, the ontological assumptions of this paradigm do not take centre stage; for pragmatists, there is no one system of philosophy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Rather, the emphasis is on questioning the value and meaning of research data through an analysis of practical outcomes and a focus on “what works” rather than objective “truth” (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020; Weaver, 2018). It allows for an understanding of the connection between knowledge and action, which has the potential to transform practice (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). The methodology related to pragmatism is thus varied, and researchers have the freedom to choose methods that best meet their needs and purposes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Pragmatic inquiry recognises the interconnectedness of experience, knowledge, and action (Weaver, 2018). The inquiry process occurs within social, historical, political, and other contexts. Then it provides a theoretical lens reflective of social justice and contextual influences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This pluralistic position aids in improving communication between disciplines and stakeholders (Weaver, 2018). The actionable

knowledge derived from the pragmatic inquiry is contextually relevant and informed by theory that benefits various stakeholders (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020).

3.4 Research Design

The current study implemented a scoping review based on a clearly formulated research question to examine the extent, range and nature of research in the field of positive psychology about positive constructs that support and enhance academic success in South African secondary schools. Scoping reviews are data reporting methods to determine the scope or coverage of literature on a topic (Munn et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2021). It entails the systematic selection and summarisation of literature for multiple purposes (Levac et al., 2010). The purpose of the current scoping review is twofold: first, to identify and map the available evidence on the current topic, and second, to identify possible research gaps in existing literature (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Munn et al., 2018).

Scoping reviews have become an increasingly popular approach to reporting on existing literature (Peters et al., 2021). Since 2005, when Arksey and O'Malley published the first framework for scoping reviews, several more detailed approaches have been added to the framework (see Colquhoun et al., 2014; Levac et al., 2010; Tricco et al., 2018). Scoping reviews follow clear guidelines and structured processes to arrive at the end results. Scoping reviews are thus recognised as valid approaches to research (Munn et al., 2018).

Scoping reviews are ideal for determining the coverage and scope of literature on a certain topic. They give a clear summary of the literature available on a topic and an overview of the focus of a particular subject area. They are useful for exploring and mapping emerging evidence in rapidly developing fields such as positive psychology (Munn et al., 2018). Scoping reviews are typically broader than traditional systematic reviews. As such,

they can often include multiple types of evidence, such as various research methodologies and literature (published, unpublished, media, and more), making them well suited to give a comprehensive overview of the evidence available (Peters et al., 2021). They can be conducted for various purposes, such as identifying available evidence on a topic, summarising research on a topic broadly, and identifying knowledge gaps (Munn et al., 2018).

There are limitations to scoping review methodology. Unlike systematic reviews, scoping reviews cannot establish the quality of the evidence found in the review. Typically, this is due to the broad nature of scoping reviews since they do not aim to quantitatively or qualitatively synthesise data that confirms best practices or statements that guide decision-making within a field (Munn et al., 2018). Scoping reviews do not undertake quality assessments or risk of bias assessments, which has created much debate among researchers (Peters et al., 2021). Brien et al. (2010) have argued that it makes it more challenging to interpret the practicality of scoping review results. Grant and Booth (2009) added to this debate by implying that this lack of quality assessments limits the usefulness of scoping reviews for policy or practice change. But researchers recognise the challenges associated with assessing the quality of vast research typically collected during a scoping review (Levac et al., 2010). The debate is ongoing, and it remains unclear whether the lack of a quality assessment impacts the usefulness and relevance of scoping studies, especially considering that their aim differs from systematic reviews (Munn et al., 2018). Scoping reviews are not designed to underpin clinical practice and policy decisions. Then as it currently stands, quality assessments are not a required step in the scoping process (Peters et al., 2021).

3.5 Methodological Framework of a Scoping Review

There exists clear guidance regarding how to conduct scoping reviews and the specific steps involved in the scoping review process (Munn et al., 2018). The steps for conducting a scoping review were initially outlined by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), who encouraged researchers to continue advancing the methodology of scoping reviews. The current study is underpinned by the original six steps of conducting a scoping review but has made use of the methodological advancements suggested by Colquhoun et al. (2014), Levac et al. (2010), Peters et al. (2021) and Tricco et al. (2018). Subsequently, there are seven steps involved in conducting a scoping review, with the addition of a quality assurance step recommended by Peters et al. (2021). Each step will be discussed in the context of the current study. In the interim, the steps involve: (1) ensuring the quality of reporting for scoping reviews; (2) identifying the research question; (3) identifying relevant studies; (4) study selection; (5) charting the data; (6) collating, summarising, and reporting results; and (7) consultation.

3.5.1 Quality of the Scoping Review

The transparency and reproducibility of a scoping review are clear indicators of a high-quality study. Reporting a review's process and results clearly and consistently, in line with a recognised methodology and checklist, enhances the rigour and utility of the study (Peters et al., 2021). As advised by Peters et al. (2021), the current study used the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) checklist to ensure quality reporting of the study (Tricco et al., 2018).

The PRISMA-ScR checklist (see Appendix A) was designed to better understand relevant terminology, core concepts, and key reporting items for scoping reviews. The

checklist contains 20 essential reporting items and two optional items (Tricco et al., 2018).

This checklist was used during each stage of the current study as a guide for transparently and consistently reporting data.

3.5.2 Research Question and Aims

The starting point of a scoping review is identifying the research question. The research question guides the way search strategies are planned and implemented. The research question should address various facets, such as the target population, outcomes of interest, and concept of interest (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The research question should be designed with the purpose of the scoping review in mind, and the intended outcome of the study guides the purpose of the review. The envisioned outcome (e.g., framework or list of recommendations) should also be included in this research phase (Levac et al., 2010).

Initially, a brief scoping search was conducted using simple search terms related to the current topic and carried out using various databases, such as Scopus, ProQuest, Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, and APA PsycINFO. The scoping search provided an overview of the literature relevant to the topic area, including key issues related to the topic (Davies, 2019). The scoping search provided sufficient information to refine the research question, identify more relevant bibliographic databases, refine search terms, and design the inclusion and exclusion criteria (Dundar & Fleeman, 2017).

The brief search revealed a surge in positive psychology studies published in the last two decades. However, it was found that they were predominantly conducted in Western countries (Hendriks et al., 2019). The nature and breadth of positive psychology constructs associated with academic success in South African secondary schools are still unknown. The envisioned outcomes for the current study are to obtain an overall picture of literature

available on this topic, summarise research findings, and identify research gaps so recommendations for future research can be made. Subsequently, this study aims to map the nature and breadth of research and identify gaps in knowledge on positive constructs associated with academic success in South African secondary schools. The research question flowed from the envisioned outcomes and purpose of the study.

3.5.3 Identifying Relevant Studies

3.5.3.1 Data Sources. Scoping reviews should be comprehensive in identifying primary studies, which are inclusive of published and unpublished literature. Arksey and O'Malley (2005) suggest searching for evidence via various sources, including electronic databases, reference lists, hand-searching of key journals, and existing networks or relevant organisations. However, from a practical standpoint (time, resources, and language), Levac et al. (2010) suggest limiting the scope of the search using the research question and purpose of the review. Researchers should acknowledge the limitations and justify the decisions (Colquhoun et al., 2014).

Data sources were searched between May and August 2022. Bibliographic databases were the primary data source for the current study. Most databases relate to a particular discipline, although some are multidisciplinary in content (Dundar & Fleeman, 2017). Given the multitude of databases available, specific databases were selected that were most relevant to the current topic area. These databases included: Scopus, Taylor & Francis (which included the Journal of Positive Psychology), Google Scholar, and EbscoHost (which included Academic Search Complete, Africa-Wide Information, APA PsycARTICLES, APA PsycINFO, and ERIC). Unpublished dissertations or theses were searched within institutional repositories of the University of Pretoria (UP), the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and the North-West University (NWU). The search was limited to these institutions since they

constituted most of the initial scoping search references. Relevant reference lists were also comprehensively scanned for applicable literature. The South African Journal of Education (SAJE) was also searched for relevant literature. Finally, as suggested by the optional seventh step of a scoping review, stakeholders were consulted to offer additional literature and information sources. These stakeholders were experts in the field of positive psychology from UP and NWU.

3.5.3.2 Search String. The search strategy of a scoping review is a fundamental element of the data collection process that can affect the overall quality of a review. The aim of a quality search strategy is to achieve comprehensive coverage of the topic while maintaining precision and specificity. The Peer Review of Electronic Search Strategies (PRESS) guidelines were used to ensure that the main search strategy was error-free, replicable, and accurate (McGowan et al., 2016; see Appendix B for PRESS checklist). Further, potential search strings were submitted to a library information specialist who facilitated the refinement process.

Search terms included synonyms, adjectives, or derivatives of academic success, secondary school, and positive constructs identified in the list of constructs (detailed in the following section). Each data source was searched multiple times using a new search string for each positive construct of interest. The terms were accompanied by standard Boolean operators, wildcards, and truncations which were used to combine or exclude certain search terms. Below is an example of one such search string, using the positive psychology construct of creativity:

“South Africa*” AND “positive psychology” AND (creativity OR originality OR ingenuity OR innovation) AND (academic OR educational OR learn* OR scholastic OR school) AND (success OR achievement OR attainment OR outcomes OR performance OR results) AND

(“secondary school” OR “intermediate school” OR “high school” OR “senior high school”)
NOT “university.”

3.5.3.3 Search Terms: Construct Selection. The central sourcing points for identifying positive constructs included in the search terms were derived from dominant positive psychology literature, using Du Plessis’ (2014) taxonomical components and Pawelski’s criteria (2016a, 2016b). Initially, positive constructs were sourced from a list designed by Lopez et al. (2006). They developed a representative list of human strengths, positive constructs, positive processes, and positive life outcomes. Then, to be as exhaustive as possible in the review, a list of constructs from the Handbook of Positive Psychology (Snyder & Lopez, 2005); Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook of Classification (Peterson & Seligman, 2004); Positive Psychological Assessment: A Handbook of Models and Measures (Lopez & Snyder, 2003); Towards Flourishing: Embracing Well-being in Diverse Contexts (Wissing et al., 2020); and other recent positive psychology publications, were cross-compared and integrated into a single list of constructs (see Appendix C). The list was then reviewed for relevance by the research supervisor, an expert in the field of positive psychology.

3.5.4 Identifying Study Selection

3.5.4.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are essential to the literature screening and selection process. Levac et al. (2010) recommend that the criteria should always be linked to the review question and comprise sufficient detail to precisely and appropriately screen studies to be included in the review. The inclusion criteria define specific traits that a study must have to be included in the review. Exclusion criteria describe the specific traits that eliminate a study from inclusion in the review (Cherry & Dickson, 2017). The current inclusion and exclusion criteria considered factors, such as

population, setting, outcomes, language, time frame, research design and publication type (see Appendix D for a comprehensive table).

