Manifestations of Well-Being in Undergraduate Students of Law

by

Noloyiso Zimbini Dimaza

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS

(Educational Psychology)

in the

Department of Educational Psychology

Faculty of Education

University of Pretoria

Supervisor:

Professor Irma Eloff

PRETORIA

March 2024

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

Name of student: Noloyiso Dimaza

Student number: 19149761

I hereby submit the mini dissertation titled: Manifestations of Wellbeing in Undergraduate Students of Law, for the degree of in MEd (Educational Psychology) at the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Education in the Department of Educational Psychology. I declare that this mini dissertation is my own work and has not been submitted previously for a degree at this university or any other higher learning institution. All cited sources in this thesis are indicated and acknowledged accordingly with a list of references. I adhered to all rules and regulations as stipulated in the University of Pretoria's examination policy.

Noloyiso Zimbini Dimaza

March 2024

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Ethics Committee

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	CLEARANCE NUMBER: **EDU068/22**
DEGREE AND PROJECT	MEd Manifestations of wellbeing in undergraduate students of law.
INVESTIGATOR	Ms Noloyiso Dimaza
DEPARTMENT	Educational Psychology
APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY	01 September 2022
DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	13 March 2024
CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE:	Prof Funke Omidire

Mr Simon Jiane
Prof Irma Eloff

This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:

- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

Name of student: **Noloyiso Zimbini Dimaza**

Student number: **19149761**

1. I understand what plagiarism is and I am aware of the University's policy in this regard.
2. I declare that this is my original work. Where other people's work has been used (either from a printed source, the internet, or any other source), this has been properly acknowledged and referenced according to departmental requirements.
3. I have not used work previously produced by another student or any other person to hand in as my own.
4. I have not allowed or will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his/her own work.

Noloyiso Zimbini Dimaza

LANGUAGE EDITOR'S CERTIFICATE

Exclamation Translations

To whom it may concern

The dissertation entitled, "Manifestations of Well-Being in Undergraduate Students of Law" has been edited and proofread as of 01 April 2024.

As a language practitioner, I have a basic degree in languages, an honours degree in French, and a master's degree in assessment and quality assurance. I have been editing, proofreading, carrying out reference control, and technically formatting documents for the past 13 years.

Please take note that Exclamation Translations takes no responsibility for any content changes made by the student to the document after the issuing of this certificate. Furthermore, Exclamation Translations takes no responsibility for the reversal or rejection of the changes made to this document.

Kind regards

Melissa Labuschagne

Melissa Labuschagne trading as Exclamation Translations
info@exclamationtranslations.co.za

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my late brothers, Sabelo Mazaka and Akhona Dimaza. Without a shadow of a doubt, I know you would have been so proud of me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the following individuals who have been instrumental in the completion of this dissertation:

- First and foremost, I extend my sincerest appreciation to God for granting me strength, wisdom, and perseverance throughout this academic journey.
- To myself, for the dedication, determination, and resilience in pursuing this endeavour, I am extremely proud of this milestone!
- I am immensely grateful to my supervisor, Professor Irma Eloff, for her exceptional guidance, mentorship, and invaluable feedback throughout the development of this dissertation. Her expertise and encouragement have been invaluable in shaping this work. I am truly blessed to have you as my supervisor.
- My appreciation goes to Doctor Gerna Wessels, who conducted the focus group with undergraduate students of Law.
- To my beloved parents, Mr and Mrs Dimaza, your unwavering love, support, and encouragement have been the cornerstone of my success. I am forever indebted to you for believing in me and inspiring me to strive for excellence.
- To my dear siblings, your constant encouragement, understanding, and support have been a source of motivation and joy throughout this process.
- To my circle of friends who checked up on me, offered words of encouragement, and provided unwavering support, thank you for being there during the highs and lows of this journey. Your friendship means the world to me.
- I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my referees and mentors for their time, expertise, and constructive criticism, I would not have made it this far it was not for them. I appreciate you.
- To everyone who has contributed to this dissertation in ways seen and unseen, your support has been invaluable, and I am deeply appreciative.

Thank you all for being part of this significant milestone in my academic journey.

ABSTRACT

Students' well-being in Higher Education (HE) is foundational to their academic success. However, recent studies show a notable and concerning decline in mental health and well-being among university students in different scientific disciplines. This study specifically focused on undergraduate law students at a university in the Gauteng province, South Africa. It aimed to explore what well-being means to them, and how university factors contribute to their subjective well-being experience.

The research was anchored in the constructivist paradigm, and theoretically grounded in the PACES model of student well-being. Utilising a qualitative research approach, the study employed secondary data analysis from an existing student wellbeing study. The existing study used purposive sampling for an online survey with participants (n=167), and snowball sampling to recruit participants (n=4) for a focus group discussion. The two data sets were analysed simultaneously, following Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis guidelines. Throughout the research process, ethical standards were strictly adhered to.

The findings of this study revealed that undergraduate law students' well-being comprised a combination of a variety of features influenced by many factors and experiences. Social support, a supportive academic environment, academic engagement, and a balanced lifestyle were identified as key contributors to student well-being by the participants. However, hindrances to well-being among undergraduate law students included academic pressures, unhealthy coping mechanisms such as substance abuse, and personal challenges like anxiety and stress.

Key words: law, law students, undergraduate student, well-being

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BA Law: Bachelor of Arts Law

BCom Law: Bachelor of Commerce Law

HE: Higher Education

HEI: Higher Education Institution

LLB Law: Bachelor of Laws

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development

PACES Model: (P) physical, (A) affective, (C) cognitive, (E)economic, and (S) social domains

PERMA Theory: (P)ositive emotion, (E)ngagement, (R)elationships, (M)eaning, and (A)ccomplishment

SADC: Southern Africa Development Community Countries

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

There has been growing concern over the well-being of university students in various scientific disciplines (Graham & Eloff, 2022; Hernández-Torrano et al., 2020; Skead & Rogers, 2014; Skead et al., 2020). In particular, there are concerns about the well-being of law students in relation to a high prevalence of depression (O'Brien et al., 2011) and work-related anxiety (James, 2011), which primarily impacts their quality of life (January et al., 2018). In addition, students' well-being and mental health have a significant influence on the academic performance of both students and the university community as a whole (Andrews & Chong, 2011).

Moreover, Higher Education (HE) students' well-being is foundational to their academic success. For some students, stress can negatively affect their physical, emotional, and psychological health. The National Tertiary Student Wellbeing Survey, which is conducted in Australia, argues that various factors affect law students. These factors include leaving home, academic stress and financial burden, pressures associated with an increased workload, and the establishment of new social networks (Rickwood et al., 2016; Said et al., 2013).

According to Rickwood et al. (2016), past research has shown that academic performance and engagement decline when students are stressed (Salzer, 2012); and substance abuse and other problematic health behaviours increase (Hamaideh, 2009). This increases the risk of anxiety, depression, and burnout (Dahlin et al., 2005; Fawzy & Hamed, 2017). All of these can have a significant impact on the mental health, wellness, and engagement of students.

In this study, I aimed to analyse secondary data concerning undergraduate law students at a large university in Gauteng to understand what well-being means to them, and how certain factors within the university context contribute to their subjective well-being experience. There are existing broader studies (O'Brien et al., 2011) done internationally in this field, however, there is a paucity of studies focusing on this topic within the context of African law students.

A study conducted in the United States indicates that students begin to show depressive symptoms within a few months of law school enrolment (O'Brien et al., 2011). In addition, Krieger (2005) states that when law students graduate and enter the workforce, they are notably different people from what they were when they began law school. "They are more depressed,

less service-oriented, and more inclined towards undesirable, superficial goals and values." One student even suggested that law school "breaks some people in certain ways, and they never recover" (Krieger, 2005, p. 434).

A South African study aimed at measuring the mental health and well-being of South African undergraduate students revealed a notable decline in students' mental health and well-being. These students were found to have reduced mental health and lower emotional, psychological, and social well-being over that academic year (Eloff & Graham, 2020). To understand this decline in mental health and well-being, it is important to investigate how well-being presents for undergraduate students, and to understand it within the range of scientific disciplines. Therefore, this study sought to understand the well-being of undergraduate law students specifically.

The question may be posed, 'Why is there a need to focus on the well-being of law students?' Research focusing on law students has consistently proven that they tend to exhibit disproportionate amounts of stress and anxiety, as well as mental health concerns in comparison to students in other disciplines, and to the general population (DeDonno et al., 2022). In addition, stress and its debilitating effects, including anxiety, depression, paranoia, and hostility, often begin in the first year of law school, last through law school, and may persist throughout their careers (Larcombe, 2013). The growing number of reports of psychological distress and poor well-being among law students make it crucial that law schools recognise and modify the curriculum and institutional aspects that trigger or exacerbate such distress among their students. It is further necessary for empirical research to be conducted to understand this phenomenon.

Moreover, a number of early deaths have been reported related to substance abuse and mental health among law students (Organ et al., 2016). These deaths underscore the need to learn more about the substance abuse, and mental health and wellness challenges faced by undergraduate law students. This will allow Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to better understand the nature of these challenges and devise strategies to encourage students to seek help to prevent more of these tragic situations from happening in future (Reuben & Sheldon, 2019).

Therefore, faculties of law need to acknowledge and take steps to address the well-being of undergraduate law students. In and of itself, the focus on the well-being of law students could potentially facilitate the necessary support, while also improving intrinsic motivation; reducing disciplinary issues; enhancing academic performance; increasing school satisfaction; and

potentially leading to individuals flourishing during their years in law school, and subsequently in their careers (Buecker et al., 2018).

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Law students' educational experiences are complex and continually changing. There have been concerning claims by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine that "far too many students at all levels of their education and in all fields of study are not achieving a level of well-being that will enable them to thrive in an academic setting and reach their full potential" (Leshner & Scherer, 2021, p. 5).

1.2.1 A need for dialogue between law students and management (curriculum restructuring)

O'Brien et al. (2011) have revealed that in terms of classroom climate, law schools should be more transparent about expectations. Moreover, discussions should be more open and free-flowing, while there should be less emphasis on stating the right thing. The authors further opine that the ideal law class would provide a safe space where the atmosphere allows for students to make mistakes.

Furthermore, they advocate for law lectures that endorse open and informative discussions, and provide an open environment where students feel comfortable enough to discuss and engage with the content. Subsequently, this would improve the relationship between lecturers and students. This would also create the potential for social bonding, resulting in a sense of belonging, and would allow students to initiate and engage in discussions. Finally, law courses should be more transparent about their expectations, and give learners more informed and more explicit guidance, as well as positive feedback (O'Brien et al., 2011).

1.2.2 How well-being presents in law students

Students' well-being depends on psychological, cognitive, social, and physical factors. This can present in either a negative or a positive way. On the one hand, a positive manifestation of well-being is evident when a person or student does well in certain aspects of their life, thus enhancing their well-being and giving them more appreciation for, and enjoyment of life. A person who likes to exercise, for example, has a sense of belonging, and can establish and maintain good relationships with others, and is more likely to lead a happy and satisfying life filled with a sense of purpose and control.

On the other hand, the negative ways in which well-being can present include leaving home, academic stress and financial burden, pressures concerning increased workload, and establishing new relations (Said et al., 2013; Rickwood et al., 2016). Therefore, it is essential to note that a good and balanced lifestyle positively contributes to a person, or a student's well-being, which applies equally to those studying law.

1.2.3 Students enter law school full of determination but leave feeling inadequate

Evidence suggests that undergraduate law students are usually full of life, hope, and determination when they enter law school (Peterson, 2016). This is further supported by Larcombe and Fethers (2013), who state that law students entering law school enjoy a sense of well-being equal to, or more than other university students. Nonetheless, this rapidly changes during the first six months of their studies: they experience anxiety, stress, and depression more than their peers who are enrolled for other degrees.

Krieger (2005) points out that after law students successfully finish their degrees and enter the workforce, they notably become different people from who they were when they first started their degree. "They are more depressed, less service-oriented, and more inclined towards undesirable, superficial goals and values." (p. 425). Based on this, it may be necessary for law faculties to continue to improve their existing programmes in ways that will cater to law students' needs, which could allow for positive personal growth and transformation (O'Brien et al., 2011).

1.2.4 Undergraduate law students' reluctance to seek help

Brown et al. (2021) define help-seeking as the act of requesting assistance or support when going through a difficult situation. In academia, this refers to students seeking help to understand concepts, academic resources, and procedures (Won et al., 2021). Generally, students who seek academic help are more likely to successfully resolve academic problems and increase their knowledge than students who do not (Martín-Arbós, 2021). Therefore, help-seeking in an educational context can be an adaptive learning strategy that increases understanding, leading to improved academic performance and student well-being.

Therefore, seeking help in academics and other areas is an important part of undergraduate law student life. However, Organ et al. (2016) suggest that there is a growing reluctance among law students to seek help for problems relating to academics, alcohol, drugs, and mental illness because many believe that seeking help will adversely affect their bar admission. Furthermore,

it is partly due to this perception that undergraduate law students are unwilling to seek help or inform the appropriate authorities when another student is unable to fulfil his or her responsibilities due to academic challenges, alcohol/drug problems, or mental health conditions. It has been documented that male students are less likely to seek academic, alcohol, drug or mental health assistance than female students, however, it has not been examined how gender-typical attitudes affect this tendency (Brown et al., 2021).

1.2.5 Student agency in well-being

It is, however, not solely the duty of the university, law faculty, and lecturers to protect the well-being of their law students. Students share responsibility for their well-being as well. Each student has the responsibility to try to protect their mental, physical, and spiritual well-being by taking care of themselves. However, a strong support structure is necessary to assist in taking care of themselves.

Previous research conducted by Larcombe and Fethers (2013) in Australia suggests that it is vital that law students wholeheartedly participate in behaviours that will promote their own academic success, and support their mental and physical well-being also. When addressing the issue of mental well-being, emphasis must be placed on what the school of law should do for students. Nonetheless, law students should take the initiative themselves and put in the work to reduce the depression, stress, and anxiety that could develop from studying law (Larcombe & Fethers, 2013).

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY, AND THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aimed to investigate, explore, and describe how well-being is experienced by undergraduate law students using secondary data from a large, urban university in Gauteng Province, South Africa.

I aimed to analyse two existing datasets on the well-being of undergraduate law students. To do so, I analysed an online survey (n=168) and an in-depth focus group interview (n=4) with undergraduate law students regarding the factors that contribute to their well-being.

This study forms part of a longitudinal study on undergraduate student well-being at the same university. However, this study will specifically focus on the well-being of law students.

The primary and secondary research questions for the current study are formulated accordingly.

The primary research question of this study is:

How does well-being present in undergraduate law students?

In order to effectively explore and scrutinise how well-being presents in undergraduate law students, the following secondary questions were posed:

Secondary research questions:

1. Which factors support the well-being of undergraduate law students?
2. How is the well-being of law students supported within the university?
3. How do undergraduate law students contribute to, and support their own well-being?
4. What challenges or threatens the well-being of undergraduate law students?

1.4 WORKING ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions were utilised going into this study:

1. Law studies may potentially have a positive impact on the well-being of law students.
2. Law studies may potentially suppress the well-being of law students.
3. There are structures to support the well-being of undergraduate law students, and they are utilised optimally.
4. There are inadequate structures to support the well-being of undergraduate law students, and they are not being utilised optimally.
5. Wellbeing presents in different ways to individuals according to their uniqueness and personal experiences.
6. Wellbeing presents in similar ways to different people regardless of their uniqueness and personal experiences.

1.5 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

The concept of **well-being**, according to Huppert (2009) and Ruggeri et al. (2020), is the combination of feeling good and functioning well. It comprises experiencing positive emotions such as happiness and contentment, as well as developing one's potential, having some control over one's life, having a sense of purpose, and experiencing positive relationships.

Subjective well-being is seen as an important factor of well-being. Traditionally, well-being has been explained from two perspectives: hedonic and eudaimonic (Salavera et al., 2020). The hedonic perspective describes or is linked with pleasure. Therefore, it is connected to personal experience related to pleasure, no matter how it is derived. This approach emphasises the importance of participating in activities that make people happy, with fewer feelings of negativity, and increased contentment with life in general (Diener, 1984; Salavera et al., 2020), therefore meeting an individual's desires.

Meanwhile, the eudaimonic approach describes the factors that help people to reach their full potential and grow personally (Salavera et al., 2020). This approach looks at subjective well-being as a constant positive state of mind resulting from addressing different development and life challenges, and reflection on their own lives and meaning (Salavera et al., 2020).

In this regard, Seligman (2012) introduced the PERMA Theory of Well-being, which consists of five elements of well-being that could be considered a "gold standard for measuring well-being" (p. 60). The first of these is (P)ositive emotion, which has to do with the experiencing of positive emotions such as love, peace, gratitude, satisfaction, inspiration, hope, or curiosity in our daily lives. While (E)ngagement is the ability to have interests in personal or professional pursuits that can deeply engage the frequent flow occurrence, thus facilitating growth opportunities. The concept of positive (R)elationships suggests that by having relationships with others, we cultivate friendships, connections, bonds, and camaraderie. Third, (M)eaning suggests the idea of striving to achieve or believing in something greater than ourselves, which provides a valuable way of finding meaning in life. Finally, (A)accomplishments imply the experience of accomplishment. Striving to improve oneself contributes to an individual's sense of achievement (Matthewman et al., 2018). Mental well-being is thus a multidimensional construct that encompasses more than just feeling good or being in a good mood (Seligman, 2012). It is noteworthy that the PERMA model is outlined because it is a well-known model regarding wellbeing. However, it was not used as the basis of this study.

In addition to 'wellbeing', some other concepts also need clarification. In this study, the concept of 'present' will refer to showing, displaying, or revealing an attitude, belief or behaviour.

In this study, an '**undergraduate student**' is defined as a student who is enrolled for their first degree at the university that formed part of this study. For the purposes of this study, I focused on second-, third-, and fourth-year law students. In this secondary data project, an

'**undergraduate student**' describes individuals enrolled for the first degree at the university. The study specifically focused on data collected from second-, third-, and fourth-year law students.

In general, the term '**Law**' refers to court-enforced legal rules that rule the state's government, the relationship between its various organs, and the conduct of its subjects toward each other (Hart et al., 2012). In this study, 'Law' will refer to the scientific study of this field by undergraduate students in the South African context. The institution where this study was conducted includes the study of Private Law, Public Law, Mercantile Law, Procedural Law, Jurisprudence, and Human Rights Law.

1.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study was anchored in the PACES Model of Student Wellbeing. According to Nelson et al. (2015), this model is composed of five distinct and interactive domains, namely: Physical (P), Affective (A), Cognitive (C), Economic (E), and Social (S) domains.

Physical domain: according to Nelson et al. (2015), this domain refers to wellness, nutrition, life expectancy, health risk factors, and access to health care. It deals with health-related concerns that directly affect how students engage in their university experiences.

Affective domain: this domain explains a student's emotional sense of self and is highly subjective. Moreover, students' affects or feelings are reflected in this domain, such as self-esteem, intimacy, affective perceptions, moods, self-efficacy, self-confidence, empowerment, shame, guilt, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues associated with affect (Nelson et al., 2015).

Cognitive domain: according to Nelson et al. (2015), cognition is often referred to as intelligence. This domain relates to the ability of students to process information effectively and utilise that information logically for growth and problem-solving. In addition, it includes traits such as beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, creativity, spontaneity, and openness to viewing situations differently.

Economic domain: in this domain, financial factors play an important role in the availability of resources, which can influence a student's academic success, food security, social adjustment, home security, and the affordability of tertiary education (Nelson et al., 2015).

Social domain: this comprises interpersonal skills, family relationships and interactions, community involvement, social networks and support, and interactions at university. Also, social behaviour such as lifestyle, risk-taking, and trying to achieve significance among student groups is included (Nelson et al., 2015).

The reason for choosing this specific model is that it was designed to help counsellors enhance students' academic, social, and career development (Nelson et al., 2015). The five domains, as relevant to the South African context, assisted me in exploring and explaining how well-being presents in undergraduate law students. Each domain was looked at independently at first, whereafter an integrated approach was utilised. In addition, this model is conceptually fairly understandable and accessible across various scientific disciplines.

1.7 EPISTEMOLOGY OF STUDY

This study made use of the constructivism paradigm. John Dewey is often referred to as the philosophical founder of constructivism thanks to his contribution to the development thereof (Jia, 2010). According to Conway et al. (2012), Dewey believed that individuals' experiences and interactions with the world create an opportunity for them to learn and grow. This compels people to constantly explore new ideas, concepts, practices, and understandings (Conway et al., 2012).

According to Chowdhury (2014), constructivism holds that people's behaviour and actions are influenced by their perception of the world and their experiences in it. Furthermore, Chowdhury (2014) states that constructivists believe that humans construct their realities through interaction with their surroundings, leading to multiple realities instead of accepting a single, universal reality, which is one of the tenets of positivism.

Constructivism was deemed relevant to this study as I focused on the knowledge constructed by undergraduate law students regarding how they experience well-being in their lives. Moreover, each participant's perceptions were seen as important and valid, enabling them to narrate their realities on their terms (Mahlo, 2011). This helped me to gain some insight into each individual's world, carrying out the aims and objectives of the research at hand.

It has been said that the constructivist paradigm works best when the research takes an interest in human activity (Pookaiyaudom, 2012). Hence, constructivism was an appropriate paradigm to explain how well-being presents in undergraduate law students. In addition, a constructivist approach is relevant to individual personal constructions and to exploring and understanding

the private thoughts and feelings of undergraduate law students, thereby capturing the uniqueness of their experience.

1.8 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This study adopted a qualitative methodological approach and inductive thematic data analysis (see theoretical framework). Creswell (2014b) depicts qualitative research as a method of understanding built on various methodological traditions of inquiry that examine a human or social issue in depth. Creswell (2014b) further explains that the researcher builds a "complex, holistic picture, analyses words report detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting" (p. 15).

This method was deemed to be an appropriate strategy to discover how well-being presents in undergraduate law students. This was mainly because I sought to gather in-depth insights, and to understand law students' experiences of well-being. I wanted to learn directly from the views and perceptions of the participants, and find out what was important to them. Therefore, this study sought to shed some light on the views and opinions of the participants regarding their subjective well-being. Furthermore, this method allowed me to mine information through the broad general questions posed to the participants (Creswell, 2014a).

1.8.1 Research design

This research was a secondary data analysis study. As such, I conducted a secondary data analysis on a section of data from a longitudinal study on student well-being (Eloff et al., 2021; Eloff & Graham, 2020; Eloff et al., 2022). Clarke and Cossette (2000) and Pienta et al. (2011) define secondary data analysis as an analysis of data that have already been collected by someone else for a different primary purpose. In this study, the data were collected for the same primary purpose (student well-being), however, the well-being of law students, in particular, was the focus of the current study. Furthermore, Pienta et al. (2011) state that typically, secondary data is safeguarded and disseminated by an entity whose stated mission is to keep the data for as long as possible.

The reason for choosing a secondary data analysis was that it was an effective tool in reaching a larger scale of participants, while it also allowed me as the researcher to ask broad questions to answer the research questions. Furthermore, secondary data analysis was cost-effective, which helped me to access resources (Dale et al., 1988; Johnston, 2014; Smith, 2008). Moreover, a secondary data analysis provided a clear view and understanding of how well-

being presents in undergraduate law students as I approached the dataset with a fresh perspective. According to Pérez-Sindín and Allen (2017), revisiting an existing dataset may reveal new insights to the researcher while allowing more time for analysis within a relatively short period of time.

1.8.2 Selection of participants

I worked from an existing secondary dataset, which meant that the sampling had already been done for this research. Snowball sampling was done in the existing student wellbeing study to recruit the participants for the focus group. According to Naderifar et al. (2017), snowball sampling is a method applied when it is difficult to access participants with the desired profile; therefore, existing participants recruit future participants from among their acquaintances.

Purposive sampling was also used in the existing student wellbeing study for the online survey. In this sampling, the previous researcher selected the participants using their judgment, while considering that study's main purpose (Showkat & Parveen, 2017).

An online survey is defined as a data-collection instrument where a set of survey questions is sent out to a target sample, and the members of this sample can respond to the questions over the internet (Creswell, 2014a). An online survey seeking to discover how well-being presents in undergraduate law students was sent out by the Department of Institutional Planning of the University in September 2020. It targeted all undergraduate students who were registered with the University at the time of that study. Following that, a link was sent via email to the students. One reminder email was also sent out to them. The previous researcher had no idea who would respond to the email. After getting responses from the students, the previous researcher extracted a sample of all of the law students doing LLB, BCom Law, and BA Law for that research. A total of 167 participants (undergraduate law students) responded to the online survey.

A social science researcher from a university in Gauteng conducted the research for the focus group. Focus groups are defined as a tool where participants engage in interviews or discussions simultaneously (Creswell, 2014a). A non-probability snowball sampling was used to recruit participants. The focus group facilitator invited students to participate in the study, providing a short description of the study. The participants (n=4) recruited were undergraduate law students from a university in Gauteng. Focus group participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality and consented to participate in the study.

1.8.3 Data collection and documentation

Two instruments were used to collect the data: the online survey conducted in 2020, and the focus group done in 2019. First, the participants answered an online survey, and their answers were then transferred to a Word document by the previous researcher. The second instrument is the focus group, where the participants' answers were audio-recorded and transcribed, and then transferred to an Excel spreadsheet. I will discuss this in detail below.

1.8.4 Online survey

The online survey was developed through consultation with a team of well-being researchers, faculty leadership, and student support services at the institution. It consisted of one primary question, 'What contributes to your well-being as a student at the university?' and also collected biographical data on citizenship, province, gender, age, race, language, degree programme, and home language. The Department of Institutional Planning sent an email to all registered undergraduate students across various disciplines linked to the email's online survey. Students from all faculties were involved. However, I only analysed the data collected from undergraduate law students for the current study.

As stated in the survey, the question that the students had to respond to was 'What contributes to your well-being as a student at the university?', which they responded to by clicking on the link that was sent via their university-allocated student email addresses. After completing the survey, they submitted it by clicking on the submit option online. The data, which were captured in Microsoft Excel, will remain confidential and anonymous. The different dates when the participants responded to the online survey and timestamps were recorded for accuracy. A password protects the spreadsheet for safekeeping, and ensures the privacy of the information.

Using data from an online survey was appropriate for this study because it allowed me to access the typed responses (raw data) to address the primary research question of the current study. This data collection strategy also reduces the amount of translation needed in studies in this field (Creswell, 2014b).

1.8.5 Focus groups

I utilised the data collected in 2019 from four undergraduate law students who participated in the focus group. In this group, the participants interacted with the interviewer, who asked prepared questions regarding the well-being of the students. Next, there was an open discussion where the students answered structured questions, giving their own opinions and experiences.

This discussion was audio-recorded, which was transcribed verbatim. Finally, Microsoft Word was used to record the conversation between the interviewer and the participants using a table format. A password also protects this data to ensure that no one other than the researchers can access the data.

The focus group informs the secondary questions of this study, where participants who were undergraduate law students at the time of the original study shared their opinions and experiences of well-being. This data provided me with some valuable insights into their worlds. This method gave both the focus group facilitator and the participants an opportunity for a free and open conversation, while allowing the facilitator to ask for clarity and engagement on what was discussed (Creswell, 2014b).

