Exploring the perceptions of a group of South African educators who participated in a Social and Emotional Learning intervention

by

Mudalo Ndou

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

at the

Department of Psychology

Faculty of Humanities

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

SUPERVISOR: PROF MARETHA VISSER

April 2024

Declaration of Originality

Full names of student: Mudalo Ndou

Student number: 18107134

Topic of work: Exploring the perceptions of a group of South African educators who participated in a Social and Emotional Learning intervention

I declare that the mini-dissertation is my own original work. Where other people's work has been used (either from a printed source, internet or any other source), it has been properly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with the requirements as stated in the University of Pretoria's plagiarism prevention policy.

Signature: _____   Date: ___10/05/2024___

i

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank God for his grace and mercy that has carried me to this point. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my supervisor Prof Maretha Visser, for her exceptional feedback and support in writing and finalising this research. I would also like to thank my co-supervisor, Dr Gloria Marsay, for her efforts and encouragement throughout the research process. This endeavour would not have been possible without my parents, Joyce Ndou and Brian Ndou, for their continuous words of wisdom and encouragement throughout my whole academic career.

Thank you to my siblings, Ronewa Ndou and Ndingoho Ndou, for your continuous support as I pursue my ambitions. Words cannot express my gratitude to my friends, Pfano Khampha, Torez Gengiah, Shaanaz Kachepatsonga, Sello Manzini, my partner, Collins Kgadima, and my cousin, Amanda Musandiwa, for their unwavering support and gestures of kindness and generosity to support me on this journey. Their belief in me has kept me motivated during this process. Lastly, I would like to dedicate this research to all the educators who saw the potential in me and nurtured it with their words and actions.

Abstract

Educators form the backbone of learner development and growth. With advances in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) interventions in educational settings internationally, understanding the perceptions of educators as to how effective such training can be, can be used to advocate the benefits of SEL training for educators in South African schools. Training programmes of this nature can assist in equipping and training educators in ways that are not only beneficial for the educators, but for the learners as well. This study aimed to explore the perceptions of a small group of volunteering educators who participated in an intervention focusing on SEL skills on an online platform. A qualitative research approach was used following a phenomenological research design. Data was collected through online semi-structured interviews. The educators who received online SEL training were asked to share their experiences and perceptions about SEL training and the value of implementing SEL skills in schools. The data was analysed using thematic analysis. Three themes were identified from the data: the value the SEL training had for educators as individuals and how some educators in public and private schools can implement aspects of SEL; barriers to implementing SEL in South African public schools; and what would be needed in the educational system to implement SEL in public schools. These results can be used to advocate for the value of SEL training for educators and learners, as well as to promote attitudes and programmes in education to allow for SEL training in future.

Keywords: self-awareness, self-management, decision-making, relationships, social awareness

|TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Acronyms

CASEL	Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
CSDP	Comer School Development Programme
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
SADAG	South African Depression and Anxiety Group
SDQ	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to Social and Emotional Learning

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) refers to learning the ability to identify and control emotions, solve issues successfully, and build meaningful relationships with others (Humphrey et al., 2013, Weissberg et al., 2015). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) which is a non-profit organisation that promotes the teaching and use of SEL skills, defines SEL as the process of 1) acquiring and successfully applying the knowledge, attitudes, and skills required to recognise and manage emotions; 2) developing caring and concern for others to build positive relationships; and 3) making responsible decisions; and 4) effectively handling challenging situations (CASEL, 2017). Similar to how learners acquire academic skills, they can learn and acquire social and emotional skills by engaging in positive activities both inside and outside of the classroom. Over time, the social and emotion skills they acquire can become enhanced and better integrated into addressing the complexities of life, not only in their academic work, but also in social relationships and civic duties which can promote their overall health and wellbeing.

In general, SEL centres around a set of social, emotional, behavioural and character skills that foster success in school, the work environment, relationships and the community (Frey et al., 2019). Although these skills have an impact on academic learning, they are often considered as soft skills or qualities rather than specific educational objectives (Frey et al., 2019). These skills are unquestionably crucial for all learners and in the world of work. Research suggests that teaching and nurturing SEL in schools could enhance children's ability to integrate thinking, emotions and behaviour, resulting in improved academic and life results. According to Cahill and Dadvand (2020), SEL programmes can enhance the wellbeing of educators and learners. A critical analysis of SEL revealed that theoretically informed SEL programmes, when taught with excellence and dedication, can help learners in reducing risk-taking behaviours such as tobacco, alcohol and other drug use, cope with distress, building their relationship to school, and enhancing social relationships and improving their academic success (Cahill & Dadvand, 2020). Furthermore, good SEL programmes can improve educator wellbeing, strengthen educator-learner relationships and increase educators' use of learner-centred education.

SEL programmes facilitate the acquisition of core competencies to identify and manage emotions, set attainable positive goals, appreciate and acknowledge the perspective of others,

form and maintain relationships, exercise sound judgement and react appropriately to interpersonal situations (Elias et al., 1997). The five core competencies as defined by Elias et al. (1997) include the following:

- Self-awareness, which is the ability to acknowledge one's own thoughts, emotions and how they influence one's behaviour. This includes one's ability to identify one's strengths and shortcomings and awareness of one's goals (Elias et al., 1997).

- Secondly, self-management is the ability to effectively control one's thoughts, emotions and behaviours. This includes impulse control, striving to achieve personal and academic goals, stress management and motivating oneself (Elias et al., 1997).

- Thirdly, social awareness which is described as "the ability to take the perspective of others including those who come from a different background or culture as well as the ability to empathise with others, understand social and ethical norms and to recognise the resources and support in the family, school, and community" (Elias et al., 1997, p.3).

- Relationship skills is the fourth competency which is the instruments required to cooperate, sustain positive and healthy relationships, listen attentively, resolve disputes in a constructive manner, and offer and accept assistance as needed (Elias et al., 1997).

- Lastly, responsible decision-making is defined as: "The ability to make constructive choices about their own behaviour and social interactions, taking into account safety concerns, ethical standards, social and behavioural norms, consequences and wellbeing of self and others" (Elias et al., 1997, p.3).

All five competencies form the basis of social and emotional skills that allow learners to develop and mature in their roles as community members and active citizens. Success in school and future careers is not determined by academic knowledge and cognitive skills alone. Jones and Doolittle (2017) show how social and emotional skills have been identified in understanding how people succeed in all areas of life.

SEL competencies have been conceptualised as a fundamental part of learning and education (Humphrey, 2013). SEL interventions aim to train educators in implementing SEL principles to benefit the educators and learners in the school (Durlak, 2016). According to Jones and

Doolittle (2017), by changing and redesigning educators' style of interaction with learners, social and emotional skills can be taught and acquired by both the learner and educator. Therefore, implementing and training educators in SEL skills, bridges the gap between academics and the essential social and emotional skills necessary for a successful life. Several programmes and strategies have been developed to teach and promote SEL as a crucial element for learning and, ultimately a successful life (Weissberg et al., 2015).

SEL developed from research pertaining to prevention of mental health problems and resilience. In the mid-1990s, the publishing of Goleman's Emotional Intelligence (1995) and Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (1993) triggered researchers' interest in SEL. Since then, the interest in SEL continues to grow as there is more evidence that indicates the positive outcomes of SEL. Internationally, the interest in incorporating SEL in education has risen dramatically (Durlak, 2011; Humphrey, 2013; Weissberg et al., 2015). To date, educators and parents across the globe recognise the connections between academic and SEL especially considering the support structures put in place at schools. Although the focus of SEL is on universal prevention and promotion, SEL is still an untried concept, particularly in South African public schools.

At the core of teaching social and emotional skills are the implementers who provide the knowledge and space to facilitate the teaching and imparting of social and emotional skills. In South Africa, SEL is not formally implemented in public schools, and limited research has been done to focus on the need for SEL and educators' perceptions of SEL (Marsay, 2020). Marsay (2020) showed that SEL constructs, and hope can be described as parallel constructs. Hope adds the concept of spirituality, beliefs and traditions in a multicultural society, while SEL constructs outline competencies required for a successful personal and academic life. Therefore, in her training, she integrated hope with SEL training. During the COVID-19 pandemic Marsay's (2020) article "A Hope-Based Future Orientation Intervention to Arrest Adversity" stimulated some interest among educators who experienced much anxiety, as education was almost halted, and they had to teach amid social distancing. This inspired interest in an intervention for educators through the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG)'s virtual platform and the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE). The training was promoted among educators through SADAG and the CIE and various participants joined the sessions. The training programme aimed to assist educators to manage and reduce their own anxiety to promote their personal wellbeing, using the Hope and SEL framework developed by Marsay (2020). Another goal of the training was to introduce the

skills to educators so that they could experiment with the skills in their teaching. The training consisted of 12 sessions spread over four months where educators participated virtually through Zoom. The sessions included training on the four constructs of Hope (Attachment, Mastery, Survival and Spirituality) as well as the five constructs of SEL (self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationships building and communication) (SEL training sessions outlined in Appendix C). A manual on Hope and SEL skills and implementation of SEL skills was compiled and distributed to educators who participated in the training. This manual was used as a tool to add to the educator's skills and competencies with the expectation that they would use these skills in the classroom.

This research focuses on educators as implementers of SEL programmes. Drawing from the work conducted by Dr Gloria Marsay in developing the concept and training of Hope and SEL in South Africa and her work in developing programmes that empower and train educators, educators' views of such programmes was investigated. Understanding the views of educators about SEL and SEL training assisted researchers in promoting the development of SEL in South Africa.

In this research, the educators' experiences and perceptions of the Hope and SEL training programme they virtually participated in through SADAG and CIE, will be explored. Evidence from the educators' training experiences will provide insight into the gains and limitations of interventions that included SEL constructs. It can also show the need for and value of SEL training that could possibly pave the way for implementing more SEL interventions in South African schools.

1.2 Goal of the Research

The goal of this research is to 1) explore the perceptions of SEL training of a group of South African educators who participated in a SEL intervention and 2) to gain insight into their perceptions of the value and applicability of SEL training programmes in South African public schools.

The research questions asked in this research are:

1) What are educators' experiences and perceptions of the Hope and SEL training they participated in? 2) What are educators' perceptions of the value and applicability of SEL programmes in schools?

1.3 Research Approach

A qualitative research approach (Pathak et al., 2013) using a phenomenological research design was used to capture the experiences and perceptions of the educators that have participated in Hope and SEL training. This design focuses on people's experiences and the meaning they attribute to the construct researched which differs from quantitative research (Bakanay & Çakır, 2016). Online semi-structured interviews were used to capture the experiences and perceptions of the educators that have participated in Hope and SEL training. From the educators who participated in the intervention, volunteers were asked per email to participate in the interviewing process. Five participants volunteered and consented to participate in the research. The data was analysed using thematic analysis to identify the main themes of the data. The ecological theory was used to describe the Hope and SEL training and to interpret the results.

Understanding the perception of South African educators on SEL could pave the way to addressing not only the learner's emotional needs but the educators who teach the learners. This study could inform new ways of training educators all over South Africa, equip them with skills to support the learners, mitigate factors that contribute to educators' burnout and promote their resilience and coping skills.

1.4 Thesis Overview

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter defines SEL and the importance and value it holds for learners and educators. It also outlines the need for educators to be trained in social and emotional skills in the South Africa context. The goal of the research and the research approach is outlined.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, the definition and literature pertaining to SEL is discussed, as well as the historical background and the core principles of SEL. Selected research done on SEL in the educational system is outlined as well as the theoretical framework of this study. Additionally, this chapter highlights the importance of educators' training programmes in the implementation of SEL in schools.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents the research methodology. The chapter outlines the research design, sampling of participants and the data collection method and data analysis process. The ethical considerations in this study are highlighted.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter outlines the data analysis process and the results obtained from the participant's interviews. Themes and sub-themes are identified and reported in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter focuses on the discussion of the results obtained from the data, strengths and limitations of the study, recommendations for future research and the conclusion of the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, the definition and literature pertaining to SEL are discussed. This chapter also discusses the historical background and the core principles of SEL as well as selected research done on SEL in the educational system. Additionally, this chapter highlights the importance of educators' training programmes in the implementation of SEL in schools. The chapter ends by focusing on the theoretical framework used in this research.

2.1 The development of SEL

SEL can be traced back to 380 B.C. through the work of Plato in *The Republic* which formed part of a significant text that advocated for a holistic and comprehensive education (Ed, 2018). In this text, Plato stated that citizens of good, sound character are formed by upholding a solid educational system. This statement infers that education's long-standing mission is to prepare learners to be compassionate, helpful, reliable and engaged citizens (Edutopia, 2011). This mission therefore formed the basis of how education must instil these values in children, while also focusing on their academic achievement.

In the 1960s, the Comer School Development Programme (CSDP) was established on the premise that relationships between children and adults have an extremely high value (Comer, 2013). This programme was built on the theoretical framework that states that for children to develop adequately, they need positive interactions with adults (Comer & Ben-Avie, 1996). Therefore, to cultivate this type of interaction, the CSDP included a variety of community members in the educational process in addition to educators and administrators (Beaty, 2018). It was in 1987 and 1992 that additional educators established the W.T. Grant Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence which was presided over by Weissberg and Elias (Beaty, 2018). This group played a significant role as they were the specialists in school-based-prevention and youth development in that they released a plan to integrate SEL in schools (Beaty, 2018). The plan outlined that learners need to have emotional competencies such as the ability to gauge the severity of feelings, control their impulses, delay gratification, identify, categorise, and express their emotions while learning to manage their emotions and reduce their stress (Catalano et al., 2004). This plan strongly relates to the current key competencies of SEL known to educators and society.

In 1994, the Fetzer Institute assembled educators, child advocates and researchers to discuss possible ideas to assist children in becoming productive citizens (CASEL, 2018). From this

assembly of educators and researchers, the term SEL materialised and gave rise to the CASEL which is the primary organisation in the United States that promotes SEL (Beaty, 2018). Since 1994, CASEL has taken the lead in advocating for the integration of academic, social and emotional learning for all children from preschool level to high school level (CASEL, 2017). The main purpose of CASEL is to integrate SEL into programmes in schools as a vital component of education that is founded on evidence-based research (CASEL, 2003). In 1997, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development partnered with CASEL and formulated a framework that developed a list of strategies to meet the needs of children (Beaty, 2018). Through this partnership, the listed strategies were written in a book called *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators* (Elias et al., 1997) which was made available to educators. This became the steppingstone for CASEL to develop SEL standards that guide the process of selecting evidence-based programmes to be implemented in the education system (Beaty, 2018).

In 1994, an international organisation with the same name, CASEL, was founded with the main goal of establishing SEL as an integral part of learning and school education internationally (Humphrey, 2013). This was followed by a group of researchers at CASEL publishing protocols and manuals for educators to implement SEL in schools internationally (Elias et al., 1997; Humphrey, 2013). These guidelines outlined the five competencies which fall under cognitive, affective and behavioural domains necessary for effective functioning in the workplace and social environment. The five competencies are described in detail as follows (Elias et al., 1997):

1. Self-awareness which is described as the ability to recognise one's own thoughts, emotions and how they influence one's behaviour. This includes one's ability to recognise one's strengths and shortcomings and being aware of one's goals (Elias et al., 1997).