The current study included research if it reported on individuals and groups that were, either secondary school learners, staff members working directly with secondary school learners or parents of secondary school learners. The research was limited to secondary school since secondary school is the final step leading to higher education and only 16% of South African learners qualify for higher education (UIS, 2019). This indicates that a large amount of secondary school learners could benefit from research pertaining to increased academic performance. While research suggests interventions at a primary school level (Taylor et al., 2015), the current research was interested in understanding how to assist learners already in secondary school that may not have been privileged to an intervention at an earlier school phase. No age limit was placed on this criterion since secondary school learners of various ages, including those over 18, may still be completing secondary school.

Only studies conducted in South Africa were included. The studies had to include positive psychology constructs (either overtly using positive psychology as a discipline or inadvertently using positive psychology as a perspective) and report an association with academic success. According to Drescher et al. (2018), research on adolescents in Africa using positive psychology as a discipline is rare. As such the current study considered research that included positive psychology as either a perspective or discipline. When studies use positive psychology as a discipline, they purposefully and overtly situate themselves within a positive psychology framework (Kern & Wehmeyer, 2021); for example, using positive psychology theories such as Seligman's (2018) PERMA theory of well-being. When used as a perspective, positive psychology can be used as a lens with which to analyse studies that align with the values and objectives of the field without overtly being situated within a

positive psychology framework (Kern & Wehmeyer, 2021). For example, assets-based approaches do not always make direct reference to a positive psychology framework (although some do). Such assets-based approaches aim to identify resources, capabilities, and strengths that are related to well-being, which aligns with a positive psychology perspective and where subsequently included in the search process (Ngalo-Morrison, 2017).

Academic success definitions included as acceptable were: a passing grade for previously failing learners, or an increase in marks from a previous baseline, or acquiring a school diploma, or academic performance that enables the pursuit of higher education. The reason for including such a wide definition of academic success was to be exhaustive in finding which constructs support and enhance academic performance. Including a passing grade is essential for a South African context, since research shows that a large number of South African school learners are not meeting the minimum levels of a passing grade and dropout of school (Albien & Naidoo, 2018).

Due to time and resource constraints, the search was limited to literature published in English within the last 15 years (January 2007- August 2022). English was deemed apt as it is the current researcher's home language, and most accredited journals use English as a *Lingua Franca* (Bennett, 2014). The period was considered within the context that international literature on positive psychology only started steadily increasing from the early 2000s (Lomas et al., 2021). Since scoping reviews aim to determine the types of available evidence, the inclusion criteria were not limited by a specific type of research design (Munn et al., 2018).

Original, peer-reviewed articles were included, along with unpublished theses or dissertations. The decision to include unpublished work was based on the scoping search that showed several potentially relevant studies not published as articles. This is in line with the

goal of scoping reviews to be comprehensive while also being practical (Colquhoun et al., 2014). Abstract-only texts and conference papers were excluded due to the limited information provided by these sources (Cherry & Dickson, 2017). Book chapters were also excluded due to time and resource constraints.

3.5.4.2 Study Selection Process. Recording the study selection process was informed by the PRISMA-ScR guidelines, which recommend using the PRISMA Flow Diagram (see Figure 1; Tricco et al., 2018). The first step in obtaining the data involved screening the literature titles for relevance. In total, 6866 titles were screened for relevance (through databases, journals, and repositories outlined). Copies of the literature representing the ‘best fit’ for answering the research question were obtained. If the relevance of a study was unclear from the title or abstract, it was also downloaded. Of the titles screened, 262 studies were downloaded. An additional 12 studies were added through reference lists, 22 through institutional repositories and one study were added through consultation with experts. Thirty-three duplicate studies were removed. The remaining studies were screened for relevance by reading the abstract. Then 192 studies were excluded for being contextually or methodologically unrelated to the research question (based on inclusion and exclusion criteria).

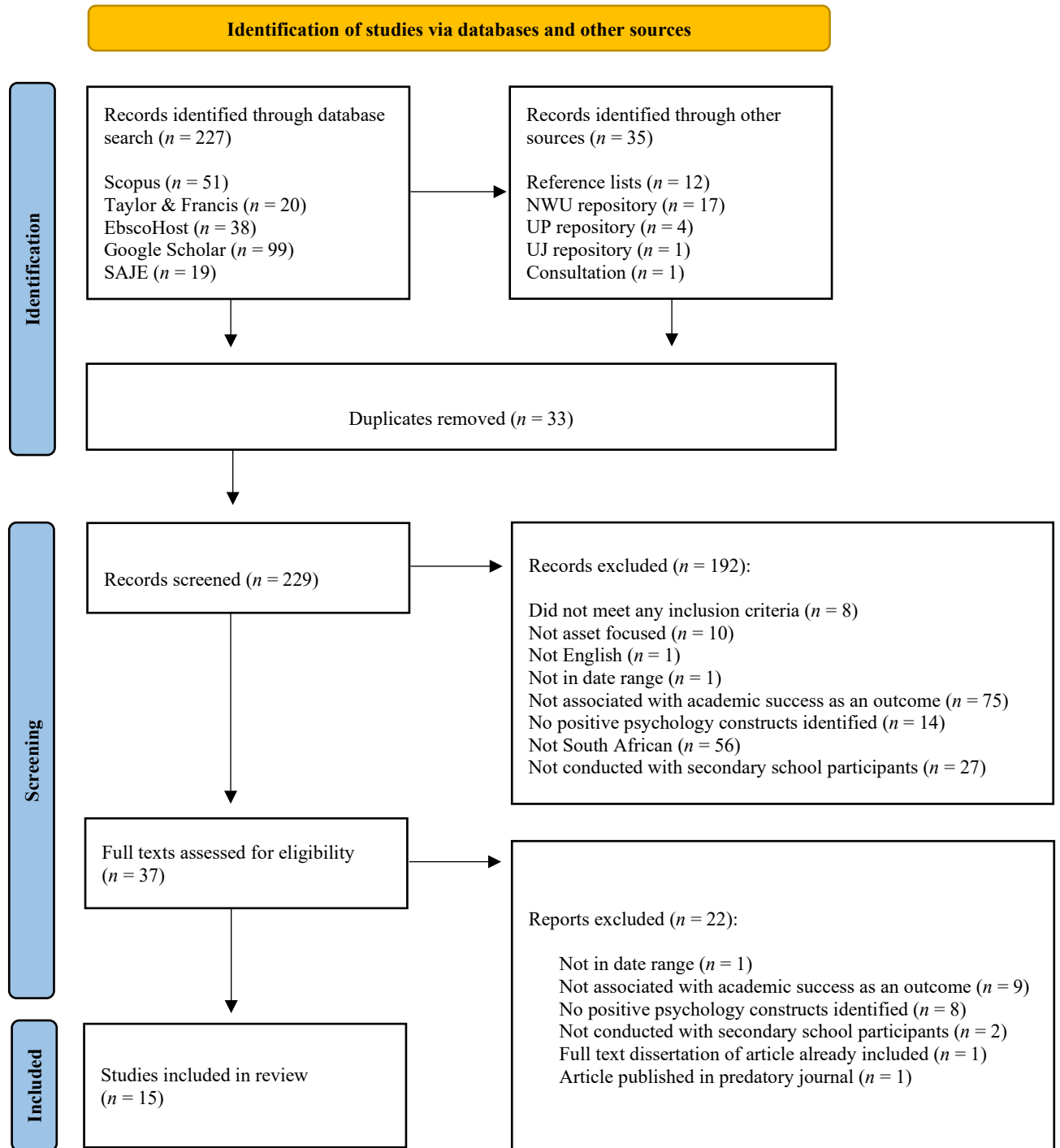
The next stage required the researcher to read the full-text of the studies to make a final decision about whether they should be included in the review. Thirty-seven studies were subject to in-depth reading to establish eligibility according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Twenty-two articles were excluded because: (a) not within the required date range ($n = 1$); (b) not associated with academic success as an outcome ($n = 9$); (c) no positive constructs identified ($n = 8$); (d) not conducted with secondary school participants ($n = 2$); (e) full-text dissertation of article already included ($n = 1$); and (f) article published in predatory

journal and unreliable ($n = 1$). Having read the studies in full, 15 studies were selected to include in the review.

As suggested by Levac et al. (2010), the research supervisor was consulted at the beginning, midpoint, and end stages of the study selection process to discuss challenges, doubts and uncertainties related to the study selection. The process was iterative, as it involved alterations to the search strategy and the exclusion and inclusion criteria based on increased familiarity with the topic as studies were collected (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

Figure 1

Flow Diagram of the Search Procedure



3.5.5 Charting the Data

The next step involved charting important items from the information obtained in the selection process. Charting is a technique for synthesising data according to key themes or relevant desired information. Arksey and O'Malley (2005) proposed a descriptive-analytical method for charting the data, which involves applying a common analytical framework to all the studies included in the review. In this way, collecting standard information from all the studies is more useful than a summary or profile of each study since data is not always presented in accessible formats (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). A data chart (see Table 1 in Chapter 4) was designed in consultation with the research supervisor (an iterative process) that reported information in several columns, including author/s, year of publication, source type, study location, study design, population, aims of the study, positive construct/s used, and conclusions.

3.5.6 Collating, Summarising, and Reporting the Results

Scoping reviews seek to present a broad overview of all the literature selected. Charting is part of presenting an easily accessible summary of the data (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Post-charting, a common method of data analysis, includes narrative summaries. The analysis method selection is data and research question-dependent (Levac et al., 2010). The current research question and data on the topic were well suited for a narrative summary.

The first step was a basic numerical analysis to highlight the extent, nature, and distribution of the studies in the review. Specifically, this process involved detailing the populations sampled, geographic locations, aims of the studies, and research designs. Second, the literature was organised according to the different positive psychology constructs associated with academic success in secondary school.

3.5.7 Consultation

Reviews of various types can be enhanced through collaboration and consultation with relevant stakeholders. This is an optional element to include in a review and is multifaceted. For example, stakeholders could be consulted regarding insights or issues relating to the field of interest, which could add value to the scoping review. The current review consulted relevant experts in the field of positive psychology at NWU and UP for additional references about potential studies to include in the review (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The research design and specific methods involved in this scoping review, were ethically approved by the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix E). Subsequently, the study was conducted according to the University of Pretoria's Humanities Faculty Research Ethics Committee's ethical code of conduct.