1.8.6 Data analysis and interpretation

An inductive thematic analysis was performed to understand the data and responses from the participants better. The main purpose of an inductive thematic approach is to allow the research findings to emanate from the dominant, frequent, and significant themes existing in raw data without the restrictions imposed by structured methodologies (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The PACES model informed the inductive thematic analyses of the well-being conceptual framework that was selected for this study (Nelson et al., 2015).

An inductive thematic data analysis was chosen because its main focus is on the content of the data. This involves organising and coding the data to identify key themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Consequently, I will link the objectives and the summary findings based on the raw data later in this dissertation (Mihas, 2019). An inductive thematic analysis was appropriate for this research as it supports efforts to discover the research participant's experiences, views, values, opinions, and knowledge from a set of qualitative data (Guest et al., 2012).

I followed the six-phase process proposed by Braun and Clarke (2013), which can facilitate the analysis and help the researcher identify and attend to the important aspects of thematic analysis. The PACES model of well-being guided this research as the chosen conceptual framework to identify themes, and analyse and integrate data using the six-phase process, which was as follows: 1. Familiarisation with the data – I planned to read and re-read the whole dataset to become closely familiar with the data. 2. Generating initial codes - I then introduced coding to the relevant features of the dataset in a structured order across the entire data set. 3. Generating themes – thereafter, I sorted the codes into potential themes, gathering relevant data. 4. Reviewing potential themes – I then checked if the themes worked concerning the

coded extracts and the whole dataset, creating a thematic 'map' of the analysis. 5. Defining and naming themes - I generated clear definitions and names for the themes, and refined the specifics of each theme through ongoing analysis. 6. Producing the report - finally, I conducted a final analysis of the selected extracts and produced a report (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The existing longitudinal study had already obtained ethical clearance from the University (HUM0180232HS). Confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were indicated within this ethical clearance. All of the participants signed an informed consent form. In the focus group, the participants also agreed verbally to keep everything discussed confidential. This was done to protect the participants from harm while still encouraging honesty. Avoiding jargon or ambiguity was crucial to help the participants understand questions correctly when answering the questions posed in the online survey and the focus group. In terms of any sensitive, controversial, contentious, or embarrassing content that the participants might have found to be upsetting, the participants were provided with an option to discontinue and were then directed to Student Counselling for potential counselling (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2013). No students discontinued participation during the focus group. In the online survey, only completed responses were included. To protect the transcribed data of the participants, both in the focus group and the online survey, the collected data were also locked or protected with passwords, with only the researchers in the team having access to the data. For the current study, additional ethical approval was sought and obtained for the secondary data analysis, with a specific focus on the well-being of undergraduate law students (EDU068/22).

1.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, a concise introduction and rationale for the study were provided. Furthermore, a brief overview of the literature was provided. Also, the research questions were outlined, and the working assumptions with which the study was approached were specified. Moreover, clarification of important concepts was provided. An outline of the chosen conceptual framework, epistemology of the study, methodological approaches, research design and methods were presented. Lastly, the ethical considerations that guided the study were briefly outlined. The next chapter will provide a detailed overview of the literature reviewed within the field of the current study.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

There have been concerning claims from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine that "far too many students at all levels of their education and in all fields of study are not achieving a level of well-being that will enable them to thrive in an academic setting and reach their full potential" (Leshner & Scherer, 2021, p. 5). Eloff and Graham (2020) suggest a significant decline in the mental health and well-being indicators of undergraduate university students between the start and the end of their academic year. They explain that this is a matter of great concern, which needs "wider recognition of the agency to attend to the mental health and well-being" (p. 9) of undergraduate students.

According to O'Brien et al. (2011), students are working to achieve their academic goals, whilst also working to balance other priorities such as finances and personal relationships. All of these factors impact the student's well-being, and could seriously affect their studies as these shape the students' learning environment. In psychological literature, the concept of well-being is very broad (Leshner & Scherer, 2021), while it can also be said that the educational experiences of law students are complex and continually changing.

This chapter therefore explores in detail the concept of well-being and its presentation in undergraduate law students holistically, while also looking at various contributing factors. First, the chapter explores the well-being of these students and how this well-being presents. The chapter then presents the challenges faced by these students that may contribute to or hinder their well-being. The chapter concludes with the conceptual framework used to guide the study.

2.2 WELL-BEING

It is of paramount importance to note that currently, there is no global consensus regarding a singular definition of well-being (Nelson et al., 2015). The term is often used to describe a holistic approach that includes physical and mental well-being, as well as other factors or aspects of life (emotional well-being, spiritual well-being, and more) (Nelson et al., 2015). Tov (2018) describes well-being as feeling satisfied with life, and experiencing more positive emotions and states than negative ones. This definition also includes finding meaning and purpose in life, experiencing joy and sadness, and being satisfied in different domains of life,

such as family life, work, and personal life in general (Tov, 2018). Therefore, well-being is not the absence of problems in individuals. Rather, some researchers (Dalziel et al., 2018; Eloff & Graham, 2020) define well-being as not only the presence of positive emotions, but rather as thriving across multiple spheres of life. In addition, it should be noted that although the term 'wellness' may sometimes be used interchangeably in discussions on well-being, the current study subscribes to the concept of 'well-being', but accepts the fact that 'wellness' may be present in the raw data.

According to Huppert (2009), well-being encompasses a variety of factors, such as physical well-being, economic well-being, social well-being, emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and other engaging activities. Subsequently, it embraces cultural aspects in its meaning as well (Huppert, 2009). In a study conducted by Carlisle and Hanlon (2008), it is suggested that well-being has strong individualistic connotations to it, and that it emphasises personal responsibility. This study indeed supports the idea that well-being is a personal experience that is based on one's personal characteristics, features, and internal factors. However, well-being is also influenced by external (objective) factors, which develop from the perspective of perception and one's assessment of society. Therefore, well-being is influenced by both internal and external factors and experiences.

Similarly, Das et al. (2020) identify subjective well-being as being characterised by how people feel and think about their own well-being, including life satisfaction, positive feelings, and whether their life has meaning. Alternatively, there is what is called objective well-being, which holds the assumption that basic human rights and needs, such as adequate food, physical health, education and more, can be measured through self-reports and objective measures, such as mortality rates and lifespan.

2.2.1 Global reports of well-being

Global reports that track the well-being of people are issued globally. One such report is the 2020 Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development's (OECD) Better Life Index. This index measures people's well-being by looking at averages, inequalities between groups, inequalities between top and bottom performers, and deprivations in order to establish how the quality of their lives is changing (OECD, 2020). According to this report, strong relationships, support networks, and engagement with others are good for our well-being (OECD, 2020). While increasing life satisfaction has been reported in many OECD countries, many people feel disconnected. The OECD (2020) further reports that approximately one in 11 people do

not have family or friends that they can rely on for assistance, and the problem is particularly acute for older people. Moreover, people are spending less time on social activities than in the past decade as studies indicate that, on average, people spend nearly half an hour less a week socialising with family and friends (OECD, 2020). These statistics show a decline in people's ability to form and maintain strong, meaningful relationships and social interactions, and support networks, which may lead to feelings of loneliness and disconnectedness. The current study acknowledges these constructs as important aspects that contribute to well-being, and considers a decline in it as very concerning since it suggests a deterioration in well-being.

Likewise, the Legatum Prosperity Index (2022) evaluates flourishing by looking at the individual's social and economic well-being. This index has reported that families make the greatest contribution to well-being, providing members with their most essential emotional, developmental, and financial support (Legatum Prosperity Index, 2022). The report also highlights that good health is crucial to the prosperity of a nation as those who are in good physical and mental health enjoy high levels of well-being, while those who are in poor health do not thrive (Legatum Prosperity Index, 2022). Additionally, the Legatum Prosperity Index (2021) report states that adequate nutrition, access to quality and basic healthcare services, and a safe and clean environment are essential resources required to achieve a basic level of well-being.

Another such report, the World Happiness Report, is published annually. It also evaluated the quality of people's social interactions and relationships during COVID-19, and reported that positivity resonance, caring for others, and shared feelings of positivity explained the relationship between better mental health and trait resilience during the pandemic (Helliwell et al., 2020). Moreover, it was reported that a larger social network (i.e. a greater number of connections) was associated with less stress and worry during the lockdown period (Helliwell et al., 2020). From this report, it can be concluded that being surrounded by a team, group, or network of people for support may be protective of one's well-being rather than being dependent solely on a close friend.

2.2.2 The well-being of university students in general

The transition from high school to university for many students, regardless of discipline, is sometimes filled with challenges that pose a threat to their well-being. For students, starting university often means that they have to leave their homes and their support networks to start a new life (Cleary et al., 2012). This transition creates a variety of challenges for university

students, which can affect their well-being. Examples of these challenges include making their own choices about their lives and their studies, adapting to the academic demands of an ill-structured learning environment, and interacting with new people (Hernández-Torrano et al., 2020).

Some of the conditions and expectations that university students may be exposed to contribute to mental health or substance use disorders, or may exacerbate their pre-existing problems (Cleary et al., 2012). Cleary et al. (2012) further state that there is growing evidence that university students are exhibiting increasing amounts of diagnosable mental health conditions during their studies at university, such as depression, stress, anxiety, personality disorders, substance use disorders, and behavioural challenges.

According to Evans et al. (2018 p. 282), in the last decade, there has been an emerging "mental health crisis" in university students globally. In South Africa, the exponential rise of mental health crises and decreased well-being among university students is widely influenced by transitional challenges. Nel et al. (2009, as cited in Kotzé & Kleynhans, 2013) classify these transitional challenges into four categories. First, there is the academic transitional challenge, which includes unrealistic academic expectations, as well as not having the necessary academic skills. Secondly, the challenge of socioeconomic and financial disparities hinder students' social integration. For example, some cannot afford on-campus residence and lack the financial means to partake in social activities that require money. Thirdly, the social transitional challenge includes a lack of social support and parental support. Lastly, the challenge of cultural transition relates to diversity and social integration.

In light of this, the current study sought to identify the transitional challenges faced by undergraduate law students as they affect their well-being drastically. It is apparent that students have varying levels of ability to cope with, and adjust to these new challenges, with some university students facing far greater challenges than others. This is of great importance as students who are able to adapt well to their new academic and social environment are much more likely to succeed in university and earn a degree (Bowman et al., 2019).

2.2.3 The well-being of undergraduate law students in particular

According to Sheldon and Krieger (2014), there is a widely held belief that things get better after the first year of law school. However, that is not the case as psychological distress has been shown to be particularly strong, with undergraduate law students experiencing inordinate

decreases in well-being compared to undergraduate university students in other disciplines (Peterson, 2016).

Undergraduate law students are primarily concerned with academic achievement, which contributes immensely to their academic well-being. Those who achieve higher academic standards have a better chance of achieving professional success, and having better quality of life as adults (Rand et al., 2020). According to Skead et al. (2020), a study conducted in Australia has revealed that law school for undergraduate students is notably competitive, and the lack of support in the law school environment has an impact on students' self-reported well-being. The competitive nature of law school has resulted in remarkably high self-imposed pressure among undergraduate law students. This is not surprising as Bishop (2017) notes that perfectionism is prevalent in a profession that is grounded in rules, order, and organisation, as well as logical reasoning and objective analysis. Therefore, law students tend to equate self-worth with achievement and, alternatively, see less-than-average academic performance as equated with personal worthlessness since self-esteem depends on continual success (Skead et al., 2020). As a result, the constant need for law students to outperform their classmates frustrates them, while also negatively impacting their academic and mental well-being.

However, academic achievement is only one component of these students' well-being. Besides academic achievement, student well-being encompasses a much broader concept. It is a perception of their own happiness, quality of life, wellness, success, and overall life satisfaction (Skead & Rogers, 2014).

The well-being of undergraduate law students is also influenced by the nature of the law school environment. A law school environment that fosters feelings of connectedness and feeling cared for by others is hampered by the inherent pessimistic and adversarial nature of law. This places undue emphasis on analysis and critical thinking, and a diminishing focus on feelings (empathy and compassion), morals, and values (O'Brien et al., 2011; Skead et al., 2020).

2.3 THE WAYS IN WHICH WELL-BEING PRESENTS IN LAW STUDENTS

Students' well-being depends on a combination of psychological, cognitive, social, and physical factors. South African universities have an important role to play in students' well-being, and should thus ensure that they create optimal support, including a positive environment, for students. This will ensure that students perform well academically so as to help them achieve their dreams of attaining a degree.

There are positive ways in which well-being can present in law students. This is evident when they do well in certain aspects of their life and their well-being is enhanced, which gives them more appreciation for, and enjoyment of life. For example, a person who likes to exercise may feel a sense of belonging, is likely able to establish and maintain good relationships with others, and is more likely to lead a happy and satisfied life filled with a sense of purpose and control.

Alternatively, the well-being of undergraduate law students could also potentially be hindered. According to the National Tertiary Student Wellbeing Survey, a variety of factors affect law students' well-being. Some of these factors include the transition from home to college, the financial pressures of school, the strain of increased workloads, lack of support, as well as the establishment of new relationships (Rickwood et al., 2016; Said et al., 2013). For example, Levit and Linder (2007) reported that undergraduate law students often feel unsupported by lecturers. Feeling unsupported may hinder their ability to flourish as students generally want to feel valued, which can be achieved by lecturers praising good work, expressing disappointment when there is insufficient effort, and giving constructive feedback. Furthermore, a lack of social bonds contributes to their stress and diminished well-being as having strong and supportive social connections is incredibly powerful because this gives them a sense of belonging and connection with others.

It is therefore important to note that a good and balanced lifestyle positively contributes to a student's well-being. Students must nurture their social and emotional skills, knowledge, and behaviours to help themselves establish resilience, and to help them discover ways of managing their physical and mental health throughout their lives. It is of relevance to note that flourishing is a sign of well-being as it is associated with lower rates and fewer cases of depression and anxiety disorders (Eloff & Graham, 2020; Grant et al., 2013).

2.4 UNDERGRADUATE LAW STUDENTS' RELUCTANCE TO SEEK HELP

Sheldon and Krieger (2007, 2014) state that even before entering law school, law students are taught to be careful about disclosing information, and to be cautious of how law schools and licensing boards of law examiners may perceive any disclosure. Law school students are also accustomed to a competitive environment in which displaying any vulnerability is discouraged (Casey et al., 2013). Therefore, seeking any form of help may be perceived as an acknowledgement or sign of vulnerability. The attitude often displayed by law schools is that students are better off dealing with problems on their own rather than seeking assistance (Casey et al., 2013). Additionally, as students move through law school and begin contemplating bar

admissions, some jurisdictions' applications may contain questions that might make them think it may be best for them not to seek assistance so that they do not need to disclose anything (Sheldon & Krieger, 2007, 2014).

According to Sharp and Theiler (2018), factors that could discourage law students from seeking help for alcohol/drug issues and mental health concerns include a potential threat to bar admission, a potential threat to job or academic status, social stigma, concerns about privacy, financial reasons, the belief that they can handle the problem themselves, and not having the time to deal with it. Sharp and Theiler (2018) also highlight that male law students are much more likely than female law students to believe that they can handle the problem themselves, but in addition, males are also more concerned with social stigma than females.

2.5 MAJOR CHALLENGES FACED BY UNDERGRADUATE LAW STUDENTS

2.5.1 Fatigue and time-consuming tasks

Undergraduate law students' well-being is affected by multiple stressors, including high demands on their time. According to Burns et al. (2020), students spend a vast amount of time in lectures, review sessions, labs, and independent study. As a result, they overwork themselves, sleep less, and barely dedicate time to engaging in health-promoting activities such as sports, exercising, and socialising (Burns et al., 2020). This can be draining both physically and mentally on students. Consequently, sleep deprivation, as well as physical and mental fatigue can have serious health implications for the overall functioning of a student. It can also be a gateway for many health issues such as burnout, anxiety, and depression.

Cooper and Gurung (2017) state that understanding when and how to delegate, possessing time management skills, and having the ability to identify when one needs to rest and recharge are critical for students' professional development and personal fulfilment. Unfortunately, these are rarely formally taught in most law schools. This is cause for concern as students struggle or do not have the necessary skills to balance important aspects of their lives during their studies.

2.5.2 Leaving home

As with students in other fields, one of the major challenges faced by undergraduate law students is living away from home. The transition away from familiar surroundings, family, and friends can be very challenging, especially for those who have never lived alone before

(Field et al., 2013; Skead et al., 2020). In addition, those with family demands may often experience guilt concerning their decreased availability for loved ones.

It is often expected that students must be emotionally and mentally strong in order to survive university life in a new city or town, yet they have never been taught these skills in either their homes or at school/university (Herbert et al., 2020; Mahmoud et al., 2012). They are then expected to learn new coping skills on their own, while also learning how to manage chores, budget monthly expenses, and socialise with their peers (Herbert et al., 2020). Due to this, they may have a very hard time coping and finding constructive ways to cope.

2.5.3 Academic stress and increased workload

Stress is a necessary aspect of life as it makes our lives more exciting, and gives us new challenges, which motivates us to achieve our goals (Mahtab & Javed, 2020). Manap et al. (2019) state that undergraduate education is challenging in its own right as students are expected to adjust to the unfamiliar environment of the university. Students are further required to meet the demands of the curriculum, which aims to shift the focus from guided learning to exploration, creative thinking, and collaboration. As a result, stress likely will affect performance and productivity in the long run if coping mechanisms are not employed to manage it constructively (Reddy et al., 2018).

Undergraduate law students face several academic problems that negatively affect their well-being, including exam stress**,** increased workload, less motivation to attend classes, and difficulties in understanding the work. Additionally, they experience mental distress due to anticipated difficulties or even the fear of the possibility of academic failure (Manap et al., 2019). Therefore, the amount of pressure they face to perform is severe. Mahtab and Javed (2020) postulate that, although a certain level of stress is important as it pushes or challenges students to perform well and yield better results, when it is not managed appropriately due to insufficient resources, it can have negative consequences for the student. The negative effects of stress include irritability, fatigue, anxiety, disequilibrium, changes in metabolism, and compromised immunity (Manap et al., 2019).

High academic stress levels in students can increase the prevalence of psychological and physical problems, which can affect their academic results (Thakkar, 2022). Furthermore, according to Thakkar (2022), a law student's academic, social, and emotional success can be adversely affected by anxiety and stress if not managed, or if left untreated. Meanwhile, depression is becoming the most common mental health problem for students. Reddy et al.

(2018) suggest that depression among students may reflect their academic anxiety, academic conflict, and their academic frustration due to pressure.

According to Manap et al. (2019), students learn better in a class environment that is collaborative, non-competitive, and task-orientated rather than one that is competitive and performance-driven. Reddy et al. (2018) explain that parents and institutions contribute to the academic stress experienced by law students as they relentlessly instil fears of failure, which has a detrimental effect on students' self-esteem and self-confidence. Reddy et al. (2018) further report increased expectations as a major contributor to increased stress levels as students strive to live up to their parents' expectations of them as students, as well as responsible members of the family (Manap et al., 2019). Therefore, the impact of academic stress continues to have a devastating impact on the mental health and well-being of undergraduate law students.

2.5.4 Financial burden

In terms of socioeconomic background, there are undergraduate law students who come from lower-income households (Guan et al., 2015). Thus, they are more likely to lack familial financial support than their peers. These financial challenges often result in other challenges, such as not being able to pay for tuition or course materials for an upcoming semester (Moore et al., 2021).

According to Sharp and Theiler (2018), whose study took place in Australia, upon admission to law school, students with restricted financial situations usually experience a major shock due to tuition fees, living costs, and other various costs that add up to a significant amount. As such, during the academic years, students are encouraged to research the best student loan programmes, bursaries, and scholarships as these can help alleviate the inherent financial pressures of tertiary education.

Additionally, according to Devlin and McKay (2018), law students use financial aid resources at higher rates than those in other fields. Students have reported that financial aid forms are often confusing to complete as they often lack the financial literacy needed to make effective decisions regarding student loans and other matters related to money.

2.5.5 Social and cultural challenges

According to Bryan et al. (2015), some undergraduate law students who lack social and cultural norm exposure may also have difficulty overcoming these challenges. This may be due to a

lack of acculturation and adjustment to expectations in professional settings, that they are unfamiliar with terminology, or that they have not been exposed to certain environments. Field et al. (2013) suggest that some students may report having 'imposter syndrome' when adjusting to law school. As a result, some feel isolated because they lack support and encouragement from family and friends, who may not understand the pressures of law school (Deo et al., 2009). Consequently, some undergraduate law students may feel abandoned without adequate encouragement, which might be essential to them persevering in their education.

2.5.6 Poor/unhealthy coping strategies for stress

High levels of stress affect a person's mental health. Undergraduate law students are no exception to this as university can be very stressful, and the field of law in particular. Undergraduate law students are rarely taught stress management skills at university, thus they either ignore the stress or resort to harmful coping mechanisms such as aggression and temper tantrums (Manap et al., 2019). Some students even turn to using illegal drugs, as well as alcohol (Organ et al., 2016). While it may seem that these substances are beneficial at the time, they do a lot more harm than good (Bennett & Holloway, 2015). Furthermore, according to Organ et al. (2016), using drugs and alcohol to relieve stress not only worsens the situation, but can also lead to bigger problems later on like addiction. As a result of this stress, students' ways of coping have profound effects on their physical, behavioural, psychological, academic, and physical well-being (Böke et al., 2019).

According to Rutledge and Sher (2001, as cited in Hanrahan et al., 2016) in terms of coping behaviours, male students are more likely than female students to endorse drinking to cope at university. Yikealo et al. (2018) agree, stating that more male students compared to female students use unhealthy coping strategies for stress. However, gender differences in the use of illegal drugs in order to cope are not adequately addressed in the literature (Böke et al., 2019). This means that the use of negative coping strategies is more prevalent among male than female students. Yikealo et al. (2018) further reveal that males are more susceptible to risky behaviours than females as females historically tend to be more involved in domestic tasks and practices.

2.5.7 Alcohol

It is generally agreed that reliance on substances is an indication of a maladaptive coping process (Organ et al., 2016). Merrill and Read (2010) found that students endorsing alcohol use as a coping mechanism were found to experience difficulties such as poor academic or professional performance, poor self-care, and greater engagement in risk-taking behaviours,

regardless of their level of drinking. In this case, individuals may engage in consuming alcohol with the expectation that it will reduce negative affect, regardless of whether their consumption of alcohol actually serves this purpose or not (Böke et al., 2019).

Alcohol abuse is an unhealthy and dangerous coping mechanism. The use thereof during stressful times can actually worsen the situation, and can even affect brain chemistry, while drinking while under stress can result in further excessive drinking (Organ et al., 2016).

2.5.8 Study drugs

According to Bennett and Holloway (2015), problematic behaviour within the university student population includes the use of illegal drugs. Hallucinogens are amongst the most widely used class of drugs. The consequences of drug use for university students have also been documented, with students reporting moderate to severe physical, psychological, and social consequences (Böke et al., 2019). It has been reported that some students use illegal drugs without a prescription in order to increase their focus and stamina (Pierceall & Keim, 2007; Yikealo et al., 2018). As such, they rely on these drugs as a means of improving their academic performance (Bennett & Holloway, 2015). Moreover, mixing drugs and alcohol can have more serious consequences/complications as well, including alcohol poisoning and over-drinking (Organ et al., 2016). Therefore, positive coping strategies should be taught to undergraduate law students, including exercise, planning, seeking instrumental support, seeking emotional support, self-support, and showing commitment to a task (Freire et al., 2016). Positive coping strategies play an important role in the improvement of a student's health, with relevant implications for psychological and subjective well-being (Bryden et al., 2015).

2.6 A NEED FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN LAW STUDENTS AND MANAGEMENT (CURRICULUM RESTRUCTURING)

In their study, O'Brien et al. (2011) revealed that with regard to classroom climate, law schools should be more transparent about expectations, discussions should be more open and free-flowing, while less emphasis should be placed on stating the 'right thing'. They further mentioned that the ideal law class would provide a safe space where the atmosphere is more permissible for students to make mistakes. This would mean learning would be supported in all forms.

Furthermore, such a law lecture room would endorse open and informative discussions, which would further provide an open environment where students feel comfortable enough to discuss

and engage with the content. Having an open environment to communicate freely would subsequently improve the relationship between lecturers and students, while also creating a sense of social bond and belonging. It would also provide an opportunity for students to engage in meaningful discussions. With all that in mind, law courses are expected to be more transparent about the expectations of students, and need to provide students with more informed and clearer guidance, as well as positive feedback (O'Brien et al., 2011).

2.7 STUDENTS ENTER LAW SCHOOL FULL OF DETERMINATION BUT LEAVE FEELING INADEQUATE

Peterson (2016) explains that there is evidence that suggests that undergraduate law students are usually full of life, hope, and determination when they enter law school. Larcombe and Fethers (2013) support this, stating that upon students entering law school, they enjoy a sense of well-being that is equal to or more than that of other university students. Nonetheless, this changes during the first six months of their studies: they experience higher rates of anxiety, stress, and depression as opposed to their peers who are enrolled for other degrees (Peterson, 2016).

Mental illness among law students has multiple causes. This includes a heavy workload, a high level of competition in law, insufficient feedback from lecturers, a lack of motivation, feelings of social disconnectedness, and the challenging methods commonly adopted in teaching law (Larcombe & Fethers, 2013). As a consequence, Sheldon and Krieger (2014) point out that after law students have successfully finished their degrees and entered the workforce, they are notably different people from what they were when they began their studies. They tend to be less service-orientated, more depressed, and more prone to superficial values and goals (Sheldon & Krieger, 2014). In support of this, O'Brien et al. (2011) argue that law school is a difficult journey for students. The academic process can be stressful, and presents real challenges. It could be argued that these challenges prepare students for an intense profession. Nonetheless, “It is not acceptable, however, for law school to graduate 'broken' individuals — insecure, isolated and psychologically distressed” (O'Brien et al., 2011, p.182).

2.8 SUPPORT

2.8.1 Low engagement in activities and on-campus resources

As a means to support law students, Spencer (2012) suggests that in high-income countries, law students should have access to on-campus resources, including academic support,

mentoring, career guidance, and health services. Additionally, these law schools should offer students a wide variety of opportunities to get involved in law school activities, such as student associations, affinity groups, student-run journals, clinics, externships, moot courts, trial teams, and various community service projects for public interest and charity (Spencer, 2012). However, there are relatively few studies focusing on law students in low- and middle-income countries such as South Africa in terms of support and availability of resources (Rousseau et al., 2021).

Unfortunately, the use of these on-campus support networks is less frequent among undergraduate law students. Quite often, these differences can be attributed to a lack of time, and not because students are disinterested in these opportunities (Dunn et al., 2008; Sabagh et al., 2018). For example, studying may take up a greater portion of their time, while working a paid job for those who are employed leaves little time for participating in law school activities (Dunn et al., 2008; Sabagh et al., 2018). Additionally, some may be burdened by family or other obligations which may place them at a disadvantage (Spence et al., 2022).

2.8.2 Student agency in well-being

It should not solely be the duty of the university, law faculty, or lecturers to protect and support the well-being of their students. Law students should be responsible for their own well-being as well. It is the duty of each person to make sure that they try by all means possible to protect their mental well-being, physical well-being, and spiritual well-being to ensure that they take care of themselves. However, a strong support structure is necessary to assist them in taking care of themselves.