2. Self-management is described as the ability to effectively control one's thoughts, emotions and behaviours. This includes impulse control, striving to achieve personal and academic goals, stress management and motivating oneself (Elias et al., 1997).

3. Social awareness is described as: "The ability to take the perspective of others including those who come from a different background or culture as well as the ability to empathise with others, understand social and ethical norms and to recognise the resources and support in the family, school, and community" (Elias et al., 1997, p.3).

4. Relationships skills are described as the instruments required to cooperate, maintain positive and healthy relationships, listen attentively, navigate constructively during conflict, and to give and ask for help when necessary (Elias et al., 1997).

5. Responsible decision-making is described as: "The ability to make constructive choices about their own behaviour and social interactions, taking into account safety concerns, ethical standards, social and behavioural norms, consequences and wellbeing of self and others" (Elias et al., 1997, p.3).

2.2 Value of SEL in Education

SEL has only come to prominence among parents, educators and politicians in recent years, despite its 20-year history (Jones & Doolittle, 2017). Research indicates that universal school-based SEL programmes can benefit participating students on a range of significant behavioural and academic results that are evidently directly after the intervention and can have a long-lasting positive impact on the students' lives as well as the communities' and the global context (Mahoney et al., 2018). Recent data indicates that SEL programmes are both feasible and successful in various educational settings and in many different countries around the world (Mahoney et al., 2018). Moreover, there is an increasing amount of finances being directed to SEL programmes in the United States of America (US). According to LaRocca and Krachman (2018) more than approximately $600 million per year is invested in SEL programmes. If SEL programmes can be funded, this may provide educators and schools with resources that can facilitate the development of emotional and social competencies of both educators and learners.

Research demonstrated that both cognitive skills (e.g. writing, reading and critical thinking skills) and social-emotional skills (e.g. collaborative skills, motivation and study skills) are an essential predictor of academic success (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). In a study conducted with 324 303 children, it was shown that SEL programmes were effective both in school and after-school settings for children with and without behavioural problems (Payton et al., 2008). The SEL programmes that were implemented enhanced learners' social-emotional abilities, attitudes towards themselves and others, connection to school, positive social behaviour, and academic performance while also reducing behavioural problems and emotional discomfort (Payton et al., 2008). When the outcomes of these studies are compared to the findings of other research interventions, it appears that SEL programmes are among the

most effective youth development programmes available to school-age adolescents (Payton et al., 2008).

In another study conducted in Australia, a cognitive-behavioural approach to teaching social and emotional skills was implemented in a hundred schools where educators presented activities from the formal curriculum that practically teach children social and emotional skills (Bernard, 2007). After training educators on the SEL curriculum and studying the impact it had on the learners, the results indicated that it is consistent with growing research evidence that demonstrates that SEL is valuable and essential in the early years (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). The results of this study also indicated an increase in the levels of positive social-emotional wellbeing for both educators and learners. Social-emotional wellbeing were measured in terms of the presence of positive emotions and behaviours and the absence of negative emotions and behaviours (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). This indicates that SEL training is essential in the overall wellbeing of learners and educators. In the same study, educators were able to implement SEL programmes successfully, demonstrating that SEL can be integrated into everyday educational practice (Payton et al., 2008).

According to Conley (2015) SEL skills are valuable for promoting positive adjustment and preventing negative adjustment. In a study including 524 children in Australia, children participated in a SEL programme called "KooLKIDS Whole of Class". This programme was implemented by trained educators and seeks to assist all children aged 8 to 12 years in recognising their strengths, understanding and managing their emotions, being aware of others' emotions, and developing their social and friendship skills (Conley, 2015). The study measured the children's competencies before and after being exposed to the SEL programme by making use of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and Social and Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SEC) (Conley, 2015). The findings indicated that universal social and emotional skills programmes are effective to promote wellbeing among children. Moreover, this study demonstrated that SEL programmes is a relatively low-cost method of enhancing social and emotional competence in all children. It can even be more effective in improving the social and emotional competence of children who have significant emotional and behavioural problems (Carroll et al., 2020). According to Belfield et al. (2015), SEL is a combination of youth development and the promotion of specific competencies, with the goal of enabling learners to respond appropriately to environmental demands and fully capitalise on opportunities. When learners are taught social and emotional skills, they can develop an internal locus of control, allowing them to make decisions and actions that align with their

own beliefs and values (Belfield et al., 2015). In a study focusing on SEL in higher institutions, university students benefited from the development of social and emotional skills that enhanced personal and interpersonal awareness and competence, enabling them to handle hard academic and social situations (Conley, 2015). Therefore, promoting these skills can reduce emotional and social difficulties and challenges they may encounter in that phase of their lives. This is supported by a study conducted a few years earlier by Ramos-Sanchéz and Nicholas (2007) who found that students with positive self-awareness and self-perception are more likely to succeed in higher education.

In the long term, children with higher social-emotional competence are more likely to thrive at university, succeed in their careers, have positive relationships, and better mental health (Greenberg et al., 2017). In a study that focused on a public health approach to education, SEL programmes offered benefits that formed the foundation for increasing one's overall wellbeing which enhances the publics' overall health (Greenberg et al., 2017). It is evident that not only do social and emotional skills benefit people as individuals, but also the community and society as a whole.

Any discussion of educators and SEL should be centred around understanding whether educators accept that education should advocate for learner's SEL skills (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). In the teaching environment, everything educators do has an impact on the outcomes of SEL. According to Johnson and Johnson (2009), educators may focus on teaching the subject or module content, but whether they use positive, competitive or individualistic learning procedures affects learner's attitudes, values, social and interpersonal development simultaneously with their academic learning. Therefore, SEL is inherent and valuable in all spheres of the classroom and the daily flow of life in the school environment (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). In a meta-analysis of 13 empirical studies conducted to observe the impact of SEL programmes on educators' burnout symptoms, there is evidence that SEL programmes can mitigate educators' burnout by promoting their sense of personal accomplishment (Oliveira et al., 2021). In addition, educators may feel less emotional exhaustion which highlights the value that SEL offers to educators (Oliveira et al., 2021).

The value of SEL is evident in how social and emotional education has well-defined criteria with specific outcomes and their impact can be identified (Elias et al., 1997). The challenge then is for educators and scientists to identify the educational techniques that most effectively contribute to those outcomes (Elias et al., 1997).

2.3 Why Educators' Training Is Important in the Implementation of SEL in Schools?

Educators' experiences and perceptions have been neglected in the discussion pertaining to the factors affecting the implementation and effectiveness of SEL programmes (Greenberg et al., 2005; Kallestad & Olweus, 2003). Educators contribute considerably to the development of social and emotional skills of learners as they are the main implementers of conveying these skills to learners (Elbertson et al., 2010). Educators need to be trained well so that they can use these skills in their personal lives and demonstrate and practise these skills to model skills to the learners. According to Kress and Elias (2007), educators must clearly understand the goals and structure of the programme and believe that it will achieve its goals.

For SEL programmes to run effectively and sustainably, specific efforts need to be directed to the social and emotional skills of educators. They need to be trained on the finer details of the programme to build educators' confidence (Kress & Elias, 2007). Therefore, by understanding educators' perceptions of SEL training, their attitudes, beliefs, and abilities can be analysed and inform the development of future SEL programmes and training in schools (Elbertson et al., 2010).

According to Schonert-Reichl (2017), in a national representative survey conducted in the US, with more than 600 educators, it was found that many preschool and high school educators believe that SEL skills are teachable, that SEL has many beneficial positive outcomes and that promoting SEL will enhance the lives of learners both from rich and poor backgrounds. With that said, educators also emphasised that to effectively implement and promote SEL skills in schools, they need strong support from school principals, school governing bodies and the government (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Additionally, the effectiveness of SEL programmes needs to be documented by researchers to allow educators and policymakers to be encouraged and to motivate programme implementation knowing that it is effective (Mahoney et al., 2018). In a meta-analysis of SEL programmes conducted by Mahoney et al. (2018), the need for meticulous programme execution in achieving favourable learner outcomes was highlighted. The study revealed that SEL programmes directed by educators and other school employees consistently produced excellent effects. The study included 356 research reports from learners within and outside of the US with precise designs and follow-up data from hundreds of learners in and beyond the US on a variety of SEL programmes (Mahoney et al., 2018). In the meta-analysis, findings suggested that SEL programmes are more likely to enhance rather than detract from learner's academic

achievement in school (Mahoney et al., 2018). The emphasis of this review situates educators as the main role players in implementing SEL interventions and how educators make such interventions viable and effective. Thus, improving educators' understanding of SEL may prove to be sufficient to effectively promote SEL. The social and emotional intelligence and welfare of educators themselves appear to be of utmost importance (Jones et al., 2017).

Several interventions that have been implemented in the last few years have focused on enhancing educators' social-emotional skills and stress management at work particularly in the US and the United Kingdom (Belfield et al., 2015, Durlak, 2011; Elbertson et al., 2010). Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) and Stress Management and Resiliency Training (SMART-in-Education) are two of these initiatives that are based on mindfulness (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Both initiatives seek to improve educators' mindfulness to lessen stress and burnout while increasing their job satisfaction, empathy and compassion for learners, and effectiveness in emotion regulation (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). According to preliminary research, both initiatives were successful in fostering educators' SEL proficiency and wellbeing (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Although the gains of SEL interventions are evident, schools must address all areas of learning, but they have few resources and are under great pressure to put academic excellence first (Corcoran et al., 2018). According to Kress et al. (2004), who have worked to develop educators in the promotion of learners' social and emotional abilities, found that educators frequently see initiatives to develop such skills as conflicting with the academic focus of their government curriculum standards. This point of view prevents many well-meaning educators from integrating SEL into their lesson plans (Kress et al., 2004).

In the Canadian mental health system, there is an immediate need for comprehensive initiatives to support safe and supportive school settings as well as positive social and emotional development in schools (Hymel et al., 2018). Although there are various approaches to addressing mental health challenges, addressing the underlying causes and aggravating factors should be the main priority (Hymel et al., 2018). A major step towards a more systemic and widespread strategy for encouraging positive social-emotional development in schools and fostering safe and supportive school settings, is the inclusion of SEL in the new British Columbia school curriculum (Hymel et al., 2018). Therefore, more effort and interventions are needed to empower and support educators and learners to achieve these standards. According to Scoda et al. (2022), educators are increasingly required to be resilient and assist learners to also become resilient to continue developing skills that will

enhance their future, prepare them for the working world, and preserve everyone's wellbeing. This goal is supported by the incorporation of SEL in educational practices, which is an essential part of building resilience (Scoda et al., 2022). Educators who have access to a wealth of SEL resources to help them deal with professional obstacles often become more resilient and when they recognise this, they may assist their learners through modelling resilient behaviours (Scoda et al., 2022). In addition, a study conducted in the Japanese educational context emphasised the importance of reflecting on the value of SEL and then creating a SEL framework that takes into consideration the cultural and social contexts of a region (Smart & Sinclair, 2022). Furthermore, the same can be said for various cultural contexts in which SEL can be effective if it considers the nature and nuances of various cultures and societal standards.

According to a longitudinal study by Hawkins et al. (2005), the effects of implementing a carefully constructed SEL programme in schools were evident 12–15 years later. Young adults who took part in the programme had improved mental health (less social anxiety and suicide thoughts), better jobs, and furthered their education (Hawkins et al., 2005). This background builds a strong case to implement SEL given the long-term impact it has on learners, educators and schools.

2.4 SEL in South Africa

SEL research in South Africa is central to understanding the dynamics of education in this country and the future implementation of SEL programmes in third-world countries. In South Africa, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has outlined three critical challenges in South Africa, namely, inequality, poverty and unemployment (DHET, 2016). This often means that policies for social protection, economic development, education and skills development do not align (De Lannoy et al., 2018; Lund, 2016; Spaull & Jansen, 2019). With ongoing challenges in the classroom environment (Leoschut & Kafaar, 2017; Maarman & Lamont-Mbawuli, 2017), the mental health of educators and learners is affected which interferes with the learners' learning and cognitive development (Mfidi et al., 2018). In a study conducted by Matoti (2010), 45 educators in and around Bloemfontein expressed their fears and concerns about the current state of South African education. The majority of educators were concerned about their personal and professional future as well as the future of education in South Africa. Moreover, their concerns outlined the political and economic climate in the country, alterations in policies and the curriculum, increased rate of educator

attrition, unsafe school environments, poor working conditions, deteriorating quality of education, low educator morale, and the unprofessional behaviour of educators (Matoti, 2010). Most of the educators in the study were educators from township schools. They suggested several strategies to change the current situation. For example, principals receiving management training, educators receiving effective professional development, educators being properly consulted and involved in the planning of educator development programmes, schools receiving better working conditions and environments, the department of education and schools communicating effectively and educators being supported. In a study conducted by Marsay (2022), educators attest to the use of social and emotional skills to improve academic achievement and success in the future. This study also proposes a next step in research, stating that it would be advisable to collaborate with educators and learners to co-design successful interventions and formal support structures with policymakers for the advancement of all those involved in the learning environment (Marsay, 2022). These strategies, if implemented effectively, may set the foundation for South African schools to look beyond their current concerns and look towards programmes such as SEL programmes, to enhance the quality of education in South Africa. This research also paves the way for research that focuses on the voices of educators about the value of SEL programmes and its implementation in their schools to promote the mental wellbeing of educators.

On a much larger scale, educators, other school employees and the people who work in out-of-school environments often receive little training in how to encourage SEL skills, deal with peer conflict, or address other SEL-related concerns (Jones et al., 2017). In light of this, part of implementing SEL in South Africa should involve training educators with the skills, knowledge and competencies that embody social and emotional principles. This means, educators themselves must critically analyse and dissect the intricacies of SEL and its applicability in the South Africa context. It is important to highlight that SEL programmes have not been implemented in public schools in South Africa and more research is required to inform educators of the value of SEL and how they can implement it successfully in their teaching and school environments. It has been implemented successfully in some private schools, although there was no research done on the value of SEL in these schools. To facilitate this process of implementing SEL, training programmes can be developed to explain SEL and its importance, particularly in contexts where academic performance is prioritised over social and emotional skills.

In the study conducted by Jagers et al. (2019), a case is made for transformative SEL programmes that accommodate the diversity of educators and learners in minority communities in the US. This study demonstrates that by taking into consideration the complexities of race, culture, ethnicity and social status, SEL programmes can effectively promote the development of social and emotional competences for learners and educators. According to Jagers et al. (2019), for SEL to effectively support those from underserved communities – and to encourage the best developmental outcomes for all children, youth and adults – SEL programmes must focus on developing the knowledge, perspectives and skills necessary for critical examination and cooperative action to address the underlying causes of inequities (Jagers et al., 2019). Although this study was conducted in the US, the idea of tailoring SEL programmes to accommodate the minority and marginalised communities in spite of the concerns in the education system, gives society hope for an all-encompassing education programme that includes both academic, social and emotional competencies even in South Africa.