The current study did not involve participants directly and did not implement interventions. As is the nature of a scoping review, it utilised secondary data from primary studies (Levac et al., 2010). Subsequently, the usual ethical considerations regarding participants were not applicable (Dormehl, 2018). However, the ethical considerations of a scoping review are essential. The value of a scoping review lies within the rigour of the process followed when conducting the review (Tricco et al., 2018). Various elements within the protocol of a scoping review elevate the scientific rigour of the research. Such elements include using quality reporting guidelines, transparency, following a recognised methodology, a research team or consultants and being aware of ethical practices within research (Peters et al., 2021; Tricco et al., 2018).

Using the most up-to-date reporting standards is crucial for making informed decisions during a scoping review and ensuring the review's integrity (Peters et al., 2021). The PRISMA-ScR guidelines facilitated the transparent, accurate, and complete reporting of why the review was done, what was done, and what was found (Tricco et al., 2018). The current review also ensured high-quality knowledge transfer through the use of recognised scoping review methodologies (namely Arksey and O'Malley's (2005), and the framework expanded by Levac et al. (2010)). The data were presented in a clear, consistent, and rigorous manner. Using reporting guidelines and recognised methodology was important in terms of ethical considerations since Peters et al. (2021) found that many scoping reviews are published without the apparent consideration of these tools, making them unreliable.

Using a research team addresses the reliability aspect of a scoping review (Wager & Wiffen, 2011). By involving a second reviewer (research supervisor), during the development and use of the research protocol, research question, study selection, and charting process, the risk of personal bias was reduced (Levac et al., 2010; Wager & Wiffen, 2011).

Language bias was explicitly considered while developing the protocol for this study (Brunton et al., 2017). Exclusively selecting English data increases the risk of language bias (Dundar & Fleeman, 2017). It is highlighted that the information obtained for the current review may not represent all the studies conducted on the review topic due to limitations related to non-English literature (Dundar & Fleeman, 2017).

Unlike systematic reviews, a quality assessment phase of the collected data is unnecessary for scoping reviews. Including quality assessments in scoping reviews is an ongoing debate (see Grant and Booth (2009) and Levac et al. (2010)), and a critical appraisal tool for scoping reviews has yet to be developed. In the interim, the researcher studied various critical appraisal tools used in systematic reviews (e.g., Effective Public Health

Practice Project quality assessment tool; Thomas et al., 2004) and has attended multiple ethics courses at the University of Stellenbosch, NWU, and UP respectively. Equipped with this knowledge, any potentially unethical studies would have been excluded from the review. The final full-text studies included in the review were screened in terms of ethical practice, and none were excluded on this basis.

Any form of plagiarism was avoided in the current study through paraphrasing, in-text citations, and a comprehensive reference list as required by the American Psychological Association (APA) seventh edition (APA, 2020).

Finally, a reflexive journal of personal assumptions, worldviews, and preconceptions enabled the researcher to track biases and mitigate their potential effects. According to Suri (2020), this is an important step in ensuring trustworthiness and transparency in the review process as it minimises personal bias.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research question under investigation, and the specific research design used to answer the research question most effectively. The research design used in the current study was a scoping review process outlined by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) to establish what is known about positive psychology constructs identified in association with academic success in South African secondary schools. In this chapter, the research design was contextualised using the research paradigm. The steps involved in a scoping review were then delineated in detail. First, the PRISMA-ScR guidelines were identified as a method for ensuring the quality of reporting for this scoping review. Next, inclusion and exclusion criteria for identifying and selecting relevant studies were described. Finding and extracting studies for inclusion was then described and shown using the

PRISMA-ScR diagram. The data charting process and narrative summary method of data analysis used in the next chapter were then explained. The chapter concluded with a discussion of ethical considerations. The next chapter will report on the final results of this scoping review.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the scoping review. The eligible studies will first be shown in a synthesised data chart that makes the results easily accessible. The findings will then be presented along three dimensions in a thematic summary: (1) the research type, location of the study, and participants; (2) the research design, framework, and aims of the research; (3) and finally the positive constructs associated with academic success. The positive constructs will each be briefly defined as delineated by the studies.

4.2 Data Chart of Results

As reflected in Figure 1 in Chapter 3, 15 studies were finally included in the results section. Data from the eligible studies were charted using a standardised data abstraction tool designed for this study. The synthesised data is presented as a data chart in Table 1. The data chart captured relevant information on key study characteristics and detailed information on the positive constructs identified in association with academic success in secondary school.

Table 1
Summary of Included Studies

#	Author/s and Year	Source Type	Location	Participants	Aims	Design	Framework	Positive Construct/s	Outcomes
1	(Adams et al., 2019)	Journal article	Johannesburg South Africa. Greater Accra, Central, and Volta regions Ghana. Kilifi and Kwale counties, Kenya.	792 Secondary school students. 184 from South Africa. 428 from Ghana. 180 from Kenya.	To examine the developmental assets that contribute toward academic performance in three Sub-Saharan African contexts.	Quantitative	Positive Youth Development (PYD) Framework.	Achievement Motivation Altruism Autonomy Empathy Fairness Honesty Love of Learning Meaning and Purpose Optimism School Engagement Self-regulation Social Intelligence	Adolescents who perform better academically reported more developmental assets, in particular, internal assets.
2	(Adebayo et al., 2020)	Journal article	South Africa.	11,969 Grade 8 and 9 learners across the country participated in the Trend in Mathematical and Science Study.	To analyse the factors that impact academic performance within non-affluent and historically disadvantaged schools.	Quantitative	Not specified.	Self-determination	Learner self-determination had a statistically significant impact on academic success, along with school management and

				(TIMSS) of 2015.				teacher accountability.	
3	(Bester & Kuyper, 2020)	Journal article	Gauteng, South Africa.	117 Grade 9 and 10 learners. Sixty-two learners from a poverty-stricken context and 55 learners from a former Model C school.	To establish how additional educational support enhances adolescents' resilience and to determine if a relationship exists between resilient behaviour and academic achievement.	Quantitative	Not specified.	Resilience Positive Relationships (teacher-learner) Social Support: -Parent support (warmth, structure, monitoring, and setting expectations)	Additional educational support (positive teacher-learner relationships, parental involvement, cognitive development, and study methods) to poverty-stricken learners resulted in higher resilience, which related positively to academic achievement.
4	(Bojuwoye et al., 2014)	Journal article	Western Cape, South Africa.	90 learners from selected public schools in the Western Cape. Sixty primary and 30 secondary school learners.	To explore experiences of learners regarding school practices to understand the provision and utilisation of these learning support services for improving	Qualitative	Asset-based approach.	Social Support: -Teacher support (extra classes, extra notes, additional learning time, accessing information, study skills, and encouragement) -Peer support (study groups and encouragement)	School actions, classroom practices and teacher and learner behaviours improved academic performance and social relations.

					the quality of learning.			-Parent support (school interest and involvement)	
5	(Geduld, 2017)	Journal article	Eastern Cape, South Africa.	14 teachers from two high-poverty schools in the Eastern Cape.	To explore teachers' perceptions of factors that motivate learners to learn and attain their academic goals.	Qualitative	Self-Determination Theory and Self-Regulated Learning model.	Optimism Belonging Social Support: -Teacher support (motivation, encouragement of self-efficacy, humour, role models, and support for intrinsic motivation) -Community support (motivation and resources to build skills) -Peer support (motivation)	Teachers, extrinsic reinforcements, community projects, and learners' drive to escape their socioeconomic situations were perceived as outstanding motivational factors.
6	(Gibbs & Poisat, 2019)	Journal article	Eastern Cape, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.	399 principals, deputies, educators, and administrative staff from 30 secondary schools in three provinces.	To examine and analyse performance factors (educator engagement and team performance) within the secondary school context.	Quantitative	Human and System Factors Framework.	Social Support: -Teacher support (engagement by doing their best, taking ownership of the role, passion, and going the extra mile)	Engaged leadership and educators contributed toward outcomes of producing high percentage pass rates.
7	(Grobler et al., 2014)	Journal article	Free State, South Africa.	1,355 Grade 11 learners from four	To explore whether, aside from gender and	Quantitative	Self-Determination Theory.	Achievement Motivation:	Successful transition was associated with

				previously disadvantaged secondary schools (n = 645), two transitional schools (n = 481), and three advantaged schools (n = 229) in the Free State.	school environment, learners' motivation can serve as a predictor of the (un)successful transition of learners from Grade 11 to 12 in South Africa.			-Autonomous identified motivation	higher levels of learner motivation (autonomous), a positive attitude towards learning, and lower levels of educational anxiety.
8	(Hemson, 2018)	Journal article	Durban, South Africa.	Four male learners successfully completed secondary school in a historically African township and successfully transitioned to university.	To understand how a group of boys in a Durban township achieved exceptional educational results despite severe financial, social, and educational constraints.	Qualitative	Resilience Theory.	Self-efficacy Autonomy Innovation Resilience Altruism Love of Learning Social Support: -Peer support (study group, humour, belonging, teamwork) -Community support (extra classes) -Parent support (attending school meetings and promoting importance of studying)	The group developed strategies that evolved into an ongoing resilient system that enabled effective responses within the school environment and had lasting effects that sustained them through their university careers and beyond.

9	(Lethale & Pillay, 2013)	Journal article	Gauteng, South Africa.	Four academically well-performing secondary school learners who were orphaned and living in adolescent-headed households. Five educators who interacted with the learners.	To identify and explore the contribution of resilience factors to the successful academic performance of adolescents from adolescent-headed homes.	Qualitative	Positive Psychology and Resilience Theory.	Courage Creativity Self-efficacy Determination/Perseverance Love of Learning Positive Emotions Meaning and Purpose Optimism Social Support -Teacher support (caring, compassionate, kind, honest, accepting, and encouraging) -Peer support (encouragement, social intelligence, belonging, altruism) Resilience	Fostering self-awareness, positive relationships, encouraging aspirations for a better future, and facilitating community support create resilience, which has a positive impact on academic performance.
10	(Molokoli, 2014)	Unpublished PhD thesis	North-West, South Africa.	150 Grade 9 mathematics learners from two public secondary schools in Rustenburg.	To construct a volition-enhancing self-regulation model to improve Grade 9 mathematics learner performance in rural community schools.	Mixed methods	Activity Theory and constructivist views.	Self-regulation	Comparing experimental and control groups indicated that the intervention effect had high statistical significance, suggesting that volition enhances mathematics performance.