Previous research conducted by Larcombe and Fethers (2013) in Australia suggests that it is of vital importance that law students participate in behaviours that will not only promote their academic success, but support their mental and physical well-being also. When addressing the challenge of mental well-being, it is important that pressure is not only put on what law schools should do for students. Law students should take the initiative themselves, and put in the work to reduce the depression, stress, and anxiety that could develop from studying law (Larcombe & Fethers, 2013).

Law students who engage in non-academic activities, such as clubs and societies related to student social life, sports, and special interests both within the law faculty and the university may find it beneficial to their well-being. These activities are more likely to result in establishing a sense of belonging and social networks amongst law students. Moreover, O'Brien

et al. (2011) explain that reviewing extracurricular programmes to ensure that they are sensitive and suitable to the interests of a wide range of students has the potential to contribute positively to their well-being. O'Brien et al. (2011) also highlight the importance of successfully promoting such programmes to law students.

2.8.3 Establishing new relationships and support networks

Undergraduate law students should build their own networks to support them in their law school journey. Baik et al. (2019) and Deo et al. (2009) state that to support themselves, law students are encouraged to establish societies and student organisations, which would give them exposure in the field; start a successful peer-mentorship programme; hold panels and networking events; and invite attorneys and judges as guest speakers. Additionally, O'Brien et al. (2011) suggest that law schools should start programmes that educate undergraduate students who are interested in pursuing a legal career. This can be done through collaborations with law students from other universities. It is also advocated that alumni mentorship programmes be developed for current students.

Lastly, connecting with others who are in the field of law such as lawyers, magistrates, and judges is crucial, however, some students are not aware of this and isolate themselves. This mistake can be detrimental to their careers as networking plays a crucial role in the legal profession (Deo et al., 2009; Ryan et al., 2021).

2.9 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study was anchored in the PACES model of student well-being. According to Nelson et al. (2015), this model is composed of five distinct and interactive domains, namely: Physical (P), Affective (A), Cognitive (C), Economic (E), and Social (S).

PACES is a five-domain model that is recognised as a valuable tool for identifying, describing, and understanding students' well-being (Nelson et al., 2015). From there, using the model, students could be assessed and supported to promote wellness. Despite their distinct natures, these five domains are interconnected and interdependent at the same time. In a nutshell, the domains represent a holistic view of student well-being.

Physical domain: according to Nelson et al. (2015), this domain refers to wellness, nutrition, life expectancy, health risk factors, and access to health care. It deals with health-related concerns that directly affect how students engage in their university experiences.

Koltz et al. (2021) suggest that there is a strong link between physical activity and mental health, particularly in stress and anxiety reduction. Meanwhile, Kleszczewska et al. (2018) state that physical activity influences self-esteem, self-perception, mood, psychological well-being, and adjustment. In a study by Kipp (2016), it was shown that high levels of self-esteem impacted adolescents' life satisfaction, which was influenced by physical activity (Kleszczewska et al., 2018). Considering the perspective of the student, the physical domain encompasses health-related issues that directly affect student engagement. Students' engagement with the learning environment is directly affected by health-related issues in the physical domain (Koltz et al., 2021).

According to Langton and Berger (2011), the physical domain comprises a variety of health-related problems, whether they belong to the student or someone in their family. Nelson et al. (2015) find that healthy university students may be more prepared to engage actively with their academics; however, it is not solely student well-being that influences this readiness to engage. Students who have family members who are experiencing health issues also require resources and support to further their studies (Nelson et al., 2015).

Additionally, physical health connects to academic performance. Families can be incorporated into the physical well-being of their children in terms of education, prevention, and opportunities, which has the potential to improve students' academic outcomes (Nelson et al., 2015). Malkoç and Yalçin (2015) further highlight that parental support and health education are necessary as they are linked to improved student health and well-being.

Affective domain: according to Nelson et al. (2015), this domain explains a student's emotional sense of self, and is highly subjective. Moreover, students' affects or feelings are reflected in this domain, such as self-esteem, intimacy, affective perceptions, moods, self-efficacy, self-confidence, empowerment, shame, guilt, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues associated with affect.

Within the affective domain, students learn emotional patterns from their family units that influence their ability to regulate their emotions at school (Nelson et al., 2015). The ability to regulate emotions is a crucial skill that must be learnt during school years, especially since emotional regulation interacts with peer relationships (Ryff & Singer, 2014). The affective issues of students range from the inability to experience emotions to extreme negative emotional responses, and these are often symptoms of a mental illness (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Mental illnesses, such as anxiety, depression, personality disorders, and

thought disorders become obvious during late childhood and into adolescence (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Left untreated, these mental health disorders may lead to more problems, such as an increased likelihood of substance use (Hanrahan et al., 2016). Additionally, psychopathology in childhood is also associated with a reduced ability to regulate emotions. Additionally, childhood psychopathology is associated with decreased emotional regulation **(**Kiff, 2012).

Families can be assisted in increasing their emotional competence and, in particular, law students can be assisted in increasing their emotional vocabulary. To achieve this, universities could offer workshops, seminars, and events that focus on emotional regulation (James & Wardhaugh, 2016).

Cognitive domain: according to Nelson et al. (2015), cognition is often referred to as intelligence. This domain relates to students' ability to process information effectively and utilise that information logically for growth and problem-solving. In addition, it includes traits such as beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, creativity, spontaneity, and openness to viewing situations differently.

Cognitive skills and abilities significantly impact academic performance and career development in law students (Nelson et al., 2015). Moreover, constructs such as mental health issues and self-esteem are associated with the cognitive domain as well. In addition to mental health issues, substance abuse adversely affects a student's cognitive domain, resulting in impaired scholastic performance, diminished motivation, disorganisation, and impulsivity (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The cognitive domain also encompasses a family's ability to create and think (Nelson et al., 2015). Having a wide range of emotional reactions and responses directly relates to a student's ability to cognitively restructure events (Gross & Thompson, 2007). There is an overlap between the cognitive and affective domains.

Economic domain: in this domain, financial factors play an important role in the availability of resources. These factors can influence a student's academic success, food security, social adjustment, home security, and the affordability of tertiary education (Nelson et al., 2015).

As previously stated, each domain of the model influences each other regarding students' overall experiences of well-being. For example, in families with low socioeconomic status, chronic stress levels are higher and students' emotional development may be impeded by the

lack of time they have to engage in emotional matters (Lunkenheimer et al., 2007). Therefore, the economic domain is directly connected to a student's academic performance and experience, academic planning, post-tertiary goals, and university adjustment (Nelson et al., 2015).

Families with insufficient financial resources may struggle to provide educational support to their children and therefore it is crucial that universities assess economic stressors that directly affect students, and provide direct support or appropriate referrals to facilitate lasting change for students (Moore et al., 2021). Universities can create means to engage in the economic domain in a variety of ways, such as access to resources or assistance for students in finding scholarships. However, families living in chronic poverty may require additional training and mentoring (Eichelberger et al., 2017).

Social domain: this domain covers interpersonal skills, family relationships and interactions, community involvement, social networks and support, and interactions at university. This also includes social behaviour such as lifestyle, risk-taking, and trying to achieve significance among student groups (Nelson et al., 2015).

Key developmental tasks for students include striving to belong, taking risks, and networking with others (Nelson et al., 2015). Spence et al. (2022) postulate that supportive relationships at university, in the family, and in the broader community networks are a crucial aspect of student resilience as they contribute to, and promote student well-being. Furthermore, promoting positive collaborations between the university and family facilitates positive social and academic outcomes for students. As a result, Bryan et al. (2015) propose that an instrumental first step in strengthening collaboration is getting accustomed to the cultural groups found at university and within the community, as well as assessing students' needs and strengths with school personnel, families, and community members.

2.10 Conclusion

Chapter 2 provided an overview of the existing literature on how well-being presents in undergraduate law students. The chapter further presented the different ways in which well-being presents, as well as the challenges faced by undergraduate law students. Finally, the chapter concluded with a discussion of the conceptual framework used. The next chapter discusses the research methodology of this study.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide a more detailed outline of the research approach and paradigm, the research design, the data collection methods, the data analysis methods, the ethical considerations, and the research limitations and strengths of the study.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH AND PARADIGM

3.2.1 Methodological approach

This study adopted a qualitative methodological approach to conduct secondary data analysis. Qualitative research focuses on gathering and analysing non-numerical data, such as interviews, observations, and textual analysis, to gain a more detailed understanding of social phenomena (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Patton, 2015). The purpose of qualitative research, according to Creswell (2014b) and Levitt et al. (2018), is to study a particular human issue or issue of social concern using a combination of inquiry-based methods borrowed from different methodological traditions.

Research based on qualitative methods provides an in-depth understanding of social phenomena from the participants' perspectives. According to Charmaz (2014), this approach can lead to rich and nuanced data that captures the complexity of social processes. In addition, qualitative research can be useful in situations where little is known about a particular topic as it allows for exploratory research and hypothesis generation (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Patton, 2015). This is why this method was regarded as an appropriate approach since I sought to determine how well-being presents in undergraduate law students. I further wanted to gain more in-depth insights into the well-being experiences of these students. In doing so, I aimed to learn directly from the views and perceptions of the participants, and unearth what is important to them regarding their subjective well-being by asking them broad general questions (Crabtree & Miller, 2023; Creswell, 2014a).

Qualitative methods are flexible and can be adapted to fit the specific research questions and context, allowing researchers to gather data in a variety of ways (Creswell, 2014a; Durdella, 2019; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Qualitative research can also be used to address topics that are difficult to measure quantitatively, such as emotions and subjective experiences (Crabtree & Miller, 2023; Charmaz, 2014).

However, qualitative research can be time-consuming and resource-intensive. Creswell (2014b) explains that this may be the case as it involves an in-depth examination of textual data. Additionally, it often requires more resources than quantitative research, such as recruiting and compensating participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2002; Patton, 2015; Pham, 2018). Additionally, the findings may not be generalisable to other populations or contexts. Qualitative research typically involves a small sample size, which limits the ability to draw conclusions about larger populations (Creswell, 2014b; Flick, 2022). Moreover, the subjective nature of qualitative research means that the findings may be influenced by the researcher's own biases and perspectives (Charmaz, 2014; Crabtree & Miller, 2023).

The existing student wellbeing study utilised qualitative data collection methods (a focus group and an online survey) which has aided to explore the current study's research question, 'How does well-being present in undergraduate law students?' The qualitative methods used in the study were regarded as well-suited for exploring the complex dynamic of well-being in undergraduate law students as they could contribute to layered understandings of the phenomenon. Furthermore, these qualitative methods were used to reach a larger and more diverse audience to elicit a variety of opinions and insights, providing a nuanced understanding of the research theme. Qualitative methods allowed me to delve deeply into the subjective experiences of the participating students, and helped to identify contextual factors, as well as the institutional culture that contributes to or detracts from their well-being. These qualitative methods also allowed the participants to express themselves freely, leading to the emergence of themes and patterns that were not anticipated, providing a more holistic view of their well-being.

3.2.2 Epistemological paradigm

Constructivism guided this study. This paradigm is commonly associated with qualitative research approaches since it focuses on the experiences and subjective nature of participants' experiences (Bogna et al., 2020). As a philosopher who contributed to the development of constructivism, Dewey is often referred to as the founder of constructivism (Jia, 2010). However, Piaget and Vygotsky have also contributed substantively to constructivism (Brau, 2018). According to Conway et al. (2012), Dewey believed that individuals grow and learn as a result of their experiences and interactions with the world. Therefore, people are constantly exploring new concepts, understandings, ideas, and practices (Conway et al., 2012).

According to Stevens et al. (2016), constructivism claims that reality is subjective as it is a construct of our minds. Therefore, this means that knowledge is not merely derived from the environment, but rather is constructed through cognitive processes (Stevens et al., 2016). In other words, constructivism posits that all knowledge is derived from experiences and people's reflections on those experiences, and opposes the idea that knowledge can be generated through one methodology (Curtis, 2013).

Constructivism, according to Chowdhury (2014), claims that how people experience and perceive the world has an impact on how they act and behave. In addition, constructivists think that rather than embracing the single, universal reality that positivists accept, people create their own realities through interactions with their surroundings.

Constructivism was significant to this study since I concentrated on the information that the participating undergraduate law students constructed about how they experience well-being in their daily lives. In addition, each participant's perceptions were respected as significant and legitimate, allowing them to describe reality in their own words (Mahlo, 2011). This assisted me in carrying out the goals and objectives of the current investigation by gaining some insight into the world of the subjects.

According to Pookaiyaudom (2012), the constructivist paradigm is most effective when the research is concerned with human behaviour. As a result, in this study, constructivism was regarded as a suitable paradigm to explore how well-being presents in undergraduate law students. A constructivist approach was also deemed appropriate for investigating and comprehending these students' inner thoughts and feelings in order to capture the uniqueness of their experience.

This paradigm further allows individuals to actively explore, ask questions, experiment with their social environment, and construct their own understanding of the world (Stevens et al., 2016). However, this approach can be time-consuming and complex, therefore careful planning and preparation are required (Theys, 2017). Furthermore, data gathered through the constructivist paradigm can be complex to assess, as its focal point is on an individual's understanding and construction of knowledge. Hence, it may not be possible to accurately assess a student's understanding or ability to apply their knowledge to real-life situations using traditional assessment methods, such as multiple-choice tests (Brau, 2018).

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study comprised a secondary data analysis. This refers to the process of examining and evaluating previously acquired data that were produced by another person (Cooper, 2019). By using existing data, researchers can obtain data that may not be practical to collect on their own while also saving time and money by accessing data that have already been collected (Cooper, 2019).

I carried out a secondary data analysis on a section of the data within an ongoing student well-being study at a South African university (Eloff, 2019; Eloff et al., 2021; Eloff et al., 2022; Eloff & Graham, 2020; Graham & Eloff, 2022). On the one hand, Clarke and Cossette (2000) and Pienta et al. (2011) agree that secondary data analysis is the analysis of data that has already been gathered by another party for a different primary goal. On the other hand, the data in this study were gathered for the same basic goal of analysing student well-being, while the well-being of law students in particular was the focus of the current investigation. In addition, Pienta et al. (2011) note that in most cases, secondary data would be protected and shared by a body whose declared goal is to preserve the data for as long as needed.

I chose a secondary data analysis because it presented a useful tool to reach a larger population of participants, and because it allowed me to pose broad inquiries to get answers to the research questions or topic. Moreover, secondary data analysis was cost-effective as it enabled me to access resources in an efficient and affordable manner (Dale et al., 1988; Denzin & Salvo, 2020; Johnston, 2014; Smith, 2008). Also, conducting a secondary data analysis allowed me to approach the dataset in a different and novel way, providing insight and comprehension of how well-being manifests in undergraduate law students without being influenced during the data collection process. Pérez-Sindn (2017) asserts that going over an existing dataset again may provide the researcher with fresh perspectives while simultaneously providing them more time to conduct an extensive analysis in a short amount of time.

The ability to undertake longitudinal research, which can shed light on changes over time, is one benefit of secondary data analysis (Bryman, 2016). In addition, secondary data analysis gives researchers access to information that may be hard or impossible to gather on their own (Bryman, 2016). Nevertheless, secondary data analysis has certain drawbacks as well. A lack of control over the data collection process is one potential concern that could result in issues with the data's accuracy and quality (Cooper, 2019). It is also possible that researchers may not

have access to all the variables they want or that the variables are not consistently measured among studies (Bryman, 2016).

3.3.1 Place of research

The term 'place of research' refers to the actual site or virtual site where the study is carried out. This may have an impact on the study's design, data collection techniques, and the generalisability of its findings (Creswell, 2014b).

This study took place at a public urban university situated within the Gauteng province of South Africa. The university is more than a century old, and currently encompasses seven campuses with an enrolment of approximately 50 000 students. It serves an undergraduate student population of more than 35 000 students. The undergraduate pass rates are usually close to 90%. The university is recognised as one of the top institutions in Africa, and the Faculty of Law is highly ranked globally. Lastly, it offers diverse teaching and learning modes, namely, contact classes, online classes, and classes offered in hybrid mode.

3.3.2 Participants

As stated earlier, this study drew on an existing dataset. This indicates that the sampling for this study had already been completed.

Table 3.1

Total number of participants

	Online Survey	Focus group
Number of participants	167	4
Mean age	20.4	20.5

A total of 167 participants (n=167) contributed to the study via an online survey with a mean age of 20.4. Whereas there were four participants (n=4) in the focus group discussion with a mean age of 20.5.

Table 3.2

The current degree of the participants

The current degree of participants	Online survey	Focus group
BA Law	49	2
LLB Law	92	2
BCom Law	26	–

Out of a total of 167 participants (n=167) in the online survey, 92 participants (n=92) were Bachelor of Laws (LLB) students, 49 participants (n=49) were Bachelor of Arts Law (BA Law) students, and 26 participants (n=26) were Bachelor of Commerce Law (BCom Law) students.

Within the focus group consisting of four participants (n=4), the distribution of academic enrolment and level of study is as follows: two participants (n=2) were enrolled for BA Law, and two participants (n=2) were enrolled for LLB Law. Only 2nd, 3rd and 4th year students were included in the study in order to control for variables that may affect wellbeing during the first year of university studies.

3.3.3 Focus group

In order to find participants for the focus group, a non-probability snowball sampling method was used in the existing student wellbeing study. This method is frequently employed in qualitative research projects. Students were recruited to participate in the study by the focus group facilitator, and were given a summary of the study.

According to Naderifar et al. (2017), when it is difficult to find participants who fit the desired profile, the snowball sampling method is used. Using this approach, a small group of volunteers with particular traits or experiences were chosen, and they were then asked to recommend other people who fit the same requirements to take part in the study (Parker et al., 2019). This procedure was carried out repeatedly until the appropriate sample size was reached (Goodman, 1961; Waters, 2015). There were four undergraduate law students (n=4) who participated in the focus group. These participants were given the assurances of confidentiality and anonymity (see Section 3.6), and subsequently gave their consent to participate in the study.

Snowball sampling has several benefits, one of which is that it enables researchers to reach difficult-to-reach or hidden groups (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Mujere, 2016). Snowball sampling can also be a time- and money-saving technique because it does not require extensive recruitment efforts, and enables researchers to quickly build rapport with the participants (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Bacher et al., 2019). Snowball sampling does, however, have several drawbacks as it could inevitably inject bias into the sample. Since the participants were recruited through referrals from already-enrolled participants, the sample may not be representative of the larger population as a whole, and the findings may not be generalisable (Goodman, 1961; Waters, 2015). Furthermore, social desirability bias may make snowball sampling unreliable because participants may favour referring people who they think would provide a favourable image to the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2012).

Table 3.3 provides a visual presentation of the biographical details of the participants in the focus group.

Table 3.3

Biographical details of the participants (n=4) (focus group)

Biographical details	Frequency	(%)
Home province:		
Free State	1	25
Gauteng	3	75
Citizenship:		
South African	4	100
Gender:		
Female	2	50
Male	2	50
Age:		
20	2	50
21	2	50
Race:		
White	4	100
Home language:		
Afrikaans	2	50
English	2	50
Level of study:		
Second year	3	75
Third year	1	25

Out of a total of four participants (n=4) in the focus group, the distribution of the participants' home provinces was as follows: one participant (n=1) was from the Free State, and three participants (n=3) were from Gauteng. The distribution of citizenship across the four participants (n=4) was as follows: all four participants (n=4) hold South African citizenship. Among the four participants (n=4) in the focus group, in terms of gender profile, two participants (n=2) identified as female, and two participants (n=2) as male. In terms of age, two participants (n=2) were 20 years of age, and two participants (n=2) were 21 years old. All four participants were White.

Out of a total of participants (n=4) in the focus group, the distribution of home language was as follows: two participants (n=2) spoke Afrikaans, and two participants (n=2) spoke English

as their home language. Lastly, the focus group participants' academic level of study was as follows: three participants (n=3) were in their second year of study, while one participant (n=1) was in their third year.

3.3.4 Online survey

The online survey was conducted between 22 September 2020 and continued until 5 October 2020. The home provinces of the participants were diverse, although they were predominantly from Gauteng. All of the participants were enrolled as law students at the same geographical place during the online survey data collection.

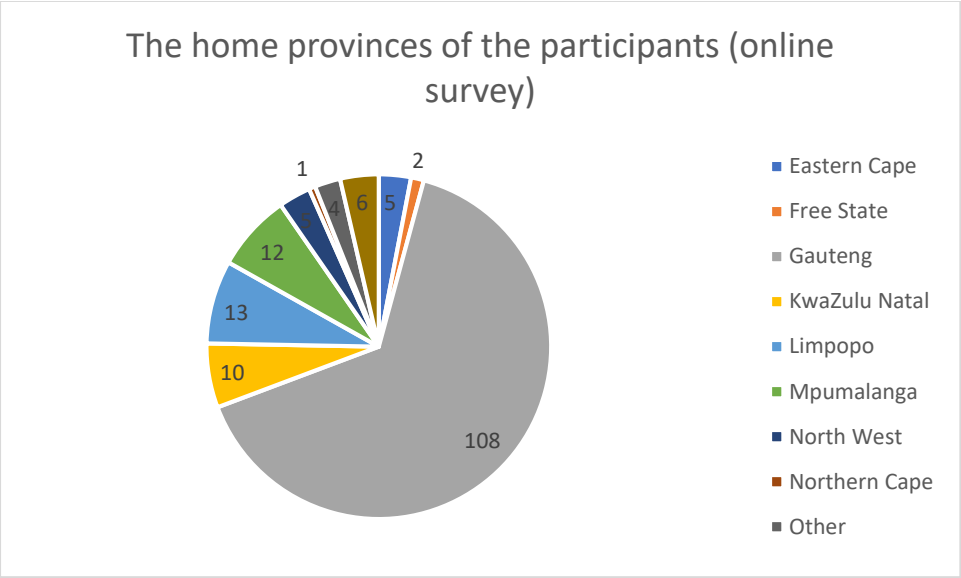
Purposive sampling was used in the existing student wellbeing study for the online survey. Purposive sampling, also referred to as judgmental sampling, is a non-probability sampling technique that is often employed in qualitative research investigations (Boddy, 2016a). Participants are chosen for purposive sampling based on a predetermined set of standards, such as age, gender, occupation, or experience, which are pertinent to the issue being studied (Palinkas et al., 2015). This approach is frequently employed in investigations where the population of interest is limited and the aim is to compile comprehensive data on a specific phenomenon. In this sampling, the previous researcher used their discretion when choosing the participants, keeping the study's principal goal at the forefront (Showkat & Parveen, 2017).

Purposive sampling has the benefit of enabling researchers to choose participants who are likely to give comprehensive information. In this way, researchers can guarantee that they have a sample that is representative of the group they seek to study by choosing volunteers based on particular criteria (Patton, 2015). Moreover, because it does not need substantial recruitment efforts and frees researchers to concentrate on gathering high-quality data, purposive sampling can be a time- and money-saving technique (Boddy, 2016a; Gill, 2020; Sandelowski, 1995). Purposive sampling does, however, have some disadvantages. Participants are chosen according to specified criteria; therefore, the sample could not be representative of the larger community as a whole, and the findings might not be generalisable (Palinkas et al., 2015). Also, because the researcher's opinions and presumptions may affect how participants are chosen, purposive sampling may be subject to researcher bias (Patton, 2015).

Figures 3.1 – 3.6 comprise a visual presentation of the biographical details of the online survey participants.

Figure 3.1

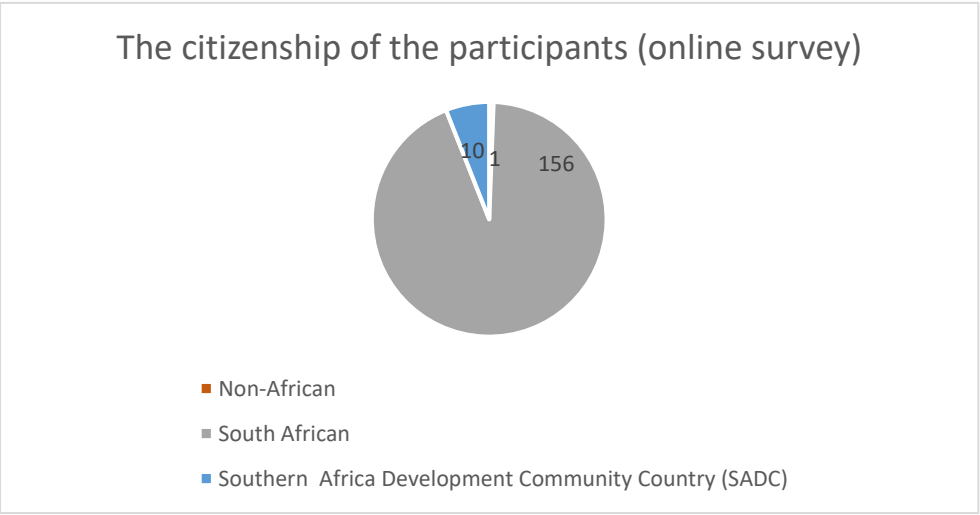
The home provinces of the participants (online survey)



Out of a total of 167 participants (n=167) in the online survey, the participants' home province distribution was as follows: five participants (n=5) were from the Eastern Cape, two participants (n= 2) from the Free State, 108 participants (n= 108) from Gauteng, 10 participants (n= 10) from KwaZulu Natal, 13 participants (n= 13) from Limpopo, 12 participants (n=12) from Mpumalanga, five participants (n= 5) from North West, one participant (n=1) from the Northern Cape, and six participants (n= 6) from the Western Cape. Additionally, four participants (n= 4) fell within the 'Other' category as they were not from any of the South African provinces.

Figure 3.2

The citizenship of the participants (online survey)

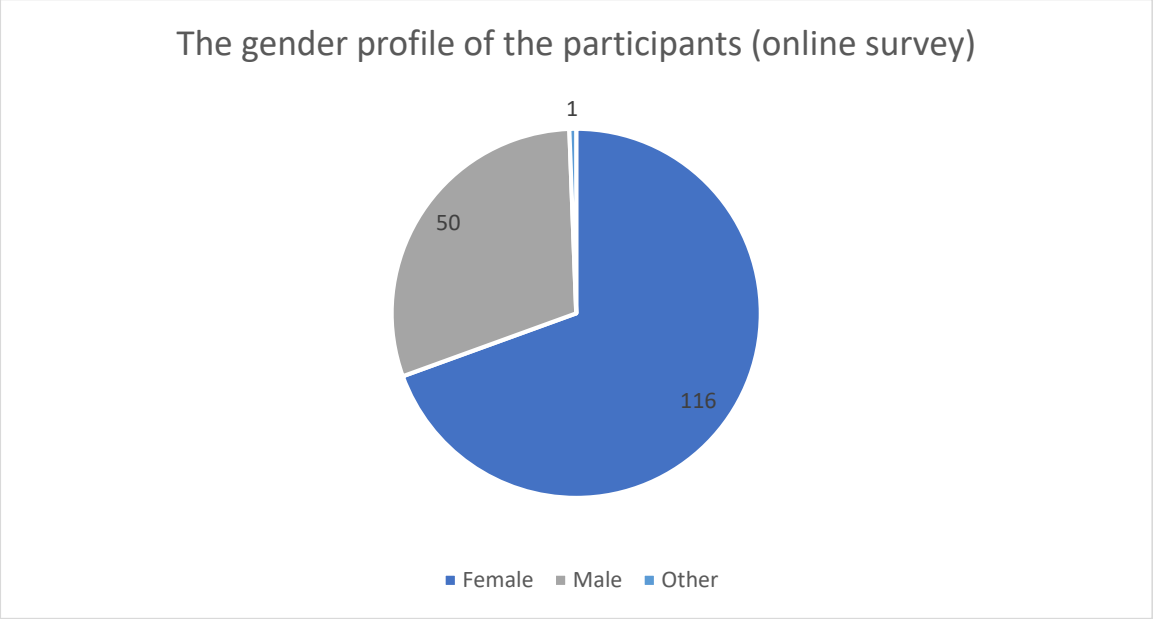


The distribution of citizenship of the total number of participants (n=167) was outlined as follows: one participant was a non-African citizen, 156 participants hold South African citizenship, and 10 participants were citizens of the Southern African Development Community Countries (SADC). This demographic variation contributes to a more nuanced interpretation of the study's results and the diverse perspectives that it captures.