In an international study conducted with European countries and four African countries: South Africa, Burkina Faso, Togo and Uganda by Marsay et al. (2021), educators expressed their perceptions on the value of SEL skills in assisting young people to successfully transition into the professional world of work. From all four countries, educators participated in surveys and interviews to describe the skills that educators are using to teach their learners and which skills educators feel their learners should embody to successfully transition into the world of work (Marsay et al., 2021). The findings revealed that despite the cultural and contextual difference across all four countries, common themes were identified. In all four nations, educators believed that the transfer to the workforce required a strong foundation in self-awareness, self-control, empathy and compassion, acceptance of cultural diversity, interpersonal relationships, decision-making, and respect (Marsay et al., 2021). Although none of the educators were aware of the CASEL framework, they were able to describe and explain several SEL skills young people needed (Marsay et al., 2021). The educators noted that interpersonal relationships, social awareness, self-management, positive impact on learning, improved educator efficacy and self-awareness were beneficial to both educators and learners (Marsay et al., 2021). This study provides evidence that the depths and complexities of SEL have not yet penetrated to the schooling system in the South African context, but that educators expressed the value of the skills related to the SEL interventions. Moreover, this study identified effective ways in which SEL programmes can be designed

and implemented to accommodate the cultural, societal and political contexts of these countries.

In the comparative analysis study by Marsay et al. (2021), educators' perceptions of SEL skills were discussed using a qualitative approach. In the first phase of the study, the educators' perception of SEL skills were explored. The results indicated that out of the 68 educators in South Africa, 31 educators stated that SEL skills were taught in their schools (Marsay, 2022), while 32 educators stated that SEL skills were not taught in their school and five educators did not answer the question (Marsay, 2022). Educators were also asked to report on their perceptions of which skills they believe are important in teaching learners more effectively. They mentioned empathy, interpersonal skills, enhanced teaching practices, skills to identify learning and social difficulties and creating a conducive environment for teaching (Marsay, 2020). According to Marsay (2020), there is an increasing number of young people who are vulnerable and who require access to nurturing and motivating learning environments so that they can acquire the necessary skills to earn a sustainable income and grow into thriving adults and responsible citizens (Marsay, 2020). This is true regardless of whether they are low-income, have a disability, or come from different racial or ethnic backgrounds especially in developing countries like South Africa (Marsay et al., 2021). What is important to note in this comparative study is that although results were generated from three countries, the analysis of South Africa provided unique themes that gave testament to the adversities of educators and young people in this country. The themes highlighted poor conflict management, harsh childhood backgrounds, personal loss, poverty and illness in the narratives of the participants (Marsay, 2020). This research is important as it highlights the unique dynamics in South Africa that could contribute to how SEL is implemented and delivered to the educators and learners in schools. It is clear that there is a need to construct and implement a contextualised and practical model that educators can use in the learning environment to initiate the development and implementation of social and emotional skills for both educators and learners (Marsay, 2022). This model combined with educators' perceptions will yield meaningful results in implementing SEL that is feasible in the South Africa context.

Furthermore, researchers in South Africa conducted a SEL-based Hope-Infused Future Orientated intervention with juvenile sex offenders. The intervention included culturally appropriate activities to help the participants make realistic decisions about their future livelihood, as well as activities to support the notions of hope as a distinct foundation

(Marsay et al., 2018). The outcome of the study revealed that six out of the nine offenders showed an increase in hope and all the young offenders in the study stated that they learned more about their own strengths, values, interests and skills and were able to discuss their thoughts about their decision-making in the future (Marsay et al., 2018). Therefore, in understanding interventions conducted in South Africa, a case can be made for developing interventions that cultivate social and emotional skills.

According to de Sousa Santos (2018), in understanding SEL in the South African context, we must be cautious of adopting theory and constructs that were developed in wealthy, capitalistic and western societies. Although this may be challenging for developing countries such as South Africa who face structural, political and financial challenges, with such advances in policy and funding occurring globally, private and non-profit organisations can start launching innovative methods to support educators in their work to implement and teach social and emotional skills (Mcknown, 2019). Moreover, research focusing on the perceptions and experiences of educators can bridge the gap to understanding SEL to facilitate the implementation of SEL programmes in South Africa.

2.5 SEL Training Conducted in South Africa

Following the devasting impact of COVID-19 on learners and educator's mental wellbeing, Dr Gloria Marsay designed a programme founded on social and emotional skills to help educators cope during difficult times. The programme included 12 sessions that trained educators on Hope and SEL skills and practical experience of how to apply SEL principles through various activities and active participation. The outline of the content of the 12 sessions is given in Appendix C. After identifying the challenges of South African educators, Dr Marsay branched into interventions that would mitigate these challenges through hope constructs coupled with social and emotional skills. Marsay (2020) highlighted that a narrative approach can be used in the African context as it uses storytelling which forms part of the African culture. Hence, she facilitated online Zoom sessions that served as a support group and training platform for educators all over South Africa. The aim of the intervention was to not only help educators cope in the aftermath of COVID-19 but to cultivate hope, wherein hope serves as a catalyst for people to overcome adversity and build their resilience (Marsay, 2020). After the sessions were completed, educators returned to contact learning and teaching post-COVID-19. To understand the impact of the training sessions they attended and the value of such interventions, research surrounding their experiences and perspectives

would highlight the need for such training programmes and the implementation of social and emotional constructs in future training programmes for educators.

Therefore, this current study will focus on capturing the experiences of educators who attended the training conducted by Dr Gloria Marsay to understand the value of SEL in the South African context. This study will give a voice to educators who are the primary implementers of academics as well as SEL in the education system. In view of this, it will be important to understand whether the aims and goals of the interventions conducted by Dr Marsay were achieved, how it impacted the educators, the knowledge that was gained and how this can be transferred to the learners.

It is essential that educators' perceptions be considered in the development of practical models and interventions for SEL development in the South African context. Therefore, this research aims to explore the perceptions of a group of South African educators who participated in a SEL intervention to gain insight into the value and applicability of SEL training programmes in South African public schools.

2.6 Theoretical Approach

This research follows an ecological theory to explore how SEL programmes can impact on the ecological system (Härkönen, 2001). The holistic ecological approach to school-based intervention programmes focuses on the whole educational environment rather than the educators individually and stresses the role of interaction between the person and the context (Larsen et al., 2014). On the individual level, the SEL training can equip educators with knowledge, skills and motivation to implement SEL programmes in schools. This is facilitated through the relationship and transference of knowledge and skills between the trainer and the trainee which will later resemble how the educators will impart this knowledge to the learners. Educators' perceptions of the training with regards to the knowledge they have obtained, the skills they have gained and their motivational levels to implement SEL programmes were explored and can be used to inform future interventions. On the interpersonal level, the relationship between the trainer (experts in SEL) and the trainee (the educators) was explored. Educators' perceptions of their trainers provided insight on how the facilitation of SEL training can be improved to equip educators with SEL competencies. The educators' relationships with the learners are also on this level. The relationship with the learners will determine how the educators can implement SEL training in their classes.

On the organisational level, institutions and organisations such as schools can draw from the information obtained on the individual and interpersonal level to reach more educators and improve the functioning of schools as organisations. The experiences and perceptions of educators captured in this study can be relayed back to school governing bodies and ultimately open the door for more educators to become familiar with SEL programmes and training opportunities. On the community level, the culmination of organisations can pool ideas and resources that can improve SEL training for educators in South Africa. According to Durlak (2011), there is a gap between practice and research in school-based interventions. Educators' perceptions and experiences can bridge the gap by providing insights that merge the practicality of SEL implementation with the concrete research on SEL programmes and communities can be educated on SEL training and programmes.

2.7 Summary

This chapter outlined the definition of SEL and the core principles of SEL that form part of skills that educators and learners stand to benefit from. The chapter also highlighted the research done on the value of SEL in the educational system. Additionally, this chapter discussed educators as central role players for the implementation of SEL programmes and interventions. The research done in South Africa related to SEL was outlined as a background for the present study. An ecological approach was used to describe SEL interventions in education and will be used to interpret the results of the study. In the next chapter the methodology of the research done is outlined.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the research methodology is discussed. The chapter outlines the research design, sampling of participants and the data collection method and data analysis process. The ethical considerations in this study are then highlighted.

The goal of this research is to explore the perceptions of SEL training of a group of South African educators who participated in a SEL intervention and to gain insight into their perception of the value and applicability of SEL training programmes in South African public schools.

3.2 Research Design

A qualitative research approach (Pathak et al., 2013) was used to capture the experiences and perceptions of the educators that have participated in SEL training. This design focuses on people's experiences and how the meaning they attribute to it is distinct and has unique importance (Bakanay & Çakır, 2016). Moreover, a qualitative approach was used to gain a deeper understanding on the human experience within a given context. Phenomenology was used as the philosophy supporting qualitative data collection (Qutoshi, 2018). Phenomenology is not limited to an approach of knowing but is an intellectual engagement in interpretations and meaning making that is used to understand the lived world of human beings at a conscious level.

3.3 Sampling of Participants

The population for this research was educators that participated in the online SEL training presented through the SADAG and the CIE platform. Although many educators attended the sessions, only a few attended all the sessions. These educators came from various schools in South Africa as they volunteered to participate in the intervention advertised through SADAG's website and CIE platform. Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants for this study. Purposive sampling involved the identification and selection of individuals or groups of individuals that are proficient and well-informed about a phenomenon of interest (Etikan et al., 2016).

From the educators who participated in the intervention, volunteers were asked to participate in the interviewing process. Educators that were part of the training and are on the database

of SADAG and CIE were invited to participate in the research by means of an email. SADAG and CIE sent an email to the participants who indicated their willingness to participate to the researcher. The researcher then sent details of the interview process and the information sheet to the volunteers.

Through this process we could not find enough educators to interview. This could be attributed to the fact that the training programme took place almost two years before the current study in 2021. Additionally, recruitment was complicated further given that the training programme was conducted online. This meant that educators were in different regions and schools all around South Africa and that they could have been experiencing various challenges that may have hindered them from participating in the study, such as a lack of data or intensive work schedules. It is also possible that educators could have moved or changed their contact details since the training, so that they could not be reached. To circumvent the challenges posed by purposive sampling, snowball sampling was added to recruit participants. Snowball sampling entailed that willing participants were requested to suggest further contacts who met the research criteria and might be willing participants, who in turn suggested possible additional participants (Parker et al., 2019). These methods were employed to recruit more participants and to maximise the number of perspectives for the research, given that the training was conducted some time ago. Therefore, educators previously trained in SEL as well as participants who had experience with SEL training were traced because they could provide well-informed experiences and perceptions of SEL training.

The inclusion criteria for participants were 1) being educators who had previously attended SEL training; 2) educators who indicated that they could recall what happened in the SEL training; and 3) educators who were willing to take part in the interview.

The exclusion criteria for participants excluded educators that could not recall what happened in the training.

Five participants volunteered to participate in the research. Three participants were female and came from private schools and had experience with implementing SEL in their schools. Two participants were male and were involved in public schools. Qualitative research does not require a set number of participants as it relies on thick description and the careful selection of specific participants; therefore, a small number of participants who could recall what happened in the intervention were approached to provide quality data (Croker, 2009).

3.4 Procedure

The researcher received permission from Dr Marsay, the facilitator of the training, to conduct the research. The SADAG and CIE database was used to recruit participants once approved by the research ethics committee of the University of Pretoria. When participants indicated their willingness to participate in the interviews via email, the researcher emailed the prospective participants an information sheet about the research and a consent form about a month before the commencement of the interview process. When consent forms were signed and sent back, the researcher arranged an interview time and date with the participants for online interviews.

3.5 Data Collection

The data collection method that was used was an online interview, approximately forty-five to sixty minutes long, using Zoom as a platform, given that this was the method used in the educators' training programme. The researcher developed the interview questions and conducted the interviews. This method was useful for gathering subjective perceptions from participants, on the assumption that interviews conducted several months after SEL training could provide valuable information about how the educators experienced the training. Additionally, this method was useful as the participants were in different provinces in South Africa. Another advantage was that interviews could be recorded with permission of the participants.

A semi-structured guide was used with a series of questions:

1) How did you experience the SEL training?
2) What knowledge did you have of SEL before participating in the training?
3) How did you benefit personally from the training?
4) Have you implemented any of these skills in your classroom or with colleagues? Please give details.
5) What further skills do you need to implement SEL training in your classes in school?
6) In your opinion should SEL training for educators be widely implemented in South African schools?

The semi-structured questions guided the interview process. Given that the participants would have attended the same SEL training, this provided insight into the educators' experiences and perceptions as well as the value of SEL skills. The interviews were audio-recorded and video-recorded as per consent form with the permission of the participants and transcribed to be used in the data analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data collected from the online interviews was analysed through thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2022). According to Javadi and Zarea (2016), thematic analysis is an approach for extracting meaning and concepts from data and includes identification, examining and recording patterns or themes. The following steps described by Clarke and Braun (2022) was followed to conduct a thematic analysis:

1) The researcher familiarised herself with the data through transcribing the audio data exactly the way the participant said it. This process has its own challenges as educators from different parts of South Africa have different accents and the audio was not always clear and eloquent. After transcribing the data, the researcher re-read the interviews and listened to the audio as many times as needed to identify information that stood out.

2) The researcher generated initial codes from the data. This was done by identifying words and ideas that seem interesting to the researcher and organising the codes into meaningful groups or categories.

3) The researcher searched for themes among the codes. When the themes were identified, the researcher grouped certain codes under relevant themes. This process involved identifying common words and opinions shared by the educators and specific words were used to pinpoint overlaps and commonalities between the educators.

4) The researcher reviewed the themes that have emerged from the data. During this phase, the researcher focused on evaluating, refining and modifying the themes that were identified in the previous step.

5) The fifth step entailed defining and naming the themes and identifying any sub-themes.

6) The sixth and final step was producing a report that includes all the themes. The thematic analysis process was continued until the researcher could answer the research questions. Quotations were added to the themes to illustrate what educators meant and to give them a voice. The findings of the thematic analysis were used to derive conclusions on

educators' perceptions of SEL training and the implementation of SEL training in South African schools.

3.7 Quality Criteria

The criteria to enhance the quality of data involves trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba's criteria for trustworthiness, namely: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and reflexivity were used to assure the quality of the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Credibility refers to the truth of the data or the participants' views and the interpretation and representation of them by the researcher (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). According to Cope (2014), a qualitative study is considered credible if the descriptions of human experiences are immediately recognised by individuals that share the same experience. This means that the response of the participants should be described accurately. In this research, credibility was ensured through the accurate transcription of the data during data collection and data analysis. During the transcription process, the researcher listened to the audio several times to ensure that the transcription was accurate.

Transferability refers to findings that can be applied to other settings or groups (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), transferability is ensured if the results of the data are meaningful to individuals who are not involved in the study and whether other readers can associate the findings with their own experiences. To ensure transferability in this research, detailed descriptions of behaviour, experiences, context and environment of the participants were included so that it will be meaningful for individuals who will read the study.

The third criterion is dependability which refers to the constancy of data over time (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To ensure dependability, the researcher followed a coding procedure in which data was coded separately by both the researcher and a co-coder to see if there was consensus. For this research, the data was coded and a co-coder was able to outline and agree on the codes for the data.

The fourth criterion is confirmability which refers to the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the data represents the participants' responses and not the researcher's biases or viewpoints (Cope, 2014). To ensure confirmability, participant records were meticulously maintained throughout the study, ensuring the preservation of research steps from the commencement of the study until the reporting of findings.