11	(Mutodi & Ngirande, 2014)	Journal article	South Africa.	114 parents of Grade 12 learners in a selected South African secondary school.	To determine how parental involvement in South African schools affects the academic performance of learners in mathematics.	Quantitative	Epstein's (1995) research-based framework.	Social Support: -Parent support (positive attitude towards learning, school, and teachers, being knowledgeable, involved in schooling, and communication with the school)	Parent-teacher communication and home and family support were positively related to academic performance, with home and family support being the most significant factor.
12	(Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021)	Journal article	Western Cape, South Africa.	Ten participants from a high-risk community completed secondary school and transitioned to university.	To explore the pathways to academic success of disadvantaged learners from a high-risk community.	Qualitative	Positive Psychology and Bronfenbrenner's (1995) ecological model.	Spirituality Achievement Motivation Altruism Bravery Creativity Gratitude Honesty Hope Autonomy Leadership Love of Learning Perseverance Perspective Self-regulation Self-efficacy Social Support -Attachment figure support (taking to school, teaching how to do homework, caring, and	The pathways to academic success have obstacles, but through positive relationships, specific personal qualities, and motivation, the learners achieved academic success.

							encouraging self- efficacy) -Siblings/family support (encouragement, skills development, and instilling a sense of responsibility) -Peer support (belonging, motivation, and encouragement) - Teacher support (encouragement, skill development, positive feedback, and promote self-efficacy) -Community support (extra classes and belonging)		
13	(Schulze & Lemmer, 2017)	Journal article	Pretoria, South Africa.	380 Grade 9 learners from four public and independent schools.	To explore the relationship between family experiences, the motivation for science learning, and science achievement.	Quantitative	Eccles', (2009) value-expectancy model of achievement-related choices, Marjoribanks', (1976) social learning theory of the family, and	Social Support -Parent support (interest in schooling, high expectations, encouragement to engagement and promotion of self-efficacy)	Family experiences correlated significantly with motivational aspects of science learning and achievement.

							Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) theory of parent efficacy.		
14	(Schulze & van Heerden, 2015)	Journal article	Pretoria, South Africa.	380 Grade 9 learners from three independent schools (n = 47,82, and 54) and one public school (n = 197).	To explore motivational factors for science learning among high school students of different genders, racial groups, and school types, in line with the TIMSS report.	Quantitative	Achievement Goal Theory.	Achievement Motivation: -Mastery goals	Motivation for learning improves academic performance. Both genders and black students were more motivated by mastery goals than by performance goals.
15	(Schutte, 2012)	Unpublished Masters' Dissertation	Free State, South Africa.	182 learners in Senior Phase at a secondary school in the Free State.	To determine whether a relationship exists between resilience, self-regulation, and the academic performance of learners living under adverse circumstances.	Quantitative	Resilience Theory.	Self-regulation. Social Support -Community support (positive relationships and opportunities for learning).	No significant relationship between resilience and academic performance was found. A moderate relationship between academic performance and self-regulated learning was found.

4.3 Type of Research Output, Location, and Participants

The majority of studies were journal articles ($n = 13$), followed by one unpublished PhD thesis and one unpublished master's dissertation. One study's exact location within South Africa was unspecified, while another reported on data collected across South Africa. Two studies reported taking place in the general Gauteng area. One study specified Johannesburg, and two specified Pretoria. The Johannesburg study also reported on data collected from Ghana and Kenya. Two studies collected data in the Western Cape province. One study took place across three provinces, namely the Eastern Cape, Western Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal. The Free State had two studies. The Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and North-West provinces were reported as single study locations by one study each.

The study participants were predominantly secondary school learners ($n = 15,373$ across 12 studies), followed by secondary school staff members working directly with the learners ($n = 413$ across two studies), and then secondary school parents ($n = 114$ in one study). Some studies ($n = 2$) did not specify the exact Grade the participants were completing at the time of the research. One study's participants were Grade 8 and 9 learners, and another was Grade 9 and 10 learners. Three studies were conducted with Grade 9 learners only. One study was conducted with Grade 10 and 11 learners, and another with only Grade 11 learners. Two studies included participants that already completed secondary school successfully. The remaining three studies were conducted with school staff ($n = 2$) and parents of Grade 12 learners ($n = 1$).

The schools included in the studies varied in description, but the majority of schools included were schools in high-poverty contexts ($n = 9$), followed by independent schools (privately governed and funded schools; $n = 6$), public schools ($n = 5$), former Model C schools (former whites-only apartheid government schools; $n = 3$), advantaged schools ($n =$

3), and a General Education Training school ($n = 1$). Three studies did not specify the school from where data were collected, and one study collected data from schools that participated in TIMSS. One study compared data from a high-poverty context school with a former Model C school. Another study compared data from a high-poverty context school with a former Model C school and an advantaged school. Finally, two studies compared data across public and independent schools.

Only some studies reported the gender and racial and ethnic information of the participants. After reading the description of the research setting, it was determined that the vast majority of studies mainly included only Black African participants; there were 650 Black African participants across studies compared to 355 White and Coloured participants. In all studies, except for one where the genders were equally dispersed, female participants outnumbered male participants.

4.4 Research Design, Framework and Aims

In terms of research design, most studies used a quantitative approach ($n = 9$), followed by a qualitative approach ($n = 5$). Only one study used a mixed methods study design. The quantitative studies, barring one study that used the TIMSS test data, used a variety of questionnaires that aligned with the research question. Three studies designed questionnaires, specifically for the study. The validity and reliability of these designed questionnaires were reported. Of these three studies, one study also used existing questionnaires. The remaining quantitative studies ($n = 5$) used existing, valid and reliable measures. In the qualitative studies, two implemented semi-structured focus groups, and two conducted semi-structured individual interviews. One study conducted both semi-structured individual interviews and a focus group. The mixed methods study was an intervention programme implemented in a group setting. The researcher completed pre- and post-test

questionnaires and mathematics tests for the quantitative section of the study. He also conducted individual interviews and engaged in participant observations during the intervention for the qualitative section. Many studies that were conducted with school learners used either academic reports ($n = 5$), academic tests ($n = 1$), or the TIMMS data ($n = 1$) as performance measures. One study selected learners for participation based on their performance, while others used the performance data for comparison to identify qualities related to academic success for high-performing learners ($n = 4$). The intervention study used the results of the pre-and-post academic test as an assessment of the effectiveness of the intervention. The studies that did not rely on academic reports relied on guidance from school staff for selecting academically successful learners for participation.

Most studies ($n = 6$) used either a positive psychology framework, an assets-based approach, or positive psychology theories. Two studies did not specify a framework or working theory, and the remainder of the studies ($n = 5$) did not explicitly use a positive psychology framework, but the results aligned with an assets-based approach.

As outlined in the criteria, all the studies aimed to explore factors contributing to academic success, either generally or subject-specific. Two studies focused on mathematics success, one on science success, and two on mathematics and science success. Three studies used a constructivist and exploratory approach to identify which positive constructs were associated with academic success (Geduld, 2017; Hemson, 2018; Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021). The remaining studies predetermined positive constructs for investigation. Most studies were focused on correlating various types of social support and positive relationships with academic outcomes ($n = 5$). Two studies also incorporated resilience and motivation as possible factors associated with academic success (Bester & Kuyper, 2020; Schulze & Lemmer, 2017). Resilience ($n = 2$) and motivation ($n = 2$) were also investigated

independently in two studies each (Grobler et al., 2014; Lethale & Pillay, 2013; Schulze & van Heerden, 2015; Schutte, 2012). One of the resilience studies additionally investigated self-regulation (Schutte, 2012). Self-regulation was the main focus of association in one study (Molokoli, 2014), and developmental assets were the focus in another study (Adams et al., 2019).

4.5 Outcomes and Positive Constructs

Most correlation studies ($n = 14$) reported positive associations between the investigated positive constructs and academic success. Only one study found no significant relationship between resilience and academic success but found a moderate relationship between self-regulation and academic success (Schutte, 2012). The exploratory studies found that academic success was associated with multiple positive constructs forming part of a bioecological context (Geduld, 2017; Hemson, 2018; Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021). The list of positive constructs identified prior to the literature search totalled 46. Of these constructs, 25 were identified in the selected 15 studies included in this review. The specific positive psychology constructs identified in association with academic success in South African secondary schools will be outlined below.

Table 2

Summary of Positive Constructs Identified in Association with Academic Success

Positive Construct	Number of Studies that Identified a Construct in Association with Academic Success
Social Support	10
Achievement Motivation/Self-determination	5
Hope/Optimism	4
Love of Learning	4
Self-regulation	4
Creativity/Innovation	3

Self-efficacy	3
Altruism/Prosocial Behaviour	3
Resilience	3
Autonomy	2
Bravery/Courage	2
Grit/Perseverance	2
Honesty/Integrity	2
Meaning and Purpose	2
Spirituality	1
Belonging	1
Empathy	1
Engagement	1
Fairness	1
Gratitude	1
Leadership	1
Perspective/Wisdom	1
Positive Emotions	1
Social Intelligence	1
Positive Relationships	1

Different forms of social support were identified in association with academic success. Social support was the most reported construct in the studies ($n = 10$). Four types of social support were identified: teacher support, parental/family support, peer support and community support. As described by the studies, social support had two components. One is emotional support (e.g., motivation, warmth, empathy, and encouragement), and the other is structural or practical support (e.g., extra classes, study skills, additional learning time, and good communication between stakeholders). In one study, the practical support component was not reported and was classified as a positive relationship, not social support (Bester & Kuyper, 2020).

Achievement motivation or self-determination was the second most reported construct associated with academic success ($n = 5$). Two studies reported on the construct broadly without expanding on the various components that constitute motivation (Adams et al., 2019; Adebayo et al., 2020). The qualitative study described motivation using an exploratory approach in terms of what participants identified as sources of motivation for academic success. Motivation encompassed receiving rewards for their work (e.g., certificates), the

desire to escape poverty, the desire to succeed so they can uplift their community, and finally, long-term life goals (Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021). The two quantitative studies that identified achievement motivation in association with academic success were rooted in Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Grobler et al., 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2017) and Achievement Goal Theory (Schulze & van Heerden, 2015; Vedder-Weiss & Fortus, 2011). They thus described the identified types of motivation using theory-specific terms. Grobler et al. (2014) found that identified motivation was correlated with academic success. They defined identified motivation as an extrinsic autonomous type of motivation; learners who succeeded academically recognised that they were not in school because it was enjoyable (intrinsic motivation) but because it was important for their future and personal values (identified motivation). But their less successful counterparts were more motivated by intrinsic motivation than identified motivation – an unexpected result. Schulze and van Heerden (2015) reported on a type of motivation termed mastery goals, described as a motivation not inspired by competition but is instead linked to the intrinsic value of learning. Learners felt fulfilled by having ideas accepted in the classroom, doing well in assessments, and in their ability to solve problems.

