

**CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES ON CHILD WELL-BEING: A PATHWAY TO  
SUSTAINABLE FUTURES**

**BY**

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I declare that this mini dissertation is my original work. Where secondary materials were used, this has been carefully acknowledged and referenced following university requirements.

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES ON CHILD WELL-BEING: A PATHWAY TO SUSTAINABLE FUTURES**

**STUDENT:** TINYIKO CATHRINE GWAMBE

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Research indicates that adults' views on children's well-being have been used to describe child well-being (Casa & Frönes, 2019:3). Bammer, Michaux, and Sanson (2010:15) emphasise the significance of the subjective well-being of children. There is a research gap in determining the well-being of children based on their experiences and perspectives, which is important in enhancing childcare and service delivery. Hence, the goal of the study was to explore children's perspectives on their well-being as a pathway to sustainable futures within the South African context. The theoretical framework of the study was ecosystems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979;1995).

The qualitative research study was applied, and a case study design was used to explore children's perspectives on their well-being. The study used a non-probability snowball sample to identify child participants between the ages of 8 and 12 years who resided in Sunnyside, Region 3 of the City of Tshwane municipality. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews guided by an interview schedule and complemented by visual communication cards. Data collected was analysed by following the thematic analysis process.

The findings revealed that the participants had a fundamental grasp of how children's well-being influences their physical, social, emotional, and academic

elements. Three key social elements support children's well-being. These are their interactions with the community, their relationships with peers, and their relationships with their immediate family. As a result, children desire to take an active role in society by participating in decisions and activities to address problems that affect them. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that children are aware of their feelings and in touch with who they are.

It is recommended that children's agency is acknowledged in understanding and expressing their well-being. Hence, stakeholders should involve children in creating programmes that improve child well-being from their perspectives. Furthermore, stakeholders must promote sustainable development to address concerns in all dimensions of children's well-being. Programmes could concentrate on expanding recreational facilities, raising environmental awareness through clean-up efforts, and maintaining a watch out for children's safety while they move around and play in the neighbourhood.

## **KEYWORDS**

Child

Child well-being

Child participation

Subjective well-being

Sustainable futures

Sustainable development

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## CHAPTER 1

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The well-being of children involves their physical, emotional, cognitive, social, spiritual, and environmental welfare and contributes immensely to their development and their future (Ben-Arieh, Casas, Frønes & Korbin, 2014:3; Nahkur & Kutsar, 2019:355). Well-being is related to a person's quality of life and includes subjective indicators (i.e., one's perception of happiness, life quality and satisfaction) and objective indicators (i.e., health status, resources for education and household income) (Statham & Chase, 2010:2). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [hereafter 2030 Agenda] (United Nations, 2015:3) was tabled to enhance the economic, social, and environmental development of all people. Although South Africa has made significant progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for children, South African children still experience considerable impediments (SAHRC & UNICEF, 2016:3). Incomplete homes, HIV/AIDS, violent crimes, exploitation, dysfunctional communities, climate change, and lack of participation are just a few of the socio-economic and environmental problems that children are exposed to (Naidoo & Muthukrishna, 2016:1; Peeters, 2012:287).

From a developmental approach, social workers in South Africa focus on promoting social change and the "well-being of individuals, families, groups, and communities in their social context" (Patel, 2015:127). The social work profession understands that achieving child well-being is a protective factor against negative factors, which can have lasting implications for children. However, to improve a child's well-being, the voice of the child needs to be heard. It is through children's active participation that policies and services become responsive to children's needs and lead to positive lifelong outcomes for them (Republic of South Africa National Department of Social Development, Save the Children South Africa, 2018:10).

Well-being is a personal construct and, therefore, individuals are best positioned to determine their perspectives of well-being (Fattore & Mason, 2017:267). Yet, children's perspectives are confined and invisible because of policies, age, and the need for protection that overshadows their well-being (l'Anson, 2013:106). Although studies have been conducted on the well-being of children, research on children's perspectives on child well-being is limited (Nadan & Kaye-Tzadok, 2019:464), especially in South Africa. This study focused on how children in the South African context conceptualise and perceive their well-being as a pathway to sustainable futures.

The key concepts relevant to the study are as follows:

**Child:** The Children's Act 25 of 2005 defines a child as "a person under the age of 18 years." In the context of this study, the term "child" refers to children between the ages of 8 and 12 years, thus in the developmental stage of middle childhood (Louw, Louw & Kail, 2014:8).