Lastly, reflexivity was used in the analysis of the data. The researcher critically self-reflected on her own biases and preconceptions and how this could have influenced her in the data interpretation (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To ensure reflexivity, the researcher received guidance and supervision from her supervisor relating to the data and interpretation thereof by keeping a journal and notes of all feedback and meetings.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the Humanities Ethics Committee with the reference number (HUM038/0922) (Appendix A). The researcher was bound to adhere to the ethical guidelines stipulated in the Health Professions Council of South Africa Act 56 of 1974 as well as the rules and regulations of the University of Pretoria. All participants gave their written consent to participate in the study. Data was confidential and reported anonymously with no identifying information according to the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA). Data obtained from the study will be kept in storage at the University of Pretoria for 10 years.

3.9 Summary

This chapter discussed the research methodology followed to be able to answer the research questions. In the next chapter, the research results are outlined.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

The findings of the study are presented in this chapter. During data collection, five participants were interviewed for the study. The participants varied in terms of the type of school they were from and the location of their school. Three participants were female and came from private schools and had experience with implementing SEL in their schools. Two participants were male and were involved in public schools. The educators were given numbers as identifying markers. The results indicate the various ways in which the educators were impacted by the training and their perspectives of the effectiveness of SEL training and possible implementation of SEL principles within the South African school system.

From the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, guided by the two research questions in Chapter 1, three themes emerged, namely:

1. SEL training.
2. Challenges in implementing SEL.
3. Strategies to implement aspects of SEL.

The themes were relating to the educators' experience of the SEL training and how they have benefitted from the training they received, what challenges they foresee occurring with the implementation of SEL in the school system as well as strategies to implement SEL. Each theme consisted of several interrelated sub-themes that related to the participants' narrative surrounding SEL training and implementation. Table 1 presents the themes and sub-themes.

Table 1

Themes and Sub-themes

Theme	Sub-theme
SEL training	Personal benefits for educators
	Helped them in relationships with colleagues and school children
Challenges in implementing SEL	Relationships with children and parents
	Societal issues
	Lack of resources in school
	Academic priority

Theme	Sub-theme
Strategies to implement aspects of SEL	Programme content
	External resources
	Time to focus on the child
	Workshops in training educators SEL skills
	Involving parents in SEL training
	Skilled educators
	Buy-in of principals and school management

4.2 Themes and Sub-Themes

The themes and sub-themes identified from the educators' experience of the SEL training, and the implementation thereof are elaborated on, supported by extracts from the interviews.

4.2.1 Theme 1: SEL training. The first theme describes the educators' experience of the SEL training, specifically how they benefitted from the training and how it helped them with building relationship with other educators and school children.

4.2.1.1 Personal benefits for educators. Educators verbalised their experience of the training relating to what they learned and how they benefitted from the training they received. Educators experienced a safe space where they experienced care and could express their feelings. The educators experienced the training as a reminder of the skills and knowledge they already had to relate to others. One educator expressed the following:

> *"I think the more I went to those support group sessions and listened to other support group people, the better I was able to do what I'm supposed to do. It's like being reminded. It's not that you don't know something, but when someone says somebody really benefitted because they had a safe space where they could express themselves, I felt like I belonged. I felt like someone cared when I signed on, they were pleased to see me, you know."* (P1)

The training was in the form of experiential learning where educators could experience the skills they were to learn. They experienced a safe space where they could share their experiences, observe others and learn from them.

> *"They're running a session where you can feel safe enough to say how you're feeling and for others to listen and they're not necessarily telling you what to do, but just to*

listen and then they say something about their lives and maybe it resonates with you. So, nobody is directly giving you advice, you're just observing and learning from others as they speak about themselves, and I think that's a great way to learn social and emotional skills certainly." (P1)

Educators benefitted from the training as it helped them individually to deal with the implications of the lockdown.

"I benefitted personally because I was able to cope with the lockdown. It was a devastating thing. That lockdown was very bad, and we were not sure of what was going to happen after the country was reopened."

Educators explained that the training benefitted them personally because it gave them hope and guidance as they were equipped with SEL skills to become socially and emotionally aware of themselves and build resilience. One educator said that the training contributed to her mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"So, the training gave us hope to say things can still come back to normal in that sense but then even the skills on self-awareness as well as the attributes that one needs to have in order to be able to, to be socially aware of himself and emotionally aware and able now reap the benefits of social-emotional learning, things like persistence. Things like resilience. And things like willingness to seek help as well as to share help with others. So those are some of the things that we learned, and they were of great help to us in making us realise what we have got." (P3)

"Because once you have SEL in your life and those concepts, it gives you hope, and it gives you guidance in your life and I think people benefit from that in the times that we live." (P5)

I think that's one of the reasons why I likely did not have mental health difficulties myself during that time. I think it built my own resilience you know, it's a really good space that you can work in, and I could see the benefits of social-emotional skills in my own life." (P5)

Educators stated that the training resembled the structure of a support group. The environment and space created on the platform allowed educators to feel safe, heard and connected to other educators. They benefitted from the training as it offered them comfort

and provided them with friendly encounters with other educators. They used the training as time for practicing self-care, meditation and mindfulness.

> *"OK, so it was an online Zoom session. And as support group leaders, we used to meet regularly on Fridays, and it was like a support session for the group leaders. It was always very comfortable and very friendly."* (P1)

> *"Doctor Marsay offered like a support group for educators where they could just take an hour for themselves to meditate, to just be mindful, to be in that present moment. And I took that time as a self-care time for myself. Lockdown itself was very obviously from a psychological perspective, so impactful on all of us."* (P5)

> *"I really felt like I belonged, like I mattered…like someone was pleased to see me, and that's kind of important, you know, I mean, I'm the one usually who is doing that to make other people feel like they're cared for and listened to. So, it was very nice to experience it from that point of view so on an emotional level it was, it was powerful. It was supportive."* (P1)

Educators expressed that at the time, lockdown had limited educators' interactions and put strain on their lives. Educators were looking for something to help them connect and interact with others despite the lockdown. They expressed that they experienced the training as a connecting session to learn and connect with other educators.

> *"The fact that once a week on a Friday we had a social and support session with SADAG was really fantastic. It was great to hear what other people were doing. It was great to see people giggling and they became friends. So, it wasn't…. it wasn't so much a training session; it was more of a connecting session."* (P1)

> *"I actually heard about Gloria's sessions on the SADAG website, and I just thought it might be interesting to see what she had to say because lockdown had been quite tough at the time, and I was just looking for some connection with other people who might be in a similar situation."* (P4)

SEL training was presented through the experience of it and educators expressed their thoughts by sharing how the training was presented in the format of experiencing and doing. One educator explained her experience as follows:

"It reminds you that you actually don't have to give anybody any advice. You really have to listen more and be empathetic. So that's an example of how those sessions helped, by reminding me of the things that were really important." (P1)

4.2.1.2 The training helped them in relationships with colleagues and school children. The educators benefitted personally from the experience of SEL training, and it helped them in their relationships with colleagues and school children.

Educators indicated that they benefitted personally, especially from the breathing exercises. The breathing exercises helped in bringing a more peaceful and patient attitude which helped in the relationship with the school children.

"Definitely all the breathing exercises to actually sit down, take a few minutes and centre. To actually go through your whole body and to feel you're connected to the things around you in space has definitely helped and it's definitely giving me a more peaceful and patient attitude especially as far as my children are concerned in class." (P4)

Educators expressed that the training helped them develop self-awareness, the ability to control their emotions and how to show empathy to others which assisted them in their relationships with others.

"What I learned about it is that it gives you the ability to control your emotions. That was one of the greatest one of them all. But then it also trained us on how to empathise with others." (P3)

Educators expressed that the training helped them to cope and assist other educators to cope. The training helped them to become aware of how to impart knowledge, share information and implement SEL principles.

"We also need to become aware of the situation at schools, not only with the learners but also with staff as well. So, Gloria took us through that process of identifying some ways in which we could help educators go through this journey right." (P2)

"We were going through lockdown, COVID-19 lockdown and her intervention was mostly meant for assisting us to be able to go out and assist educators in schools. So, my experience with her was mostly confined to us, being prepared to go out and help

educators cope with the COVID-19 lockdown and general destruction that was caused by COVID-19." (P3)

An educator expressed that the training assisted in mitigating mental health challenges. They benefitted personally but the training enabled them to guide their colleagues and children in the school environment.

"I could see the benefits of social-emotional skills in my own life, and I think it made me also able to guide my colleagues and even in the work that I was doing myself in terms of getting our children to transition back to school very effectively." (P5)

4.2.2 Theme 2: Challenges in implementing SEL. After the training sessions the educators were motivated to implement SEL skills in their relationships with colleagues and school children. Some were in a position to integrate these skills in their teaching, but others experienced a variety of challenges to do so. One educator expressed the frustration of not being able to implement SEL training in schools as follows:

"But when we started going back to work, we tried to visit a few schools to introduce this training that we had been given, but unfortunately we could not go beyond the principal's office or a few people." (P3)

This theme describes the challenges the educators encounter in implementing SEL. Challenges were experienced on various levels.

4.2.2.1 Relationships with children and parents. Some educators expressed that the challenges involved privacy concerns in public school settings and learner's parents affects how SEL can be implemented. An educator expressed that there was no privacy to address the concerns of a learner in the school environment. Because of the way that schools were set up, information shared often did not remain private.

"*The other thing is maybe physical space or…privacy. You know, if you want to engage with somebody on a personal level, you don't necessarily want others to overhear so that could be a sort of logistical thing."* (P1)

In addition to the lack of privacy, educators were scared to ask children about their personal issues as they may feel obligated to act on what they were told.

"I think that one of the obstacles is that the educators might feel that if somebody reveals a terrible situation at home to them that they might have to do something about it. So maybe that's another thing that you don't ask people what's going on in your life because maybe as an educator, you feel like you would then be responsible for doing something about it." (P1)

If children shared their problems with an educator and they had to address the issues, they had to involve the parents and parents were not always willing to become involved. The challenge was even greater if the parents were involved in the problems that the children experienced. The educators did not feel empowered to confront parents about conditions in their homes. Additionally, parents posed challenges to the implementation of SEL in the school environment. Educators were concerned that parents do not teach their children social and emotional skills and that they discipline their children in a different way. Some of the educators identified parents as a hindrance to implementing SEL as they may not approve of the principles of SEL, as it could differ from their own parenting style.

"*Maybe the parents would be quite a hindrance because they're often not on the same page, especially today's parent. Today's parent is very much more permissive. They allow a lot more and they are thinking that they're giving their children freedom and space, but they're actually not giving them the routine and structure that they need so they don't develop those good social skills that they need because their parents don't have them which makes it difficult.*" (P4)

"*Empowering the parents because that's another huge thing that we need parents to buy in for social-emotional learning, to actually work.*" (P5)

4.2.2.2 Societal issues. Educators also expressed that another challenge to implementing SEL was the societal issues of the country that had a direct impact on the emotions and learning capacity of the children. Educators were concerned that if they did not intervene in the social challenges, they would not be able to improve the mental health of the children.

"All these societal problems impact the emotions of children and all these have got an impact on the level of learning. So, if we leave it to the government, I don't think we're going to make it as a country." (P3)

Educators highlighted that societal issues such as poverty and lack of service delivery had an impact on the emotional wellbeing of children. Children were aware of the issues which created uncertainty for them and this directly affected their social and emotional wellbeing.

> *"In our country we are struggling with financial issues and service issues and that uncertainty of 'Will my lights be on? Will I have water? Will I? Will there be money for food?' That uncertainty, I think it's definitely something that emotionally impacts children because they've far more aware that there are difficulties than they used to be."* (P4)

Another educator highlighted that some schools have to prioritise physical needs as children were hungry. When the focus was on physical needs, the emotional needs of children were often neglected.

> *"So how do you talk about programmes that would give you some emotional support, but when you know that there are children out there that's starving?"* (P2)

4.2.2.3 Lack of resources in the school. The educators expressed that while certain schools were well resourced, many others were poorly resourced which posed a challenge in implementing SEL training. Educators vocalised their concern indicating that schools were understaffed and could not function effectively. Educators expressed that this created the impression that SEL could only be implemented in private, wealthy schools.

> *"You have a school with two educators. How do you expect that school to function? Well, so social-emotional learning becomes, I don't know what to call it, but something that is just for the rich and those who are in a better position."* (P3)

4.2.2.4 Academic priority. Educators mentioned that the schools in which they worked challenged not only the educators but the learners who were in the school. Educators expressed that when schools were poorly resourced, principals often prioritised academic skills over other needs, which led to SEL being misunderstood or undermined and educators' ability to implement SEL was compromised.

> *"One of the things we suggested was that we should get the principals to go through this programme as well. Because when we made contact with the principals, they said yes, it would be useful for them. Unfortunately, when we set the time, they said we won't do it during school time. It'll be after school."* (P2)

Educators highlighted that the focus at schools was to complete and prioritise the school curriculum. Educators explained that there was little time available to develop SEL skills as it was more important in their school environments to complete the curriculum.

> "*Obviously there's a place for it. You got to get through a syllabus. There's this huge syllabus and so much stuff to cover. Well, that comes back to the time issue again. I mean where? How do you know what to cover and what not to cover*?" (P1)

An educator explained that the department and district office focused mainly on academic work and prioritised the curriculum.

> "*So even while the curriculum was watered down a bit, there was still a push from the department and the district office to focus on curriculum. So, principals would say they can't make the time. Yeah, that was a challenge…*" (P2)

Educators expressed their frustration that they were understaffed and overburdened with work leaving no time and space to accommodate the social and emotional needs of the learners.

> "*I'll give you an example, as we speak now, when there's a shortage of educators, the learning that will happen in that situation will not be like it should be when you had enough educators. And those who are in service are now overburdened with work, which is only confined to the curriculum… how much more now to deal with social and emotional conditions of children? So, we are in a field which is a bit frustrating because we see the need, we know the good results of this programme, but it cannot be implemented under this condition.*" (P3)

Educators emphasised that they were overwhelmed with academic work and the government did not intervene, yet they expected positive outcomes.

> "*Educators who should be applying it are overwhelmed by the catch-up programme. They are overwhelmed by the work that they've got to do with the mainstream curriculum and then there are fewer of them because politicians are only just saving money. But at the same time, they expect the best outcomes.*" (P3)

An educator highlighted that working in government school limited the discussion around what needed to change to implement aspect of SEL because the focus was on completing the syllabus.

"If you follow a specific curriculum like in a government school, I guess you don't have the flexibility to actually talk about what is happening." (P5)

4.2.3 Strategies to implement aspects of SEL. Educators explained various strategies that are necessary before aspects of SEL can be implemented on a large scale in public schools.

4.2.3.1 Programme content. One educator was so convinced of the value of SEL in schools that he developed his own sessions that would impart SEL knowledge to educators, school staff and learners.

"So, I use those (3 principles of being a hope provider) and the book that we got then later on for school and developed my own sessions which goes about 30 minutes and 45 minutes. So, I went… I developed about… I think, yeah, six sessions. I think it will be a tremendous tool that would really, not only develop the wellbeing of staff, but also even learners as well, because the staff, the educators can take it to the classrooms as well." (P2)

It is necessary to develop the content of SEL training that is culturally appropriate so that educators and learners will benefit from the training.