According to Meyer (2015), online surveys may prove more convenient and cost-effective, but they may present challenges linked to self-selection and the lack of control over the study setting. For this study, to ensure control over the setting of the study, I only used the data pertaining to undergraduate law students who completed the online survey.

Figure 3.3

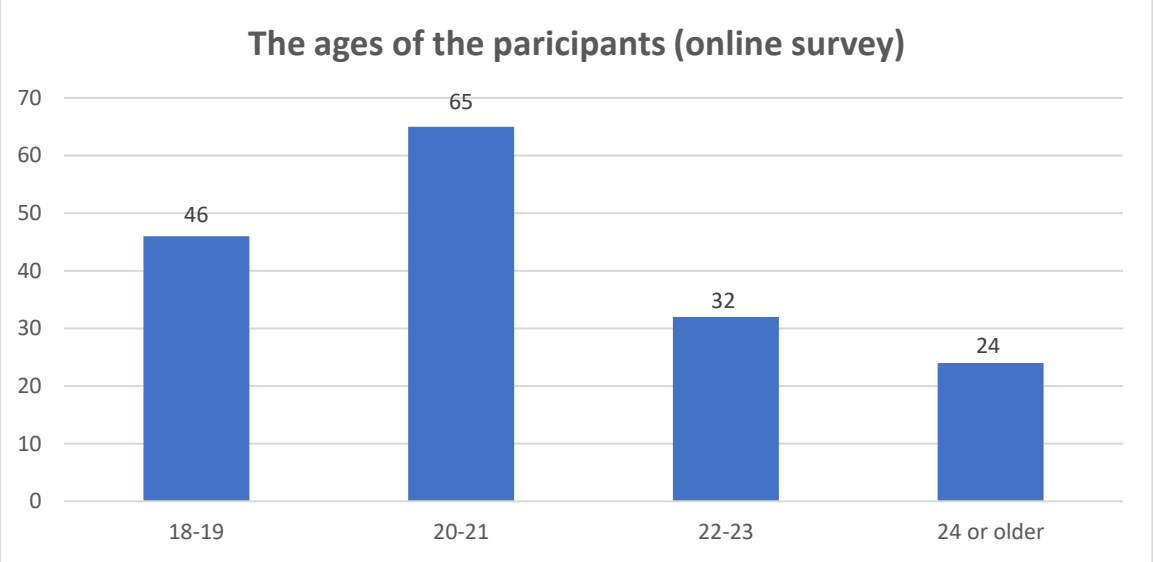
The gender profile of the participants (online survey)



Among the 167 participants (n=167) in the online survey, the gender distribution was as follows: 50 participants (n=50) identified as female, 116 participants (n=116) as male, and one participant (n=1) identified neither as male nor female, falling into the 'Other' category. Understanding the composition of the participants' gender profile enriched the comprehensiveness of the online survey data, and enhanced the capacity to draw nuanced conclusions from the study.

Figure 3.4

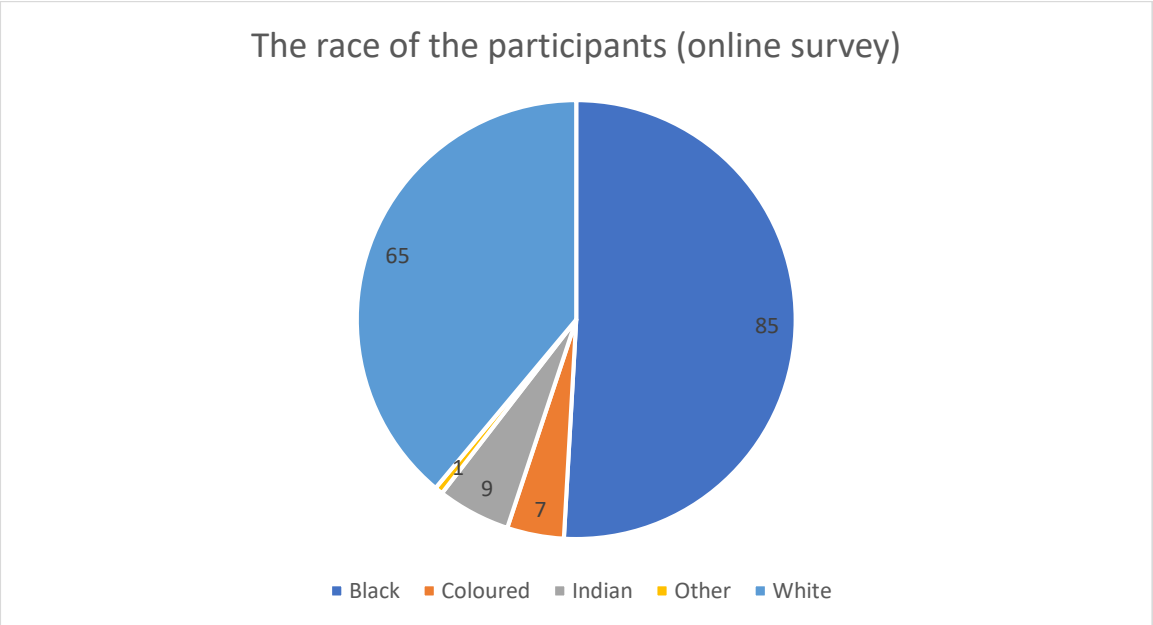
The ages of the participants (online survey)



Among the 167 participants (n=167) in the online survey, 46 participants (n=46) fell within the 18-19 age range, 65 participants (n=65) were 20-21, 32 participants (n=32) were aged 22-23, and 24 participants (n=24) were aged 24 years or older. This breakdown provides a nuanced understanding of the age demographics within the surveyed group.

Figure 3.5

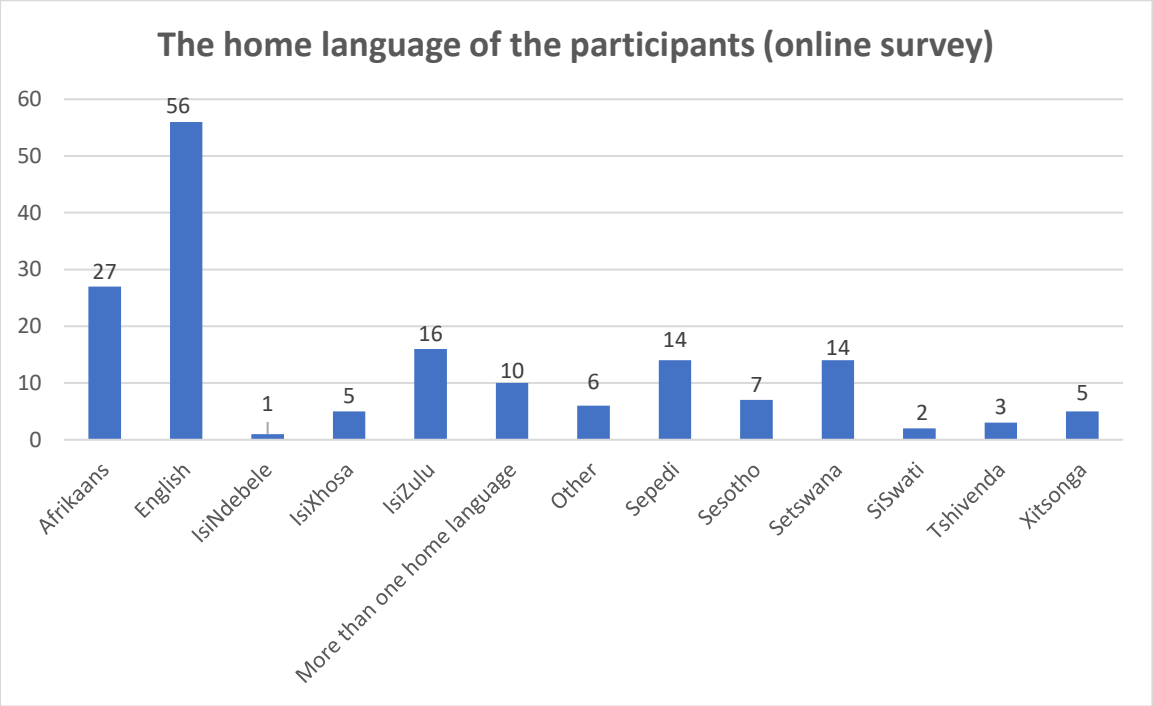
The race of the participants (online survey)



Of the 167 participants (n=167) in the online survey, 85 participants (n=85) identified as Black, seven participants (n=7) as Coloured, nine participants (n=9) as Indian, and 65 participants (n=65) as White. Additionally, one participant (n=1) identified with a race that did not fit into these categories, and fell under 'Other'. This comprehensive overview of the racial composition highlights the diversity within the sample, providing valuable insights into the perspectives and experiences of individuals from various racial backgrounds.

Figure 3.6

The home language of the participants (online survey)



Out of a total of 167 participants (n=167) 27 participants (n=27) spoke Afrikaans, 56 participants (n=56) spoke English, one participant (n=1) spoke IsiNdebele, five participants (n=5) spoke IsiXhosa, 16 participants (n=16) spoke IsiZulu, 14 participants (n=14) spoke Sepedi, seven participants (n=7) spoke Sesotho, 14 participants (n=14) spoke Setswana, two participants (n=2) spoke SiSwati, three participants (n=3) spoke Tshivenda, and five participants (n=5) spoke Xitsonga as their home languages. Additionally, ten participants (n=10) spoke more than one home language, and six participants (n=6) spoke a home language that was not a South African language (Other). This diverse linguistic representation highlights the richness of language backgrounds among the online survey participants.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

3.4.1 Data collection process

The online survey was created after extensive discussion with the institution's faculty leadership, student support services, and a group of well-being researchers. It included a single main question, “What contributes to your well-being at the university?” It also gathered information about the participants’ background, including citizenship, province, race, language, gender, age, degree programme, and home language.

The Department of Institutional Planning at a university in Gauteng distributed an online survey in September 2020 to determine how well-being presents among undergraduate students. It was directed at all enrolled undergraduate students from all faculties. However, for the purpose of this study, I solely analysed the information gathered from undergraduate law students.

As mentioned above, students were sent one question, which they responded to by opening the link that was sent to them via their university-allocated student email addresses. The students also received a reminder email. After completing the survey, the participants clicked on the submit option online. This data was then narrowed down to all of the law students majoring in LLB, BCom Law, and BA Law to fit the focus of this study. The online survey received responses from 167 undergraduate law students. Thereafter, Microsoft Excel was used to record the information, which was kept private and anonymous. Timestamped responses to the online survey were recorded along with the specific dates that each participant responded. The spreadsheet is secured with a password to maintain the confidentiality of the data.

Due to its convenience and accessibility, online survey data collection is a common approach for gathering data in research investigations (Fosnacht et al., 2018). For the current study, using data from an online survey made sense because it provided access to the typed responses (raw data) to answer the main research question. Also, by using this method of data gathering, less translation is required (Creswell, 2014b).

Online surveys are more common than ever due to technological improvements in a variety of disciplines, including psychology and sociology (Göritz, 2014). One of the advantages of online survey data gathering is its capacity to reach a vast and diverse audience, which can boost the generalisability of the findings (Kaplowitz et al., 2018). Online surveys can also lessen the possibility of social desirability bias because the participants are able to respond to questions in a more private and anonymous context (Wright & King, 2019).

Online surveys do have some limitations though. In comparison with traditional surveys using paper and pencil, response rates may be lower (Wright & King, 2019). Another limitation is that not everyone has access to the internet or may be less likely to engage in online surveys, resulting in questions about the representativeness of the sample (Fosnacht et al., 2018). However, researchers can employ a variety of tactics to get around some of these limitations, including providing incentives, targeting particular groups, and employing different recruitment techniques (Kaplowitz et al., 2018).

The study for the focus group was carried out by a social sciences researcher from the same university. Four undergraduate law students participated in the semi-structured focus group in 2019. The interviewer engaged the participants and posed questions about the well-being of the students, as captured in writing in advance. Examples of the questions posed included: "What do you think in your life contributes to your wellness as a student law student?" and "What keeps you from being well?" (refer to Appendix A). The students then participated in an open discussion in which they shared their ideas and experiences in response to structured questions. This conversation was captured on audio. Following that, the recorded participants' statements were transcribed using their own words. The interaction between the interviewer and the participants was then recorded using a table format in Microsoft Word. This data is also password-protected to make sure that only the researchers can access it.

The focus group provided information for the study's secondary questions, where ideas and experiences relating to how well-being presents in the lives of undergraduate law students were shared by the participants. The researcher gained some useful insights into their worlds from this data. This technique allowed the focus group facilitator and the participants to have a free and open discussion, while also allowing the facilitator to solicit clarification on, and participation in the topics that were covered (Creswell, 2014b).

Focus groups are a type of qualitative research technique where information is gathered from a group of people with related traits or experiences (Morgan, 2018). In a group situation, this approach helps to explore complex topics and comprehend the viewpoints and experiences of others (Krueger & Casey, 2015). One benefit of focus groups is their capacity to produce in-depth, rich data that can reveal the views and life experiences of the participants (Kitzinger, 2019). Focus groups can also help with the discovery of common themes and patterns that can aid researchers in gaining a deeper understanding of the proposed study (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

Focus groups do have certain limitations though. For instance, because the sample size is often small and non-representative, the results might not be generalizable to a larger population (Kitzinger, 2019). Furthermore, there can be issues with how group dynamics affect the findings, such as the effect of social desirability bias or dominating group members (Morgan, 2018). Researchers can employ a variety of tactics to overcome these constraints, such as ensuring that the sample is diverse, having clear ground rules for the conversation, and employing the assistance of skilled moderators (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

3.4.2 Instruments

The data were gathered using two instruments: an online survey was conducted in 2020 and a focus group interview was carried out in 2019. The participants first responded to an online survey, and the previous researcher then transferred their responses to an Excel spreadsheet, where they were all captured in one document. The focus group was the second instrument, and the responses from the participants were audio-recorded, transcribed, and then recorded into a Word document.

An online survey is described as a data-collection tool in which a target sample is provided a set of survey questions, and the sample members can then respond to the questions online (Creswell, 2014a). Braun et al. (2021) note that online qualitative surveys have the advantage of being open and flexible, which makes them ideal for addressing a wide range of research questions of interest to the researchers. This is effective as it provides access to a range of data, i.e. people's perspectives, experiences, representational and meaning-making practices, and so forth. The disadvantage of online surveys is that they are often viewed as inflexible and rigid tools for qualitative research as they do not provide a chance to probe the participants' accounts or ask further questions, resulting in thin and insufficient data (Davey et al., 2019). In an effort to address this disadvantage, the original researcher complemented the online survey with focus groups to provide data that were adequate in depth, and rich in content.

Focus groups are used in qualitative research and consist of a small group of carefully selected participants who participate in open discussions or interviews for research purposes (Creswell, 2014a). The original study's researcher carefully selected the participants from the target population for the study. A small sample of participants was representative of the wider audience that the researcher aimed to reach. One advantage of using a focus group is that it is a quick and convenient way to collect data from several people at the same time using group interactions as a tool (Kitzinger, 2013). Furthermore, this method was useful for the exploration

of the participants' experiences and clarification of their views regarding how well-being presents in undergraduate law students. This helped uncover shared or common knowledge, as well as the experiences of the participants regarding this topic. Focus groups do have the disadvantage that participants may compromise confidentiality (Kitzinger, 2013). In order to mitigate this problem, the participants were asked to sign an informed confidentiality form.

In the current study, the synergy between the focus group and online survey enabled me to capture a nuanced, comprehensive, and representative picture of the factors influencing the participants' well-being. Additionally, the use of multiple research methods allowed for triangulation of the findings, enhancing the reliability and validity of the study. Consistent patterns through different methods strengthened the overall conclusions. Furthermore, the focus group captured the depth of individual experiences, while the online survey ensured a broader representation of diverse perspectives. Therefore, both the focus group and the online survey offered a more holistic view of the complexities surrounding the well-being of undergraduate law students.

3.4.3 Data bank/data storage

Data storage plays a critical role in the research process. Proper data storage ensures that the data is stored securely in order to be accessed and reused in the future (Fox & Easpaig, 2021). There are several safeguards that a researcher can employ to ensure that data are stored securely, including keeping electronic files password-protected, locking physical storage areas, or using a secure cloud-based storage service (National Science Foundation, 2011).

For the purpose of this research, an online data bank was used to keep the data safe (Fox & Easpaig, 2021). An electronic file in the form of a spreadsheet was created in Microsoft Excel, which was password-protected to maintain the confidentiality of the data with only myself and my supervisor having access to the data for both the online survey and the focus group. I further saved the data in different locations to prevent the data from being lost due to theft and hardware failures (National Science Foundation, 2011).

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

An inductive thematic analysis was used to understand the participants' responses. This approach's major goal is to release research findings from the dominating, frequent, and significant themes present in the raw data without being constrained by formal procedures

(Braun et al., 2021; Braun & Clarke, 2013). The inductive thematic analysis in this study regarding well-being was guided by the PACES model (Nelson et al., 2015).

I chose an inductive thematic data analysis because its main focus is centred on the content of the data. The procedure entails carefully reading and rereading the data, generating initial codes, combining codes into possible themes, reviewing and improving themes, and identifying and labelling themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021a). As a result, I linked the goals and the summary findings together based on the raw data (Mihas, 2019). As such, my efforts were focused on determining the experiences, views, values, opinions, and knowledge of the participants from an existing set of qualitative data. Thus, an inductive theme analysis was deemed appropriate for use in this study (Azungah, 2018; Guest et al., 2012).

According to Braun and Clarke (2021b), inductive thematic data analysis is a versatile and user-friendly method for analysing qualitative data that enables the investigation of many viewpoints and experiences. In addition, inductive thematic data analysis enables the development of fresh themes and patterns that earlier theoretical frameworks might not have foreseen. It also allows for a more in-depth and nuanced analysis of the data because it is based on the participants' own words and experiences. Meanwhile, it can also be utilised when there has been little prior research or when there is not enough literature on a subject. Inductive thematic data analysis can be used with a variety of data types, such as open-ended survey responses, focus groups, and interviews.

However, this type of analysis has limitations. Firstly, considering that it requires manually examining and coding substantial amounts of data, it might be time-consuming and labour-intensive. Secondly, it may be challenging to compare results between studies or to expand on prior research if there are no pre-existing theoretical frameworks. Thirdly, the themes and categories found are dependent on the researcher's interpretation of the data, so there is a chance of researcher bias. Inductive thematic analysis is also criticised for lacking rigour since it lacks an established analytical framework.

In this study, I used the six-phase process advocated by Braun and Clarke (2019), which facilitated the analysis and assisted me in recognising and attending to the crucial thematic analysis components. The PACES model of well-being was chosen as the conceptual framework to identify themes, and analyse and integrate data using the six-phase process. Braun and Clarke (2019) outline the six-phase process as follows:

1. Familiarisation with the data: to get to know the data well, I had to read and reread the entire dataset.

2. Generating initial codes: next, I applied coding to the pertinent elements of the dataset in an organised order throughout the full dataset.

3. Generating themes: I grouped the codes into possible themes and gathered relevant information.

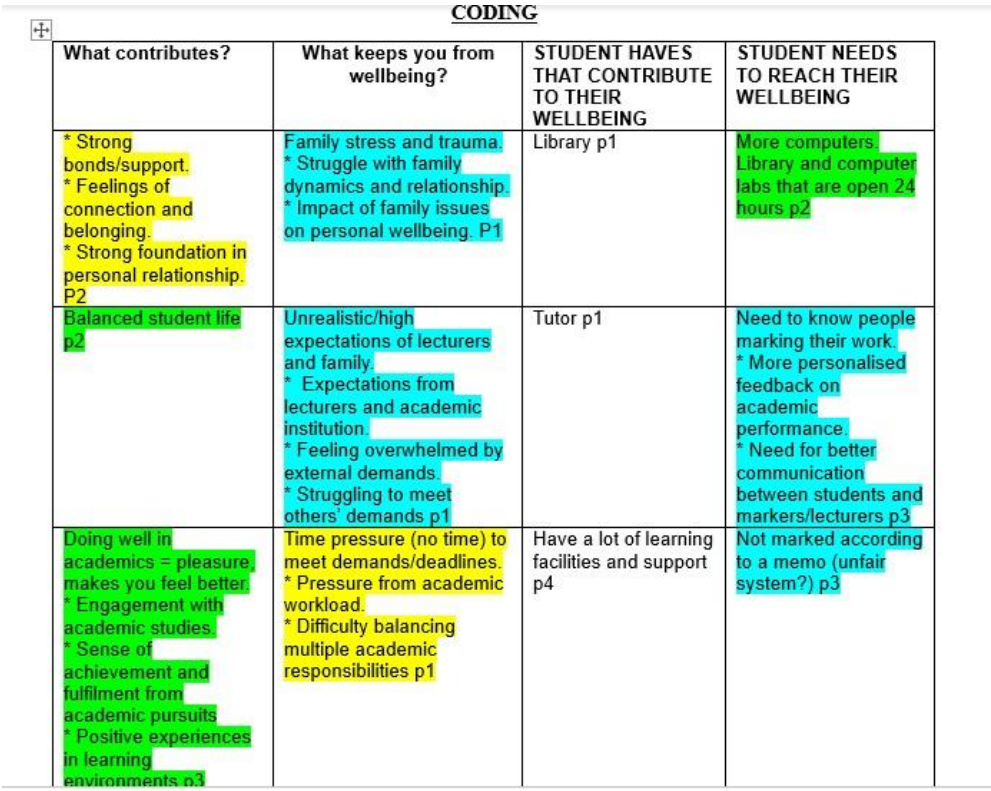
4. Reviewing potential themes: I then evaluated whether the themes made sense in relation to the coded extracts and the entire dataset, resulting in a thematic 'map' of the analysis.

5. Defining and naming themes: I came up with concise definitions and titles for the themes, and through continuous analysis, I improved the details of each theme.

6. Producing the report: lastly, I conducted a final analysis of the selected extracts and then produced a report.

Figure 3.7

A picture of the notes during the inductive thematic data analysis



CODING

What contributes?	What keeps you from wellbeing?	STUDENT HAVES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR WELLBEING	STUDENT NEEDS TO REACH THEIR WELLBEING
* Strong bonds/support. * Feelings of connection and belonging. * Strong foundation in personal relationship. P2	Family stress and trauma. * Struggle with family dynamics and relationship. * Impact of family issues on personal wellbeing. P1	Library p1	More computers. Library and computer labs that are open 24 hours p2
Balanced student life p2	Unrealistic/high expectations of lecturers and family. * Expectations from lecturers and academic institution. * Feeling overwhelmed by external demands. * Struggling to meet others' demands p1	Tutor p1	Need to know people marking their work. * More personalised feedback on academic performance. * Need for better communication between students and markers/lecturers p3
Doing well in academics = pleasure, makes you feel better. * Engagement with academic studies. * Sense of achievement and fulfilment from academic pursuits. * Positive experiences in learning environments p3	Time pressure (no time) to meet demands/deadlines. * Pressure from academic workload. * Difficulty balancing multiple academic responsibilities p1	Have a lot of learning facilities and support p4	Not marked according to a memo (unfair system?) p3

Both the focus group and the online survey data were analysed simultaneously because the data dealt with the same phenomenon and the answers were interrelated. The data analysis of the study uncovered three main themes along with corresponding sub-themes, which were derived

from inputs gathered through both the focus group discussion and the online survey. The participants were requested to give their perspectives as law students on well-being in their field of study. While some responses were presented or quoted in tables, others were exclusively from the focus group due to the online survey's limited scope, which only addressed specific aspects of the themes. Consequently, there was limited additional data available from the online survey to accommodate other themes.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the institution where the study was conducted on 1 September 2022 (Ethics number: EDU068/22). In psychology and other disciplines, ethical considerations play a significant role in research. According to Creswell (2014a), before undertaking a study, the researcher must consider the ethical guidelines so as to uphold and promote the ethical standards required in research. This entails safeguarding the welfare and rights of research participants, as well as preserving the objectivity and legitimacy of the research process. Therefore, the ethical aspect of this study, i.e. informed permission, confidentiality, and the avoidance of deception, was ensured by strict adherence to the ethical standards established for researchers at the University and also by the Health Profession Counsel of South Africa (HPCSA).

The university where this study was conducted also granted ethical approval for the ongoing study (HUM0180232HS). This ethical clearance includes the ideals of participation being voluntary, anonymous, and confidential. Furthermore, all of the participants signed an informed consent form. The participants in the focus group also agreed to keep all discussions confidential. All participants were protected from harm, and honesty was encouraged. Eliminating jargon or ambiguity was essential to ensuring that the participants understood the questions asked in the focus group and online survey.

In the case of any sensitive, contentious, controversial, or embarrassing content being revealed that the participants may have found upsetting, they were given the option to discontinue participation and were then directed to Student Counselling for possible counselling (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2013; Reid et al., 2018). During the focus group, there were no students who discontinued participation. Only responses that were fully complete were included in the online survey. To safeguard the transcribed data of the participants in both the focus group and the online survey, the collected data were also locked away or password-protected, with only the researchers on the team having access to the data.

3.6.1 Voluntary participation

The participants were given the opportunity to choose whether or not to participate in the research, with no pressure to do so (Boddy, 2016b). The participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time and point in their participation (Creswell, 2014a; Ward & Delamont, 2020).

3.6.2 Informed consent

Before agreeing to participate in a research project, information must be disclosed to the potential participants regarding the study's purpose, any potential risks and benefits, as well as their rights and obligations; this is known as informed consent (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2017; Norris et al., 2006; Patel et al., 2016). Informed consent is a critical component of research ethics. In this study, all of the focus group participants signed informed consent forms after the study was explained to them. During the online survey, the participants indicated their consent electronically after a short description of the survey was provided.