**Child well-being:** Child well-being is defined as a holistic concept that involves the physical, emotional, cognitive, social, spiritual, and environmental well-being of children and is characterised by an absence of psychiatric or psychological problems (Nahkur & Kutsar, 2019:355). Children's well-being influences their lives in the present and affects their development and their future (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014:1). Child well-being is measured according to different domains, including living standard, social cohesion, home, family and friends, education, leisure time, material sources, the neighbourhood, connection to nature, cultural fulfilment, health, and safety and security (Buck, Summers, Smith & Harwell, 2018:1254; Nadan & Kaye-Tzadok, 2019:463).

**Sustainable development:** The term "sustainable development" is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), 1987:43). Sustainable development is a path in which the social, economic, and environmental developments of the present-day generation considers the needs of upcoming generations and promotes the well-being of people and the environment without

causing a decline in the well-being of future generations and their environment (Ahenkan & Osei-Kojo, 2014:163). Thus, development done sustainably leads to sustainable futures.

**Sustainable futures:** The term “sustainable futures” is defined as “a future that is about human dignity, social inclusion and environmental protection” (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016). Within this study, “sustainable futures” is defined as futures for children who are free from social ills such as poverty, inequality, lack of basic services, and crime. These can be achieved if children’s perceptions of child well-being are identified and incorporated into development and intervention plans.

**Child participation:** Child participation is a fundamental right of children which involves the active participation of children in decisions, processes, programmes, and policies that affect their lives (Republic of South Africa National Department of Social Development, Save the Children South Africa, 2018:09). In this study, child participation means listening to children’s views on matters that concern them, and considering their views when adults make decisions on policies and services that aim to improve child well-being.

## 1.2 RATIONALE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Children’s physical, mental, social, cognitive, spiritual, material, and environmental well-being has a substantial influence on their lives and future (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014:1; Nahkur & Kutsar, 2019:355; Newland, Giger, Lawler, Roh, Brockevelt & Schwenle, 2019:395; Minkkinen, 2013:4). Children’s well-being is a critical aspect of the mastery of their developmental tasks and helps them to adjust to their environment and interact with their environment (Ayala-Nunes, Jiménez, Jesus, Nunes & Hidalgo, 2018:812; Peeters, 2012:290).

Although South Africa has made notable progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are intended to promote the well-being of all people, factors such as social and economic inequality hamper the process and many children are still exposed to adverse circumstances (Lombard, 2015:484; SAHRC & UNICEF, 2016:5). Societal problems such as poverty, violence, family disintegration, mental health problems, substance use,

adverse childhood experiences, and climate change severely affect many children (Ayala-Nunes et al., 2018:885; Patel, 2015:291-292; Naicker Norris, Mabaso & Richter, 2017:2; Richter & Dawes, 2008:86; Richter, Desmond, Hosegood, Madhavan. Makiwane, Makusha, Morell & Swartz, 2012:3). Social workers in South Africa work with large numbers of children whose lives are affected by the above-mentioned social problems (Newland et al., 2019:397).

Social workers working from a developmental approach can add value in advocating for sustainable development and the well-being of children (Hawkins, 2010:69; Lombard & Viviers, 2014:83; Patel, 2015:127). Although all children are a vulnerable group in need of protection, they have the potential to grow within their physical and social environment (Buck et al., 2018:1252). Ayala-Nunes et al. (2018:813) emphasise the importance of promoting the well-being of children as follows:

Promoting and investing in the well-being and positive development of children and youth—especially for those growing up in adverse environments—is being increasingly viewed as a political priority and a means to break the cycle of disadvantage and to enhance social cohesion as well as to increase productivity in the economy and society at large.

Many decisions related to the well-being of children are based on social policies and conceptions of adults; however, adult conceptions about the well-being of children may not be relevant to children (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014:10; Buck et al., 2018:1254). In addition, views on child well-being are socially and culturally constructed and may vary in different contexts (Mashford-Scott, Church & Tayler, 2012:235). The personal and subjective nature of well-being and the knowledge that children have of their lives put them in the best position to explain what well-being means to them (Fattore & Mason, 2017:276-277; Minkkinen, 2013:4).