4.2.3.2 External resources. As part of strategies to implement aspects of SEL, educators expressed that external resources could be used to implement emotional support in schools. An educator suggested that forming an alliance with psychologists to implement aspects of SEL could be empowering for the learners.

"I personally enjoy working in a school, and that's why I've worked here for five years. A lot of psychologists want to qualify and go to private practice. They don't want to be caught up in a school context, and I think maybe if we got…we made it more of an alliance and we had our psychologists even coming in and doing workshops with the kids and empowering them." (P5)

Another educator in a private school expressed that in their school, psychologists intervened by engaging in talks and support groups to support learners and their parents. This strategy assisted with the implementation of SEL.

"We've been very fortunate in that my principal is very forward-thinking as far as emotional and social stuff goes, so we actually have people come to talk to the parents on a regular basis, we have a couple of psychologists that we actually asked to come

in and give parent talks to support the parents and to show them where and what we are thinking is important." (P4).

Educators highlighted that other professionals such as psychologists and social workers could be helpful in addressing some of the emotional and behavioural challenges in the school. An educator expressed that educators often did not have the skills to deal with children's emotional problems and needed input from other professionals. The educator stated her perspective as follows:

> *"We found that learners' emotional needs go beyond the scope of educators' abilities. Other professionals are required in schools for children to cope. We need psychologists who are permanently available. We need social workers who are accessible and as you know, we've been working in some of these schools trying to work with social workers and you can't find them."* (P3)

> *"Education is not taken seriously by government so the private sector and other people who have got interest in education should take up this and start implementing it in institutions where they've got access and also all other people who can play a role in making it happen, like getting these social workers to be present in some centres so that they can serve the surrounding communities or psychologists or psychiatrists."* (P3)

4.2.3.3 *Time to focus on the child*. Educators expressed that for them to implement SEL, they needed to be aware of their role in imparting knowledge and helping children feel seen. This educator expressed that it was not so much the sharing of information that was valuable, but the experience and feeling that educators gave to their learners that was most impactful.

> *"I think the most important thing for educators is to be aware of the fact that while they're there to impart knowledge, it's also very important to make the children - the learners - feel seen. That as an educator, you feel like you should be teaching, sharing, telling, giving information and I think that we need to be constantly reminded that that's not the best way always."* (P1)

4.2.3.4 *Workshops in training educators SEL skills*. Some educators explained methods that they employed to incorporate SEL principles in their schools. Educators also provided solutions to some of the challenges they mentioned. An educator suggested initiating workshops in their schools as part of implementing SEL.

"The main focus of that is doing workshops where we try to convince educators and staff to move away from the punitive route to restorative processes - practice. Yeah, so that's, that also helps with the social-emotional learning." (P2)

One educator highlighted that for the implementation of SEL in schools, material resources were of minimal significance while emotions and sharing these emotions played a much bigger role.

"And of course, the programme itself doesn't call for much resources. No. So you're not looking at textbooks and laptops and tablets and all that. No, it's about your emotion, how you're feeling and things like that. So, the sharing and discussions that emanate from these things." (P2)

4.2.3.5 Involving parents in SEL training. Educators also shared the strategies they were using in their own schools (private schools that implement aspects of SEL) such as engaging with parents to teach them skills that could enhance their children's lives.

"So, we've actually just recently done a talk for our parents on routine and discipline. So that is what was called loving discipline so teaching the children to make choices correctly and have good manners and those little routine things that parents maybe don't know because their parents haven't taught them, yeah." (P4)

Another educator emphasised that empowering the parents of the learners could be a strategy to get them to buy in to the benefits of SEL.

"*Empowering the parents because that's another huge thing that we need parents to buy in for social-emotional learning, to actually work.*" (P5)

4.2.3.6 Skilled educators. Some educators (mostly from private schools) explained that they were already incorporating SEL in their school. They also highlighted that part of being an SEL educator was modelling the SEL principles to the learners as they may not see or experience these principles outside the school environment.

"We are using social-emotional skills and skill development all the time and I would say that it's probably… I don't have a specific time set aside for it because it's just every moment of every day and showing the children and then role modelling or modelling from my side exactly how I want them to be modelled, because they might not have that from their parents." (P4)

One educator expressed that any educator had the capacity to implement SEL. She emphasised that SEL embodied skills that educators already knew that only needed to be reinforced.

> *"But I think any educator would have the ability to teach this. It's not some, it's skills we know it's just something we are reinforcing, for example, also let's say most communication skills like, say for example, how to speak in a more polite manner, manners, whole body listening, those kinds of things are skills that you need to reiterate at school."* (P5)

4.2.3.7 Buy-in of principals and school management. Educators expressed that obtaining the buy-in of principals and school management could be a strategy towards implementing SEL. Educators suggested that if principals and school management participated in SEL training, SEL programmes could be successful.

> *"So, I think for impact at school, it's crucial that the principal and the school management teams have buy in because I think the success of the programme can only be felt through going through the experience, through the involvement of the management of the school, that being, not only the principal, but also other members of the SMT as well."* (P2)

> *"Aside from getting buy-in from the principals and the school management team, we need to go to the department. You know, to the provincial education departments and the district officers."* (P2)

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the perspectives of the educators who participated in the SEL training on the SADAG platform related to their experience of the specific SEL training and how to implement SEL at school level. The results are discussed in chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

5.1 Introduction

A group of South African educators who participated in an SEL training intervention were interviewed to explore their perceptions of the training and their perceptions of the value and applicability of SEL training programmes in South African schools. From the analysis of data of the five educators from both public and private schools, three themes were identified. The discussion examines the experiences of educators during the training and how they benefitted from the training as well the challenges they experienced in their efforts to implement SEL strategies in their schools. Lastly, the resources required to support SEL educators are discussed as various resources in the form of professionals, interventions and skills development are outlined.

5.2 Discussion on SEL training

This study explored the experiences educators had of the SEL training presented to them via Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they personally benefitted from it. During the COVID-19 pandemic, educators expressed that they had gone through challenging times. They expressed that the standard working procedures they used before had to change to accommodate the COVID-19 lockdown. The devastating event meant that educators' ability to cope was tested and they felt that they were not coping both emotionally and logistically as schools were closed and teaching and learning moved to virtual platforms (for some schools with the facilities). The online SEL training educators were invited to attend, provided a platform for educators to hear what other educators were going through and offered them a space to feel comfortable and safe. Educators met once a week, they were exposed to SEL skills experientially and were able to connect with each other and form friendships.

Educators' experience of the training resembled that of a support group wherein educators felt that they were noticed, listened to and appreciated by other educators and where they were offered a safe space that helped them to express themselves. Educators' experience of the training allowed them to feel like they belonged, and they felt that someone cared about them. They commented on how educators were attentive in listening and observing each other, which was a great way of learning social and emotional skills. The way the educators were trained in SEL skills through experiential learning made them aware of how to transfer these skills and put them into practice (Berg et al., 2021). Educators also benefitted from the

training because the skills they learned and experienced assisted them to cope with the COVID-19 lockdown. Additionally, they gained skills to approach their colleagues and learners when they went back to school again.

In similar studies, educators were able to share various forms of online emotional support with other educators after joining an online educators' group (Chung & Chen, 2018; Hart & Steinbrecher, 2011; Kelly & Antonio, 2016). In some studies, educators would participate in online social exchanges for various reasons which include, sharing emotions, idea exploration, combatting educator isolation, use of online surroundings and experiencing a sense of camaraderie (Hur & Brush, 2009). Educators in this study had similar experiences which included relaxation, meditation and mindfulness activities which educators reported became a moment of self-care and reduced isolation during lockdown. Although the training was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, the experience of educators on the online platform and the support structure it created for the educators was significant. A study conducted by Chung and Chen (2018) proposed that sharing social support with other educators on online support groups could provide benefits for educators. This links to the educators in this study who felt connected and supported when engaging in the online training sessions. Educators in this study benefitted significantly as they felt that the sessions did not feel like training, but more of a connecting session. The reward for participating in educator online platforms was that educators received emotional support, higher levels of confidence and improved problem-solving skills (DeWert et al., 2003).

In an analysis of 52 empirical studies of both formally organised and unofficially produced online educator communities conducted over a span of twenty years, the consensus was that online communities can be a valuable tool for creating supportive and collaborative professional practices (Lantz-Andersson et al., 2018). Therefore, structuring SEL training in the form of a support group allows educators to experience firsthand the significance of SEL as such skills can be deduced and observed in these online platforms, making it easier for educators to model these principles to their learners. Therefore, support groups, training groups and online communities serve as resources for educators to use in their journey to implementing SEL.

The goal of their training is for educators to gain the ability to implement social and emotional skills in their schools. What the training did for educators, was to allow them to experience social and emotional values and principles so that they could be the vessels of

implementing SEL. This meant that the training gave the educators the knowledge and skills of SEL by allowing them to experience and observe the engagement, connection and how social and emotional information can be communicated to cultivate social and emotional skills. The educator's experience of feeling seen, feeling that they belonged and mattered was important for them. Educators reported that they often found themselves being the person who made sure that *others* felt like they were cared for and listened to. Being in the training sessions and experiencing the care and attentiveness of others made them feel supported and left a great emotional impact. The skills cultivated in the educators training were self-awareness and self-management wherein the training allowed educators to become more aware of how to impart knowledge and share information when implementing SEL principles. Educators who attended the SEL training believed that they were able to assist other educators in schools to cope with the challenges imposed by the lockdown. The educators' experiences align with similar studies highlighting the important role and use of SEL skills in human development, academic success and overall wellbeing of educators, including skills to effectively cope with stressors such as those imposed by COVID-19 (Zieher et al., 2021; Zolkoski et al., 2021)

Educators indicated that the training gave them hope and created a sense of self-awareness which helped them become more aware of their emotional status. A survey of 455 participants in a US study indicated that educators experienced an increase in symptoms of anxiety and depression between March 2020 and February 2021 and most were seeking mental health support (Cohen-Fraade & Donahue, 2022). This highlights the value that SEL training may contribute to alleviate symptoms and cultivate well-being among educators as they expressed that the training helped them to improve their mental health. Therefore, cultivating awareness about one's own mind and the present moment can lead to a reduction in anxiety, an increase in positive emotions and interaction as well as other psychological and emotional advantages (Weinstein et al., 2009).

The training reminded them of their role to assist and help in the development of learners. Educators believed that the training also helped them to guide their colleagues and their learners to transition back to school after the lockdown. They referred to their own work and projects that they implemented after the training to support other educators who could then transfer it to the learners. This highlights the importance of educators' knowledge of the SEL framework and competencies to identify learners who display low social and emotional competences and work towards improving their learners' social and emotional skills (Ee &

Cheng., 2013). Educators play an important role in fostering the social and emotional competencies of their learners; therefore, their experience of the training is important so that they can effectively infuse SEL into the classroom context (Ee & Cheng, 2013).

Educators emphasised that the breathing exercises played a significant role in cultivating a more peaceful and patient attitude especially relating to their interaction with learners in the class. These breathing exercises used in this training are similar to mindfulness-based educator professional development programmes that are designed to target educators' stress and social and emotional capacity in the classroom context (Henriksen & Gruber, 2022). Breathing exercises as part of mindfulness techniques are not only beneficial in enhancing educator's wellbeing but also in reducing psychological distress and improving the quality of classroom interactions (Jennings et al., 2020). Educators benefitted from the training as they were able to mitigate mental health difficulties and build their own resilience which helped them see the value of enhanced social and emotional skills in their own lives.

5.3 Challenges in Implementing SEL

Educators saw the benefit of SEL and were motivated to implement SEL in schools but experienced various challenges with applying SEL principles in their schools. Educators expressed that there was no privacy to address the concerns of the learners in the school environment. They explained that the manner in which the schools were set up meant that confidential information often did not remain private. This hindered educators from effecting change in their learner's emotional wellbeing given that confidentiality was limited. Educators seem to be afraid to ask about children's issues as they could feel obligated to act on what they are told by the learners. This meant that educators often avoided such engagements with their learners, thus limiting educator's understanding of their learners' challenges and needs.

Another challenge faced by educators stemmed from the relationships with learners' parents. Educators were concerned that parents did not teach their children social and emotional skills and that they disciplined their children in a different way. Educators noted that some parents were permissive which meant they were responsive to their children, but lacked structure, rules and discipline. These types of parents often did not have the ability to impart social or emotional skills to their children, which meant the children were not given the routine and structure needed to develop social and emotional skills. Children with permissive parents were often immature and struggled to control their impulses and became disrespectful and

rebellious when asked to do something that contradicted their current inclinations (Joseph & John, 2008). They were also unduly demanding and reliant on adults, and they demonstrated less perseverance in their school activities than youngsters whose parents exercised greater control (Joseph & John, 2008). For educators, parents' influence and parenting style in the home environment made it challenging to apply social and emotional skills because the primary caregivers were not always equipped with these. With this in mind, educators who are resilient and empowered could establish better relations with the parents and collaborate with them (Addi-Raccah & Ainhoren, 2009). Moreover, empowered educators can empower parents to incorporate social and emotional skills at home which will strengthen the alliance between educators and parents in instilling social and emotion competencies in their children.

Furthermore, the societal issues of the country have a direct impact on the emotions and learning capabilities of children. This resonates with what Matoti (2010) highlighted in the literature review when describing the state of education in South Africa. The South African primary, secondary and tertiary education systems have long faced significant obstacles, including overcrowding in classrooms, a lack of learner support materials, unclean water, inadequate and unhygienic bathroom facilities, mediocre education and a lack of support, particularly in underprivileged areas (Maree, 2022). Moreover, societal issues such as loadshedding which are driven by corruption and ineffective policies continue to affect development and economic growth in the country (Mlambo, 2023). This is a challenge for educators because they are constantly faced with challenges beyond their control and do not have any influence on how society impacts their learners. Educators expressed their concern indicating that if they do not intervene, no change will be implemented. Educators highlighted that children are more aware of the financial and societal issues in their environment, and this creates uncertainty and impacts the children negatively. Educators reported that the quest to integrate social and emotional skills is often hindered by schools that prioritise the academic needs of the children above their emotional needs. Therefore, educators need to prioritise engaging and talking about emotions amid other psychological challenges the children may be experiencing to develop and strengthen the children's emotional and social competencies (Cahill & Dadvand, 2020).

Another challenge the educators experience is that schools, especially public schools, are under-resourced and understaffed and do not function efficiently and effectively. Educators expressed that this created the impression that SEL could only be implemented in private, wealth schools. Although educators acknowledged the benefits of SEL programmes, the

difficulty of implementing SEL increased because of the shortage of educators. Literature outlines that educators are the primary implementers of SEL in schools (Hunter et al., 2022) and if their presence in schools is lacking, their ability to initiate change is limited.