3.6.3 Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity

These ethical considerations are strongly connected. The privacy of the participants was of the utmost importance. Privacy refers to the control that participants have over their personal information (Singh & Wassenaar, 2016). Anonymity describes how the identity of the participants is kept secret (Ferreira et al., 2015). Confidentiality refers to the protection of the information provided by participants and how it is going to be used (Ferreira et al., 2015). The participants were asked for consent before any interviews could commence. The identities of the participants were also not utilised when reporting on the findings of this study.

3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted at only one South African university. Expanding data collection to conduct research with students at other universities may enrich the findings. Additionally, the study was only done on undergraduate students. Furthermore, this specific study focused on undergraduate law students. Although analyses of students from other faculties are ongoing, comparison between faculties could potentially be insightful.

As previously mentioned, as the researcher, I conducted a secondary data analysis, making use of existing data (Rubin & Babbie, 2016), and therefore was not a part of the initial research team (Beck, 2019; Heaton, 2008). This may have the advantage of a fresh perspective on the

dataset, but it may also have a limitation in that I might be slightly 'removed' from the dynamics of data collection on this phenomenon and the resultant findings. In that case, it was important to carefully examine the data intensively, along with the descriptions of the data collection processes to ensure that the importance and quality of the data were consistent with the study's aims (Boslaugh, 2007; Elliott, 2015). The time spent on data collection could therefore, in this case, be spent on more comprehensive and in-depth data analysis.

3.8 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

When a study collects accurate and trustworthy data, and measures the variables it sets out to do, it is deemed legitimate (Cypress, 2017). To ensure the validity of this study, valid measures such as triangulation, member verification, and peer debriefing were utilised to ensure the validity and reliability of the results (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The data were also collected before (focus group) and during the COVID-19 pandemic (online survey).

Furthermore, while the research findings cannot be applied to a larger population of undergraduate law students in South Africa (Noble & Smith, 2015), the diversity of the participants in this study may mean that the findings do find resonance elsewhere. To ensure reliability, both I and the original researcher used established techniques and protocols, and maintained consistency in data collection and analysis (Nowell et al., 2017; Polit & Beck, 2008).

This study employed a secondary data analysis, which was beneficial in gaining access to a variety of diverse and representative groups through the use of a variety of data sources, such as an online survey and a focus group. This allowed more accurate estimates of effects to be obtained (Curran et al., 2016).

3.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined and explained the research methodology of both this study and the original research. The research approach and paradigm, the research design, the data collection methods, the data analysis methods, the ethical considerations, and the research limitations and strengths of the study were explored in detail. In the following chapter, the results of this study are presented.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the findings of this study are presented based on the analysis of the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data collected during the focus group discussion and online survey. The discussion of the findings is enriched by excerpts from the data, which serve to illustrate and support the identified themes and sub-themes. Additionally, the connection between the findings and existing literature on this topic is explored.

4.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND KEY THEMES

The data analysis uncovered three main themes along with corresponding sub-themes. These themes are subsequently elaborated upon in the following sections. The participants were asked to respond verbally (focus group) and in writing/electronically (online survey) to questions concerning their perspectives as law students regarding their own well-being. Direct quotes from the focus group and/or online survey are provided for each theme. Tables 4.1 to 4.5 present data from both the focus group and online survey. However, from Table 4.6 onward, only the focus group data is utilised. This decision was made because the focus group provided more in-depth insights, whereas the online survey comprised only one question addressing a specific aspect of the themes. As a result, there was limited additional data that could be extracted from the online survey to fit other themes. I prioritised giving weight to the comprehensive responses shared in the focus group discussions to give credibility to the views expressed. The themes and sub-themes are summarised in the following table.

Table 4.1
Overview of themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Theme 1: Contributions to the well-being of law students.	1.1 Presence of social support and belonging. 1.2 Academic fulfilment and balance. 1.3 Student safety on campus.
Theme 2: Hindrances to the well-being of law students	2.1 Academic challenges and pressures. 2.2 Unhealthy or negative coping mechanisms. 2.3 Personal challenges.
Theme 3: Factors that enrich the well-being of law students.	3.1 Accessibility and support. 3.2 Prioritisation of mental health. 3.3 Fostering student community and engagement.

4.2.1 Theme 1: Contributions to the well-being of law students

Contributions to well-being encompass various factors, practices, and support structures that positively influence an individual's overall state of wellness. These contributions can be economic, social, and health-related, and are essential components of a holistic approach to promoting health and happiness in an individual's life (Tov, 2018). Because well-being is very subjective, different factors contribute differently to an individual's well-being. Therefore, what may enhance one person's well-being may not necessarily have the same effect on someone else.

4.2.1.1 The presence of social support and belonging

Based on the responses of the participating law students, the presence of social support and belonging was perceived as a significant factor in their well-being and academic success. Social support comes in different forms, such as emotional support, instrumental support, information support, or appraisal support (Liu et al., 2021). This tangible or non-tangible support was provided by their social networks (family ties, friendships, professors, classmates, acquaintances, and even accessional encouragement from strangers) (Liu et al., 2021). It played a crucial role in helping these law students feel cared for, and in fostering a sense of belonging and worth to help them cope better with stress and illness, and endure hardships and other stressful life challenges. Furthermore, a sense of belonging is recognised as a key component in positive experiences of university life, and is associated with successful transition and integration (Gopalan & Brady, 2020).

The participants in both the focus group and the online survey mentioned that strong bonds and supportive relationships with family and friends had a positive impact on their lives. They stated that it was a crucial component that added to their well-being, giving them a sense of belonging and a feeling of being cared for. The participants highlighted the importance of support from family and friends, and a supportive home structure. These relationships served as pillars of support, nurturing the students emotionally and academically. The participants also emphasised the support, care and guidance given by lecturers, as well as the importance of a good academic support system. The responses highlighted the significance of human interaction, spending time with friends and loved ones, being on campus with friends, and staying at the student residence as contributors to these students' well-being. This highlights the intrinsic value of connection in promoting well-being. Whether it was within their families,

social circles, or academic environment, a supportive network was reported to foster resilience, and it enabled these students to navigate challenges with greater ease.

Furthermore, the participants emphasised the significance of a supportive environment, at home, within their social circles, and at the university, in paving the way for them to be able to seek emotional support, therapy, and generally talk to someone about the challenges that they faced being away from home and being a student. The participants' responses emphasised the interconnectedness between personal relationships, familial support, and academic success. They indicated that a harmonious environment both at home and within the university community played a pivotal role in enhancing their overall well-being. The following table presents extracts from the data to illustrate these responses. The numbers in brackets e.g. (p 15) in the tables presenting the evidence represent assigned participant numbers.

Table 4.2

Presence of social support and belonging

Focus group	Online survey
"I would say definitely I think a strong … foundation in terms of family and friends."	"My Friends" (p15, p16, p89).
"Okay … also like she said like a strong support system and … I think a balanced student life is definitely something that contributes to being."	"Time spent with friends and loved ones" (p20, p40, p123).
".. and I think it's the same with you with your relationships and your friends and your family if things are good at home then that really helps to support you in your studies and in every other aspect same with your friend but if … there's drama at home or drama with your friends then you know that's gonna… that's gonna be subtracting from it so I think it's just about you know kind of finding the balance..."	"Being on campus with friends" (p23).
	"Support of family, friends and lecturers" (p26, p77, p107, p131, 132, 133, p141, p145, p163).
	"Knowing that I have constant support at all levels - whether that be academic or emotional and beyond" (p14).
	"Lecturers who actually care about their students" (p32).

Focus group	Online survey
	"Seeing friends, talking to people, being social" (p34, p96, p110, p149).
	"…a supportive home structure" (p38, 148).
	"Staying at my residence" (p36).
	"My family, friends and faculty support" "Good academic support system" (p42, p55, p69, p71, p86, p88, p127, p152, p160).
	"…social support" (p73).
	"Talking to someone about the challenges I face from home and being a student too" (p75). "Therapy afforded by *" (p164).
	"Going to lectures, interacting with fellow students and having the freedom of movement to leave the house. I also have joined many clubs between first and second year. My favourite club to attend was * and the *. * Club was nothing revolutionary. Most of the time we simply 'hung out.' Every Wednesday or Thursday for about an hour or so, but it was something to look forward to. The * had a music/poetry show before lockdown which I attended and recited a piece of writing. I enjoyed this too. These were the reasons I left my home in * to come and study at *. Yes, it's tough sometimes to live alone. But I liked my life there. So, in summary, human interaction contributes to my well-being" (p94).
	"An interactive residence environment, good support structures, good friends, and working consistently in academics" (p167).

These responses align with research findings that highlight the positive impact of social support and belonging on students' well-being and academic engagement. As noted by Cobo-Rendón et al. (2020), the sense of belonging, social connections, and support from various sources (friends, family, and academic environment) are crucial for fostering a positive academic experience. These also contribute to the overall well-being of university students, particularly

in the context of law students. Moreover, the participants' responses and the research findings collectively emphasised the multifaceted nature of social support and belonging in contributing to law students' well-being. Such factors play a crucial role in creating a supportive and inclusive environment that enhances students' academic success and overall quality of life.

Furthermore, research suggests that individuals who perceive higher levels of social support tend to experience lower levels of stress, depression, and anxiety, and exhibit greater resilience in the face of academic and personal challenges (Carmona-Halty et al., 2021). Recent literature emphasises the importance of supportive relationships within the academic context, particularly the role of faculty members and academic mentors in fostering student success and well-being (Crego et al., 2016). Moreover, positive interactions with lecturers, characterised by empathy, guidance, and encouragement, have been associated with higher levels of student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement (Quaye et al., 2019).

4.2.1.2 Academic fulfilment and balance

Academic fulfilment and balance centres around the concept of achieving academic success while maintaining a balanced lifestyle (Bartlett et al., 2021). It emphasises the satisfaction derived from engaging with academic studies, achieving personal and educational goals, and experiencing a positive learning environment (Bartlett et al., 2021). The participants highlighted achieving academic fulfilment and balance in various aspects of their university experience as important factors that contributed significantly to their overall well-being as law students.

The participants expressed a strong connection between academic engagement and their overall well-being. As such, engagement with academic studies was identified as a key contributor to a sense of achievement and fulfilment. Positive experiences in learning environments, including interactive lectures and meaningful coursework, were also highlighted.

The participants associated a sense of achievement and fulfilment with their academic pursuits. Doing well in their studies was viewed as a source of pleasure that positively influenced their overall well-being. Furthermore, the intrinsic satisfaction derived from academic accomplishment seemed to contribute to a positive and fulfilling student experience, as well as overall well-being.

Maintaining a balanced lifestyle also emerged as a crucial aspect of achieving academic fulfilment and overall well-being. The participants recognised the importance of finding a

balance between academic commitments and personal activities. Having a balanced lifestyle, engaging in extracurricular activities, and pursuing hobbies outside of their studies were identified as essential components of maintaining overall balance and maintaining a healthy state of mind. Alternatively, the participants acknowledged that a little bit of stress, when viewed as a motivational factor, could contribute to a sense of accountability. As such, stress was perceived as a driving force that encouraged the students to meet academic challenges and fulfil their responsibilities, adding positively to their well-being.

A clear state of mind was also identified as a crucial element in achieving academic fulfilment and balance. The participants emphasised the importance of mental clarity in navigating the complexities of their academic journey.

Engaging in extracurricular activities beyond academics was also highlighted as a means to find balance, fulfilment, and to maintain overall well-being. The participants emphasised the significance of pursuing hobbies and interests outside the academic sphere to maintain a well-rounded and enriching university experience. Furthermore, they recognised the value of holistic development and personal growth beyond academic achievements. The table below presents extracts from the data to illustrate the participants' responses.

Table 4.3

Academic fulfilment and balance

Focus group	Online survey
"I think a balanced student life is definitely something that contributes to well-being…"	"I try take some time for myself to focus on myself and properly relax" (p4, p67, p104, p106). "Having downtime to recuperate from stressful times not in the form of sleep and solitude" (p67, p122, p125, p130, p153, p155, p161).
"…so, like your academics either you can get immense pleasure from it and you can really be like doing well and then that will make you feel better and you'll actually, you know … your well-being improves. I think stress to a certain extent is good but … just to pressure you into doing work. I think it's just about you know kind of finding the balance where you've got enough stuff that's actually contributing to wellness and less that's subtracting from it…"	"A good balanced lifestyle, a routine, spending time with friends and res life" (p5, p22, p31, p45, p46, p50, p58, p79, p81, p91, p149). "A work-life balance..." (p17, p61, p135).
"I find that what gives good wellness is a clear state of mind …"	"Listening to music" (p12, p70, p151).

Focus group	Online survey
	"Feeling like I'm in control of my schoolwork and managing my stress" (p18, p66, p101, p109, p117). "Studying under pressure and eating healthy" (p49).
	"Ability to maintain a good academic average" (p25, p136).
	"Doing activities outside of my academic work" (p42). "Working out, reading, hiking, football" (p39, p44, p59, p93, p95, p105, p143).
	"Time management" (p76, p165). "Being able to get everything done on time" (p85).

These responses align with the research findings, which show the impact of stress management, work-life balance, and healthy lifestyle behaviours on students' mental health and well-being. Studies have consistently shown that active involvement in academic pursuits leads to a higher level of satisfaction, achievement, and personal fulfilment (Filgona et al., 2020; Fredricks et al., 2004). Engaging classroom experiences, such as having interactive lecturers and meaningful coursework, have been associated with increased student motivation, enjoyment of learning, and psychological well-being (Halverson & Graham, 2019; Handelsman et al., 2005).

Maintaining a balanced lifestyle, as highlighted by the participants, is supported in the literature as research suggests that students who effectively manage their academic responsibilities alongside personal activities experience reduced stress levels and improved overall well-being (Barbayannis et al., 2022). This balance is crucial for students to avoid burnout, maintain mental health, and achieve academic success. Moreover, engaging in extra-mural activities and pursuing hobbies outside of academia have been shown to enhance resilience, foster social connections, and promote psychological health among students (King et al., 2021).

The literature indicates that moderate levels of stress can indeed serve as a motivator for academic success, corroborating the participants' views (Conley et al., 2015). When perceived positively, stress can enhance students' focus, determination, and performance, leading to a sense of accomplishment and personal growth (Cho et al., 2021). The participants' emphasis on finding a balance between academic engagement and activities that contribute to wellness reflects the importance of holistic approaches to student well-being, and the promotion of healthy lifestyle behaviours.

4.2.1.3 Student safety on campus

Student safety on campus encompasses the collective measures, protocols, and environments designed to ensure the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of students within the university premises (Huang et al., 2022). It encompasses a broad spectrum of concerns, including, but not limited to protection from physical harm, prevention of harassment and discrimination, access to mental health support services, and the creation of a conducive atmosphere for learning and personal development (Maier & DePrince, 2020). Ensuring safety on campus is crucial for promoting an environment where individuals can thrive academically and personally. This includes promoting a sense of security, trust, and inclusivity that enables students to fully engage in their academic pursuits and extracurricular activities without fear or hindrance. The participants reported that they felt safe on campus, and that having a good security system in place contributed to their well-being on campus. At the institution where the study was conducted, access to the campus is regulated. If an individual is not a registered student or staff member at the university and if they cannot present a student/staff card, then they will not be allowed entry. This helped the students in this study to feel free and safe on campus.

However, gender differences in perceptions of safety were evident, with male participants generally feeling safer on campus compared to their female counterparts. The female participants expressed concerns about safety, especially when walking alone at night. Some participants highlighted biological factors, such as physical stature, that influenced their feelings of safety on campus. They mentioned that certain physical attributes may provide a sense of protection, particularly for male students. The participants acknowledged the need for reporting safety incidents on campus, whilst also noting that many cases may go unreported. This emphasises the need for enhanced awareness and reporting mechanisms. While they acknowledged the relative safety of the campus compared to external environments, they also recognised that it is not entirely risk-free. They then discussed the importance of being vigilant, especially at certain times or in poorly lit areas on campus. Table 4.4 presents extracts from the data to illustrate these points.

Table 4.4
Student safety on campus

Focus group	Online survey
"I feel safe on campus because only specific people are allowed entry onto campus that doesn't necessarily mean a rapist a person who molest wouldn't come onto campus, I just think … specifically that I'm a male as well, I have certain biological factors that allow me to protect myself more than that over females obviously."	"A safe environment" (p14). "…safety" (p28, p92).
"I think like campus is a safe space but it's only as safe as the people that come onto campus; if you have a sociopath on your campus, it's not necessarily a safe space for anyone within twenty metres of that person."	"…having the freedom of movement to leave the house" (p94).
"…so in reality you know campus is a lot safer than outside of campus it's not like a hundred percent safe..."	
"…I feel safe on campus because only specific people are allowed entry onto campus…"	
"As a male, yes, I feel safe."	
"Ja, as quite a small statured female, I'm not gonna lie, okay, on campus I feel quite safe, but at night after walking out a test at eight o'clock at night walking on campus is not really well lit is kind of …you're a little more on guard, ja."	
"…so, in reality you know campus is a lot safer than outside of campus it's not like a hundred percent safe we've had cases … it just doesn't get, like, reported to … media so nobody knows about it…"	
"…I think we have to say that yes okay in reality at least the campus is rather safe and you know walking to reses not like the worst thing ever but it does still play a psychological role where I feel like you should be fine, you know, if you want to walk naked around campus well obviously, like, that's public indecency, but you should still be able to feel safe…"	

The literature on campus safety aligns with the findings of this study, indicating that a well-established security system contributes significantly to students' perception of safety on campus (Alhaza et al., 2021). Schafer et al. (2018) underscore the importance of controlled access to campus facilities, with restricted entry for non-registered individuals, as a crucial aspect of ensuring safety on campus.

However, gender differences in perception of safety are a consistent theme in research on campus safety (Polko & Kimic, 2022), which has been confirmed in the current study. Female students often report feeling less safe on campus compared to their male counterparts, citing concerns about walking alone at night, and vulnerability to potential threats (Logan & Walker, 2021). Biological factors such as physical stature may indeed influence the perception of safety, with larger individuals feeling more confident in their ability to defend themselves (Slavich, 2020).

4.2.2 Theme 2: hindrances to the well-being of law students

Navigating the university experience is a transformative journey for law students marked by academic growth, personal development, and new opportunities. Yet, amidst the pursuit of knowledge and achievement, students often encounter challenges that can detract from their overall well-being, especially in a demanding field such as law. The complexities of academic life, coupled with external pressures and personal struggles, can subtract from students' holistic health and happiness in their pursuit of higher education.

4.2.2.1 Academic challenges and pressures

Academic challenges and pressures are present in the pursuit of academic success and excellence. From demanding coursework and rigorous assignments to high-stakes examinations and competitive grading systems, the academic landscape is often characterised by intense pressure to perform at a high level (Bhujade, 2017). Students may experience academic pressure in various forms, including the need to meet strict deadlines, excel in challenging courses, maintain high grades, and fulfil academic expectations set by themselves, their families, and their institutions (Jiang et al., 2022). These pressures can manifest as stress, anxiety, and feelings of inadequacy, significantly impacting students' mental and emotional well-being (Bhujade, 2017).

At university, students often find themselves struggling with numerous academic pressures that can significantly detract from their overall well-being. Among the foremost concerns voiced

by the participants were unrealistic and often high expectations imposed by both lecturers and family members. The weight of academic institutions' expectations, coupled with familial pressures, creates an intense sense of burden on students striving to meet these standards.

A prevalent source of stress highlighted by the participants is the relentless time pressure encountered by law students. The participants highlighted that the continuous struggle to meet the demanding deadlines, and juggling multiple academic responsibilities, left them feeling overwhelmed and strained. Furthermore, they emphasised that the continuous academic workload exacerbated this strain, leading to difficulties in maintaining a balanced lifestyle and managing various coursework obligations effectively.

Moreover, the participants expressed the toll of underperformance in academics and the subsequent sense of falling behind. The fear of failure and the pressure to excel academically loomed over them, contributing to heightened stress levels and diminished well-being among law students. These discussion points are illustrated in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5

Academic challenges and pressures

Focus group	Online survey
"When lecturers expect you to have … time for five other modules plus theirs and they believe that their module is the only one you're taking, it's a bit difficult to juggle that around."	"Workload" (p78).
"…the expectations that other people like … they have like your family and stuff like that, that contributes to stress."	"During online teaching and learning, the faculty has no regard for our well-being, and just overwhelms us with (more than usual) work, despite us having to work under challenging circumstances" (p83).
	"* is no longer contributing anything other than stress" (p84).
	"Less extreme deadlines" (p100).
	"Doing schoolwork helps me focus. But being inundated and overwhelmed like this is giving me stress" (p101).

The literature consistently supports the notion that university students, particularly those in law programmes, face significant academic pressures that impact their well-being. Studies reveal that unrealistic academic expectations from both institutions and family members contribute to

heightened stress levels and psychological strain among students (Aihie et al., 2019). The relentless time pressure and juggling of multiple responsibilities exacerbates feelings of being overwhelmed, and impact students' ability to maintain balance (Barbayannis et al., 2022; Suldo et al., 2008). Additionally, the fear of academic underperformance and the pressure to excel further contribute to stress and diminish overall well-being (Qomariyah et al., 2023).

4.2.2.2 Unhealthy or negative coping mechanisms

Unhealthy or negative coping mechanisms refer to the strategies and behaviours that individuals employ to manage stress, anxiety, and other emotional challenges in ways that are ultimately detrimental to their well-being (Organ et al., 2016). These coping mechanisms often provide temporary relief or distraction from difficult emotions or situations, but can lead to long-term negative consequences. Unhealthy coping mechanisms can manifest in various forms, such as substance abuse, excessive alcohol consumption, self-harm, social withdrawal, and avoidance of problems (Aloka et al., 2024). These behaviours not only undermine students' mental and physical health, but also impede their academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and overall quality of life.

The participants highlighted the normalisation and widespread use of substances such as Ritalin, Concerta, marijuana, and alcohol as means to manage academic pressures and enhance performance. The participants clarified that these substances are often sought after and consumed to address a variety of challenges, including academic stress, and the need to stay awake for prolonged periods to meet deadlines. They further expressed concern over the ease with which drugs are accessed and the normalisation of self-medication without proper understanding of, or consideration for the potential consequences. They also discussed how these substances were perceived differently and used for a range of purposes, from enhancing concentration to coping with emotional distress or social pressures.

However, underlying these discussions is the recognition of the inherent risks and negative repercussions associated with the misuse of these substances. The participants shared anecdotes and observations of individuals experiencing adverse effects, addiction, and mental health complications as a result of their substance use. They emphasised the detrimental impact on physical health, mental well-being, and academic performance, stressing the need for greater awareness and education regarding the risks involved.

Furthermore, the participants discussed the social and cultural factors that contribute to the normalisation and acceptance of substance abuse within university contexts. They mentioned the influence of peer pressure, social dynamics, and the pervasive nature of drug culture in shaping attitudes and behaviours surrounding substance use. Table 4.6 presents extracts regarding this topic.

Table 4.6

Unhealthy or negative coping mechanisms

Focus group	Online survey
"You think you're the only person who's going through it, but I can almost guarantee you when you get to class the next day, there's gonna be twenty people that had just gone through that same kind of trauma but you won't know because you're too scared to speak out as well cause you think it exudes a kind of a weakness about you, where in actuality it it's not really I mean everyone is an emotional being…"	"Drugs" (p146). "Ritalin" (p126).
"I feel like a lot of people also self-diagnose…" "Self-diagnosis self-medications…Never a good thing unless you understand…"	"The strip" (p10).
"…Because he was addicted…And he's also been through the whole thing of friends dying, depression … anxiety specifically, like, copious amounts of anxiety because you are… you feel as though you are not worthy, I find that, that's a big thing for me at university because when I put hard graft in and I get a fifty-eight, I think I'd be way better working for my pops at home in the butchery, you know what I mean…"	
"…it's quite a prevalent thing…drug culture… Why is drug culture not included when we all know it goes on…"	
"In certain instances, though, you could argue that, like, I've been so depressed at certain times because I haven't smoked and then you smoke and then you, like, life isn't that bad. That's the psycho-active altering effect on your ja…"	
"Think ja and… what we don't take… cognisance until there's alcohol is a drug as well."	
"I have friends who I live with who are willing to pay crazy amounts of money for Ritalin. I'm like, you're not even ADD what are you doing? What are you doing? You're gonna… you're gonna destroy your brain, like, stop it and then no, I need to study, I need to study. I need to stay up till four, wake up at five…"	

Focus group	Online survey
"I've even seen on some of the WhatsApp groups people asking for like Ritalin."	
"Oh, okay, I have many friends who are avid users of the substance of marijuana, some of them shouldn't use it cause they're lazy in nature. Others, they need to use it cause they too active, they're too… they don't know how to chill like… you need to relax dude, you've been working for sixteen hours, this is how you get mentally unstable, I think. So there's certain, ja, there's certain things like certain people must just know like what substances you should use and then the quantity you should use them cause I also have certain people on my corridor who are alcoholics who… shake before twelve if they don't, like, a brandy or something, I don't know. Oh my goodness dude it's gotten to a point whereby you need it to sustain yourself. "	
"…the university actually should have some sort of responsibility towards you know alcohol… abuse because we've had some deaths this year… because of alcohol students getting drunk you know there's car accidents…"	
"Under develop minds should be drinking anything, like, I've been drinking since was fourteen. I've had thinks under supress recently for the past years. I'm an avid user of marijuana, avid, and in the past two months, I've subsequently had to stop because of schizophrenia and scares of schizophrenia… I speak on behalf of myself, when you use something to function whether it be Concerta, alcohol, cough syrup in the morning to make you chilled, weed, whatever it is, if you're using it to function, there's a very big problem that you are suppressing."	
"Ja, and just to… bring it back to the… to the Ritalin and Concerta, Concerta issues it in first year. I used Concerta like once to get an assignment done… and it was like in a hectic week and everything and I had to learn all night and concentrate, but I realised that that's just not a good idea. That's actually a very bad idea because I've got friends who I didn't have then, but like I've got friends that actually have to use it that actually you know and… I realised just you know sometimes people think, I… you know you're on Concerta that's like cheating and now you're a super student but the fact is they need it to get equal to the average student… with regards to concentration and I used it to like, you know, boost myself and afterwards I was not myself for at least two days. I think I went forty-five hours without sleep."	

Focus group	Online survey
"…anyway onto this lady that lives next door to me, she didn't know how to prioritise her time, so another person introduces to her take Concerta. Now she's addicted to Concerta, she can't stop using it and when it becomes time for exam season, there's like, you can tell the lips are going crack… I need Concerta, I need to study and then, like, she altered her brain cap, we told her, "are you ADHD, are you ADD?" Not we, I told her, "are you ADD or what are you? Why are you taking Concerta so much?" and she's like, "no, I need it to study" and that's like someone who sniffs cocaine for the first time, does something and then like later on they can't get off of it because now you've changed something of their… and you can't just switch it back, you can't just stop so there and there's, like, it's not like a group of students. I mean it's more often than not; it's like, I would be happy to say 30 to 40% of most modules with strenuous weeks people are popping Concerta, Ritalin - I know there's another one."	

Recent literature supports the participants' observations on the normalisation and widespread use of substances among university students, such as Ritalin, Concerta, marijuana and alcohol, as coping mechanisms for academic pressures. Studies constantly report high rates of substance use among students, driven by various stressors and the need to manage academic demands (McCabe et al., 2017). Students often view these substances as quick solutions to manage stress and enhance concentration (Organ et al., 2016). Research also emphasises the significant risks associated with substance misuse, including adverse effects on physical health, mental well-being, and academic performance (Böke et al., 2019).