The participation of children in matters affecting them, as stipulated in the Children's Act 38 of 2005, Article 10, can thus provide meaningful information that social workers can use to develop interventions that will contribute to the well-being of children, both in the short term and for their futures. Furthermore, the study envisages contributing to more child-responsive policies and services that will facilitate sustainable futures.

The research question for this study is: “What are children’s perspectives on child well-being as a pathway to sustainable futures within the South African context?”

### **1.3 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The goal of the study was to explore children’s perspectives on their well-being as a pathway to sustainable futures within the South African context.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To conceptualise child well-being and participation within the framework of the ecosystems theory and sustainability.
- To explore children’s understanding of child well-being.
- To explore children’s views on social factors that affect their current and future well-being.
- To explore children’s views on economic factors that affect their current and future well-being.
- To explore children’s views on environmental factors that affect their current and future well-being.
- To describe children’s suggestions for enhancing child participation in matters that influence their well-being.

### **1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology is briefly discussed below. It will be explained in detail in Chapter 3.

The research paradigm used for this study was interpretivism, which views reality as a social construct that can be understood by studying people in their social settings (Nieuwenhuis, 2019a:67). Since the researcher collected and analysed the perceptions of children on child well-being, a qualitative research approach was chosen as suitable because it uses verbal descriptions to portray the phenomenon being studied (Nieuwenhuis, 2019a:59).

The study utilised exploratory and descriptive purposes where the researcher explored a topic on which limited research has been conducted in the South



African context and then provided a qualitative description of the phenomenon (Fouché & De Vos, 2011b:95-96; Neumann, 2014:38). By utilising applied research, the study contributed to identifying solutions to problems that will inform a policy that promotes sustainable futures for children (Fouché & De Vos, 2011b:94; Rubin & Babbie, 2017:145).

A case study design was used and deemed appropriate to the study as the design is the preferred strategy to use when “how” and “why” questions are asked (Nieuwenhuis 2019b:90). More specifically, the instrumental case study was used to explore the participants’ perceptions on the well-being of children to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon and the participants’ needs and views on the phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008:544-559; Nieuwenhuis, 2019b:90).

Non-probability sampling, in particular purposive sampling, was applied to include children between the ages of 8 and 12 years as participants who provided answers to the research question and supplied rich information on the perspectives of children on their well-being (Neumann, 2014:274; Strydom & Delpont, 2011:392). The researcher also employed snowball sampling to recruit participants for the study (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:393). The researcher conducted the study in Sunnyside, Region 3 of the City of Tshwane municipality, Gauteng Province.

The data was collected by employing one-on-one interviews, which were aided using an interview schedule comprising open-ended questions and analysed by using thematic analysis (Roulston & Choi, 2018:238; Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017:19). Furthermore, the quality of data was ensured by applying measures that enhanced the trustworthiness of the research findings. This was achieved by considering credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017:3).

## **1.5 OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH REPORT**

The proposed chapter outline for the study was as follows:

### **Chapter 1: General introduction**

Chapter 1 contains a general introduction and orientation to the study. The concepts relevant to the study are defined, and the rationale and problem statement are discussed. This is followed by a discussion of the research question, goal, and objectives of the study. A summary of the research methodology is described, and the chapters of the research report are outlined.

### **Chapter 2: Literature review**

Chapter 2 comprises a review of the literature on child well-being, the importance thereof, and factors that can influence children's well-being. The literature review includes a discussion on the social, economic, and environmental indicators of child well-being, factors that affect child well-being, and international, regional, and national legislative frameworks that advance and protect the well-being of children. Furthermore, the literature chapter includes the theoretical framework of the study, a discussion on child well-being within the South African context, and social work's contribution towards child well-being.

### **Chapter 3: Research methodology**

In Chapter 3, the research methodology and ethical considerations that guided the study are discussed. The chapter includes the research paradigm, the research approach, the type of research, the research design, the study population and sample, data collection methods and analysis, the trustworthiness of the data, the limitations of the study and the applicable ethical aspects relevant to the study.

### **Chapter 4: Empirical findings and discussions**

In Chapter 4, the empirical study and findings of the study are presented and discussed.

## **Chapter 5: Key findings, conclusions, and recommendations**

In Chapter 5, the key findings of the study are summarised, conclusions are drawn, and recommendations that stem from the findings are made.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of research studies on children's subjective well-being is rapidly gaining momentum and this has led to the identification of measures that can be used to assess subjective well-being across different countries, groups, and languages (Dinisman & Ben-Arieh, 2016:556). Therefore, it is important to look beyond the measurement of subjective well-being by gaining insight into factors that influence children's subjective well-being.