Educators play an important role in influencing whether and how this international vision for education will be accomplished (Jennings et al., 2020). With this in mind, educators reported that in addition to the shortage of educators in schools, the schools in which they work as well as the education authorities prioritise academic skills over the emotional and social skills. This leads to SEL being misunderstood and undermined which compromises the educators' ability to implement SEL. Educators understand that these abilities can be taught; they want schools to prioritise incorporating such development into the curriculum, instruction and school culture; and they believe that learner learning requirements should reflect this priority (Bridgeland et al., 2013). Educators reported that implementing SEL in schools is possible. However, the curriculum and workload overshadow the implementation of SEL skills. Educators explained that the Department of Education and the district offices focus mainly on academic work and prioritise completing the curriculum. Given the ongoing crisis in the South African education system and continuous changes in the curriculum, this puts a burden on educators (Du Plessis & Letshwene, 2020). For educators, whether they agree with this or not, they often do not have a platform or even time to discuss the needs of the children, what is happening in the classroom and the issues of the school environment. Educators highlighted that the government did not intervene, yet they expected positive outcomes. This resulted in educators feeling frustrated and overwhelmed and, in this climate, the social and emotional needs of children to prepare them for the future were thus not addressed.

5.4 Discussion on Strategies to Implement Aspects of SEL

Educators acknowledged the value of SEL in their schools and highlighted various strategies to implement SEL. Educators who had an interest in contributing to the body of knowledge, developed their own sessions that would impart SEL knowledge and information to other educators, school staff and learners. This highlights the educators' positive attitude towards SEL and their desire to see it not only in theory but in practice. In addition to creating content for SEL programmes, educators explained that part of the strategies to implement aspects of SEL should include making use of external resources to support the emotion needs of learners. Educators suggested forming alliances with psychologists to empower the learners.

When imparting these abilities to learners, an educator's own SEL competencies are crucial (Ferreira et al., 2020). Educators, particularly from private schools explained that in their schools, psychologists intervened by engaging in talks and support groups to support not only the learners, but their parents as well. Educators continually emphasised that the role of implementing SEL requires a multidisciplinary team of professionals such as psychologists and social workers to address some of the emotional and behavioural challenges in the school. This is important as the educators would benefit from acquiring training and support from a variety of professionals to cope with the present academic expectations and enhance learner's social and emotional competencies (Buchanan et al., 2009). Educators expressed that the learners' emotional needs go beyond the scope of educators' abilities and emphasised that other professionals are required in schools to help learners cope.

Educators in similar studies conducted in the Republic of Ireland felt that support from other staff members in raising awareness for SEL and delivering the programme would be crucial to the programme's long-term viability (Dowling & Barry, 2020). Furthermore, educators in the United States reported various other individuals from whom they would be willing to receive support (Buchanan et al., 2009). In this current study, one of the educators from a private school reported that her principals' understanding of SEL led to the involvement of psychologists in the school. The psychologists engaged parents on what was important for them to assist the educators as well as their own children. This relates to studies in the United States that found that when supported by leaders from the district level, principals felt more confident in their capacity to implement SEL with better learner outcomes (Gimbert et al., 2023). It is now widely understood that the responsibility for social and emotional education is not solely a family obligation as it has been historically, but rather a school-home/community cooperation (Bernard et al., 2017; DePaoli et al., 2017).

With growing recognition of the need to incorporate SEL into daily instructional programmes, this presents an exciting opportunity for school psychologist to redefine and reinvent their roles (Ross et al., 2002). Involving other professionals opens the door for SEL to be a community collaboration to support educators who should be the primary implementers of SEL.

Through the training, educators learned that it is not so much the sharing of information that is valuable, but the experience and feeling that the educators give their learners what is most valuable. This highlights that a key strategy to implementing SEL is to focus on the

educator's role in imparting knowledge and helping the children feel seen and accepted. This will require educators to model social and emotional skills in their teaching by being aware of their own emotions and behaviour. This can be cultivated though workshops to train and equip educators with SEL skills. Educators identified workshops as a valuable tool to address educators' attitudes and behavioural techniques from punitive methods to restorative processes that promote SEL principles.

In a study in the United States, 112 educators received training in a mindfulness-based SEL intervention (Kim et al., 2021). This programme encouraged educators to embrace trauma-sensitive attitudes with their learners and reduce educator's burnout (Kim et al., 2021). This study showcases how workshops and interventions incorporating SEL can be beneficial to educators. Educators agreed that focusing on emotions and sharing emotions could have a greater impact even when material resources were unavailable. Educators noted that what was crucial to SEL implementation was not the material components of learning such as textbooks and laptops but more of the emotional experiences of people and discussing these experiences. When educators fail or lack the pedagogical and social-emotional resources to effectively manage their emotions and behavioural challenges in their classrooms, learners display lower levels of on-task behaviour and low performance which can cause educators to be more frustrated and emotionally exhausted (Gimbert et al., 2023). To avoid educators' emotional distress, educators need to be trained and given the knowledge and skills they need to effectively implement SEL.

In addition to workshops to train educators, educators see value in strategies to involve parents in SEL training. Educators shared how in some private schools, they had talks with parents regarding the children's routines and discipline methods. This aided in addressing the challenges presented by parents who might not have social and emotional skills; training them helped to equip them with these skills. In the event that parents adopted this way of parenting and engaging with their children, they were more likely to transfer these skills to their children. In a study of American public schools, educators and parents agreed that SEL was a strategy that could develop the child holistically (Atwell et al., 2021). This is valuable because this means the responsibility to model social and emotional competencies is not left to educators alone. In most private schools, educators explained how they were modelling SEL principles to their learners as they were aware that their learners might not always see or experience these principles outside of the school environment. The goal therefore was to demonstrate social and emotional skills in the school environment in the hope that learners

would also embody these skills and model them outside the school environment and in their future endeavours.

To impart these skills, it is important to understand that teaching social and emotional skills calls for a unique combination of abilities and information that standard classroom instructors may not always possess. To influence behaviour, educators need to be well-versed in child and adolescent development as well as understanding learning styles and behaviour modification techniques (Ross et al., 2002). Additionally, educators need to be skilled in facilitating conversations on sensitive subjects such as controlling one's anger, using violence, fostering good relationships, substance abuse, sexuality and risky behaviour (Ross et al., 2002). Unfortunately, educators' preparation programmes often fail to train educators on SEL curriculum and effective teachings strategies (Zolkoski et al., 2021).

Therefore, educators are aware that any educator has the capacity to implement SEL as these skills are principles that the educators already know, they need only to be reinforced and cemented into educators' ideology. Additionally, educators reflected on the idea that the training sessions were reminding them of the things that are important, which are being listened to and showing empathy towards others. In another study in Finland, Talvio et al. (2013) found that when educators started to build their own social interaction skills, such as expressing their feelings constructively, their willingness to apply SEL skills increased, maladaptive methods of engaging reduced, and educators began to consider how to grow their learners' autonomy. This indicates that providing the resources of skills development and imparting knowledge of SEL to educators is necessary for SEL implementation. Educators must acknowledge how their own behaviour models SEL principles and competencies as their learners will be observing their educators (Jennings et al., 2020) This means, educators must carefully observe their behaviour to ensure that it supports their aims and teaching objectives (Jennings et al., 2020). Therefore, developing an educator's own social and emotional skills is crucial as these skills equip educators to handle learner behaviour, cultivate relationships with learners, efficiently oversee classes, model these skills which are associated with reduction in educator's burnout (Murano et al., 2019).

Finally, for any strategy to be implemented, there needs to be buy-in from the principals and school management. As authority figures and primary decision-makers in the school environment, educators expressed that buy-in from these entities is essential to implementing SEL. Educators indicated that a barrier to SEL implementation is political dynamics relating

to how the government presents the idea that they are delivering quality education when in the experience of educators, there are significant deficits. To counter this challenge, educators propose that principals and school management should go through the experience of what SEL encompasses (like the training they experienced) to become more involved in its implementation. Moreover, leaders in education should invest in building a shared understanding of SEL and the ability to interpret its principles, while considering how these indicators shape the understanding and use of SEL (Marsh & Kennedy, 2020).

Educators believe that school management teams are one level; however, buy-in is also essential from the provincial departments of education and the district officers. With educators and other school staff including the principal, school governing bodies and the districts, SEL programmes could consistently yield positive results if these entities play their role effectively when implementing SEL, as this will ensure positive outcomes for learners (Mahoney et al., 2018). Similar research indicated that state, district and school leaders should consider making SEL implementation a priority (Kendziora & Yoder, 2016). This would include putting in place regulations, standards, and guidelines to help educators and administrators incorporate SEL into the curriculum (Kendziora & Yoder, 2016).

5.5 Theoretical reflections

An ecological framework guided this research. According to Durlak (2011) a broad ecological perspective can assist in enhancing our understanding of a programme's effects. In view of this, an ecological perspective could highlight how educators' SEL training may permeate various levels of society. The ecological perspective embraces the individual, interpersonal, organisational, community and policy levels (Zavelevsky & Lishchinsky, 2020). The holistic ecological approach to school-based intervention programmes focuses on the whole educational environment rather than the educators individually and stresses the role of interaction between the person and the context (Larsen et al., 2014). The educators in this study highlighted the factors and challenges that they encounter when interacting with learners and their parents and the school and district leadership and how all these entities are constantly interacting with each other, often posing a challenge to educators as to how they can attain SEL skills and ultimately implement these skills.

On the individual level, the training equipped educators with some knowledge, skills and motivation to implement SEL programmes in schools. Educators' perceptions of the training with regard to the knowledge they had obtained, the skills they had gained and their

motivational levels to implement SEL programmes indicated that educators see value in SEL and could use these skills for future implementations. On the interpersonal level, the relationship between the trainer (scholars and experts in SEL) and the trainee (the educators) was explored by looking at how the educators experienced and benefitted from the training. The facilitation of SEL training equipped educators in SEL competencies. Because of the reciprocal nature of interaction between levels of a system, the motivation of the trained educators could influence colleagues and the principal, and they could advocate for the need and value of implementing SEL.

On the organisational level, institutions, and organisations such as schools play a fundamental role on the individual and interpersonal level to support more educators and improve the functioning of schools. Once the organisational level is functional and schools address the factors that affect SEL implementation, it may influence the policy level wherein the government can make policy and curriculum changes that will incorporate SEL and support the educators who are the primary implementers of SEL.

5.6 Contribution of the Study

The experiences and perceptions of educators captured in the study can be relayed back to school governing bodies and ultimately open the door for more educators to become familiar with SEL programmes and training opportunities. On the community level, the combination of organisations can pool ideas and resources that can improve SEL training for educators in South Africa. According to Durlak (2011), there is a gap between practice and research in school-based interventions. Educators' perceptions and experiences can bridge the gap by providing insight that merges the practicality of SEL implementation with the theoretical research on SEL programmes, and communities can be educated on SEL training and programmes.

On the policy level, the government oversees school curriculums and educator training programmes. Challenges faced by educators can be attributed to school structures, local communities and educational authorities, hence a country like South Africa can reap massive social and economic benefits from investing in education (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Investing in policies that take into consideration educators' experiences and perceptions of training programmes will be a step closer to addressing fundamental gaps in educator training and education programmes. By exploring educators' perceptions, other educators and important role players such as school psychologists will have an opportunity to understand

what educators require to be effective implementers of SEL. Additionally, other educators may use these experiences to self-reflect and consider any evidence of their learners' social and emotional skills development with the goal of facilitating meaningful SEL in schools (Martinson et al., 2020). As educators are responsible for modelling SEL skills and competencies to learners, by investing time and resources in training the educators, we also invest in the future of the learners. The views and perspectives captured in this study can therefore have a ripple effect on how impacting one part of the system can benefit the whole system and effect change in society's social and emotional values and skills. Despite the limitations of the qualitative approach, the principles presented in this study may lead to theory development surrounding SEL, further empirical research, and creative practice that may be used internationally to promote equal access to social-emotional learning training for educators and programming for learners worldwide.

5.7 Limitations of the Study

An important limitation of the study was that it was conducted two years after the SEL training was presented to educators which may have affected the results as the perceptions of educators may have shifted due to the circumstances after COVID-19. Furthermore, because the training was conducted two years ago only a small number of the original participants could be reached and volunteered to be interviewed. The small number of participants was the most important challenge in this research. With more interviews, it would have been possible to obtain a wider perspective.

Additionally, given that the training was structured as a support group for educators and did not have a formal framework to educate educators on SEL competencies, it is challenging to outline what competencies the educators gained and how they are implementing these skills two years after the training.

5.8 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should focus on a few narrower questions, such as what type of programme is most effective for promoting which specific SEL skills and attitudes in the short and long term, which programmes would benefit which learner groups, and what specific components of each programme account for its effects. Furthermore, we need to do research on the implementation, wide-scale distribution, ongoing monitoring, improvement, and sustainability of SEL programmes that have shown initial benefits (Mahoney et al., 2018).

For example, how can we improve schools' ability to implement and analyse SEL programmes? How can we effectively connect educational policy and financing so that more schools can provide SEL programmes?

From a South African perspective, SEL can still be considered an international programme that is more feasible in affluent and well-resourced schools and organisations. A top-down approach to implementing SEL would be beneficial to educators if government structures, including the Minister of Education and school governing bodies, can initiate programs and workshops that teach educators about SEL. Educators can also be encouraged to implement activities and programs in their classrooms that align with SEL principles. By obtaining the buy in of leaders and authoritative figures in the education system, SEL and its benefits may filter through to the principals, educators and to the learners. With educators being the vessel in which SEL can be implemented in the South African context, support from other professionals such as psychologists and social workers to train educators on SEL will serve as a catalyst to understanding and implementing SEL. Therefore, the more information and knowledge is shared about what SEL is and how it can benefit learners and educators and society at large, the more likely it will be for SEL training programmes and interventions to be developed and implemented in a sustainable way.

5.9 Conclusion

This research aimed to explore the perceptions of a group of South African educators who participated in a social and emotional intervention, to gain insight into their perceptions of the value and applicability of SEL training programmes in South African schools. Educators serve as important role models for children's social and emotional development in the school setting because children learn these skills by observing and interacting with adults, including educators. Educators encourage the development of prosocial behaviours by modelling social and emotional competence; therefore, how educators are trained in SEL will impact the way in which SEL is implemented in schools. Educators' narratives of SEL implementation in South African schools highlight the challenges of our education system. However, the educators' narratives also emphasise the applicability of SEL in schools and possible ways of supporting educators to circumvent some of the current challenges. With growing interest in social and emotional competencies, educators' own social and emotional wellbeing, competencies and perspectives should take priority as educators are the fulcrum of developing social and emotional skills in schools.