4.2.2.3 Personal challenges

Personal challenges stemming from within individuals or their immediate surroundings or a combination of both, can significantly impact a student's well-being and academic success. These challenges can be diverse, encompassing a range of emotional, psychological, and social factors (Park et al., 2020). Internal struggles such as anxiety, depression, and self-doubt can create roadblocks to motivation and engagement. Family situations marked by stress, conflict, or lack of support can add external burdens, while even seemingly mundane obstacles like homesickness or difficulty managing time can take a toll on a student's mental and emotional resources (Pascoe et al., 2020).

One significant personal challenge reported by the participants was the influence of individual vices, such as procrastination and difficulties managing personal behaviours. These tendencies can hinder productivity and exacerbate stress levels, contributing to a sense of overwhelm among law students.

Academic performance struggles, coupled with mental health concerns, present a significant challenge for university students. The participants listed difficulties in achieving academic goals, and the subsequent impact on their mental well-being. These struggles may stem from academic pressure, perfectionism, or challenges in adapting to the demands of university-level coursework. Poor academic performance can lead to feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, and heightened stress levels, contributing to the deterioration of mental health among students.

The participants emphasised that family stress and trauma were also significant obstacles for them and other law students. They mentioned that struggles with family dynamics, relationships, and unresolved family issues could create emotional turmoil, and impact their ability to focus on their studies effectively. The burden of familial responsibilities and conflicts may further exacerbate stress levels and hinder academic performance.

The participants expressed feelings of homesickness and a lack of support structure, indicating a sense of detachment from loved ones, and a perceived absence of a social support network. Transitioning to university often involves leaving behind familiar environments and support systems, which can contribute to feelings of loneliness and isolation among students. The absence of a strong support structure exacerbates feelings, making it challenging for students to navigate the academic and personal challenges they encounter. The lack of connection with family and friends back home can further intensify feelings of homesickness, and amplify the emotional toll of being away from home.

Furthermore, the participants expressed concerns about inadequate access to mental health support resources and professionals within the university setting. They mentioned issues such as rushed therapy sessions and a lack of availability of psychologists as barriers to receiving timely and effective support for mental health concerns. The absence of accessible and responsive mental health services can leave students feeling unsupported and overwhelmed, exacerbating existing mental health challenges and hindering their ability to cope with stressors effectively. The following table presents extracts from the data to illustrate these points.

Table 4.7
Personal challenges

Focus group
"…I find but then something that will also places burden on your wellness will probably be your own vices, I procrastinate …"
"…it can also be that you find yourself… in a bad place academically, you know, falling behind for whatever reason and then you know stress is really definitely…"
"What keeps me from being well… family stress and trauma involved in that obviously and… varsity plays a huge roll… when lecturers expect you to have … time for five other modules plus theirs, and they believe that their module is the only one you're taking it's a bit difficult to juggle that around… ja."
"…but if … there's drama at home or drama with your friends then you know that's gonna… that's gonna be subtracting from it…"
"…I think my wellness is very dependent on my context, so whether I be doing well in school but not having a good home in terms of family difficulties, my wellness will not be… it will be in to be independent on the other, so I find that what gives good wellness is a clear state of mind … but given the position we all hold here at university, it's very hard to have such a thing, especially away from home I found. So my wellness is probably structure from home having… my mom wake me up or whatever in the morning and things like that, I haven't had that so that deducts from my wellness…"

The literature underlines the detrimental impact of individual vices, such as procrastination, and difficulties in managing personal behaviour, on students' academic performance and mental well-being (Sirois & Pychyl, 2016; Steel & Klingsieck, 2016). Procrastination, in particular, is identified as a prevalent issue among university students, leading to increased stress levels and decreased academic achievement (Duraku et al., 2023). Research acknowledges the emotional challenges associated with transitioning to university, and the sense of detachment from familiar support systems, contributing to feelings of loneliness and isolation among students. Furthermore, the absence of a strong support structure exacerbates these feelings, making it difficult for students to navigate academic and personal challenges effectively (Neveu et al., 2012).

4.2.3 Theme 3: Factors that enrich the well-being of law students

Enhancing the well-being of university students encompasses addressing various aspects of their physical, mental, emotional and social health to foster a balanced and fulfilling academic experience. This involves recognising and meeting the unique needs and challenges faced by students within the university environment. Beyond academic excellence, university students

require support systems, resources, and environments conducive to maintaining their overall well-being. These needs may include access to mental health services, opportunities for social connection and support, strategies for managing stress and workload, and avenues for personal and professional development.

4.2.3.1 Accessibility and support

Accessibility and support within the university context encompass the provision of resources, services, and assistance, which enable students to fully engage in their academic pursuits and navigate the challenges of higher education effectively (Tovar, 2015). These two interrelated concepts are fundamental pillars of a student-centred learning environment, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of background or circumstance, have equal opportunities to succeed academically and to thrive personally. Accessibility pertains to the availability and ease of use of educational facilities, technologies, and accommodations (Stewart et al., 2015). Support refers to the provision of guidance, mentorship, and assistance to help students overcome barriers and achieve academic and personal goals (Beyene et al., 2023). Together, accessibility and support play a crucial role in fostering an inclusive and empowering university environment where every student feels valued, respected, and equipped to reach their full potential.

The participants expressed a need for improved access to learning facilities, particularly in terms of computer resources. They mentioned the importance of having more computers on campus, especially for those who do not have access to such resources outside of university. Additionally, the availability of a 24-hour library and computer lab facilities was identified as crucial, particularly for students from lower-income backgrounds.

They voiced concerns about the transparency and fairness of assessment processes, particularly in terms of marking and feedback. They highlighted a disconnect between the students and the markers, emphasising the need for a more personalised approach to feedback. The participants felt that they were being marked strictly according to a memo without consideration for the complexity of problem-solving questions in law. They expressed a desire for more insight into the assessment process and a clearer understanding of how their work is evaluated.

The participants further stressed the importance of, and need for having approachable and supportive faculty members. They expressed frustration with lecturers who were perceived as unapproachable and unresponsive to student needs. One participant described instances where

seeking assistance from lecturers resulted in feeling attacked or labelled as lazy, creating barriers to seeking academic support. They particularly mentioned the importance of faculty members being more accessible and empathetic to students' concerns, and improved communication support from university staff. They also stated the importance of feeling cared for and supported, especially during challenging times such as exam periods. The participants expressed a desire for increased acknowledgement of students' well-being, and a reduction in unnecessary academic pressure.

The participants mentioned the importance of having ample opportunities for consultation with faculty members. However, they also discussed the challenges in accessing consultation hours, particularly when schedules conflicted with lecture times. They, therefore, stressed the need for more flexible consultation options to accommodate students' diverse schedules and commitments. Table 4.7 provides excerpts from the students' interview regarding these issues.

Table 4.8

Accessibility and support

Focus group
"…so I find that, like, learning facilities for support, there could be more computers on campus for people who don't have such access to such …"
"So, like, when I go get my marks, I don't actually get to meet the person or know the people who are marking my work, nor do they get to know who I am or understand where I'm coming from, so I find that most of the time when I get marked, I'm marked according to a memo and there… it's… you can't disagree with it because of the vast amount of people that are in the course, but at the same time, I feel like we shouldn't be marking according to a memo if you want to have progressive… you know."
"Just … to add to that, I think it's also difficult to mark strictly on a memo, especially with problem-solving questions like we have in law… it's not a simple answer like, yes, he is guilty. Like, that's not what we do, it's very application based so to be marked on the memo I find is also very unfair and to add to your whole learning facilities and support, then I agree completely, like, we have a lot. What I find about a lecturers, especially in the law faculty, is they're very unapproachable and when you do approach them, they just attack you and tell me that you are lazy, even if that's not the case."
"…and another thing is also think … a 24-hour, you know, library facility as computer lab facility is something that would definitely help a lot of those students… that are… that come from … you know, working class that come from financially struggling backgrounds because I don't think any of the campuses have 24-hour library facilities."

Focus group
"You don't use consultation hours?" (interviewer) "I do specifically for my major and philosophy, I do, but like for law, when you have like four to five lecturers a day and it falls in your lecture slots, you can't necessarily just go."
"I think just up their support, you know, just like let us know you know they care, and not like put more pressure on us academically than is necessary. Like considering the fact that that is the time of the year that's really bad, especially with the change of season as well, so like in the first semester, right before the exam, you can pressure me as much you like, I'm probably not gonna break, this time of the year like I'm probably gonna grab you."

The participants' concerns about the need for more computers on campus, a 24-hour library, computer lab facilities, and a more personalised approach to feedback are supported in the literature. For example, a study by Sontag-Padilla et al. (2016) has found that students attending university with better learning resources have significantly different academic outcomes. Another study by Savasci and Tomul (2013) finds that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to have access to learning resources. In this study, the participants stressed the need for improved access to learning facilities, particularly for those without resources outside of university. Additionally, the importance of a 24-hour library and computer lab access was emphasised, especially for students facing financial hardships.

4.2.3.2 Prioritisation of mental health

The prioritisation of mental health in universities is essential for fostering a supportive and conducive learning environment where students can thrive academically, professionally, and personally. In the high-pressure environment of law studies, where rigorous coursework, demanding schedules, and intense competition are the norm, mental health considerations often take a backseat (Skead & Rogers, 2014). However, the importance of mental health cannot be overstated, it directly impacts students' ability to cope with stress, manage academic responsibilities, and navigate the challenges inherent in law studies (Manap et al., 2019). By prioritising mental health, law schools not only acknowledge the unique stressors faced by law students, but also affirm their commitment to fostering a supportive and conducive learning environment where students can thrive both academically and personally (Sontag-Padilla et al., 2016).

The responses provided by the participants regarding mental health services within the university highlight critical issues that need urgent attention and reform. Despite the acknowledgement of mental health support, the participants expressed dissatisfaction with the

current state of psychological services available on campus, particularly concerning accessibility, effectiveness, and equity.

One significant concern raised by the participants is the insufficient number of psychologists available to cater to the university's vast student population. One participant said, "There's 16 amongst 60 0000." There exists a deep sense of inadequacy in meeting the demand for mental healthcare. The participants reported challenges in accessing timely screening and therapy sessions, often resulting in prolonged waiting periods and limited availability of therapeutic interventions.

Moreover, they expressed dissatisfaction with the quality and duration of therapy provided by the university psychologists. The limitation imposed on the number of therapy sessions and the strict screening process contributed to a sense of frustration and helplessness among students grappling with mental health issues.

The intersection of mental health and socioeconomic status further compounded the challenges faced by students seeking psychological support. The participants highlighted the stark inequalities inherent in the current system, where those with financial means can access private therapy sessions, while others are left to navigate inadequate university-provided services. This disparity perpetuates a cycle of marginalisation, wherein students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are disproportionately affected by mental health issues, but lack the resources to access appropriate care.

Furthermore, the participants critiqued the university's allocation of resources, questioning the prioritisation of funds for extracurricular activities over essential mental health services. The discrepancy between investment in sports programmes and psychological support emphasises systematic issues where physical well-being is prioritised over mental health, perpetuating a culture where psychological support is undervalued and stigmatised. Excerpts from the data regarding these points are presented in the table below.

Table 4.9
Prioritisation of mental health

Focus group
[psychologists] "There's 16 amongst 60 0000."
"We get a lot of complaints… there was the march against… the march for mental health the other day and… and it's something that I've heard there, and I've heard it before, and I've heard it afterwards as well is that they apparently only take ten screenings per day and I think only on Thursdays, maybe it's not every single

Focus group
day, but what I've heard was yeah, so it's like ten screenings per week and then you only get limited number of hours… and of … therapy and then if your issue is not sorted within that time, you have to go through their screening process again and, you know, then you get a new person with, you know, they kind of think, okay, we can't help you if we haven't helped you by now, and then you have to start the whole process over again and… I actually have a friend that… this year he's tried to commit suicide… more than once because, you know, like I think… the idea that the university has for you know for… campus psychologists, it's good but I don't think it's…"
"… because … if you just look at the… evidence, the number of students that have tried to commit suicide, those that have, you know, everything just points to the fact that it's not sufficient, it's not good enough… and something needs to be done about that."
"Two weeks and then you're done. Its ongoing constantly, your problem's never solved when you're sitting there with, you know, mental health issues and disorders and mood, whether it's mood disorders or personality disorders it's, ja, you can't just have like two weeks of sessions and then you're done."
"But private, you paying R170 an hour." "So, the average * student probably will not have access to quality… psychological support?" (interviewer) "And… I think that's exactly the problem, what happens because of… South Africa is a very unequal society, you know, and that's something that we have to face. So the thing is, for students that tend to be not mentally well and will probably not need a psychologist are the ones that can afford it, you know, if I'm just speaking like a sense of let's talk about depression specifically, no other sort of … mental issues, but just depression. So the students that tend to be, like, okay because they've got their support structures or they can afford it, they don't need it as much, or if they need it, it's fine, they can afford it, but then students, you know, poverty, I think contributes a lot towards depression and then it's like catch twenty-two cause you're too poor to go for… therapy and it just, you know, it builds on, on itself."
"I find the people… how we can pay for x amount of coaches for the * first rugby team yet we can't find the funds to give fourteen more psychologist, then we have 30 amongst the 60 0000 students…"
"Like, just last week, I was in the line to the … what is it South African, it's for depression… it's, you call them on the student help line just to talk to someone because sometimes you can't call your parents at two in the mornings cause they wanna sleep, they have jobs so just to talk to someone, you know what I mean, and then you wait ten minutes on the line because they might be busy or whatever. So, psychological support isn't like, is not prioritised here, it's more like an… it's the whole stigma around university where, like, if you want it, you work for it against all the odds, and sometimes the odds, obviously, as we've seen in like previous weeks, they prevail against you and it sucks."

Jaisoorya (2021) finds that mental health services are inadequate to meet the needs of university students, particularly in terms of accessibility, effectiveness, and equity. The literature also shows the importance of a holistic approach to student well-being, which includes mental health services, extracurricular activities, and a supportive campus climate (Suasthi, 2022).

The participants' concerns about the insufficient number of psychologists, limited screening and therapy sessions, and the challenges faced by students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are supported in the literature. For example, a study by Sontag-Padilla et al. (2016) in California found that only about 15% of students seeking mental health services received the help they needed. Osborn et al. (2022) further report that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to seek help for mental issues.

There is thus a significant gap between the demand for mental health care and the availability of resources in the university setting (Wagner et al., 2023). The insufficient number of mental health professionals, as noted by the participants, is a widespread issue documented in research examining the state of mental health services in higher education settings. The shortage of mental health professionals has resulted in long wait times for students. Factors contributing to this shortage include limited funding, staff shortages, and an increasing number of students seeking services (Wagner et al., 2023). Moreover, dissatisfaction with the quality and duration of therapy sessions provided by university psychologists aligns with research findings that indicate limitations in the scope and effectiveness of mental health interventions within a university setting (Auerbach et al., 2018).

4.2.3.3 Fostering student community and engagement

Fostering student community and engagement within the university and university residences encompasses the fostering of meaningful connections, mutual aid, and a supportive environment among students, faculty, and staff members (Strayhorn, 2018). It embodies a culture where individuals feel valued, understood, and encouraged to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally (Li et al., 2018). In the context of law students and the broader university community, this sense of community and support is crucial. It not only enhances the overall well-being of students, but also contributes to their academic success, personal growth, and resilience in facing the challenges inherent in law studies and university life. Building and nurturing such a community fosters collaboration, empathy, and a sense of belonging.

The participants emphasised a need for strong student residential communities within the university where students feel connected, supported, and cared for. One participant mentioned the intimate and supportive environment within their private residence, where students knew each other by name, room number, and academic pursuits. According to the participant, this sense of familiarity and companionship created a safety net wherein individuals were quick to notice when someone was struggling emotionally. This level of awareness and concern was

reported to help prevent students from spiralling into a dark place without receiving the necessary support. However, the other participants who lived in a university residence did not say the same thing about their residences, with one participant even going so far as to explain that they had no relationship at all with their residence neighbours.

Also, another aspect emphasised by the participants was the need for the university to demonstrate genuine care and support for students' well-being. They discussed the significance of the university acknowledging and addressing the mental health challenges faced by students, particularly during critical periods, such as during September and October, when suicide rates tend to peak. Despite the university's awareness of these challenges, the participants expressed a sense of dissatisfaction with the lack of proactive measures taken to support students during these vulnerable times.

Moreover, they brought up the role of student life and extracurricular activities in fostering a sense of belonging and well-being. They noted a decline in student participation in cultural and sporting events, which have historically served as opportunities for students to connect, support one another, and build friendships outside of the academic realm. However, they also recognised the importance of initiatives like student societies and sports competitions in fostering a sense of community and closeness among students.

The participants added that there is a need for the university to prioritise holistic development by providing opportunities for students to engage in activities beyond academics. While academic excellence is undoubtedly important, the participants voiced a need for a balanced approach that considers students' emotional and social well-being. They advocated for a university environment that values and supports students as multifaceted individuals, recognising that academic success is just one aspect of their overall growth and development. The following table presents extracts from the data to illustrate these points.

Table 4.10
Fostering student community and engagement

Focus group
"For example my girlfriend was in… one of the * resses and she… she didn't even, like, she didn't even know her neighbours in the rooms next to her. She was able to go through like the whole year with, I think, one friend in the whole res and that that's the kind of thing that, you know, someone like that… that's the kind of person, well, I'm not saying she's suicidal but that's the kind of person that can get suicidal because even my, ja, even my neighbours don't know what's going on. Even my neighbours don't care about me, and that's the illusion that's… creating is that they don't care and you, you know if you go and speak to someone about it I'm sure

Focus group

they will care but it's not always easy to go speak to someone. You need someone to notice you and to ask you, "Hey are [you] fine?" and I think that's how students feel towards the university as well because we know, and we know the university knows... September, October, that's the highest suicide… like those two months is the highest suicide rate in university spaces. We know it, we know the university knows it, but yet we don't see the university doing anything."

"What would you like them, the university to do?" (interviewer)
"I think just up their support, you know, just, like, let us know you know they care and not, like, put more pressure on us academically than is necessary. Like, considering the fact that… that is the time of the year that's really bad, especially with the change of season as well, so, like, in the first semester right before the exam, you can pressure me as much you like, I'm probably not gonna break, this time of the year, like, I'm probably gonna grab you."

"That's exactly the thing, so, I'm very involved in your know called [sic] student cultures student life or whatever and, what I've… realised is that, and speaking to some of our older friends in all parts of the university and it's, like, this whole thing that's, you know, student life is taking a very big dip. It's not what it was like, say, for example, the rugby - you don't see and, like, people don't come to the rugby anymore, you know, and that's where, you know, you get to see whether your friends are okay or not. So yesterday, I went to watch a cricket game that my res was playing against another res and they had zero supporters. They just had the team that was playing, they didn't even have a coach or nothing and we had, like, at least like 30 to 40 guys to come support our team and that's, that's the kind of thing that you need is when people actually, you know, like, and you know cricket doesn't really matter, but it's what it does is it brings you out of your room. Okay now I'm sitting next to someone I haven't seen in two weeks and I say, "okay, this guy's down, let's have a chat, let's drink a coffee," and that's the kind of thing it does. So, for example, like the rugby, I think for first teams there was five teams competing, this year, these people don't care about… support anymore and it's not just… I think sport's good because, you know, you need that balance between your academics and physical activity… but at least… soccer has… gotten a lot more people playing soccer, which is good, cause at least people are still active, but you still don't get a lot of supporters at games and support is, you know, support for the team, but you also find that that's friends support each other and the same with like the ___ events get people there and that's where you see your friends that you don't see every day, and the people that don't come out of their rooms everyday actually coming out for that, and I find that that in our res, where student, like, when res life is a very important part of it, well, we don't always academically, you know, sometimes it costs you a bit academically, but with regards to your well-being, like, it's fine. I'll take the 10% dip in my academics to know that I'm a happy person... and to know that my friends are happy people."

The literature aligns with the participants' emphasis on the importance of strong student residential communities, genuine care, and support from the university, as well as holistic development for students' well-being. Research shows the positive impact of supportive living environments on students' mental health and overall satisfaction. The participants explained

that a sense of community and familiarity within the university residences contributes to a safety net for emotional support and early intervention. This sentiment is echoed in research advocating for community-building in student residences (Strayhorn, 2018).

Concerns about students feeling disconnected and unnoticed in university residences resonate with existing literature on the importance of a supportive social environment in preventing feelings of isolation and fostering mental well-being (Brett et al., 2023). The notion that students may hesitate to seek help unless someone notices their struggles is supported in the research regarding barriers to mental health help-seeking behaviour among students (Lipson & Eisenberg, 2018).

Studies have shown that students who live in supportive and connected residential communities tend to have better academic outcomes, higher levels of well-being, and a greater sense of belonging. Furthermore, the importance of universities in providing active support for students' mental health, particularly during critical periods such as exam season, is touted in the literature. This support can include access to mental health services, counselling, and wellness programmes. Additionally, research has shown that a balanced approach to university life, which considers students' emotional and social well-being, is crucial for their overall growth. (Stowell et al., 2021).

4.3 CONCLUSION

Chapter 4 delved into the analysis of the research findings, which were structured around three primary themes that were identified. These themes were further divided into the sub-themes that emerged from the data. Throughout the discussion of the results, the researcher incorporated excerpts from the data to reinforce these themes, and drew connections to existing literature to highlight similarities. Chapter 5 concludes the study by addressing the research questions initially posed in Chapter 1. Additionally, the study's potential significance is assessed and its limitations are reflected upon. Lastly, recommendations for further training, practice, and research endeavours are offered.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter marks the conclusion of this dissertation. It provides a concise summary of the study's findings, and discusses the findings concerning both the primary and the secondary research questions, as described in Chapter 1. Finally, this chapter concludes with the potential limitations of the study, and recommendations for possible future research.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

5.2.1 Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to, and the rationale for undertaking this research. It explored existing literature related to the well-being of undergraduate law students, and outlined the purpose of the study along with its research questions. The chapter also examined working assumptions, clarified key concepts, presented the conceptual framework, and discussed the epistemology of the study. Methodological aspects were also covered, including the research design, participant selection, data collection methods, documentation procedures, and approaches to data analysis and interpretation. Additionally, ethical considerations relevant to the study were addressed.

5.2.2 Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 2 of the study explored and discussed the literature relating to the well-being of undergraduate law students. Past research was examined to understand the concept of well-being from various perspectives. This involved reviewing global reports on well-being and then focusing on the well-being of university students, specifically undergraduate law students. The chapter discussed how well-being presents in undergraduate students according to research, and identified factors that influence their well-being and support system. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the PACES model of student well-being as the study's theoretical framework, which also served as the foundation for the subsequent chapters of the study.

5.2.3 Chapter 3: Research methodology

Chapter 3 discussed the research methodology utilised in this study. It provided a detailed exploration of the constructivist paradigm, which served as the epistemological perspective of

this study. Additionally, the chapter outlined the research design and expounded on the methods used in sampling, data collection, analysis, and interpretation, providing rationale and justification for each approach in this study. The conclusion of the chapter entailed a thorough summary of the ethical considerations adhered to during the study, along with an overview of the strengths and limitations of the study.

5.2.4 Chapter 4: Findings of the study

Chapter 4 presented the data and discussed the findings of the study. This process involved following a thematic data analysis procedure, which began with reviewing the data to identify emerging themes and sub-themes. Excerpts from the participants' interview were used to substantiate the emerging themes, which were subsequently discussed and linked to the relevant literature.

5.3 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The objective of this study was to investigate, explore, and describe how well-being presents in undergraduate law students. Acknowledging the importance of direct experience in shaping meaning and individual perspectives, the constructivist paradigm was adopted to thoroughly explore the research questions, and address participants' perceptions and personal constructs. Additionally, different qualitative data generation methods were employed to generate data that answered the research questions. In an attempt to answer the primary research question, first, the main findings or themes identified in the study will be outlined. Subsequently, a summary of the findings pertaining to each of the secondary research questions will be provided.

5.3.1 Primary research question

How does well-being present in undergraduate law students?

This question served as the primary focus of the study, and it aimed to thoroughly explore and analyse how well-being presents in undergraduate law students. The factors highlighted by the participants recurred as central themes (and sub-themes) in the students' perceptions of their own well-being as these factors impacted them across diverse situations and contexts.

In answering the primary research question, the findings of this study indicate that the well-being of undergraduate law students presents as a combination of a variety of features influenced by many factors and experiences. Firstly, the participants maintained that strong social ties, such as those with family and friends, and supportive academic environments

contributed to their well-being. These connections provide emotional support, foster a sense of belonging, and contribute to overall resilience. Additionally, academic engagement and a balanced lifestyle are vital for promoting well-being, with participants valuing the integration of personal interests and extracurricular activities into their routines.

However, well-being among undergraduate law students has hindrances such as academic pressures, unhealthy coping mechanisms like substance abuse, and personal challenges, including anxiety and stress. Academic pressures, combined with high expectations from family and lecturers, contribute to increased stress and feelings of inadequacy. Additionally, the normalisation of poor coping techniques, as well as limited access to mental health support worsen students' well-being challenges.

5.3.2 Secondary research questions

Which factors support the well-being of undergraduate law students?

According to the participants, the factors supporting the well-being of undergraduate law students included strong bonds with family and friends, providing a sense of belonging, and emotional support. Others noted that supportive relationships with lecturers and a nurturing academic environment also contribute significantly to well-being. Interacting with others, spending time with loved ones, and residing in a supportive student community were further perceived to enhance well-being. A supportive environment, an inclusive home, social circles, and the university facilitate emotional support and resilience building. The participants perceived academic engagement as a factor that supports their well-being and promotes fulfilment and accomplishment. They also viewed balancing academic responsibilities with personal activities, and participating in extracurricular pursuits as vital in promoting well-being. Additionally, they perceived maintaining a positive outlook on stress, prioritising mental clarity, and pursuing non-academic interests as contributing factors to achieving academic fulfilment and overall well-being amongst law students. The participants further perceived the campus as safe due to the presence of a robust security system, which regulates access to the university. Despite recognising the relative safety of the campus, the participants emphasised the importance of vigilance, especially in poorly lit areas or during certain times.

How is the well-being of law students supported within the university?

According to the findings of this study, undergraduate law students are supported within the university through various avenues, including access to learning facilities such as libraries, and academic support services like tutoring and consultation hours. While some participants

acknowledged the existing resources, others suggested improvements such as increased computer availability, 24-hour library services, and flexible consultation hours to better cater to students' diverse needs and schedules. Additionally, the participants acknowledged initiatives like student advisor programmes and online learning platforms in contributing to support for students' well-being. Some participants further perceived the integration of extracurricular activities, societies, and faculty houses to foster a sense of community and belonging, promoting a balanced environment for students' academic and personal development. However, there is a call for the university to prioritise student well-being beyond academic concerns, emphasising the importance of initiatives like first-year programmes and events that support holistic student growth and development.

How do undergraduate law students contribute to, and support their own well-being?