Subjective well-being is defined as the observations and experiences of people about their lives, which are derived from encounters and perceptions of individuals, focusing on both positive and negative aspects, and the identification of life satisfaction by analysing an individual's overall life (Dinisman & Ben-Arieh, 2016:557). It, therefore, assists with identifying and addressing factors that impact children both negatively and positively to improve their overall well-being and maximise their potential respectively.

In South Africa, the high levels of socio-economic inequalities are worsened by the increased rates of crime, child mortality, and other forms of violence. This assertion is supported by the 2016 UNICEF report on the Progress and Disparity among Children in South Africa, indicates that 18% of families prevented their children from walking to school while 25% refused their children to play outside (Ayala-Nunes et al., 2018:812; Matthews & Martin, 2016 in Adams, Savahl, Florence & Jackson, 2019:552).

Although the study of subjective well-being has grown in momentum and led to significant changes, the high levels of socio-economic inequalities still affect South African children and negatively influence their future outcomes (Adams et al., 2019:547). This adds to the impediments that prevent children from participating in daily issues that affect them (Adams et al., 2019:551).

Previous studies have been carried out to measure the objective and subjective well-being of children, their perceptions of overall life satisfaction, the interactions they have with their environment, and their experiences of living in a world where technology is highly utilised (Adams et al., 2019:546,547; Dinisman & Ben-Arie, 2016:555; Nadan & Kaye-Izadok, 2019:461). The research results obtained from these studies will be used to inform the literature review.

The chapter starts by identifying child well-being as a phenomenon. The next discussion focuses on child development with emphasis on the characteristics of the middle childhood phase, followed by indicators of child well-being, factors that affect child well-being, and legislative frameworks that are aimed at advancing and protecting the well-being of children. The next section discusses the theoretical framework of the study, followed by a discussion on child well-being within the South African context, and then a discussion on social work's contribution to child well-being. The chapter ends with a summary.

## **2.2 CHILD WELL-BEING AS A PHENOMENON**

The term “well-being” refers to an individual's experiences of positive physical and mental health, happiness, and prosperity. It encompasses having the ability to achieve life satisfaction, managing stress effectively and having a sense of meaning or purpose (Gleason & Narvaez, 2019:60; Tov, 2018:1). These are referred to as subjective indicators of well-being, while objective indicators of well-being include health status, resources for education, and income (Statham & Chase, 2010:2). Therefore, when examining the overall well-being of children, it is important to consider their subjective perception of their well-being and the resources that they have.

Child well-being as a phenomenon is about constructing knowledge and an understanding of how children perceive their well-being, which according to Dunlop-Bennett, Bryant-Tokalau and Dowell (2019:113,114), is important for several reasons. First, it extends current studies by moving away from objective to subjective views when defining and conceptualising child well-being. Second, it provides a holistic view of child well-being by identifying multiple dimensions

that influence child well-being which is derived from children's perceptions. Third, research findings can lead to positive and sustainable outcomes for children when they are employed at both local and international levels during policy debates and decision-making processes that are directed towards improving children's lives.

Previous studies indicate that the well-being of children has been identified based on adults' perceptions (Casa & Frönes, 2019:3). This leaves a gap in determining the well-being of children based on their experiences and perceptions. Data about their perceptions and experiences is important in improving the care and services they are currently receiving. Bammer et al. (2010:15) emphasise the importance of the subjective well-being of children by asserting that children's well-being and quality of health must be determined during the early years of their development since they are future leaders who will contribute positively to society. Subsequently, child studies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have shifted from being adult-centric to engaging children's voices. The shift has encouraged the development of research studies that are focused on the voices of children in determining their subjective well-being (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014:13; Casas & Frönes, 2019:10).

### **2.2.1 Subjective well-being**

As earlier indicated, the inclusion and utilisation of subjective well-being as a social indicator have gained momentum in recent years as researchers shifted focus from only studying objective well-being (Casas, 2011 & Huebner, 1991 in Kaye-Tzadok et al., 2019:433). The shift of focus from objective to subjective well-being identifies the importance of child-centred programmes as predictors of positive child development and well-being (Park, 2004 in Dinisman & Ben-Arieh, 2016:556) and partial fulfilment of the mandate of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations General Assembly, 1986 in Dinisman & Ben-Arieh, 2016:556).