References

Addi-Raccah, A., & Ainhoren, R. (2009). School governance and teachers' attitudes to parents' involvement in schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *25*(6), 805-813. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0742051X09000079

Scoda, A. D., Andrei, A., OZDEMIR, N. K., Kourmousi, N., Kounenou, K., Ferrari, L., & Bacanli, F. (2022). Social and emotional learning and resilience in Southeastern Europe: Educators' cross-cultural perspectives. In *NISSEM Global Briefs: Educating for the social, the emotional and the sustainable. Volume III: SEL in context.* (Vol. 3, pp. 64-84). NISSEM. https://www.research.unipd.it/handle/11577/3456991

Ashdown, D. M., & Bernard, M. E. (2012). Can explicit instruction in social and emotional learning skills benefit the social-emotional development, well-being, and academic achievement of young children?. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *39*, 397-405. https://idp.springer.com/authorize/casa?redirect_uri=https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10643-011-0481-x&casa_token=2de_DbycFVkAAAAA:tgwN7bgIcWH1tm2pXTM0fHUZPGEIrEZkdzPhZ1SAy4lNBB8hsbUH5EmhHHyp6JBSGigDu5R_3UAxg1JbqTQ

Atwell, M. N., Bridgeland, J. M., & Manspile, E. P. (2021). Ready to engage: Perspectives of teachers and parents on social and emotional learning and service-learning in America's public schools. *Civic*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED614154

Beaty, J. (2018). History of social and emotional learning. *International Arab Journal of English for Specific Purposes, 1*(2), 67-72. https://revues.imist.ma/index.php/IAJESP/article/view/14402

Bakanay, Ç. D., & Çakır, M. (2016). Phenomenology and its reflections on science education research. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, *8*(4). https://www.academia.edu/download/48885960/IOJES_2063.pdf

Belfield, C., Bowden, A. B., Klapp, A., Levin, H., Shand, R., & Zander, S. (2015). The economic value of social and emotional learning. *Journal of Benefit-Cost Analysis*, *6*(3), 508-544. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-benefit-cost-analysis/article/economic-valueof-social-and-emotional-learning/D9A12352A7CF1B39E9A2B7EA4C68F150

Bernard, M. E. (2007). *Program achieve: A social and emotional learning curriculum* (3rd ed.). Oakleigh, Victoria, Australia: Australian Scholarships Group.

Berg, M., Talvio, M., Hietajärvi, L., Benítez, I., Cavioni, V., Conte, E., ... & Lonka, K. (2021). The development of teachers' and their students' social and emotional learning during the "learning to be project"-training course in five European countries. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*, 3381. https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.705336/full?&trk=public_post_comment-text

Bernard, M. E., Elias, M., Bell, P., Ferrito, J., & Langione, K. (2017). Social and emotional learning: Role of school psychologists in Australia. *Handbook of Australian School Psychology: Integrating International Research, Practice, and Policy*, 503-519. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-45166-4_25

Bridgeland, J., Bruce, M., & Hariharan, A. (2013). The missing piece: A national teacher survey on how social and emotional learning can empower children and transform schools. A report for CASEL. *Civic Enterprises*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED558068

Buchanan, R., Gueldner, B. A., Tran, O. K., & Merrell, K. W. (2009). Social and emotional learning in classrooms: A survey of teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and practices. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, *25*(2), 187-203. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15377900802487078

Cahill, H., & Dadvand, B. (2020). Social and emotional learning and resilience education. *Health and Education Interdependence: Thriving from Birth to Adulthood*, 205-223. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-15-3959-6_11

Carroll, A., Houghton, S., Forrest, K., McCarthy, M., & Sanders-O'Connor, E. (2020). Who benefits most? Predicting the effectiveness of a social and emotional learning intervention according to children's emotional and behavioural difficulties. *School Psychology International*, *41*(3), 197-217. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0143034319898741

CASEL. (2003). Safe and sound: An educational leader's guide to evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs. Chicago, IL: Author. Retrieved from CASEL: http://www.casel.org

CASEL. (2017). About CASEL. Retrieved from CASEL: http://www.casel.org

CASEL. (2018). History. Retrieved from CASEL: https://casel.org/history/

Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A., Lonczak, H. S., & Hawkins, J. D. (2004). Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs. *The annals of the American academy of political and social science*, *591*(1), 98-124.*programs*. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0002716203260102

Chung, T. Y., & Chen, Y. L. (2018). Exchanging social support on online teacher groups: Relation to teacher self-efficacy. *Telematics and Informatics*, *35*(5), 1542-1552. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0736585317307773

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). Conceptual and design thinking for thematic analysis. *Qualitative psychology*, *9*(1), 3. https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2021-45248-001.html

Cohen-Fraade, S., & Donahue, M. (2022). The impact of COVID-19 on teachers' mental health. *Journal for Multicultural Education*, *16*(1), 18-29 https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JME-08-2021-0131/full/html

Comer, J. P. (2013). School and moral justice: The school development program as a case study. *Journal of Research in Character Education*, 9(2), 91-106. https://search.proquest.com/openview/c923afd32df2e1de44f61fa265ccd952/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=27598

Comer, J. P. (1996). *Rallying the whole village: The Comer process for reforming education*. Teachers College Press.

Conley, C. S. (2015). SEL in higher education. https://ecommons.luc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1035&context=psychology_facpubs

Cope, D. G. (2014). Methods and meanings: Credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(1), 89–91. https://doi.org/10.1188/14.ONF.89-91

Corcoran, R. P., Cheung, A. C., Kim, E., & Xie, C. (2018). Effective universal school-based social and emotional learning programs for improving academic achievement: A

systematic review and meta-analysis of 50 years of research. *Educational Research Review*, 25, 56-72. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2017.12.001

Croker, R. A. (2009). An introduction to qualitative research. *Qualitative Research in Applied Linguistics*, 3-24. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230239517_1

De Lannoy, A., Graham, L., Patel, L., & Leibbrandt, M. (2018). *What drives youth unemployment and what interventions help? A systematic Overview of the Evidence and a Theory of Change.* Retrieved from https://redi3x3.org/sites/default/files/Youth%20Unemployment%20report_Dec18.pdf

DePaoli, J. L., Atwell, M. N., & Bridgeland, J. (2017). Ready to lead: A national principal survey on how social and emotional learning can prepare children and transform schools. A report for CASEL. *Civic Enterprises*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED579088

Department of Higher Education and Training. (2016, June 3). *Draft policy: Building and effective and integrated career development services system for South Africa.* Retrieved from http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/40041_gon621.pdf

de Sousa Santos, B. (2018). *The end of the cognitive empire: The coming of age of epistemologies of the South*. Duke University Press.

DeWert, M. H., Babinski, L. M., & Jones, B. D. (2003). Safe passages: Providing online support to beginning teachers. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *54*(4), 311-320. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15391523.2009.10782532

Dowling, K., & Barry, M. M. (2020). Evaluating the implementation quality of a social and emotional learning program: A mixed methods approach. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *17*(9), 3249. https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/17/9/3249

Du Plessis, P., & Mestry, R. (2019). Educators for rural schools–a challenge for South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, *39*. https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v39ns1a1774

Du Plessis, E. C., & Letshwene, M. J. (2020). A reflection on identified challenges facing South African teachers. *The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning*, *15*(2), 69-91. https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.10520/ejc-jitl1-v15-n2-a7

Durlak, J. A. (2016). Programme implementation in social and emotional learning: basic issues and research findings. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 46(3), 333-345. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764x.2016.1142504

Durlak, J. A. (2011). The impact of enhancing students social and emotional learning: A metaanalysis of schoolbased universal interventions. *Child Development*, *82*(1), 405. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x

Ed, J. B. M. (2018). History of social and emotional learning. *International Arab Journal of English for Specific Purposes*, *1*(1), 67-72. https://revues.imist.ma/index.php/IAJESP/article/view/14402

Edutopia. (2011, October 6). Social and emotional learning: A short history. Retrieved from Edutopia: https://www.edutopia.org/social-emotional-learning-history

Ee, J., & Cheng, Q. L. (2013). Teachers' perceptions of students' social emotional learning and their infusion of SEL. *Journal of Teaching and Teacher Education*, *1*(2), 59-72. https://platform.almanhal.com/Files/2/46818

Elbertson, N. A., Brackett, M. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2010). School-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programming: Current perspectives. *Second International Handbook of Educational Change*, 1017-1032. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-2660-6_57

Elias, M. J., Elias, M., Zins, J. E., & Weissberg, R. P. (1997). *Promoting social and emotional learning: Guidelines for educators*. Ascd.

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, *5*(1), 1-4. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11

Ferreira, M., Martinsone, B., & Talić, S. (2020). Promoting sustainable social emotional learning at school through relationship-centered learning environment, teaching methods and formative assessment. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, *22*(1), 21-36. https://sciendo.com/article/10.2478/jtes-2020-0003

Frey, N., Fisher, D., & Smith, D. (2019). *All learning is social and emotional: Helping students develop essential skills for the classroom and beyond*. ASCD.

Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple intelligences: The theory in practice*. Basic Books/Hachette Book Group.

Gimbert, B. G., Miller, D., Herman, E., Breedlove, M., & Molina, C. E. (2023). Social emotional learning in schools: The importance of educator competence. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, *18*(1), 3-39. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/19427751211014920

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.

Greenberg, M. T., Domitrovich, C. E., Graczyk, P. A., & Zins, J. (2005). The study of implementation in school-based preventive interventions: Theory, research, and practice. *Promotion of Mental Health and Prevention of mental and Behavioral Disorders*, *3*, 1-62.

https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=59e7e86e1b386b48322991e98baf0676f72dc19e

Greenberg, M. T., Domitrovich, C. E., Weissberg, R. P., & Durlak, J. A. (2017). Social and emotional learning as a public health approach to education. *The Future of Children*, 13-32. https://www.jstor.org/stable/44219019

Härkönen, U. (2001). The Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory of human development. https://www.academia.edu/download/78412107/Bronfenbrenner_in__20English_07_sent.pdf

Hart, J. E., & Steinbrecher, T. (2011). OMG! Exploring and learning from teachers' personal and professional uses of Facebook. *Action in Teacher Education*, *33*(4), 320-328. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01626620.2011.620515

Hawkins, J. D., Kosterman, R., Catalano, R. F., Hill, K. G., & Abbott, R. D. (2005). Promoting positive adult functioning through social development intervention in childhood: Long-term effects from the Seattle Social Development Project. *Archives of pediatrics & adolescent medicine*, *159*(1), 25-31. https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/article-abstract/485897

Henriksen, D., & Gruber, N. (2022). Mindful and creative: Building educational systems for individual and community wellbeing. *TechTrends*, *66*(2), 125-130. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11528-022-00703-2

Humphrey, N. (2013). Social and emotional learning: A critical appraisal. *Social and Emotional Learning*, 1-184. http://site.ebrary.com/id/10837709

Hunter, L. J., DiPerna, J. C., Hart, S. C., Neugebauer, S., & Lei, P. (2022). Examining teacher approaches to implementation of a classwide SEL program. *School Psychology*, *37*(4), 285. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2022-57230-001v

Hur, J. W., & Brush, T. A. (2009). Teacher participation in online communities: Why do teachers want to participate in self-generated online communities of K–12 teachers? *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, *41*(3), 279-303 https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15391523.2009.10782532

Hymel, S., Low, A., Starosta, L., Gill, R., & Schonert-Reichl, K. (2018). Promoting mental well-being through social-emotional learning in schools: Examples from British Columbia. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, *36*(Special Issue), 97-107. https://www.cjcmh.com/doi/abs/10.7870/cjcmh-2017-029

Jagers, R. J., Rivas-Drake, D., & Williams, B. (2019). Transformative social and emotional learning (SEL): Toward SEL in service of educational equity and excellence. *Educational Psychologist*, *54*(3), 162-184. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2019.1623032

Javadi, M., & Zarea, K. (2016). Understanding thematic analysis and its pitfall. *Demo*, *1*(1), 33-39. http://dx.doi.org/10.15412/J.JCC.02010107

Jennings, P., Frank, J., & Montgomery, M. (2020). Social and emotional learning for educators. *Rethinking learning: A review of social and emotional learning for education systems*, 127-153. https://researchdirect.westernsydney.edu.au/islandora/object/uws:57281/

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2009). The importance of social and emotional learning. *Affective teacher education: Exploring connections among knowledge, skills, and dispositions*, 1-26.

Jones, S. M., Barnes, S. P., Bailey, R., & Doolittle, E. J. (2017). Promoting social and emotional competencies in elementary school. *The Future of Children*, 49-72. https://www.jstor.org/stable/44219021

Jones, S. M., & Doolittle, E. J. (2017). Social and Emotional Learning: Introducing the Issue. *The Future of Children*, 27(1), 3-11. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44219018

Joseph, M. V., & John, J. (2008). Impact of parenting styles on child development. *Global Academic Society Journal: Social Science Insight*, *1*(5), 16-25. http://scholararticles.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/5_16_25p_Joseph_John.pdf

Kallestad, J. H., & Olweus, D. (2003). Predicting educators' and schools' implementation of the Olweus bullying prevention program: A multilevel study. *Prevention & Treatment*, *6*, [np]-[np]. https://doi.org/10.1037/1522-3736.6.0021a

Kelly, N., & Antonio, A. (2016). Teacher peer support in social network sites. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *56*, 138-149. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0742051X16300336

Kendziora, K., & Yoder, N. (2016). When districts support and integrate social and emotional learning (SEL): Findings from an ongoing evaluation of districtwide implementation of SEL. *Education Policy Center at American Institutes for Research*. *https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED571840*

Kim, S., Crooks, C. V., Bax, K., & Shokoohi, M. (2021). Impact of trauma-informed training and mindfulness-based social–emotional learning program on teacher attitudes and

burnout: A mixed-methods study. *School mental health*, *13*(1), 55-68.

https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12310-020-09406-6

Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4:

Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, *24*(1), 120-

124. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092

Kress, J. S., Norris, J. A., Schoenholz, D. A., Elias, M. J., & Seigle, P. (2004). Bringing

together educational standards and social and emotional learning: Making the case for

educators. *American Journal of Education*, *111*(1), 68-89.

https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/424720

Kress, J. S., & Elias, M. J. (2007). School-based social and emotional learning programs.

Handbook of Child Psychology. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470147658.chpsy0415

Lantz-Andersson, A., Lundin, M., & Selwyn, N. (2018). Twenty years of online teacher

communities: A systematic review of formally-organized and informally-developed

professional learning groups. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *75*, 302-315.

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0742051X18300908

LaRocca, B., & Krachman, S. B. (2018). A data-informed approach to social-emotional

learning: Policy recommendations for state and local leaders. A policy

brief. *Transforming Education*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED605368

Larsen, C. H., Alfermann, D., Henriksen, K., & Christensen, M. K. (2014). Preparing

footballers for the next step: An intervention program from an ecological perspective.