Four studies reported hopefulness or optimism about the future as an essential element in achieving academic success (Adams et al., 2019; Geduld, 2017; Lethale & Pillay, 2013; Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021). Hope was described as a positive future expectation of succeeding academically, reaching goals, and receiving decent job opportunities.

A love of learning was identified as a critical contributor to the participants' academic success in four studies (Adams et al., 2019; Hemson, 2018; Lethale & Pillay, 2013; Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021). A love of learning was distinguished from cramming to pass a test and forgetting the knowledge afterwards (Hemson, 2018). Instead, it was described as a deep

understanding of the subject matter due to an enjoyment of the content and a desire to apply learning outside of school (Hemson, 2018; Lethale & Pillay, 2013).

Self-regulation was reported in four studies as linked to academic success. Two studies described it in detail (Molokoli, 2014; Schutte, 2012). It was defined as a learner taking an active role in their learning by activating and sustaining emotions, behaviours, and cognitions orientated towards learning. It requires learners to plan, monitor, and adjust their learning strategies, environments, and affective states to optimise learning (Schutte, 2012).

Creativity or innovation was reported on by three studies (Hemson, 2018; Lethale & Pillay, 2013; Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021). These studies described it in terms of two facets. The one facet related to the ingenuity required when navigating and negotiating for various resources needed to achieve academic success in challenging circumstances such as poverty (e.g., safe homework spaces, textbooks, and food). The second facet was creativity to maximise learning through various study skills, such as drawing, dancing, and singing to memorise and understand the content.

Three studies identified self-efficacy as another vital factor related to academic success (Hemson, 2018; Lethale & Pillay, 2013; Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021). Self-efficacy was described as the belief in a person's own ability to achieve success. It was important for the participants in these studies to believe in their ability to achieve their goals as it motivated them to persevere through challenges. These studies highlighted that the primary sources of self-efficacy were past achievements and encouragement from sources of social support (e.g., teachers giving positive feedback or being in a peer group that values education).

Altruism or prosocial behaviour and autonomy were identified in three studies as associated with academic success (Adams et al., 2019; Hemson, 2018; Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021). Altruism was described as a learning strategy and a source of motivation (as outlined). In terms of being a learning strategy, participants recognised that as they took time to tutor other learners, they gained more knowledge and mastery over a subject which aided them in succeeding in their work. Autonomy was defined as a feeling of personal power reflected through deciding what they wanted to achieve, taking responsibility for their future, and taking steps to achieve their goals (Adams et al., 2019; Hemson, 2018).

Two studies associated bravery or courage with academic success (Lethale & Pillay, 2013; Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021). In these studies, participants reported courage as vital for their learning as it assisted them in conveying any misunderstandings in the classroom or asking their peers to explain concepts and help them understand.

Grit or perseverance was reported in two studies (Lethale & Pillay, 2013; Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021). This construct was not defined by the studies' authors in terms of a specific theory (e.g., Duckworth, 2016) nor expounded on by the participants; it was merely mentioned as associated with academic success since participants persevered through challenges to achieve success.

Two studies associated honesty or integrity with academic success (Adams et al., 2019; Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021). In these studies, honesty was associated with self-awareness in that participants would use honesty to reflect on past failures (e.g., recognising that failure was due to a lack of studying) and adjust for the future.

Meaning and purpose in life were linked to academic success by two studies (Adams et al., 2019; Lethale & Pillay, 2013). According to these studies, the participants each

identified a unique purpose in life and a desire to achieve this goal, giving them an important sense of direction and perspective regarding the role of the school.

Resilience was related to academic success in three studies (Bester & Kuyper, 2020; Hemson, 2018; Lethale & Pillay, 2013). In a fourth study, resilience was investigated, but it was not found to have a significant relationship with academic success (Schutte, 2012). However, she reported that although the overall construct of resilience (individual, family, and community resources) was not significantly related to academic success, one facet of resilience, namely community resources, was significantly correlated to academic success. It was included in the social support category. Bester and Kuyper (2020), Hemson, (2018), and Lethale and Pillay (2013) similarly defined resilience as a complex and dynamic phenomenon that requires an interplay between the individual and contextual resources within the family and community. According to these authors, resilience encompasses positive adaptations within a context of adversity to achieve success. According to Bester and Kuyper (2020), resilience requires the presence of personal protective factors (for example, a realistic self-concept, and internal locus of control) and quality social relationships characterised by warmth, structure, and realistic expectations. When these factors are present, they found that learners were more equipped to make academic choices that led to academic success. Likewise, Hemson (2018) found that resilience to adverse circumstances and academic challenges required positive adaptations that involved internal resources such as a realistic self-concept and external resources, such as varying degrees of social support. Lethale and Pillay (2013) reported that resilience was a necessary factor for academic success in adolescent-headed families. In their investigation of academic success despite adverse circumstances, they identified multiple factors that were essential in promoting resilience and ultimately academic success. These factors aligned well with Bester and Kuyper (2020) and Hemson (2018) since it was a combination of internal resources (self-awareness, problem-

solving, intelligence, and aspirations for the future) as well as external resources (educator support, and peer support).

Spirituality, gratitude, leadership, wisdom (Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021), belonging (Geduld, 2017), positive emotions (Lethale & Pillay, 2013), empathy, engagement, fairness, and social intelligence (Adams et al., 2019) were each only identified by one study in association with academic success. Spirituality was described as a deep relationship with God that was a source of hope, encouragement, and self-efficacy. A sense of belonging in school was described as a psychological need for relatedness, which supports and encourages academic progress. Empathy and social intelligence were described as factors of social competence that enable a learner to build positive relationships with peers and teachers. Fairness was defined as a positive value that a learner displays because they place importance on equality and reducing social ills. Gratitude, leadership, wisdom, and positive emotions were not described or defined further in the respective studies. The studies that identified these constructs in association with academic success did not elaborate on how these constructs were associated with academic success.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter focused on describing the characteristics of the selected studies. The results were described using a narrative summary format. The first section was presented as a data chart that encompassed a basic numerical analysis of the studies to present the extent and nature of the studies. The results revealed 15 studies that met the full inclusion criteria for this scoping review. The second section described the characteristics and results of the study in more detail. The studies were distributed across South Africa in different provinces, with most taking place in Gauteng. The study populations were predominantly secondary school learners in disadvantaged contexts. The research consisted mostly of quantitative studies,

followed closely by qualitative studies. The research aims were all similarly aligned in that they investigated factors related to academic success in South African secondary schools. The results revealed that 25 out of 46 potential positive constructs had been investigated in South African secondary schools. The most identified construct in association with academic success was social support. Achievement motivation, hope, love of learning, self-regulation, creativity, self-efficacy, altruism, autonomy, bravery, grit, honesty, meaning and purpose, and resilience were all identified by more than one study. The remaining positive constructs were only identified by one study each.

The next chapter will explore the data in relation to the research question and locate it within the context of current literature. The chapter will discuss the current study's limitations and make recommendations for future research based on the identified literature gaps.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This study conducted a scoping review to empirically evaluate the status of research on positive psychology constructs identified in association with academic success in a South African secondary school context. This chapter presents a discussion of the results in relation to the research question and the context of available research on the current topic. The chapter concludes with the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

5.2 Summary of Results in Relation to the Research Question

This scoping review aimed to explore and describe the research available on positive psychology constructs associated with academic success in a South African secondary school setting. The review identified 15 studies investigating academic success in South Africa between 2007 and 2022. The findings show that most studies investigated the link between academic success, and a predetermined positive construct instead of taking a more exploratory approach. It was also found that the studies on this topic focus, mainly on secondary schools in poverty-stricken areas where learners face many psychosocial challenges. In light of South African history, the context of poverty and social challenges seems to be an essential element to consider when investigating academic success in secondary school. Finally, the findings indicate a lack of research focusing specifically on positive psychological factors that could impact academic performance in South Africa. Of the 46 possible positive constructs, only 25 were identified or investigated, indicating a gap in South African research that requires further investigation.

5.3 The Results in Context

5.3.1 *Limited Number of Studies*

Despite the large number of international studies reporting on the benefits of including positive psychology within a school context (Lomas et al., 2021) and the reported increase in the number of positive psychology publications related to academic success internationally (Froh et al., 2011), and in non-Western countries (Hendriks et al., 2019), South Africa is still experiencing a lack in research relating to the current topic. In 2000, Wissing (as cited in Coetzee & Viviers, 2007) addressed the subject of positive psychology construct clarification and future research in South Africa during a presentation. She categorised three phases of well-being research in South Africa. The first stage (prior to 2000) focused on identifying protective environmental factors and resources available. The second stage focused on intrapersonal factors and specific characteristics of well-being. In the third stage, she recommended that research focus on processes that facilitate well-being (e.g., PPIs). Thirteen years later, Eloff (2013) encouraged researchers to investigate the relationship between school-wide interventions and more complex variables such as academic performance and increased attendance.

The current results indicate that research in South Africa concerning the present topic has not progressed past the first and second stages of research suggested by Wissing (2000 as cited in Coetzee & Viviers, 2007) and research on the intricate relationship between positive psychology in school and variables, such as academic performance is in its infancy. Dormehl (2018), who critically reviewed PPIs internationally in a school context and Guse (2022), who completed a scoping review of PPIs in African contexts, confirmed this paucity. Their research showed there had been limited implementation and evaluation of PPIs in the South African context, and none at the time were aimed at increasing academic success in

secondary school. One possible reason for the scarcity of positive psychology research on academic success in South African secondary schools may be that implementing positive psychology in educational institutions is still limited to a few training programmes in South Africa (Guse, 2010). Most undergraduate and postgraduate psychology students are predominantly exposed to a pathogenic paradigm of teaching which may translate to limited research within the field compared to international literature (Guse, 2010; Strümpfer, 2005).

5.3.2 The Type of Research Conducted

Barring one study that implemented an intervention, the remaining results aimed to investigate the link between academic success and either a predetermined positive construct or identify constructs in an exploratory approach. Each study's participants and locations varied greatly, making generalisability across South Africa in all contexts difficult. However, these studies had a common aim to explore which positive constructs are relevant in a South African context. This seems in line with the third phase of positive psychology, which advocates for a refocusing to include more contextually relevant research (Wissing, 2022). So, although research has yet to reach the suggested phase of process implementation or intervention (Wissing, 2000, as cited in Coetzee & Viviers, 2007), it seems to be heading in a useful direction in terms of exploring the foundational building blocks for contextual relevance and culture-activity fit (Layous, 2018). The diversity of participants and research designs in the current results aid in exploring the phenomenon of academic success in secondary school from various perspectives and worldviews.