Subjective well-being is regarded as a multi-dimensional concept that comprises unique components (Casas & Frönes, 2019:5). These components are identified by the Children's World Project and include cognitive, affective,

and psychological well-being (Rees & Main, 2015:33). Social work research also identified the basic triad of measures of subjective well-being, which includes social well-being, economic security, and environmental well-being (Coompton & Hoffman, 2013:51; Fattore & Mason, 2017:276; Savahl, Tiliouine, Casas, Adams, Mekonen, Dejene, Benninger & Witten, 2017:31; Miller, Hayward & Shaw, 2012:23).

Previous studies have identified strategies that can be used to enhance the well-being of children. These include the reduction of negative thoughts, optimistic thinking, enhancing the ability to be an extrovert, and having an active life (Fordyce, 1983 in Eryilmaz & Sapsaglam, 2018:77). The evolutionary psychologist recommends additional strategies. These are derived from evolutionary psychology and include satisfying own desires, reducing stress, building relationships with relatives, and changing competitive structures into ones that require cooperation (Buss, 2000 in Eryilmaz & Sapsaglam, 2018:77).

Moreover, research shows that the conceptualisation of subjective well-being in a holistic manner is an important pathway to understanding the functioning of children as beings with capabilities (Giman & Huebner, 2003 in Grass-Manos, Shimoni & Ben-Arieh, 2015:72). In other words, a holistic approach adds to the development of intervention programmes that enhance children's well-being (Heubner, Seliggon, Valois & Suldo, 2006 in Grass-Manos et al., 2015:72). Focusing on subjective well-being in research studies provides children with an opportunity to report on their level of life satisfaction and happiness on several life domains such as the use of time, virtual world, social relationships, and political voice (Casas & Frönes, 2019:4; McAuley, McKeown & Merriman, 2012:451; Nadan & Tzadok, 2019; Rees & Main, 2015:12).

### **2.2.2 Objective well-being**

Objective well-being comprises indicators that are statistically based and information that is provided by experts in specific research fields. These indicators include health, education, and economic growth (Casas & Frönes, 2019:3). Other indicators of objective well-being, which include academic performance, are regarded as observable and measurable (Haq & Zia,

2013:998; Thompson & Aked, 2009 in Omar & Siti Hajar, 2017:8; Woodhead, 2008 in Omar & Siti Hajar, 2017:8). Objective well-being is important as it provides the basis of understanding whether needs are met, and services provided are sufficient. For example, research in Ireland determined that children whose material needs are met have access to a healthy diet, school, and positive relationships with family (Statham & Chase, 2010:5).

In summary, child well-being can be derived from both objective and subjective well-being. Objective well-being provides the statistics that describe child well-being according to health, education, and economic indicators. It is based on the perceptions of adults and, therefore, does not provide a full picture of children's well-being since their perceptions are not included. This gap is filled by utilising subjective well-being, which reports on the well-being of children by focusing on their perceptions of their natural environment and its impact on their well-being. Therefore, it is important to conduct a research study on the subjective well-being of children, which requires an understanding of the process of child development.

### **2.3 CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

Child development is characterised by three stages namely early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence (Louw & Louw, 2014:224). The research study was done with participants who are in the middle childhood stage, that is, between the ages of 8 and 12 years. Middle childhood is a stage in which skills such as cognitive, personality, and relationship building are developed (Del Giudice, 2014:1). In this stage, children acquire social norms and values from their communities while learning to integrate themselves into their surrounding environment. As a result, children's eagerness to learn and work increases, which in turn strengthens their self-esteem and competency (Blume & Rosario-Perez, 2016:2). Since middle childhood is regarded as a period of cognitive, social-emotional, and self-concept development, children begin to get a grasp of the world through experiences they encounter, which prepares them for the challenges they will encounter as they enter adolescence stage (Louw & Louw, 2014:225).



Middle childhood can be discussed according to the physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development of the child. In terms of **physical development**, children go through rapid growth that improves their balance, mobility, strength, motor skills, eye and hand coordination, and vision (Berk, 2013:178; Henderson & Thompson, 2016:32; Louw & Louw, 2014:227). It also comprises the development of the brain, which reaches the size and weight of an adult brain (Louw & Louw, 2014:226). These physical characteristics provide children with an opportunity to participate in a range of activities they could not partake in when they were in their early childhood.