According to the findings of this study, the participants contributed to their own well-being through a variety of self-care practices and lifestyle choices. These include prioritising personal time for relaxation to reduce stress and foster mental clarity. Moreover, the participants explained that engaging in downtime activities beyond sleep and solitude provided them with opportunities to recuperate from stressful situations, which also promoted emotional resilience. Adopting a balanced lifestyle with a structured routine encourages stability and social interaction, enhancing overall well-being. The participants also viewed engaging in activities such as listening to music, and participating in physical exercises like working out, reading hiking, or playing football as a way in which they contributed to their well-being. These also offered them avenues for emotional release, enjoyment, and physical health maintenance. Additionally, they acknowledged that engaging in effective time management strategies allowed them to pursue personal interests and manage responsibilities effectively. This supported them in maintaining and supporting their own well-being amidst academic and personal demands.

What challenges or threatens the well-being of undergraduate law students?

The participants listed various academic challenges and pressures that are commonly experienced by undergraduate law students, including demanding coursework and high-stakes examinations, which significantly burdened and threatened their mental and emotional well-being. They noted that high expectations from lecturers and family members intensified this pressure, leading to feelings of stress and inadequacy. Furthermore, they perceived time

constraints and the continuous academic workload as factors that could exacerbate feelings of overwhelm and strain among students, making it challenging to maintain a balanced lifestyle. They viewed the fear of failure and the pressure to excel academically as contributing to heightened stress levels, and potentially diminishing overall well-being among undergraduate law students.

The participants perceived unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse and excessive alcohol consumption, as prevalent among undergraduate students used to manage academic stress and enhance performance. They discussed the normalisation and accessibility of substances like Ritalin and marijuana, despite recognising their associated risks and negative consequences. Furthermore, they viewed peer pressure and the pervasive culture within a university context as contributing to the acceptance and normalisation of substance abuse, posing significant hindrances to the well-being of undergraduate law students.

The participants viewed personal challenges, including internal struggles like anxiety and depression, as well as external factors such as family stress and trauma as a significant challenge to the well-being and academic success of undergraduate law students. They further highlighted individual vices like procrastination and difficulties managing personal behaviours as hindrances to productivity and stress management. Additionally, the participants perceived struggles with academic performances, coupled with inadequate access to mental health support resources to exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and overwhelm among students, impeding their ability to cope effectively with stress.

5.4 RELATING THE FINDINGS TO THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Nelson's et al. (2015) PACES Model of Student Well-being was utilised in the present study to provide a framework within which to explore and investigate the well-being of undergraduate law students. It comprises five unique and interactive domains, namely: Physical (P), Affective (A), Cognitive (C), Economic (E), and Social (S) domains. These domains have been identified to support the well-being of students and could be used to assess and promote wellness (Nelson's et al., 2015). Despite their differences, these five domains are interconnected and interdependent at the same time, providing a holistic view of student well-being (Nelson's et al., 2015).

5.4.1 Physical domain

This domain pertains to students' physical health and well-being, including nutrition, health risk factors, exercise, and overall physical wellness (Nelson et al., 2015). It also addresses health-related concerns that have a direct impact on how students engage in their university experiences (Nelson et al., 2015). Physical health correlates with academic achievement, and influences self-esteem, mood, self-perception, adjustment, and psychological well-being (Kleszczewska et al., 2018). According to the findings of this study, the participants acknowledged engaging in physical exercises like hiking, working out, and participating in sports to maintain their physical health, which contributed to their well-being. Nevertheless, they noted a decline in student participation in cultural and sporting activities. Furthermore, the physical health of the students, according to this study, was compromised by their unhealthy coping methods such as marijuana, Concerta, Ritalin, and excessive alcohol consumption. These behaviours may hinder the academic performance and overall quality of life of students.

5.4.2 Affective domain

The affective domain focuses on students' emotional and psychological well-being, including feelings, moods, self-esteem, intimacy, self-confidence, affective perceptions, self-efficacy, empowerment, anxiety, shame, guilt, depression, and other mental health issues associated with affect (Nelson et al., 2015). According to the findings of this study, the participants perceived internal struggles such as anxiety and depression, as well as external factors like family stress and trauma, as posing a serious threat to academic performance and the general well-being of undergraduate law students.

Furthermore, the participants expressed dissatisfaction with the current state of mental health services, citing issues like rushed therapy sessions and a lack of adequate numbers of psychologists at the university, leaving students feeling unsupported. They cited academic struggles and inadequate access to mental health support resources as key issues that needed urgent reform. Students' perceptions of the lack of accessible and responsive services can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy, and overwhelm and hinder effective stress management.

5.4.3 Cognitive domain

The cognitive domain is also called intelligence, and concerns students' ability to process information effectively (critical thinking) and to apply it rationally to advance their learning (academic achievement) and problem solving (Nelson et al., 2015). In addition, it also

encompasses characteristics like attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, spontaneity, creativity, and openness to viewing situations differently (Nelson et al., 2015).

In the current study, the participants highlighted the importance of academic satisfaction and balance in diverse aspects of their university experiences, acknowledging them as key components that enhanced their overall well-being as law students. They noted a strong correlation between academic engagement and overall well-being. Moreover, positive learning environments, like interactive lecturers and meaningful coursework, were highlighted as contributors to academic satisfaction and overall well-being. The intrinsic gratification that comes from achieving academic goals was seen as a source of pleasure that enhanced the students' overall well-being, underscoring the crucial role that cognitive fulfilment plays in promoting a positive student experience.

5.4.4 Economic domain

The economic domain pertains to students' financial well-being and access to resources (Nelson et al., 2015). Financial factors have a significant impact on the availability of resources in a student's academic progress, food security, social adjustment, home security, and the affordability of tertiary education (Devlin & McKay, 2018). According to the findings of this research, the participants expressed a need for better access to educational resources, particularly with regard to computer facilities. They emphasised the need to have additional computers on campus, particularly for those who do not otherwise have access to such resources outside of university. Furthermore, it was highlighted that having 24-hour access to computer labs and libraries was crucial, particularly for students from lower-income families.

5.4.5 Social domain

The social domain includes interpersonal skills, family ties and interactions, social networks and support, community involvement, and interactions at the university (Nelson et al., 2015). Nelson et al. (2015) further state that students' developmental tasks include seeking to belong, taking risks, and socialising with others. Malkoç and Yalçin (2015) suggest that supportive relationships in universities, families, and broader community networks are crucial because they promote student well-being.

It was noted in this study that the participants stressed the value of strong student residential communities within the university, where students could feel connected, supported, and cared for. However, they were dissatisfied with the lack of proactive steps taken by the university to

support students during vulnerable times. They also reported feeling homesick and lacking support structures, reflecting a sense of detachment and isolation from loved ones. Student perceptions of the lack of adequate support structures exacerbate these feelings, emphasising the significance of building connections and providing suitable support networks within the university community.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The qualitative nature of the study and the limited sample size of the focus group presented certain limitations, including generalising the findings to other populations of law students. Nevertheless, within this specific context, the study provided an in-depth understanding of the different perspectives of the participants by combining an online survey and a focus group interview.

It is crucial to note that the study was conducted solely at one South African university. Expanding data collection to include students from other universities could have enhanced the breadth of the findings. Additionally, the study focused exclusively on undergraduate law students. Ongoing analyses of students from other faculties are in progress, thus comparing the findings between faculties could offer valuable insights.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, I was not part of the initial research team involved in data collection, but rather engaged in secondary data analysis, utilising existing data (Rubin & Babbie, 2016). While this approach offers a fresh perspective on the dataset, this approach may result in a slight detachment from the original data collection processes. To address this, I meticulously examined the data and the descriptions of data collection processes to ensure alignment with the study's objectives (Boslaugh, 2007; Elliott, 2015). I also continuously engaged with the principal investigator of the primary project, which allowed for more comprehensive and in-depth data analysis.

Despite efforts to enhance the trustworthiness of this study through different measures, there is also a possibility that subjective interpretation may be seen as a limitation. It is essential to acknowledge this potential bias and interpret the findings with consideration for the inherent subjectivity thereof.

5.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout the course of this study, I adhered meticulously to the ethical guidelines outlined in Chapter 3. In the primary study, the participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights. It was emphasised that participation was voluntary, and the participants had the freedom to decide whether or not to take part in the research (Boddy, 2016b). They were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any point. Informed consent forms were also signed by all focus group participants after the study was explained to them.

For the online survey, the participants provided electronic consent after a brief overview of the survey. For the focus group, consent was obtained from the participants before any interviews commenced. Additionally, their identities were not disclosed when reporting the study's findings. To protect the confidentiality of the participants' transcribed data from both the focus group and the online survey, all collected data was securely stored, either through encryption or password protection. This strict adherence to ethical considerations demonstrates the dedication to safeguarding the well-being and the rights of the participants throughout the study.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the current study and the related literature review, the following recommendations for future theoretical development are provided. There is clear evidence in the study to suggest that psychoeducation on managing stress, on substance use, and on the importance of addressing mental health problems is required. Further, future research should explore effective strategies to deal with academic pressures and improve mental health support and awareness, as well as tailored well-being initiatives among law students. In addition, understanding how supportive relationships and academic engagement interact to promote well-being can yield useful insights.

It is critical to study the long-term implications of unhealthy coping techniques, such as substance misuse, on students' mental health and academic performance. Exploring strategies that establish a more holistic support structure that addresses both academic and personal challenges may pave the path for improved well-being among undergraduate law students. Furthermore, researching the efficacy of support services and programmes within university settings can provide useful insights into addressing the diverse needs of students. This study

lays the foundation for future research to delve into these aspects further, generating a more thorough understanding of how to cultivate and sustain well-being in this academic cohort.

5.8 CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

As student well-being in universities is rapidly becoming a concern, it is important to note that the responsibility for student well-being extends beyond individual students, and includes the institutions in which they are enrolled. Reflecting on the research findings and relevant literature, it is clear that addressing student well-being necessitates not only academic support, but also a holistic approach that addresses physical, affective, cognitive, social, economic, and social needs, as outlined in the PACES model.

Education should empower students to not just excel academically, but also to lead fulfilling and balanced lives. However, the reality frequently falls short of this ideal, with many students facing substantial stress, anxiety, and mental health challenges that limit their ability to thrive in academic settings.

As a result, there is an urgent need for educational institutions to make student well-being an essential component of their mission. This prioritisation necessitates a paradigm shift in how educational success is conceptualised, expanding beyond mere academic performance to embrace the holistic development of students.

In conclusion, universities must improve student support services, encourage inclusive communities, and implement proactive steps to reduce stress and promote holistic well-being among law students. Furthermore, by promoting an environment of empathy and understanding, universities can work towards ensuring that all students have the opportunity to prosper, not only academically, but also in all aspects of their lives. This could ensure that they reach their full potential both in academic settings and beyond.

REFERENCES

Aihie, O. N., & Ohanaka, B. I. (2019). Perceived academic stress among undergraduate students in a Nigerian University. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, *9*(2), 56.

Alhaza, K., Abdel-Salam, A. S. G., Mollazehi, M. D., Ismail, R. M., Bensaid, A., Johnson, C., ... & Romanowski, M. H. (2021). Factors affecting university image among undergraduate students: The case study of Qatar University. *Cogent Education*, *8*(1), 1977106.

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2013-14907-000.

Andrews, A., & Chong, J. L. Y. (2011). Exploring the well-being of students studying at an Australian University. *Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association*, 9-38.

Atkinson, R., & Flint, J. (2001). Accessing hidden and hard-to-reach populations: Snowball research strategies. *Social Research Update, 33*(1), 1-4.

Auerbach, R. P., Mortier, P., Bruffaerts, R., Alonso, J., Benjet, C., Cuijpers, P., ... & Kessler, R. C. (2018). WHO world mental health surveys international college student project: prevalence and distribution of mental disorders. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, *127*(7), 623.

Azungah, T. (2018). Qualitative research: deductive and inductive approaches to data analysis. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *18*(4), 383-400.

Babbie, E., & Mouton, J. (2012). *The practice of social research*. Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

Bacher, J., Lemcke, J., Quatember, A., & Schmich, P. (2019). Probability and Nonprobability Sampling: Representative Surveys of hard-to-reach and hard-to-ask populations. Current surveys between the poles of theory and practice. *Survey Methods: Insights from the Field*. https://surveyinsights.org/?p=12070

Baik, C., Larcombe, W., & Brooker, A. (2019). How universities can enhance student mental well-being: The student perspective. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *38*(4), 674-687

Barbayannis, G., Bandari, M., Zheng, X., Baquerizo, H., Pecor, K. W., & Ming, X. (2022). Academic Stress and Mental Well-Being in College Students: Correlations, Affected Groups, and COVID-19. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 886344. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.886344

Bartlett, M. J., Arslan, F. N., Bankston, A., & Sarabipour, S. (2021). Ten simple rules to improve academic work-life balance. *PLoS Computational Biology*, *17*(7), e1009124. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pcbi.1009124.

Beck, C. T. (2019). *Secondary qualitative data analysis in the health and social sciences*. Routledge.

Bennett, T. H., & Holloway, K. R. (2015). Drug use among college and university students: Findings from a national survey. *Journal of Substance Use*, *20*(1), 50-55.

Beyene, W. M., Mekonnen, A. T., & Giannoumis, G. A. (2023). Inclusion, access, and accessibility of educational resources in higher education institutions: exploring the Ethiopian context. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *27*(1), 18-34. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1817580.

Bhujade, V. M. (2017). Depression, anxiety and academic stress among college students: A brief review. *Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing*, *8*(7), 748-751.

Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowball sampling: Problems and techniques of chain referral sampling. *Sociological Methods & Research*, *10*(2), 141-163.

Bishop, K. (2017). Framing failure in the legal classroom: Techniques for encouraging growth and resilience. *Arkansas Law Review*, *70*, 959.

Boddy, C. R. (2016a). Sample size for qualitative research. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, *19*(4), 426-432.

Boddy, J. (2016b). The ethics of social research. *Researching Social Life*, *4*.

Bogna, F., Raineri, A., & Dell, G. (2020). Critical realism and constructivism: merging research paradigms for a deeper qualitative study. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, *15*(4), 461-484.

Böke, B. N., Mills, D. J., Mettler, J., & Heath, N. L. (2019). Stress and coping patterns of university students. *Journal of College Student Development*, *60*(1), 85-103.

Boslaugh, S. (2007). *Secondary data sources for public health: A practical guide*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511618802

Bowman, N. A., Jarratt, L., Jang, N., & Bono, T. J. (2019). The unfolding of student adjustment during the first semester of college. *Research in Higher Education*, *60*, 273-292.

Brau, B. (2018). Constructivism. In R. Kimmons, *The Students' Guide to Learning Design and Research*. EdTech Books. https://edtechbooks.org/studentguide/constructivism

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). Successful qualitative research: *A practical guide for beginners*. Sage.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, *11*(4), 589-597. https://www.doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021a). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, *13*(4), 759-775. https://www.doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2021.1929071

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021b). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *18*(3), 328-352. https://www.doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238

Braun, V., Clarke, V., Boulton, E., Davey, L., & McEvoy, C. (2021). The online survey as a qualitative research tool. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *24*(6), 641-654.

Brett, C. E., Mathieson, M. L., & Rowley, A. M. (2023). Determinants of well-being in university students: The role of residential status, stress, loneliness, resilience, and sense of coherence. *Current Psychology*, *42*(23), 19699-19708. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03125-8

Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2017). Ethics in qualitative psychological research. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research In Psychology* (pp. 259-273). Sage.

Brown, D., Barry, J. A., & Todd, B. K. (2021). Barriers to academic help-seeking: The relationship with gender-typed attitudes. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 45*(3), 401-416.

Bryan, J., Young, A., Griffin, D., & Henry, L. (2015). Preparing students for higher education: How school counsellors can foster college readiness and access. https://www.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.5133.2003

Bryden, C. I., Field, A. M., & Francis, A. J. (2015). Coping as a mediator between negative life events and eudaimonic well-being in female adolescents. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *24*, 3723-3733.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*. Oxford university press.

Burns, D., Dagnall, N., & Holt, M. (2020). Assessing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on student well-being at universities in the UK: a conceptual analysis. *Frontiers in Education*, *5*. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2020.582882

Carlisle, S., & Hanlon, P. (2008). 'Well-being' as a focus for public health? A critique and defence. *Critical Public Health 18,* 263-270. https://doi.org/10.1080/09581590802277358.

Carmona-Halty, M., Salanova, M., Llorens, S., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2021). Linking positive emotions and academic performance: The mediated role of academic psychological capital and academic engagement. *Current Psychology*, *40*(6), 2938-2947.

Casey, L. M., Joy, A., & Clough, B. A. (2013). The impact of information on attitudes toward e-mental health services. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *16*(8), 593-598.

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Cho, H., Yoo, S. K., & Park, C. J. (2021). The relationship between stress and life satisfaction of Korean University students: mediational effects of positive affect and self-compassion. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 1-16.

Chowdhury, M. F. (2014). Interpretivism in aiding our understanding of the contemporary social world. *Open Journal of Philosophy*, 4, 432-438. http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ojpp.2014.43047.

Clarke, S. P., & Cossette, S. (2000). Secondary analysis: Theoretical, methodological and practical considerations. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research, 32*(3), 109-129.

Cleary, M., Horsfall, J., Baines, J., & Happell, B. (2012). Mental health behaviours among undergraduate nursing students: Issues for consideration. *Nurse Education Today*, *32*(8), 951-955.

Cobo-Rendón, R., López-Angulo, Y., Pérez-Villalobos, M. V., & Díaz-Mujica, A. (2020). Perceived social support and its effects on changes in the affective and eudaimonic well-being of Chilean university students. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, 590513.

Conley, C. S., Durlak, J. A., & Kirsch, A. C. (2015). A meta-analysis of universal mental health prevention programs for higher education students. *Prevention Science*, *16*, 487-507.

Conway, C., Edgar, S., Hansen, E., & Palmer, M. (2012). Book review: Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 21(2), 69-81. https://doi: 10.1177/1057083710397590

Cooper, H. (2019). *Research synthesis and meta-analysis: A step-by-step approach*. Sage publications.

Cooper, J. M., & Gurung, R. A. (2017). Smarter Law Study Habits: An Empirical Analysis of Law Learning Strategies and Relationship with Law GPA. *Louis ULJ*, *62*, 361.

Crabtree, B. F., & Miller, W. L. (2023). *Doing qualitative research*. Sage publications.

Crego, A., Carrillo-Diaz, M., Armfield, J. M., & Romero, M. (2016). Stress and academic performance in dental students: the role of coping strategies and examination-related self-efficacy. *Journal of Dental Education*, *80*(2), 165-172.

Creswell, J. W. (2014a). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approac*hes (4th ed.). Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2014b). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (3ed.). SAGE Publications, inc.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage publications.

Curran, P. J., Hussong, A. M., & Cai, L. (2016). Advancements in data analytic approaches for longitudinal data. *Alcohol Research: Current Reviews*, *38*(1), 79–87. https://doi.org/10.1080/19376529.2016.1189214

Curtis, R. (2013). Constructivist approaches to counselling. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Career development and counselling: Putting theory and research to work* (2nd ed., pp. 277-301). Wiley.

Cypress, B. S. (2017). Rigor or reliability and validity in qualitative research: Perspectives, strategies, reconceptualization, and recommendations. *Dimensions of Critical Care Nursing*, 36 (4), 253-263. https://doi: 10.1097/DCC.0000000000000253.

Dahlin, M., Joneborg, N., & Runeson, B. (2005). Stress and depression among medical students: A cross-sectional study. *Medical Education, 39*(6), 594-604.

Dale, A., Arbor, S., & Procter, M. (1988). *Doing secondary analysis.* Unwin Hyman.

Dalziel, P., Saunders, C., & Saunders, J. (2018). *Wellbeing economics: The capabilities approach to prosperity*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93194-4.

Das, K.V., Jones-Harrell, C., & Fan, Y. (2020). Understanding subjective well-being: perspectives from psychology and public health. *Public Health Review, 41*, 25. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40985-020-00142-5.

Davey, L., Clarke, V., & Jenkinson, E. (2019). Living with alopecia areata: An online qualitative survey study. *British Journal of Dermatology, 180*(6), 1377–1389. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjd.17463

DeDonno, M. A., Ferris, A. H., Molnar, A., Haire, H. M., Sule, S. S., Hennekens, C. H., & Wood, S. K. (2022). Perceptions, coping strategies, and mental health of residents during COVID-19. *Southern Medical Journal, 115*(9), 717.

Denzin, N. K., & Salvo, J. (Eds.). (2020). *New Directions in Theorizing Qualitative Research: Indigenous Research* (Vol. 2). Myers Education Press.

Deo, M. E., Allen, W. R., Panter, A. T., & Daye, C. (2009). Struggles & Support: Diversity in US Law Schools. *Nat'l Black LJ*, *23*, 71.

Devlin, M., & McKay, J. (2018). The financial realities for students from low SES backgrounds at Australian regional universities. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, *28*(1), 121-136.

Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*, 95, 542-575.

Dunn, L. B., Iglewicz, A., & Moutier, C. (2008). A conceptual model of medical student well-being: promoting resilience and preventing burnout. *Academic Psychiatry*, *32*, 44-53.

Durdella, N. (2019). Working as a Qualitative Methodologist in Dissertation Contexts. In: *Qualitative Dissertation Methodology: A Guide for Research Design and Methods.* SAGE Publications, Inc.

Duraku, Z. H., Davis, H., & Hamiti, E. (2023). Mental health, study skills, social support, and barriers to seeking psychological help among university students: a call for mental health support in higher education. *Frontiers in Public Health, 11*, 1220614. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1220614.

Eichelberger, B., Mattioli, H., & Foxhoven, R. (2017). Uncovering Barriers to Financial Capability: Underrepresented Students' Access to Financial Resources. *Journal of Student Financial Aid*, *47*(3), 5.

Elliott, D. C. (2015). Secondary data analysis. In *Research in the college context* (pp. 175-184). Routledge.

Eloff, I. (2019). Student well-being in Veterinary Sciences: Implications for student support and career agility. *African Journal of Career Development, 1*(1), 1-4.

Eloff, I., & Graham, M. (2020). Measuring mental health and well-being of South African undergraduate students. *Global Mental Health 7,* e34, 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1017/gmh.2020.26.

Eloff, I., Mampane, M. R, Omidire, F., Ayob-Essop, S., Bester, S., Kgopa, B. (2022). *Dimensions of Wellbeing of University Students during a Pandemic*, *African Perspectives of Research in Teaching and Learning*, *6*, 1, 34-49.

Eloff, I., O'Neil, S., & Kanengoni, H. (2021). Students' well-being in tertiary environments: insights into the (unrecognised) role of lecturers. *Teaching in Higher Education,* e1-22.

Eloff, I., O'Neil, S., & Kanengoni, H. (2022). Factors contributing to student well-being: student perspectives. In: L. Schutte, T. Guse & M. P. Wissing, *Embracing well-being in diverse African contexts: Research perspectives*. Springer.

Evans, T. M., Bira, L., Gastelum, J. B., Weiss, L. T., & Vanderford, N. L. (2018). Evidence for a mental health crisis in graduate education. *Nature Biotechnology*, *36*(3), 282-284.

Fawzy, M., & Hamed, S. A. (2017). Prevalence of psychological stress, depression and anxiety among medical students in Egypt. *Psychiatry Research, 255*, 186-194.

Ferreira, R. J., Buttell, F., & Ferreira, S. (2015). Ethical considerations for conducting disaster research with vulnerable populations. *Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics*, *12*(1), 29-40.

Field, R., Duffy, J., & Huggins, A. (2013). Supporting transition to law school and student well-being: The role of professional legal identity. *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education*, *4*(2), 15-25.

Filgona, J., Sakiyo, J., Gwany, D. M., & Okoronka, A. U. (2020). Motivation in learning. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, *10*(4), 16-37.

Flick, U. (2022). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research Design*. SAGE.

Fosnacht, K., Sarraf, S. A., & Howe, E. (2018). Digital approaches to recruiting and screening participants in health behavior research. *Translational Behavioral Medicine, 8*(4), 646-655. https://doi: 10.1093/tbm/ibx048

Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, *91*(3), 269-310.

Freire, C., Ferradás, M. D. M., Valle, A., Núñez, J. C., & Vallejo, G. (2016). Profiles of psychological well-being and coping strategies among university students. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *7*, 216278.

Fox, R., & Easpaig, B. N. G. (2021). Engaging critical methodologies in qualitative research methods with undergraduate psychology students. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *49*(1), 228-240.

Foxcroft, C., & Roodt, G. (2013). *Introduction to psychological assessment in the South African context* (4th Edition). Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-1990-4473-3.

Gill, S. L. (2020). Qualitative sampling methods. *Journal of Human Lactation*, *36*(4), 579-581.

Goodman, L. A. (1961). Snowball sampling. *The Annals of Mathematical Statistics*, *32*(1), 148-170.

Gopalan, M., & Brady, S. T. (2020). College students' sense of belonging: A national perspective. *Educational Researcher*, *49*(2), 134-137.

Göritz, A. S. (2014). Online versus offline surveys: Advantages and disadvantages. *International Journal of Market Research*, *56*(6), 803-820. https://doi: 10.2501/IJMR-2014-055

Graham, M. A., & Eloff, I. (2022). Comparing Mental Health, Wellbeing and Flourishing in Undergraduate Students Pre- and during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19, 7438, 1-17.

Grant, D. M., Wingate, L. R., Rasmussen, K. A., Davidson, C. L., Slish, M. L., Rhoades-Kerswill, S., ... & Judah, M. R. (2013). An examination of the reciprocal relationship between avoidance coping and symptoms of anxiety and depression. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *32*(8), 878-896.

Gross, J.J. & Thompson, Ross. (2007). Emotion regulation: Conceptual foundations. In *Handbook of Emotion Regulation*, (pp. 33-50). Guilford Press.

Guan, Y., Wang, F., Liu, H., Ji, Y., Jia, X., Fang, Z., ... & Li, C. (2015). Career-specific parental behaviors, career exploration and career adaptability: A three-wave investigation among Chinese undergraduates. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *86*, 95-103.

Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2012). Introduction to applied thematic analysis. *Applied Thematic Analysis*, *3*(20), 1-21.

Halverson, L. R., & Graham, C. R. (2019). Learner engagement in blended learning environments: A conceptual framework. *Online Learning*, *23*(2), 145-178.

Hamaideh, S. H. (2009). Stressors and reactions to stressors among university students. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, *57*(1), 69-80. https://doi:10.1177/0020764009348442.

Handelsman, M. M., Briggs, W. L., Sullivan, N., & Towler, A. (2005). A measure of college student course engagement. *The Journal of Educational Research*, *98*(3), 184-192.

Hanrahan, H. M., Dewitt, A. L., & Brasher, S. M. (2016). Gender, Confinement, and Freedom: Team Teaching Introduction to Women's Studies. *Feminist Teacher*, *26*(2-3), 95-114.

Hart, H. L. A., Hart, H. L. A., Raz, J., & Green, L. (2012). *The concept of law*. Oxford University press.

Heaton, J. (2008). Secondary analysis of qualitative data: An overview. *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 33-45.

Helliwell J. F., Layard R., Sachs J., & De Neve J. E. (2020). *World happiness report 2020. Sustainable development solutions network*. https://happiness-report.s3.amazonaws.com/2020/WHR20.pdf.