The Sport Psychologist, *28*(1), 91-102. https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2013-0015

Leoschut, L., & Kafaar, Z. (2017). The frequency and predictors of poly-victimisation of South African children and the role of schools in its prevention. Psychology, Health & Medicine. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2017.1282616

Lund, C. (2016). Mental health and human rights in South Africa: the hidden humanitarian crisis. *South African Journal of human rights, 32*(3), 403-405. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02587203.2016.1266799

Maarman, G. J., & Lamont-Mbawuli, K. (2017). A review of challenges in South African education and possible ways to improve educational outcome as suggested by decades of research. *Africa Education Review*, *14*(3-4), 263-289. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/18146627.2017.1321962

Mahoney, J. L., Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2018). An update on social and emotional learning outcome research. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *100*(4), 18-23. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0031721718815668

Marsh, J. A., & Kennedy, K. (2020). Possibilities and challenges: Conditions shaping educators' use of social–emotional learning indicators. *Teachers College Record*, *122*(14), 1-28. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/016146812012201409

Mfidi, F., Thuayagale-Tsheneagae, G., & Akpor, O. (2018). The TEAM model for mental health promotion among school-going adolescents. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Mental Health, 30*(2). https://doi.org/10.2989/17280583.2018.1485570

Martinsone, B., Ferreira, M., & Talić, S. (2020). Teachers' understanding of evidence of students' social emotional learning and self-reported gains of monitored

implementation of SEL toolkit. *Journal of Education Culture and Society*, *11*(2), 157-170. https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=897191

Mckown, C. (2019). Challenges and opportunities in the applied assessment of student social and emotional learning. *Educational Psychologist*, *54*(3), 205–221. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2019.1614446

Maree, J. G. (2022). Managing the Covid-19 pandemic in South African Schools: Turning challenge into opportunity. *South African Journal of Psychology*, *52*(2), 249-261. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/00812463211058398

Marsay, G. (2022). Educators' perspectives on the relevance of social and emotional learning skills in South Africa. *Perspectives in Education*, *40*(4), 215-226. https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.38140/pie.v40i4.6078

Marsay, G., Atitsogbe, K. A., Ouedraogo, A., Nsubuga, H., Pari, P., Kossi, E. Y., ... & Solberg, V. S. H. (2021). The importance of social emotional learning skills in assisting youth to successfully transition into the professional world. *African Journal of Career Development*, *3*(1), 11. https://ajcd.africa/index.php/ajcd/article/view/37

Marsay, G. (2020). A hope-based future orientation intervention to arrest adversity. *South African Journal of Education*, *40*(1). https://www.ajol.info/index.php/saje/article/view/194251

Marsay, G. (2020). Now, more than ever, we need social and emotional learning skills interventions. *Mail and Guardian Thought Leader*. https://fisppa.psy.unipd.it/overflyng/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Now-more-than-ever-we-need-Social-and-Emotional-Learning-skills-interventions-–-Thought-Leader.pdf

Marsay, G., Scioli, A., & Omar, S. (2018). A hope-infused future orientation intervention: a pilot study with juvenile offenders in South Africa. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, *46*(6), 709-721. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03069885.2018.1480011

Matoti, S. N. (2010). The unheard voices of educators: Perceptions of educators about the state of education in South Africa. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, *24*(4), 568-584. https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.10520/EJC37630

Mlambo, V. H. (2023). Living in the Dark: Load Shedding and South Africa's Quest for Inclusive Development. *IAHRW International Journal of Social Sciences Review*, *11*(2), 153-160. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Victor-H-Mlambo/publication/372409764_Living_in_the_Dark_Load_Shedding_and_South_Africa's_Quest_for_Inclusive_Development/links/64beebbab9ed6874a542306d/Living-in-the-Dark-Load-Shedding-and-South-Africas-Quest-for-Inclusive-Development.pdf

Murano, D., Way, J. D., Martin, J. E., Walton, K. E., Anguiano-Carrasco, C., & Burrus, J. (2019). The need for high-quality pre-service and inservice teacher training in social and emotional learning. *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching & Learning*, *12*(2), 111-113. https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JRIT-02-2019-0028/full/html

Oliveira, S., Roberto, M. S., Veiga-Simão, A. M., & Marques-Pinto, A. (2021). A meta-analysis of the impact of social and emotional learning interventions on teachers' burnout symptoms. *Educational Psychology Review*, *33*(4), 1779-1808. https://idp.springer.com/authorize/casa?redirect_uri=https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10648-021-09612-x&casa_token=QO16dZkTX-

YAAAAA:qvg1coS1Yzih0UhP8iwZcOX5glEroy9uvQpJCjpej_IeHkDTd75kB1567X
RKzv1rX3JkUoJuLA0KfLkxKKk

Parker, C., Scott, S., & Geddes, A. (2019). Snowball sampling. *SAGE Research Methods Foundations*. https://eprints.glos.ac.uk/6781/

Pathak, V., Jena, B., & Kalra, S. (2013). Qualitative research. *Perspectives in Clinical Research, 4*(3). https://doi.org/10.4103/2229-3485.115389

Payton, R. L., & Moody, M. P. (2008). *Understanding philanthropy: Its meaning and mission*. Indiana University Press.
https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=JWP36KZ_qBwC&oi=fnd&pg=PP1
&dq=Payton,+R.+L.,+%26+Moody,+M.+P.+(2008).+Understanding+philanthropy:+I
ts+meaning+and+mission.+Indiana+University+Press.&ots=-
Wkf3GOXmf&sig=Qnc49A4WX8HIRCkWSKWPe4aMfzo

Qutoshi, S. B. (2018). Phenomenology: A philosophy and method of inquiry. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, *5*(1), 215-222.
http://dx.doi.org/10.22555/joeed.v5i1.2154

Ramos-Sánchez, L., & Nichols, L. (2007). Self-efficacy of first-generation and non-first-generation college students: The relationship with academic performance and college adjustment. *Journal of College Counseling*, *10*(1), 6-18.
https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/j.2161-1882.2007.tb00002.x

Ross, M. R., Powell, S. R., & Elias, M. J. (2002). New roles for school psychologists: Addressing the social and emotional learning needs of students. *School Psychology Review*, *31*(1), 43-52.
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02796015.2002.12086141

Schonert-Reichl, K. (2017). Social and emotional learning and teachers. *The Future of Children, 27*(1), 137-155. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/social-emotional-learning-teachers/docview/2434476657/se-2

Smart, A., and Sinclair, M. (Eds.) (2022). *NISSEM Global Briefs: Educating for the social, the emotional and the sustainable. Volume III: SEL in context.* NISSEM. https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjDgtmOsOqEAxVb8wIHHb2nB9IQFnoECA4QAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fnissem.org%2Fnissem-global-briefs%2Fngb-vol-iii%2F&usg=AOvVaw12_6TELiBPjmH3AhhYKvU5&opi=89978449

Spaull, N., & Jansen, J. (Eds.). (2019). *South African schooling: The enigma of inequality.* A study *of the present situation and future possibilities.* Springer. https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-3-030-18811-5.pdf

Talvio, M., Lonka, K., Komulainen, E., Kuusela, M., & Lintunen, T. (2013). *Revisiting Gordon´s teacher effectiveness training: An intervention study on teachers´ social and emotional learning.* Retrieved from: http://repositorio.ual.es/bitstream/handle/10835/3024/Art_31_878.pdf?sequence=1

Weinstein, N., Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2009). A multi-method examination of the effects of mindfulness on stress attribution, coping, and emotional well-being. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *43*(3), 374-385. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0092656608001682

Weissberg, R. P., Durlak, J. A., Domitrovich, C. E., & Gullotta, T. P. (2015). Social and emotional learning: Past, present, and future. *Handbook of social and emotional learning: Research and practice*. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2015-24776-

001?to=riversli@pcsb.org&subject=APA%2BPsycNET%2BSearch%2BResults&mes
sage=&display=Citation&searchHistory=on&g-recaptcha-response=

Zavelevsky, E., & Lishchinsky, O. S. (2020). An ecological perspective of educator retention:

An emergent model. *Teaching and Educator Education*, *88*, 102965.

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0742051X19308674

Zieher, A. K., Cipriano, C., Meyer, J. L., & Strambler, M. J. (2021). Educators'

implementation and use of social and emotional learning early in the COVID-19

pandemic. *School Psychology*, *36*(5), 388. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2021-89954-
007

Zolkoski, S. M., Aguilera, S. E., West, E. M., Miller, G. J., Holm, J. M., Sass, S., & Stokes,

E. L. (2021). Teacher perceptions of skills, knowledge, and resources needed to

promote social and emotional learning in rural classrooms. *The Rural*

Educator, *41*(3), 1-11. https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/ruraleducator/vol41/iss3/1/

Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Humanities 100.
Since 1919

05 December 2022

Dear Ms M Ndou

Project Title:	Exploring the perceptions of a group of South African educators who participated in a Social and Emotional Learning intervention
Researcher:	Ms M Ndou
Supervisor(s):	Prof MJ Visser
Department:	Psychology
Reference number:	18107134 (HUM038/0922) Degree: Masters

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 05 December 2022. Please note that before research can commence all other approvals must have been received.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.Sincerely,

Prof Karen Harris

Chair: Research Ethics CommitteeFaculty of Humanities UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

e-mail: tracey.andrew@up.ac.za

Appendix B: Informed Consent

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Humanities 100.
1919 - 2019
Department of Psychology

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

EXPLORING THE PERCEPTIONS OF A GROUP OF SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATORS WHO PARTICIPATED IN A SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING INTERVENTION

Hello, my name is Mudalo Ndou, I am currently a Master student at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria. You are being invited to take part in my research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take some time to read the following information carefully, which will explain the details of this research project. Please feel free to ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to understand educators' perceptions of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) based on the training they received during 2020 through the SADAG platform. The training programme aimed to assist educators to manage their own anxiety using the Hope and Social and Emotional Learning frameworks during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study will explore the educators' experiences and perceptions of the SADAG intervention with the goal of understanding the benefit of such trainings.

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You are invited to participate in the study because you were part of the SADAG intervention, and your experiences of the intervention will contribute to the knowledge base used to develop future Social and Emotional Learning training programmes.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

You will be expected to participate in an individual interview via Zoom. This interview will take approximately 1 hour in which you will be asked questions about your experiences and perceptions of the training. The interviews will be video recorded on Zoom and the audio recordings from the interviews will be transcribed for data analysis purposes. Prior to the interview, you will be requested to sign a consent form as an indication for your willingness and agreement to participate in the study. The consent form must be completed and returned before the interview begins. You will also be asked to give permission for your data to be used for future research.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without negative consequences or being penalized.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

- All data collected during the interview will be kept confidential as personal information will not be linked to the opinions shared in the interview when data is documented in the research report. A code name will be assigned to each participant when documenting the data in the research report.
- Findings from this data may be disseminated through conferences and publications, although findings will be anonymous. Only the researchers of this study will have access to your personal information.
- Participant information will be kept confidential, except in cases where the researcher is legally obliged to report incidents such as abuse and suicide risk.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There will be no direct benefit to you for participation in this study, however, I hope that the information obtained may generate knowledge pertaining to the well-being of educators and the importance of SEL training for teachers all over South Africa.

WHAT ARE THE ANTICIPATED RISKS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The risks are low, although you may become aware of personal challenges as you narrate your experiences. The researcher will refer you for professional help if needed.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT THAT SOME FORM OF DISCOMFORT OCCUR AS A RESULT OF TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

Should you have the need for psychological assistance after the interview, I will assist you to be referred to Ms Elne Visagie. Email address: elne.visagie@up.ac.za Tel: 0124205197.

WHAT WILL THE RESEARCH DATA BE USED FOR?

The information gathered from the participant will be used for research purposes, that include a master's dissertation, article publication, national and international conference presentations to advocate for the need for SEL training for educators.

WILL I BE PAID TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

Unfortunately, you will not be paid to take part in this study. The request is for the participant to have access to Zoom and stable internet connection during the interview.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

During the research process participant information in hard copies will be locked in a cabinet and electronic data will be kept in a file that is password protected. After the research electronic information and interview recordings will be stored for period of 10 years in an UP-storage system.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria. A copy of the approval letter can be provided to you on request.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

The findings of the study will be shared with you by Mudalo Ndou and Dr Gloria Marsay after completion of the study.

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE CONCERNS, COMPLAINT OR ANYTHING I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE STUDY?

If you have questions about this study or you have experienced adverse effects as a result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided below. If you have questions regarding the rights as a research participant, or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the researcher, please contact the supervisor whose contact details are below.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and in advance for participating in this study.

Researcher
Name: Mudalo Ndou   *MNdou*
Contact number: 072 924 2411
Email address: ndoumudalo@gmail.com

Supervisor
Name: Prof Maretha Visser
Contact number: 012 420 2549 / 082 889 8338
Email address: maretha.visser@up.ac.za

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Humanities 100.
1919 - 2019
Department of Psychology

Exploring the perceptions of a group of South African educators who participated in a Social and Emotional Learning intervention
WRITTEN CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research

has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and risks of participation.

STATEMENT	AGREE	DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason, and without any consequences or penalties.			
I understand that personal information collected during the study will be kept confidential and I give permission to the researchers of this study to access the information.			
I understand that this study has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance from Research Ethics Committee Faculty of Humanities of the University of Pretoria.			
I understand who will have access to personal information and how the information will be stored with a clear understanding that I will not be linked to the information in any way.			
I understand how this study will be written up and published.			
I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.			
I consent to being video and audio recorded for this study.			
I consent that my contribution can be used in research outputs such as publication of articles, thesis and conferences as long as my identity is protected.			
I give permission to be quoted directly in the research publication without revealing my identity.			
I give permission that the data can be used for future research.			
I have sufficient opportunity to ask questions and I agree to take part in the above study.			

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
Name of person taking consent   Date   Signature

Appendix C: Teacher's Training Schedule

Teachers' Recharge Diary

	Session	**SEL Skills**
3 June	Hope meditation on planets	Self-awareness Relationship Building and Communication
10 June	Hope meditation on Social Support	Social awareness
17 June	Relaxation techniques from Anxiety and Phobia Workbook	Self-Management
24 June	Hope meditation for survival The bridge	Self-Management
1 July	Maslow's hierarchy of needs preschooler….red flags	Social Awareness Responsible Decision Making
8 July	Maslow's hierarchy of needs primary school and adolescents red flags	Social Awareness Responsible Decision Making
15th July	Load shedding options for coping with difficult relationships	Relationship building and communication
22nd July	Navigating a storm survival techniques….and storm meditation	Self-management Responsible decision making
29th July	Self-compassion Being in the present Eckhart Tolle page 19……meditation for being in the now	Self-Awareness Self-management Social awareness
5th August	Holding anxiety	Self-awareness Self-management Responsible decision making
12th August	Break	
19th August	Break	
26th August	June Manala	
2nd September	Coping with difficult relationships	Relationship building and communication Responsible Decision Making
30th September	Feedback and Wrap up	

Appendix D: Confirmation of Professional Editing

Blue Diamonds Professional Editing Services (Pty) Ltd

Polishing **your** brilliance
Email: jacquibaumgardt@gmail.com
Website: www.jaybe9.wixsite.com/bluediamondsediting

15 April 2024

Declaration of editing

Exploring the Perceptions of a Group of South African educators who Participated in a Social and Emotional Learning intervention
by
Mudalo Ndou

I declare that I have edited and proofread this thesis. My involvement was restricted to language usage and spelling, completeness and consistency. I did no structural re-writing of the content.

I am qualified to have done such editing, being in possession of a Bachelor's degree with a major in English, having taught English to matriculation, and having a Certificate in Copy Editing from the University of Cape Town. I have edited more than 500 Masters and Doctoral theses, as well as articles, books and reports.

As the copy editor, I am not responsible for detecting, or removing, passages in the document that closely resemble other texts and could thus be viewed as plagiarism. I am not accountable for any changes made to this document by the author or any other party subsequent to the date of this declaration.

Sincerely,

Dr J Baumgardt
UNISA: D. Ed. Education Management
University of Cape Town: Certificate in Copy Editing
University of Cape Town: Certificate in Corporate Coaching

Jacqui Baumgardt
Full Member

Membership number: BAU001
Membership year: March 2024 to February 2025

+44 7895146059
jacquibaumgardt@gmail.com
https://jaybe9.wixsite.com/bluediamondsediting

www.editors.org.za

Intermediate Member

Blue Diamonds Professional Services (Pty) Ltd (Registration Number 2014/092365/07)
Sole Director: J Baumgardt