5.4 Positive Constructs Associated with Academic Success in South Africa

The 25 constructs identified in association with academic success in this study are relevant for future research. However, before discussing the intricacies of each construct, it is

important to note that they are not necessarily representative of all the contextually relevant constructs associated with academic success in South Africa; they are merely the only ones investigated up to date. This is possibly due to the dominance of quantitative studies that predetermined constructs for investigation as opposed to more exploratory approaches, as suggested in the third phase of positive psychology (Lomas et al., 2021). A large portion of constructs has not been researched in this context or internationally. For example, literature shows that even in a Western context, the construct of “appreciation of beauty and excellence” is one of the least researched and least understood character strengths (Hort, 2019). Overall, research identifying positive psychology constructs associated with academic success in South Africa requires more attention.

5.4.1 Social Support and Positive Relationships

Social support was the most identified construct associated with academic success in secondary school. This is no surprise since research in recent years has consistently shown that although internal resources or personal qualities such as perseverance, self-control, and hope are contributing factors to success, it is only a small part of the reason some learners thrive, and others do not (Allen et al., 2022; Masten, 2014; Ungar, 2018). According to Ungar (2018), success depends on the social support that learners receive from those around them. It ties in well with resilience, which was also identified in association with academic success, since resilience is an individual’s ability to navigate the resources necessary for success (e.g., supportive relationships or textbooks) and then to negotiate for resources meaningful to them (Ungar, 2018). The meaningfulness of a resource is learner-dependent, which explains why the types of social support described in each study were so diverse (Masten, 2014; Ungar, 2015). The most meaningful sources of social support seem to be teachers able to form emotionally supportive connections with learners; parents that take an authoritative approach

with positive expectations and take an interest in a learner's schooling; peers that are encouraging, motivational, and accepting; and communities or families that valourise education and provide various resources such as homework support. In line with research conducted in Canada and South Africa, the current study found that learners who receive meaningful social support are more likely to succeed (Ungar et al., 2021).

The meaningfulness of the social support offered to the learners in the various identified studies seemed dependent on the quality of the support and not the quantity thereof. International research also highlights that the quality of service provision accounts for higher success rates than the number of support sources (Masten, 2014; Ungar, 2018). The included studies alluded to some of the personal qualities displayed by sources of support, which aided in building meaningful connections. For example, kindness, humour, warmth, encouragement, and a willingness to go the extra mile. While it is beyond the scope of the current study to comment on the positive qualities of social support sources, it is a recommended avenue for future research.

According to resilience literature, social support accounts for the majority of school engagement, academic success and well-being (Theron et al., 2022). The current results indicate that individual factors are also integral in reaching academic success alongside social support. A bioecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 2006) or multisystemic understanding (Ungar et al., 2021) of academic success helps identify the interplay of factors affecting a learner's performance. A learner can be perceived as a system that contains a host of individual characteristics (biological, cognitive, and psychological factors) while concurrently being part of a greater social and environmental societal system (Albien & Naidoo, 2018). The learner is consistently influencing and being influenced by the environment (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Research suggests that academic success may not be

attributable to one singular system or individual trait but rather to the perceived quality and meaningfulness of these bidirectional interactions (Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021; Theron et al., 2022; Ungar et al., 2021). In South Africa, the value of a positive social support system cannot be underestimated in assisting learners to achieve academic success. The findings support that academic success is an outcome of the interplay between various systems within a learner's context that work together to support their academic progress.

5.4.2 Achievement Motivation and Autonomy

Motivation concerns what moves individuals to think, act, and develop. There are multiple theories with which to explore the construct of achievement motivation. Within the field of positive psychology, SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2017) is one of the most widely used theories. In SDT, the basis for motivation is rooted in inherent growth tendencies and psychological needs. The characteristics of the social context can either support or inhibit growth (Nel, 2020).

SDT distinguishes between autonomous and controlled motivation. Autonomous motivation occurs when the meaningfulness of an activity has been integrated with the true self. Controlled motivation occurs when an individual may feel pressured by outside forces to engage in an activity or thought process. Autonomous motivation meets the three psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Higher levels of autonomous motivation have been linked to deeper engagement with academic work, resulting in increased perseverance and success, whereas controlled motivation is debilitating (Grobler et al., 2014). This may explain why autonomy was an important factor associated with academic success.

The most effective and ideal form of motivation is autonomous intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In the current context, learners are motivated by a self-endorsed love of learning. In line with Ryan and Deci's (2017) description of intrinsic motivation, a love of learning and the inherent value of learning was recognised as primary sources of motivation in multiple studies (Adams et al., 2019; Hemson, 2018; Lethale & Pillay, 2013). Conversely, an interesting result was the emergence of extrinsic identified motivation as the main source of successful motivation in some studies (Grobler et al., 2014; Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021; Schulze & Lemmer, 2017). This type of motivation is still autonomous; however, the motivation stems from external factors that have been self-endorsed as valuable. For example, the learners were motivated by recognising that school is important for their future goals and not necessarily for the love of the subject content itself.

Additionally, for some learners, it became a moral imperative to succeed, given their family background of historical inequality. The latter example is an important finding in South Africa, given the collectivist cultural values held by many South Africans, which may not have been given prominence in Western literature (Albien & Naidoo, 2018; Hendriks et al., 2019). Extrinsic identified motivation may be a more effective form of motivation in collectivist cultures than intrinsic motivation. For example, in one study, less academically successful learners were motivated by intrinsic goals versus their more successful peers who were motivated by extrinsic identified motivation (Grobler et al., 2014). However, this hypothesis requires further investigation since it was not addressed in the included studies. Subsequently, although some results align well with SDT in terms of the most effective forms of motivation, some deviations in South African literature indicate a need for more contextually sensitive research regarding achievement motivation.

5.4.3 Self-Efficacy

Main theories of self-efficacy describe it as a belief about one's ability to coordinate skills and resources while facing challenging situations or to attain the desired goal (Maddux & Kleinman, 2021). The studies that identified self-efficacy as associated with academic success aligned with this conceptual understanding. Although self-efficacy is often explored and operationalised in positive psychology, it originates from social cognitive theory (SCT). The premises of SCT give a clue as to the dynamics of self-efficacy in the academic domain. The assumptions of SCT suggest that the development of self-efficacy beliefs is primarily influenced by understanding cause-and-effect relationships and the capacity for self-observation. The performance experiences (successful attempts at controlling the environment), vicarious experiences (forming expectations based on the behaviour of others and the consequences), verbal persuasion (positive feedback from valued sources), and emotional states (associating success with positive emotions) each play a role in strengthening self-efficacy (Maddux & Kleinman, 2021). The results of the current study support these outlined experiences and highlight the intricate interplay of individual factors (such as positive emotions) and social support on an individual's self-efficacy, and ultimately, academic success.

5.4.4 Empathy, Altruism and Belonging

Empathy, altruism, and belonging were each associated with academic success. Although not explicitly stated in the findings of the included studies, there seems to be an interaction between these constructs that could explain their inclusion in South African academic success literature. Research indicates that empathy requires the ability to identify with another and observe the plight of another (Batson et al., 2009; Cassell, 2021). Altruism takes this a step further; it is characterised as a concern for the welfare of others and a

willingness to engage in activities that contribute to the well-being of others (Khumalo et al., 2020). When engaging in this type of prosocial behaviour, a reciprocal giving-receiving sequence occurs (Yalom & Leszcz, 2020). Apart from becoming more proficient in subject matter, as reported by the studies, learners may also have experienced a feeling of being important to others and being needed. This balance of adding value to the other and feeling valued is known as belonging (Prilleltensky, 2019).

Given the background of the study participants that identified these three constructs, it is likely that these learners have internalised a form of Ubuntu values. Ubuntu is a social organising principle that ignites and maintains positive community relationships (Khumalo et al., 2020). As recorded in one study, the learners internalised their duty to give back to the community out of respect for themselves and their community (Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021). Empathy, altruism, and belonging, each played a role in the motivation, learning processes, and building of positive relationships related to academic success.

5.4.5 Meaning and Purpose

Questions about meaning and purpose in life often come to the foreground when people experience challenges in life or are at the precipice of having to make a significant life decision (Wissing, 2020). Much like the learners described in these studies, who either had to make Grade 9 subject choices or were on their way to completing school and choosing a career path (Albien & Naidoo, 2018). Meaning and purpose in life involve understanding life and order, pursuing meaningful goals and experiencing a sense of fulfilment in attaining them. A high sense of meaning and purpose is related to a clear direction in life with which goals are aligned (Reker & Woo, 2011). Fry and Debats (2010) view it as a cognitive map that helps orientate and direct a person through the course of life. This construct may be

related to academic success as it serves as a map for reaching academic goals and pursuing a meaningful career that may require academic success.

Meaning and purpose also relate to a bioecological understanding of academic success since, according to meaning models, belonging, intimacy, and positive relationships play an important role in an individual's meaning-making process (Steger et al., 2011; Wong, 2011). These facets of meaningfulness were all mentioned in association with academic success, and their interplay can be seen in the meaning-making process. The current findings support that meaning and purpose in life are important for finding direction, belonging, and motivation for academic success.

5.4.6 Engagement

South African literature suggests that school engagement is vital for school attendance and educational success and is related to the potential for economic progression (Theron et al., 2022). Broadly, engagement is a multifaceted process that entails an active contribution (behaviour), mental effort (cognition), and emotional investment (affect; Fredrickson, 2009). School engagement again demonstrates the multisystemic and interlinked processes involved in academic success.

Behavioural engagement in school is evident when a learner actively contributes to the learning process and school activities. Cognitive engagement indicates being psychologically invested in learning (e.g., academic aspirations and goals). Affective engagement is demonstrated when a learner is emotionally involved with their education, school activities, peers, and teachers (e.g., experiencing positive emotions towards a teacher and perceiving it as a meaningful relationship; Theron et al., 2022). Positive emotions were identified as a key construct in one study, which links well with school engagement since

positive affect is a predictor of higher school engagement (Theron et al., 2022). Fredrickson (2013) outlines ten positive emotions, including emotions such as joy, amusement, inspiration and more. No current research in South Africa specifically explores these emotions in relation to school engagement or academic success in secondary school. However, it may be a worthwhile avenue for future research.