Herbert, C., Meixner, F., Wiebking, C., & Gilg, V. (2020). Regular physical activity, short-term exercise, mental health, and well-being among university students: the results of an online and a laboratory study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, 491804.

Hernández-Torrano, D., Ibrayeva, L., Sparks, J., Lim, N., Clementi, A., Almukhambetova, A., ... & Muratkyzy, A. (2020). Mental health and well-being of university students: A bibliometric mapping of the literature. *Frontiers in psychology*, *11*, 540000.

Huang, D., Ceccato, V., & Kyttä, M. (2022). Safety perceptions in university campuses: The role of environment. *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*, *24*(3), 266–285. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41300-022-00148-y

Huppert, F. A. (2009). Psychological well-being: evidence regarding its causes and consequences. *Applied Psychology: Health Well Being* 1(2), 137-164. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-0854.2009.01008.

Jaisoorya, T. S. (2021). A case for college mental health services. *The Indian Journal of Medical Research*, *154*(5), 661–664. https://doi.org/10.4103/ijmr.IJMR_37_20.

James, C. (2011). *Theory of Change Review: A Report Commissioned by Comic Relief*. Comic Relief.

James, C., & Wardhaugh, F. (2016). Enhancing emotional competencies with law students. *International Journal of Clinical Legal Education*, *23*, 53.

January, J., Madhombiro, M., Chipamaunga, S., Ray, S., Chingono, A., & Abas, M. (2018). Prevalence of depression and anxiety among undergraduate university students in low- and middle-income countries: a systematic review protocol. *System Review*, 7, 57. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-018-0723-8.

Jia, Q. (2010). A Brief Study on the Implication of Constructivism Teaching Theory. *International Education Studies*, *3*(2). ISSN 1913-9020 (Print), ISSN 1913-9039.

Jiang, M. M., Gao, K., Wu, Z. Y., & Guo, P. P. (2022). The influence of academic pressure on adolescents' problem behavior: Chain mediating effects of self-control, parent-child conflict, and subjective well-being. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 954330. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.954330.

Johnston, M. P. (2014). Secondary Data Analysis: A Method of which the Time Has Come School of Library and Information Studies, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL, USA. *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries* 3. 619–626. ISSN 2241-1925.

Kaplowitz, M. D., Hadlock, T. D., & Levine, R. (2018). A comparison of web and mail survey response rates. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 72*(3), 496-505. https://doi: 10.1093/poq/nfy025

Kiff, C. J. (2012). *Examining the interplay of vagal tone and parenting as predictors of child psychopathology*. [Doctoral thesis, University of Washington]. University libraries.

King, N., Pickett, W., McNevin, S. H., Bowie, C. R., Rivera, D., Keown-Stoneman, C., ... & U-Flourish Student Well-Being and Academic Success Research Group. (2021). Mental health need of students at entry to university: baseline findings from the U-Flourish Student Well-Being and academic success study. *Early intervention in Psychiatry*, *15*(2), 286-295.

Kipp, L. E. (2016). Psychosocial aspects of youth physical activity. *Pediatric Exercise Science*, *28*(1), 28-31.

Kitzinger, J. (2013). Using focus groups to understand experiences of health and illness. *Understanding and using health experiences: Improving patient care*, *1*, 49-59.

Kitzinger, J. (2019). Focus groups. In P. Liamputtong (Ed.), *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences* (pp. 191-208). Singapore: Springer.

Kleszczewska, D., Dzielska, A., Salonna, F., & Mazur, J. (2018). The association between physical activity and general life satisfaction in lower secondary school students: The role of individual and family factors. *Community Mental Health Journal*, *54*, 1245-1252.

Koltz, R. L., Nelson, M. D., Tarabochia, D. S., & Elliott, A. (2021). A Model of Family Well-Being for School Counsellors. *Journal of School Counselling*, *19*(55), 55.

Kotzé, M., & Kleynhans, R. (2013). Psychological well-being and resilience as predictors of first-year students' academic performance. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, *23*(1), 51-59.

Krieger, L. S. (2005). The Inseparability of Professionalism and Personal Satisfaction. *York Law School Clinical Research Institute*, 425, 434.

Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

Langton, C. E., & Berger, L. M. (2011). Family structure and adolescent physical health, behavior, and emotional well-being. *Social Service Review*, *85*(3), 323-357.

Larcombe, W., & Fethers, K. (2013). Schooling the Blues? An Investigation of Factors Associated with Psychological Distress Among Law Students. *University of New South Wales Law Journal 36*(2), 390-436.

Legatum Institute (2022) "The Legatum Prosperity Index 2021" https://www.prosperity.com/about/resources

Leshner, A.I., & Scherer, L.A. (2021). *National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2021. Mental Health, Substance use, and Wellbeing in Higher Education: Supporting the Whole Student.* The National Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/26015.

Levit, N., & Linder, D. O. (2007). Happy law students, happy lawyers. *Syracuse Law Review*, *58*, 351.

Levitt, H. M., Bamberg, M., Creswell, J. W., Frost, D. M., Josselson, R., & Suárez-Orozco, C. (2018). Journal article reporting standards for qualitative research in psychology: The APA publications and communications board task force report. *American Psychologist*, *73*(1), 26-46.

Li, J., Han, X., Wang, W., Sun, G., & Cheng, Z. (2018). How social support influences university students' academic achievement and emotional exhaustion: The mediating role of self-esteem. *Learning and Individual Differences*, *61*, 120-126.

Lipson, S. K., & Eisenberg, D. (2018). Mental health and academic attitudes and expectations in university populations: results from the healthy minds study. *Journal of Mental Health*, *27*(3), 205-213.

Liu, Y., Zhu, Y., & Xia, Y. (2021). Support-Seeking Strategies and Social Support Provided in Chinese Online Health Communities Related to COVID-19. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*, 783135. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.783135.

Logan, T., & Walker, R. (2021). The Gender Safety Gap: Examining the Impact of Victimization History, Perceived Risk, and Personal Control. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *36*(1-2), 603-631. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517729405.

Lunkenheimer, E. S., Shields, A. M., & Cortina, K. S. (2007). Parental emotion coaching and dismissing in family interaction. *Social Development*, *16*(2), 232-248.

Mahlo, F. D. (2011). *Experiences of Learning Support Teachers in the Foundation Phase, with Reference to the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Gauteng.* [Doctoral thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria]. Unisa Institutional Repository.

Mahmoud, J. S. R., Staten, R. T., Hall, L. A., & Lennie, T. A. (2012). The relationship among young adult college students' depression, anxiety, stress, demographics, life satisfaction, and coping styles. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, *33*(3), 149-156.

Mahtab, F., & Javed, M. Z. (2020). Academic stress, career decision making and stress appraisal among CSS students. *European Journal of Psychological Research Vol, 7 (1).*

Maier, S. L., & DePrince, B. T. (2020). College students' fear of crime and perception of safety: The influence of personal and university prevention measures. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, *31*(1), 63-81.

Malkoç, A., & Yalçin, I. (2015). Relationships among resilience, social support, coping, and psychological well-being among university students. *Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance Journal*, *5*(43), 35-43.

Manap, R., Hamid, S. A., & Ghani, M. A. (2019). Depression, anxiety and stress among undergraduate students. *e-BANGI, 16*, 1-7.

Martin-Arbos, S., Castarlenas, E., & Duenas, J. M. (2021). Help-seeking in an academic context: A systematic review. *Sustainability*, *13*(8), 4460.

Matthewman, L. J., Jodhan-Gall, D., Nowlan, J., O'Sullivan, N., & Patel, Z. (2018). Primed, prepped and primped: Reflections on enhancing student well-being in tertiary education. *Psychology Teaching Review*, *24*(1), 67-77.

Merriam, S. B., & Grenier, R. S. (Eds.). (2019). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. John Wiley & Sons.

Merrill, J. E., & Read, J. P. (2010). Motivational pathways to unique types of alcohol consequences. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, *24*(4), 705-7011.

Meyer, K. A. (2015). Conducting research on the internet: Online survey design, development, and implementation guidelines. *Journal of Extension, 53*(6), 1-12. https://www.joe.org/joe/2015december/tt2.php

Mihas, P. (2019). Qualitative data analysis. In *Oxford research encyclopedia of education*. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.1195

Moore, A., Nguyen, A., Rivas, S., Bany-Mohammed, A., Majeika, J., & Martinez, L. (2021). A qualitative examination of the impacts of financial stress on college students' well-being: Insights from a large, private institution. *SAGE Open Medicine*, *9*, 20503121211018122.

Morgan, D. L. (2018). *Focus groups as qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Mujere, N. (2016). Sampling in research. In *Mixed Methods Research for Improved Scientific Study* (pp. 107-121). IGI Global.

Naderifar, M., Goli, H., & Ghaljaei, F. (2017). Snowball Sampling: A Purposeful Method of Sampling in Qualitative Research. *Strides in Development of Medical Education. In Press*. https://www.doi.org/10.5812/sdme.67670.

National Science Foundation. (2011). Dissemination and sharing of research results. In *Grant proposal guide*. http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf11001/aag_6.jsp

Nel, C., Troskie-de Bruin, C., & Bitzer, E. (2009). Student transition from school to university: Possibility for a pre-university intervention. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, *23*, 974–991.

Nelson, M. D., Tarabochia, D. W., & Koltz, R. L. (2015). PACES: A Model of Student Well-Being. *Journal of School Counseling*, *13*(19). http://jsc.montana.edu.

Neveu, D., Doron, J., Visier, L., Boiché, J., Trouillet, R., Dujols, P., & Ninot, G. (2012). Students perceived stress in academic programs: Consequences for its management. *Revue D'epidemiologie et de Sante Publique*, *60*(4), 255-264.

Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2015). Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, *18*(2), 34-35.

Norris, F., Galea, S., Friedman, M., & Watson, P. (2006). *Methods for disaster mental health research*. Guilford Press.

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *16*(1), 1-13. https://doi: 10.1177/1609406917733847

O'Brien, M., Tang, S., & Hall, K. (2011). Changing Our Thinking: Empirical Research on Law Student Wellbeing, Thinking Styles and the Law Curriculum. *Legal Education Review*, *21*(2), 149-182.

OECD. (2020). *How's life? Measuring well-being*. OECD Publishing.

Organ, J. M., Jaffe, D. B., & Bender, K. M. (2016). Suffering in silence: The survey of law student well-being and the reluctance of law students to seek help for substance use and mental health concerns. *Journal of Legal Education*, *66*(1), 116-156.

Osborn, T. G., Li, S., Saunders, R., & Fonagy, P. (2022). University students' use of mental health services: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems*, *16*(1), 57. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13033-022-00569-0.

Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, *42*(5), 533-544.

Park, S. Y., Andalibi, N., Zou, Y., Ambulkar, S., & Huh-Yoo, J. (2020). Understanding students' mental well-being challenges on a university campus: interview study. *JMIR Formative Research*, *4*(3), e15962.

Parker, C., Scott, S., & Geddes, A. (2019). Snowball sampling. *SAGE research methods foundations*.

Pascoe, M. C., Hetrick, S. E., & Parker, A. G. (2020). The impact of stress on students in secondary school and higher education. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, *25*(1), 104-112.

Patel, N. U., Moore, B. A., Craver, R. F., & Feldman, S. R. (2016). Ethical considerations in adherence research. *Patient Preference and Adherence*, 2429-2435.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. Sage.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*. Sage publications.

Pérez-Sindín, X., & Allen, M. (2017). Secondary Data sources: advantages and disadvantages. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods* (pp. 1578-1579). Sage Publications. https://dio.org/10.4135/9781483381411.n557.

Peterson, T. D. (2016). The moral obligation of law schools to address law student well-being: A review essay about the happy lawyer. *Notre Dame Journal of Ethics & Public Policy, 30*, 67.

Pham, L. T. M. (2018). *Qualitative approach to research a review of advantages and disadvantages of three paradigms: Positivism, interpretivism and critical inquiry.* University of Adelaide.

Pienta, A. M., O'Rourke, J. M., & Franks, M. M. (2011). Getting started: working with secondary data. In K. H. Trzesniewski, M. B. Donnellan, & R. E. Lucas (Eds.), *Secondary Data Analysis: An Introduction for Psychologists* (pp. 13–26). American Psychological Association. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1chrxvs.5.

Pierceall, E. A., & Keim, M. C. (2007). Stress and coping strategies among community college students. *Community College Journal of Research And Practice*, *31*(9), 703-712.

Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2008). *Nursing research: Generating and assessing evidence for nursing practice*. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Polko, P., & Kimic, K. (2022). Gender as a factor differentiating the perceptions of safety in urban parks. *Ain Shams Engineering Journal*, *13*(3), 101608.

Pookaiyaudom, G. (2012). *A Comparative Analysis of International and Domestic Tourists' Perceptions of Community-Based Tourism: The Case of Pai, Thailand.* https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/A-comparative-analysis-of-international-and-of-%3A-of-Pookaiyaudom/bec5bb9c1a852b445552637b954a82498fe624d1

Qomariyah, L., Ekowati, D., & Mudzakkir, M. F. (2023). The Contexts of Academic Pressure: Narrative Review. *RSF Conference Series: Business, Management and Social Sciences*, *3*(3), 502–514. https://doi.org/10.31098/bmss.v3i3.715

Quaye, S. J., Harper, S. R., & Pendakur, S. L. (Eds.). (2019). *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429400698.

Rand, K. L., Shanahan, M. L., Fischer, I. C., & Fortney, S. K. (2020). Hope and optimism as predictors of academic performance and subjective well-being in college students. *Learning and Individual Differences*, *81*, 101906.

Reddy, K. J., Menon, K. R., & Thattil, A. (2018). Academic stress and its sources among university students. *Biomedical and Pharmacology Journal*, *11*(1), 531-537.

Reid, A. M., Brown, J. M., Smith, J. M., Cope, A. C., & Jamieson, S. (2018). Ethical dilemmas and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Perspectives on Medical Education, 7*, 69-75.

Reuben, R. C., & Sheldon, K. M. (2019). Can mindfulness help law students with stress, focus, and well-being: An empirical study of 1Ls at a midwestern law school. *SouthWestern Law Review, 48,* 241.

Rousseau, K. L., Thompson, S., Pileggi, L. A., Henry, M., & Thomas, K. G. (2021). Trends in the prevalence and severity of depressive symptoms among undergraduate students at a South African University, 2016-2019. *South African Journal of Psychology*, *51*(1), 67-80.

Rickwood, D., Telford, N., O'Sullivan, S., Crisp, D., & Magyar, R. (2016). *National Tertiary Student Wellbeing Survey Headspace: National Youth Mental Health Foundation.* http//hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/522678.

Rubin A., Babbie E. R. (2008). *Research methods for social work* (6th ed.). Thompson Books/Cole.

Ruggeri, K., Garcia-Garzon, E., Maguire, A., Matz, S., & Huppert, F.A. (2020). Well-being is more than happiness and life satisfaction: multidimensional analysis of 21 countries. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes.* https://doi.org/10.1186/s12955-020-01423-y

Rutledge, P. C., & Sher, K. J. (2001). Heavy drinking from the freshman year into early young adulthood: the roles of stress, tension-reduction drinking motives, gender and personality. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 62*(4), 457-466.

Ryan, F., Thanaraj, A., & Jones, E. (2021). The changing legal profession. In *Digital Lawyering* (pp. 368-403). Routledge.

Ryff, C. D., & Singer, B. (2014). Interpersonal flourishing: A positive health agenda for the new millennium. In *Personality and Social Psychology at the Interface* (pp. 30-44). Psychology Press.

Sabagh, Z., Hall, N. C., & Saroyan, A. (2018). Antecedents, correlates and consequences of faculty burnout. *Educational Research, 60*(2), 131-156.

Said, D., Kypri, K., & Bowman, J. (2013). Risk factors for mental disorder among university students in Australia: findings from a web-based cross-sectional survey. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, *48*(6), 935-944.

Salavera, C., Usan, P., Teruel, P., & Antonanzas, J. L. (2020). Eudaimonic Well-being in adolescents: The role of trait emotional intelligence and personality. University of Zaragoza, Spain. *Sustainability*, 12, 2742. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12072742

Salzer, M.S. (2012). A comparative study of campus experiences of college students with mental illnesses versus a general college sample. *Journal of American College Health, 60*(1),1-7.

Savasci, H. S., & Tomul, E. (2013). The Relationship between Educational Resources of School and Academic Achievement. *International Education Studies*, *6*(4), 114-123. https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v6n4p114

Sandelowski, M. (1995). Sample size in qualitative research. *Research in Nursing & Health, 18*(2), 179-183.

Schafer, J. A., Lee, C., Burruss, G. W., & Giblin, M. J. (2018). College student perceptions of campus safety initiatives. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, *29*(4), 319-340.

Seligman, M.E. (2012). Flourish: A visionary understanding of happiness and well-being. Atria Paperback. *Policy*, 27(3), 60-61.

Sharp, J., & Theiler, S. (2018). A review of psychological distress among university students: Pervasiveness, implications and potential points of intervention. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, *40*, 193-212.

Sheldon, K. M., & Krieger, L. S. (2007). Understanding the negative effects of legal education on law students: A longitudinal test of self-determination theory. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *33*(6), 883-897.

Sheldon, K. M., & Krieger, L. S. (2014). Service job lawyers are happier than money job lawyers, despite their lower income. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *9*(3), 219-226.

Showkat, N., & Parveen, H. (2017). *Non-Probability and Probability Sampling*. Aligarh Muslim University. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307546330

Singh, S., & Wassenaar, D. R. (2016). Contextualising the role of the gatekeeper in social science research. *South African Journal of Bioethics and Law*, *9*(1), 42-46.

Sirois, F. M., & Pychyl, T. A. (Eds.). (2016). *Procrastination, health, and well-being*. Academic Press.

Skead, N., & Rogers, S. L. (2014). Stress, Anxiety and Depression in Law Students: How Student Behaviours Affect Student Wellbeing. *Monash University Law Review*, *40*(2), 565-588.

Skead, N. K., Rogers, S. L., & Johnson, W. R. (2020). The role of place, people and perception in law student well-being. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, *73*, 101631.

Slavich, G. M. (2020). Social safety theory: a biologically based evolutionary perspective on life stress, health, and behavior. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, *16*, 265-295.

Smith, E. (2008). *Using secondary data in educational and social research.* McGraw-Hill Education.

Sontag-Padilla, L., Woodbridge, M. W., Mendelsohn, J., D'Amico, E. J., Osilla, K. C., Jaycox, L. H., ... & Stein, B. D. (2016). Factors affecting mental health service utilization among California public college and university students. *Psychiatric Services*, *67*(8), 890-897.

Spence, R., Kagan, L., Nunn, S., Bailey-Rodriguez, D., Fisher, H. L., Hosang, G. M., & Bifulco, A. (2022). Life events, depression and supportive relationships affect academic achievement in university students. *Journal of American college health*, *70*(7), 1931-1935.

Spencer, K. M. (2012). *A study of the impact of a first-year experience initiative on first-year developmental education student success and persistence*. [Doctoral thesis, Capella University].

Steel, P., & Klingsieck, K. B. (2016). Academic procrastination: Psychological antecedents revisited. *Australian Psychologist*, *51*(1), 36-46.

Stevens, C. K., Murdock, J. L., & Lee, S. H. (2016). A constructivist grounded theory study of undergraduate students' well-being. *Journal of College Student Development*, *57*(5), 485-500. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2016.0056

Stewart, S., Lim, D. H., & Kim, J. (2015). Factors influencing college persistence for first-time students. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 12-20.

Stowell, D., Lewis, R. K., & Brooks, K. (2021). Perceived stress, substance use, and mental health issues among college students in the Midwest. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community*, *49*(3), 221–234. https://doi.org/10.1080/10852352.2019.1654263.

Strayhorn, T. L. (2018). *College students' sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all students*. Routledge.

Suasthi, I. G. A. (2022). A holistic approach to student well-being in Hindu education: The effects of spiritual teaching practices, community involvement, and classroom environment. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, *102*(102), 89-107.

Suldo, S. M., Shaunessy, E., & Hardesty, R. (2008). Relationships among stress, coping, and mental health in high-achieving high school students. *Psychology in the Schools*, *45*(4), 273-290.

Thakkar, M. (2022). The Firm: Source of Inspiration for an Aspiring Lawyer. *Indian Journal of Law and Legal Research*, *4*(1).

Theys, S. (2017) Constructivism. In S. McGlinchey (Ed), *International Relations Theory* (pp. 36-41). E-International Relations.

Tov, W. (2018). Well-being concepts and components. In E. Diener, S. Oishi & L. Tay (Eds.), *Handbook of Well-being* (pp. 1–15). DEF Publishers.

Tovar, E. (2015). The role of faculty, counsellors, and support programs on Latino/a community college students' success and intent to persist. *Community College Review*, *43*(1), 46-71.

Wagner, B., Snoubar, Y., & Mahdi, Y. S. (2023). Access and efficacy of university mental health services during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Frontiers in Public Health*, *11*, 1269010. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1269010

Ward, M. R., & Delamont, S. (2020). Introduction: using qualitative research methods for educational research. In *Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education* (pp. 1-4). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Waters, J. (2015). Snowball sampling: A cautionary tale involving a study of older drug users. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *18*(4), 367-380.

Won, S., Hensley, L. C., & Wolters, C. A. (2021). Brief research report: Sense of belonging and academic help-seeking as self-regulated learning. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, *89*(1), 112-124.

Wright, K. B., & King, S. (2019). *Online versus paper surveys: Which is better? Association for Psychological Science.* https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/online-versus-paper-surveys-which-is-better

Yikealo, D., Tareke, W., & Karvinen, I. (2018). The level of stress among college students: A case in the college of education, Eritrea Institute of Technology. *Open Science Journal*, *3*(4).

APPENDIX A

STUDENT WELLBEING AT **

PHASE 2

WHY DO CERTAIN FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO STUDENT WELLBEING?

General short introduction:

What is well-being? (in very simple terms without referring to factors that contribute).

We distinguish between the *hedonic* tradition which explores well-being as feelings, which would refer to non-cognitive expressions of an individual or a community's experience or state; and which is empirically measurable. The *eudemonic* tradition, on the other hand, views well-being as a relational activity and a long-term practice of 'being well' (definition of Harward (2016), in the collection of essays on *Well-Being and Higher Education)*.

You can also read up on the PERMA-theory of Wellbeing in Positive Psychology, as preparation.

We use "conversational learning" during the focus groups.

Background to the project: Shortly explain that there was a preceding phase where students noted in an open-ended questionnaire which factors contribute to their well-being. This phase will try and clarify those factors, or identify new factors not mentioned.

Ice-breaker and general question about contributing factors: "If you think about your life as a student at **, what is the first factor that you think of when I ask you: 'what contributes to your well-being'? If everyone had a chance to share their thoughts, one can ask: "Are there anything anyone else can think of that has not been mentioned but is also an important factor to consider?"

In the next section of questions, you want to probe to what extent the different factors (as identified from one batch of about 350 questionnaires, on which an initial familiarisation analyses was done by Dr Sumari O'Neil) contribute to their well-being, and to what extent they feel that those factors are present or absent at the **.

The questions need to be open ended, therefore ask

"**How does/do _____ contribute to your well-being?**"

Probes for each factor should focus on deeper understanding and what the stance of that specific factor is at **. Probe for examples from students' life/experiences.

A. Infrastructure at **:

1. Surroundings i.e., gardens, seats, open spaces, buildings.
2. Availability of parking
3. Access to clinics and health care providers
4. Cafeterias, restaurants and student centre
5. Fitness centres (walking trails on campus and ** gym)
6. Internet (access to Wi-Fi)
7. Lecture halls, lecture rooms and labs

B. Learning facilities and support:

1. Course / programme content (Probe about the relevance of the programmes and study material)
2. Online learning facilities (Probe about blended learning, access and content of ClickUP)
3. Tutorials
4. Library services
5. Lecturers

C. Social support:

1. Who constitutes the social support that contributes to well-being? (From the questionnaires it those mentioned are family, friends, day houses)
2. What are the most important relationships in your life?

D. Psychological and emotional support:

1. Who constitutes the psychological and emotional support that contributes to well-being? (From the questionnaires it those mentioned are faculty advisors, counsellors and psychologists on campus, well-being sessions presented at the res and on campus)

E. Academic support:

1. Who constitutes the academic support that contributes to well-being? (From the questionnaires it those mentioned are lecturers who care and believe in the student and tutors)
2. How does the FLY@** programme contribute to well-being? (some students explicitly mentioned it, although it is not clear *how* it helps them; do probe this)
3. Who do they see as mentors that support them academically? (A number of students mentioned mentors contribute to their well-being, yet, it is unclear who these mentors are, and if in fact they have mentors, or is it factors that they feel will contribute but is absent at the moment; explore).

F. Achievement/accomplishment

1. What do you see as accomplishment as a student?
2. Wellbeing research with people around the globe shows the importance of 'accomplishment' and 'achievement' to our well-being. Why do you think this is important? (probe about accomplishment as a measure of hope for a better life/the privilege to create your own future)
3. How important is accomplishment at ** (in your studies) to your well-being? (Why? Share some examples from your life.)

G. Own capabilities:

1. How do you contribute to your own well-being? (Explain)
2. How important do you think you are in determining your own well-being?
3. Probe the following factors that were mentioned by the students in phase one included commitment to studies, time-management, and ability to balance work and rest and organisational skills; if it does not come up from the group.

H. Recreational activities:

1. Students mentioned that activities such as sports or hobbies contribute to their well-being. How do these activities contribute to your well-being?
2. What activities do you take part in? Are they part of campus life, or do you do it outside varsity life?

I. Spirituality/religion:

1. How do you think your own spirituality contributes to well-being?
2. Are there religious or spiritual activities that are part of campus life that you attend, or is it mainly outside varsity life?
3. Do you have meaning in your life? Why/why not? (This is a high-sensitivity question, and therefore left as optional for inclusion. Therefore, you can assess the atmosphere in the focus group and then decide whether you wish

to include it or not. Please observe all participants' reactions if you do include it and follow up afterwards, if you deem it necessary).

4. What do you think brings meaning to the life of a ** student?

J. Basic needs:

1. We know that for anyone to enjoy more sophisticated aspects of life, such as accomplishment, one would need to satisfy basic human needs. Which do you think needs attention if I say: food, hygiene, transport, and security? (If security does is not specifically mentioned, probe more since it was an aspect mentioned several times by the students, especially in terms of security when parking off campus, while many mentioned how the safety on campus contributed to their overall well-being). Probe the current status of the aspects mentioned, e.g. Do you feel safe on campus? Why?
2. How do you think does "being part of life on campus" contribute to a student's well-being? (Being part of something, enculturated into university life both social and academic was mentioned).
3. Do you think that if students' are proud of ** it will contribute to their well-being? How? (Some students mentioned that they are so proud to be studying at the best university, and that contributes to their well-being).

K. General questions:

1. What do you think is the smallest thing that the university can do that will have the greatest positive impact on the well-being of students?

2. Are there factors (other than the ones mentioned already) that are missing that you would like to add as factors that contribute to student well-being at **?

3. What is the most important thing that you think the leaders of the university should know about your well-being?