Children in middle childhood stage experience **cognitive development**, comprising the development of flexible, organised, and critical thoughts that can be compared to the thoughts of an adult as determined in Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development (Berk, 2013:249; Louw & Louw, 2014:299). In this stage, children improve their academic skills such as mathematics, reading, and writing, which leads to an increase in their attention span, concentration, and memory retention ability (Berk, 2013:6; Henderson & Thompson, 2016:37). Moreover, they improve their mastery of language, use of long and complex sentences, and extend their vocabulary (Louw & Louw, 2014:234; Martorell, Papalia & Feldman, 2014:291). From the age of eight years, children exhibit their understanding of space and demonstrate it through descriptions and illustrations, which is a skill that is referred to as "map skills" (Berk, 2013:251).

Children not only show the ability to share their perceptions but also comprehend the perceptions of others and make their judgments regarding the cause and effect of a specific situation (Henderson & Thompson, 2016:37; Martorell et al., 2014:360). It is also essential to consider that children's cognitive development is also influenced by the socio-cultural environment (Arnett, 2016:368; Martorell et al., 2014:379-381).

In middle childhood, **social development** entails the expansion of children's social world to include the community, peers, and school while acquiring knowledge and skills that are required within their cultural context (Arnett, 2016:33; Louw & Louw, 2014:257,299; Martorell et al., 2014:395). Erikson's theory of psychosocial development identifies children as being in the stage of

industry and inferiority, which comprises learning the physical, social, practical, and academic skills that are required in adult life (Henderson & Thompson, 2016:41). During the same period, children acquire a thorough understanding of the self and those around them, which includes comprehending the perceptions of individuals, groups, and relationships' interactions (Berk, 2013:5,6; Louw & Louw, 2014:233,255). In addition, children's self-concept becomes clear; they develop the ability to compare their qualities to those of their peers and describe themselves according to their social, psychological, internal, and external aspects of the self (Louw & Louw, 2014:257). In addition, they develop the ability to differentiate between the "real" self (their origin as a person) and the "ideal" self (the person they wish to be) (Louw & Louw, 2014:256,257).

Children in middle childhood are satisfied after completing challenging and interesting tasks and seek rewards after achieving successful outcomes (Martorell et al., 2014:395; Thomas, 2005:93). Children's chances of experiencing a sense of mastery are increased when they are provided with a task to complete and are given the appropriate guidance by the adults (Arnett, 2016:23; Martorell et al., 2014:395; Thomas, 2005:93). Another important contributing factor to their social and emotional well-being is peer acceptance, where friendships, loyalty, and faithfulness to peers becomes important (Louw & Louw, 2014:276,299). At the same time, their family continues to be the main contributing factor to their development where positive relationships with their siblings and parents improve their overall well-being (Henderson & Thompson, 2016:43; Louw & Louw, 2014:299).

The fourth element of middle childhood, **emotional development**, comprises children showcasing the ability to understand, interpret, and display complex emotions (Berk, 2013:419; Louw & Louw, 2014:233,299). Children between the ages of six and eight start to reflect their emotions mentally by sharing their understanding of events that affect their emotions, determining situations that either produce negative or positive emotions and experiencing multiple emotions at the same time (Berk, 2013:412-416; Louw & Louw, 2014:259). When children approach the age of 10 years, they develop the ability to regulate

their emotions by utilising strategies such as controlling their distress and identifying ways of solving their problems (Berk, 2013:412; Martorell et al., 2014:395). Furthermore, children's empathy increases whereby they start understanding other people's emotions and respond to the distress of others (Berk, 2013:417,419; Martorell et al., 2014:395).

In middle childhood, **moral development** refers to the ability to differentiate between right and wrong behaviours. This is achieved by grasping different aspects such as culture, religion, peer group, and social norms of the family and community (Louw & Louw, 2014:287,294,300). Becoming aware of different environmental aspects is closely linked to the cognitive development element since the process of identifying universal moral principles depends on the child's moral reasoning. Therefore, the focus is on the child's understanding of justice, the rules of society, and moral responsibility (Cowan, Langer, Heavenrich & Nathanson, 1969:261).

In summary, children's development is measured by focusing on physical, social, cognitive, emotional, psychological, and moral development. It is affected by other factors such as the environment, financial stability, and social interactions, which are thoroughly discussed in the following section.