5.4.7 Character Strengths

Character strengths as a collective were not the topic of investigation in the identified studies. However, 13 of the 24 character strengths (see Appendix F for a list of character strengths) were associated with academic success in secondary school. Character strengths are a collection of positive traits expressed through thoughts, feelings, and behaviours universally recognised as strengths and virtues (Peterson & Park, 2011). There is a gap in South African literature concerning character strengths and academic success, especially since the current results indicate a value in exploring them further.

Internationally, character strengths are related to learner well-being and are substantially linked to academic success (Weber & Ruch, 2012). Some of the character strengths identified in the current study, namely perseverance, self-regulation, social intelligence, and hope, were strongly correlated with academic success in international studies (Wagner & Ruch, 2015). Research regarding the significance of constructs such as fairness, spirituality, wisdom, creativity, and bravery in a South African context may yield interesting results given the historical climate of segregation and unjust governing. Already, some results in this study have alluded to the contextually specific significance of these constructs where learners felt a moral imperative to succeed academically due to apartheid policies that prevented their families from pursuing education in the past (Grobler et al., 2014; Hemson, 2018; Lethale & Pillay, 2013; Naidoo & van Schalkwyk, 2021). The current

results suggest an overlap of relevant character strengths for academic success internationally and in South Africa. However, the relevance and significance of the character strengths that were merely identified in association with academic success were not explored further. Subsequently, there is a need to investigate character strengths in South African secondary schools in relation to academic success.

5.5 Overcoming a Challenging Context

There is rich international literature examining the persistence of early educational inequalities in relation to the hierarchical nature of learning. The debate concerning the possibility of ameliorating deficits arising from inequalities has been rife since the 1960s when the Coleman Report (1966) was released. This American research found that the socioeconomic status of learners, and their peers was the most critical factor contributing to school outcomes, and that school characteristics or school support in this context had little bearing on their academic success (Coleman, 1966). Numerous studies have since been published that counter this argument and suggest that the pessimistic conclusions of the Coleman Report were too generalised and absolute (Taylor et al., 2015). The current findings may add to the ongoing debate on what is effective in ameliorating deficits caused by inequalities and poverty.

The included studies in the current review (not by reason of inclusion criteria) were either solely conducted with participants in a disadvantaged setting, compared disadvantaged learners' performance with advantaged learners, or made specific commentary on the performance of disadvantaged learners. Primarily, this is due to the vast number of learners in disadvantaged circumstances compared to their advantaged peers. It stems from a history of discriminatory and structural inequalities during apartheid and ongoing corruption at all levels, which has led to one of the most significant income distribution gaps in the world

(Albien & Naidoo, 2018). If researchers and policymakers were to be guided by the Coleman Report (1966) and other similar findings, which conclude that socioeconomic status is the most important factor in ameliorating learning deficits, the case for South African learners would be hopeless.

The contextualisation of the selected studies highlighted numerous challenges that many South African learners face on their journey to academic success, and one study specifically highlighted that an increase in resources did not lead to improved academic outcomes (Adebayo et al., 2020). Exploring other options besides socioeconomic status is vital in the South African context. Positive psychology provides this alternative avenue for promoting academic success in challenging contexts. However, relying on a Western model of positive psychology may prove ineffective. Western views may be valid within a developed context, but greater complexities exist within developing contexts (Eloff, 2013). As the selected studies have highlighted, South African learners may strive to be academically successful; however, they face daily challenges such as poverty, HIV, substance abuse, physical abuse, and crime which cannot merely be overcome by cultivating, for example, good character alone. Instead, the current findings suggest that academic success in South Africa requires the navigation, negotiation, and implementation of meaningful resources and various stakeholders to ameliorate the effects of challenging living circumstances – as an African proverb aptly states, “it takes a village to raise a child” (Reupert et al., 2022, p. 1). In a context where increasing socioeconomic status may not be viable, culturally relevant social support combined with individual attributes may counter inequality and support academic success.

5.6 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There were several limitations regarding the current research. Scoping reviews are often limited by the lack of quality appraisal tools in the methodology of the review. Similarly, this scoping review was limited by the absence of these factors; however, an effort was made to exclude overtly dubious studies, such as those published in predatory journals. The summary of the literature available on the current topic was limited by the lack of conceptual clarification and exploration of the included positive constructs by some studies. Lastly, excluding non-English studies and book chapters may have limited the results of the study since those sources may have included valuable information on the current topic of academic success in secondary school.

The current study has expanded the theoretical knowledge base regarding the topic of positive psychology and academic success in secondary school by providing a summary of the literature available on the topic. It is possible that this research could guide future policy developments and research. This scoping review is helpful for researchers in the field of education and positive psychology since it provides a clear map of the evidence available and has highlighted specific knowledge gaps that still need to be addressed. Several recommendations for further research flow from this scoping review, as there seems to be a shortage in South African literature concerning positive psychology constructs and academic success in secondary school. The lack of available studies highlighted several research gaps and subsequent avenues for future research. First, it is recommended that, as a whole, more positive psychology constructs should be examined in association with academic success in South African secondary schools. These constructs should be explored in a way that considers cultural traditions, practices, and history. For example, the nuances of intrinsic versus extrinsic academic motivation in a collectivist context, the significance of certain

character strengths over more individualistic strengths, or which positive emotions specifically are important for academic success are all avenues for further research. Second, social support seems to be an important construct for academic success. Thus, more in-depth research is needed on the qualities of social support that make them meaningful to learners. apart from the exploratory studies, positive constructs were researched in isolation. Third, given the context of South Africa and the complex needs of learners, it is recommended that the interplay of multiple constructs be investigated within a bioecological or multisystemic framework. Fourth, an expanded methodological scope is recommended to identify positive psychology constructs associated with academic success since there were limited qualitative and mixed-method studies. More exploratory research is needed in South Africa that is sensitive to cultural nuances, followed by research that validates positive psychology measures in the context of South African secondary schools. This will pave the way for more relevant mixed-methods and quantitative studies. Fifth, positive education is a flourishing field in international literature, however, this scoping review revealed that it is very limited in South Africa. It is recommended that future research in South Africa focuses on the area of positive education and the implementation of such research.

5.7 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to empirically evaluate the status of research on positive psychology constructs that have been identified in association with academic success in South African secondary schools. This included synthesising the research on the topic and identifying any research gaps. A total of 15 studies were included in the final analysis. It was found that the relevant studies were distributed across South Africa and were mostly conducted with learners from disadvantaged contexts; when advantaged learners were included in the studies, they were included for comparison purposes. The study aims of the

included studies were aligned in that they investigated factors associated with academic success in secondary school. However, they were diverse in their methodology. Of the 46 possible positive constructs, only 25 were identified in these South African studies. Social support was the most investigated construct, followed by achievement motivation, hope, a love of learning, and self-regulation. The remaining constructs were identified by three or fewer studies each. These were merely the currently investigated positive constructs but were not exhaustive or indicative of the most effective constructs related to academic success. The results highlighted a gap in the literature concerning positive psychology constructs identified in association with academic success in South African secondary schools. Robust and replicable studies are needed to advance knowledge on the positive psychology constructs associated with academic success in South African secondary schools.

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Appendix A

Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) Checklist

SECTION	ITEM	PRISMA-ScR CHECKLIST ITEM	REPORTED ON PAGE #
TITLE			
Title	1	Identify the report as a scoping review.	Cover page
ABSTRACT			
Structured summary	2	Provide a structured summary that includes (as applicable): background, objectives, eligibility criteria, sources of evidence, charting methods, results, and conclusions that relate to the review questions and objectives.	iv
INTRODUCTION			
Rationale	3	Describe the rationale for the review in the context of what is already known. Explain why the review questions/objectives lend themselves to a scoping review approach.	2
Objectives	4	Provide an explicit statement of the questions and objectives being addressed with reference to their key elements (e.g., population or participants, concepts, and context) or other relevant key elements used to conceptualise the review questions and/or objectives.	4
METHODS			
Protocol and registration	5	Indicate whether a review protocol exists; state if and where it can be accessed (e.g., a Web address); and if available, provide registration information, including the registration number.	Research Proposal. Not registered online.
Eligibility criteria	6	Specify characteristics of the sources of evidence used as eligibility criteria (e.g., years considered, language, and publication status), and provide a rationale.	34
Information sources*	7	Describe all information sources in the search (e.g., databases with dates of coverage and contact with authors to identify additional	32

SECTION	ITEM	PRISMA-ScR CHECKLIST ITEM	REPORTED ON PAGE #
		sources), as well as the date the most recent search was executed.	
Search	8	Present the full electronic search strategy for at least 1 database, including any limits used, such that it could be repeated.	33
Selection of sources of evidence†	9	State the process for selecting sources of evidence (i.e., screening and eligibility) included in the scoping review.	36
Data charting process‡	10	Describe the methods of charting data from the included sources of evidence (e.g., calibrated forms or forms that have been tested by the team before their use, and whether data charting was done independently or in duplicate) and any processes for obtaining and confirming data from investigators.	39
Data items	11	List and define all variables for which data were sought and any assumptions and simplifications made.	39
Critical appraisal of individual sources of evidence§	12	If done, provide a rationale for conducting a critical appraisal of included sources of evidence; describe the methods used and how this information was used in any data synthesis (if appropriate).	N/A
Synthesis of results	13	Describe the methods of handling and summarizing the data that were charted.	39
RESULTS			
Selection of sources of evidence	14	Give numbers of sources of evidence screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the review, with reasons for exclusions at each stage, ideally using a flow diagram.	38
Characteristics of sources of evidence	15	For each source of evidence, present characteristics for which data were charted and provide the citations.	39
Critical appraisal within sources of evidence	16	If done, present data on critical appraisal of included sources of evidence (see item 12).	N/A

SECTION	ITEM	PRISMA-ScR CHECKLIST ITEM	REPORTED ON PAGE #
Results of individual sources of evidence	17	For each included source of evidence, present the relevant data that were charted that relate to the review questions and objectives.	44
Synthesis of results	18	Summarize and/or present the charting results as they relate to the review questions and objectives.	53
DISCUSSION			
Summary of evidence	19	Summarize the main results (including an overview of concepts, themes, and types of evidence available), link to the review questions and objectives, and consider the relevance to key groups.	64
Limitations	20	Discuss the limitations of the scoping review process.	77
Conclusions	21	Provide a general interpretation of the results with respect to the review questions and objectives, as well as potential implications and/or next steps.	78
FUNDING			
Funding	22	Describe sources of funding for the included sources of evidence, as well as sources of funding for the scoping review. Describe the role of the funders of the scoping review.	N/A

JBI = Joanna Briggs Institute; PRISMA-ScR = Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews.

* Where *sources of evidence* (see second footnote) are compiled from, such as bibliographic databases, social media platforms, and Web sites.

† A more inclusive/heterogeneous term used to account for the different types of evidence or data sources (e.g., quantitative and/or qualitative research, expert opinion, and policy documents) that may be eligible in a scoping review as opposed to only studies. This is not to be confused with *information sources* (see first footnote).

‡ The frameworks by Arksey and O'Malley (6) and Levac and colleagues (7) and the JBI guidance (4, 5) refer to the process of data extraction in a scoping review as data charting.

§ The process of systematically examining research evidence to assess its validity, results, and relevance before using it to inform a decision. This term is used for items 12 and 19 instead of "risk of bias" (which is more applicable to systematic reviews of interventions) to include and acknowledge the various sources of evidence that may be used in a scoping review (e.g., quantitative and/or qualitative research, expert opinion, and policy document).

From: Tricco AC, Lillie E, Zarin W, O'Brien KK, Colquhoun H, Levac D, et al. PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR): Checklist and Explanation. *Ann Intern Med.* 2018;169:467–473. doi: [10.7326/M18-0850](https://doi.org/10.7326/M18-0850).

Appendix B

PRESS 2015 Guideline Evidence-Based Checklist

Translation of the research question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the search strategy match the research question/PICO? • Are the search concepts clear? • Are there too many or too few PICO elements included? • Are the search concepts too narrow or too broad? • Does the search retrieve too many or too few records? (Please show number of hits per line.) • Are unconventional or complex strategies explained?
Boolean and proximity operators (these vary based on search service)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are Boolean or proximity operators used correctly? • Is the use of nesting with brackets appropriate and effective for the search? • If NOT is used, is this likely to result in any unintended exclusions? • Could precision be improved by using proximity operators (eg, adjacent, near, within) or phrase searching instead of AND?
Subject headings (database specific)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the width of proximity operators suitable (eg, might adj5 pick up more variants than adj2)? • Are the subject headings relevant? • Are any relevant subject headings missing; for example, previous index terms? • Are any subject headings too broad or too narrow? • Are subject headings exploded where necessary and vice versa? • Are major headings ("starring" or restrict to focus) used? If so, is there adequate justification? • Are subheadings missing? • Are subheadings attached to subject headings? (Floating subheadings may be preferred.) • Are floating subheadings relevant and used appropriately? • Are both subject headings and terms in free text (see the following) used for each concept?
Text word searching (free text)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the search include all spelling variants in free text (eg, UK vs. US spelling)? • Does the search include all synonyms or antonyms (eg, opposites)? • Does the search capture relevant truncation (ie, is truncation at the correct place)? • Is the truncation too broad or too narrow? • Are acronyms or abbreviations used appropriately? Do they capture irrelevant material? Are the full terms also included? • Are the keywords specific enough or too broad? Are too many or too few keywords used? Are stop words used? • Have the appropriate fields been searched; for example, is the choice of the text word fields (.tw.) or all fields (.af.) appropriate? Are there any other fields to be included or excluded (database specific)?
Spelling, syntax, and line numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should any long strings be broken into several shorter search statements? • Are there any spelling errors? • Are there any errors in system syntax; for example, the use of a truncation symbol from a different search interface? • Are there incorrect line combinations or orphan lines (ie, lines that are not referred to in the final summation that could indicate an error in an AND or OR statement)?
Limits and filters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are all limits and filters used appropriately and are they relevant given the research question? • Are all limits and filters used appropriately and are they relevant for the database? • Are any potentially helpful limits or filters missing? Are the limits or filters too broad or too narrow? Can any limits or filters be added or taken away? • Are sources cited for the filters used?

Appendix C

Integrated List of Positive Psychology Constructs

List of Constructs

1. Achievement Motivation/ Self-determination
2. Actualisation
3. Adaptability
4. Altruism/Prosocial Behaviour
5. Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence
6. Autonomy
7. Bravery/Valour
8. Belonging
9. Character strengths
10. Citizenship
11. Compassion
12. Creativity/Originality
13. Curiosity/Interest
14. Empathy
15. Empowerment
16. Engagement
17. Fairness
18. Flow/Mindfulness
19. Forgiveness
20. Gratitude
21. Grit/Perseverance
22. Honesty/Authenticity/Integrity
23. Hope/Optimism
24. Humility/Modesty
25. Humour/Playfulness
26. Judgement/Open-mindedness
27. Kindness
28. Leadership
29. Love
30. Love of Learning
31. Meaning and Purpose

32. Perspective/Wisdom
 33. Positive Emotions
 34. Positive Relationships
 35. Prudence
 36. Quality of Life/Life Satisfaction
 37. Resilience
 38. Self-determination
 39. Self-regulation
 40. Self-efficacy
 41. Social Intelligence
 42. Social Support
 43. Spirituality/Religiousness
 44. Teamwork
 45. Well-being
 46. Zest
-

Appendix D

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Study Selection

Inclusion criteria	Justification
<p>Population: Individuals and groups that are secondary school learners, or staff members working directly with secondary school learners, or parents of secondary school learners. Both males and females.</p>	<p>The research question is interested in positive psychology constructs that increase academic success in school and therefore, requires literature on school attending learners. Data from both males and females is necessary for the collection of exhaustive data.</p>
<p>Setting: South African secondary school.</p>	<p>The research purpose and question necessitate the setting to be in South Africa. School is the foundation of academic success and progression. The current research will limit the search parameters to only include secondary schools since secondary school could potentially lead to higher education but only 16% of South African learners qualify for this, indicating that a large amount of secondary school learners could benefit from research pertaining to increased academic performance (UIS, 2019). In line with the Sustainable Development Goals and Education 2030 agenda, there is a need for information regarding academic success specifically in secondary school.</p>
<p>Outcomes: Positive constructs associated with academic success.</p>	<p>This outcome will answer the research question best. Academic success could be defined as a passing grade for previously failing learners, or as the acquisition of a school diploma, or as academic performance that enables the pursuit of higher education.</p>
<p>Research design: Any</p>	<p>Scoping reviews are wide and often not limited by a research design, so that research can be extensively mapped (Peters et al., 2021).</p>

Language: English.	English is the current researcher's home language, and the majority of accredited journals use English as a <i>Lingua Franca</i> (Bennett, 2014).
Time frame: Published within last 15 years.	To ensure that only the most recent and relevant literature is reviewed.
Publication type: Accredited peer-reviewed journal publications that are full-text, and unpublished dissertations or theses.	It allows for a systematic and wide literature search.

Exclusion criteria	Justification
Setting: Home-schools and Technikons.	Home-schools and Technikons have different, modes of learning and teaching, and methods of assessment. The current research is concerned with PPIs that increase academic success in conventional school settings.
Language: Non-English.	Although the researcher is keenly aware of language biases, the choice to include only English publications in the review is one of pragmatics. Since the researcher is only proficient in English, the meaning, implicature, symbolism, and deixis of non-English literature may be misinterpreted. This is due to a lack of non-English semantic, syntactic, and cultural knowledge on the part of the researcher.
Time frame: Literature published more than 15 years ago.	To ensure that only the most recent and relevant literature is reviewed.
Publication type: Abstract-only texts, conference papers, and book chapters.	Abstract-only texts and conference papers were excluded since they are less transparent and limit research replicability. Abstract-only texts such as recently reported conference studies may yield the most up-to-date literature, however it could be a limitation since early results do not always correlate with final results. Book chapters

were excluded due to limited access to book chapters and time constraints prevented loaning requests.

Appendix E



Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotheo



8 October 2020

Dear Mrs L Naidoo

Project Title: Positive Psychology and Academic Success in Secondary School: A Systematic Review
Researcher: Mrs L Naidoo
Supervisor(s): Prof C Guse
Department: Psychology
Reference number: 18342389 (HUM050/0620)
Degree: Masters

Thank you for the application that was submitted for ethical consideration.


The Research Ethics Committee notes that this is a literature-based study and no human subjects are involved.

The application has been **approved** on 1 October 2020 with the assumption that the document(s) are in the public domain. Data collection may therefore commence, along these guidelines.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. However, should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, a new research proposal and application for ethical clearance will have to be submitted for approval.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely,



Prof Innocent Pikirayi
Deputy Dean: Postgraduate Studies and Research Ethics
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: PGHumanities@up.ac.za

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotheo

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof I Pikirayi (Deputy Dean); Prof KL Harris; Mr A. Blzcs; Dr A-M de Beer; Dr A dos Santos; Ms KT Govinder; Andrew; Dr P. Qutara; Dr E Johnson; Prof D Maree; Mr A Mohamed; Dr I Noomé; Dr C Ruttergill; Prof D Rzyburn; Prof M Soar; Prof E Tallard; Prof V Thebe; Ms B Tsabe; Ms D Mokslepa

Appendix F

The VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues



VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues

Virtue of Wisdom



Creativity
Original, adaptive, ingenuity, seeing and doing things in different ways



Curiosity
Interest, novelty-seeking, exploration, openness to experience



Judgment
Critical thinking, thinking through all sides, not jumping to conclusions



Love of Learning
Mastering new skills & topics, systematically adding to knowledge



Perspective
Wisdom, providing wise counsel, taking the big picture view

Virtue of Courage



Bravery
Valor, not shrinking from threat or challenge, facing fears, speaking up for what's right



Perseverance
Persistence, industry, finishing what one starts, overcoming obstacles



Honesty
Authenticity, being true to oneself, sincerity without pretense, integrity



Zest
Vitality, enthusiasm for life, vigor, energy, not doing things half-heartedly

Virtue of Humanity



Love
Both loving and being loved, valuing close relations with others, genuine warmth



Kindness
Generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruism, doing for others



Social Intelligence
Aware of the motives and feelings of oneself and others, knows what makes others tick



Teamwork
Citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty, contributing to a group effort



Fairness
Adhering to principles of justice, not allowing feelings to bias decisions about others



Leadership
Organizing group activities to get things done, positively influencing others

Virtue of Temperance



Forgiveness
Mercy, accepting others' shortcomings, giving people a second chance, letting go of hurt



Humility
Modesty, letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves



Prudence
Careful about one's choices, cautious, not taking undue risks



Self-Regulation
Self-control, disciplined, managing impulses, emotions, and vices

Virtue of Transcendence



Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence
Awe and wonder for beauty, admiration for skill and moral greatness



Gratitude
Thankful for the good, expressing thanks, feeling blessed



Hope
Optimism, positive future-mindedness, expecting the best & working to achieve it



Humor
Playfulness, bringing smiles to others, lighthearted – seeing the lighter side



Spirituality
Connecting with the sacred, purpose, meaning, faith, religiousness