## **2.4 INDICATORS OF CHILD WELL-BEING**

The three major indicators of child well-being are social, economic, and environmental.

### **2.4.1 Social indicators**

Social well-being is linked to the interactions or support systems that people have in their lives (Buck et al., 2018:1254). For instance, a strong relationship between social well-being and social support has been identified. In this relationship, an impact on one causes an impact on another. Furthermore, the impact of the interaction in relationships and the socio-economic environment on an individual determines their outcome in life (Rahdarzadeh & Adibisedeh, 2016:194). Buck et al. (2018:1254) refer to interactions with the socio-economic environment, including peers, families, school, and communities; these link with

social support, school engagement, and attitudes towards other community members.

COVID-19 has negatively affected the well-being of children and families. Ten Bruggencate, Luijkx and Sturm (2019:1826) indicate the impact of COVID-19 on the well-being of children and their families by asserting that the inability to meet the basic and social needs of people may result in physical and mental problems. The development of COVID-19-related problems can be mitigated by ensuring that children have access to quality education that contributes to improved academic performance, health, and well-being (Buck et al., 2018:1257).

#### **2.4.2 Economic indicators**

The economic or material indicators are essential in measuring child well-being as income is needed to sustain the well-being of children and their family units. Researchers focus on different aspects of child well-being when determining its economic impact, which includes the socio-economic status of parents, child health, investments done by parents, the success of an adult, child development, family background, early life circumstances and inter-generational transmission (Conti & Heckman, 2012:11).

A report released by Statistics South Africa in 2018 indicated that more than half (62,3%) of the child population between the ages of 0-17 lived in low-income circumstances with female-headed households being more prevalent in these conditions (Statistics South Africa, 2018). As part of improving the economic well-being of children in South Africa, the government introduced the child support grant in 1998 as a measure of assisting parents with low income to foot the costs of meeting the basic needs of a child. The child support grant has yielded many benefits, such as improving physical, material, and social care, learning and behavioural outcomes (Grinspun, 2016:44).

Despite the efforts made by the government through the introduction of the child support grant, many children are still living below the poverty line, with Black children mostly affected. Unemployment has an impact on many households

and deprives them of family wealth and educational resources (Casas, 2011:569; Conti & Heckman, 2012:5).

### **2.4.3 Environmental indicators**

Child studies have shifted focus by considering the importance of the environment in which the child interacts daily (Adams et al., 2019:547; Buck et al., 2018:1263; David & Weinstein, 2013:4). It is therefore important to consider the environmental indicators of child well-being since disaster-stricken communities can negatively influence children and their families. Practices that do not consider children's right to be heard must be challenged. This is supported by Lombard and Viviers (2014:84) who assert that children have the right to participate in issues that affect them, for example, climate change. These matters must be identified and professionals such as social workers must promote child participation in building pathways to sustainable futures.

Alston (2015:357) asserts that individuals highly impacted by disasters are those who are struggling to earn an income or have unmet socio-economic rights such as decent income, improved living conditions, and health care. The impact of disasters on those earning low income and having unmet socio-economic rights can be addressed by utilising children's inputs to improve the resilience of communities, develop, and implement effective policies and effectively manage disasters (Manyena, Fordham & Collins, 2008:313). The establishment of contact with nature in early childhood education and care is crucial for the management of disasters because children develop appropriate strategies to manage Earth and its inhabitants. For instance, educators in childcare environments can develop a learning culture where children can take care of nature through play and creativity, which in turn will create sustainable futures for all (Borgen & Ødegaard, 2020:277).

The premise of this study is that children have agency and hence should have the opportunity to participate and have their voices heard on issues that impact their well-being and future. These issues are discussed in the following section.

## **2.5 FACTORS IMPACTING CHILD WELL-BEING**

Protective and risk factors can influence child well-being, as will be discussed.

### **2.5.1 Protective factors of child well-being**

Protective factors are regarded as attributes that minimise the probability of producing negative outcomes because of experiencing adversity (Afifi & MacMillan, 2011:268). They achieve this by increasing the likelihood of producing better-than-expected outcomes (Greene & Greene, 2009:1013). Protective factors are important since children are impacted by the interactions that occur in the micro (intimate peer and family relationships) and macro (norms and cultures) systems (Ttofi & Farrington, 2012:87). Aspects such as education, family system, and policies make a positive or negative difference to the well-being of the child. According to Newland (2014:1339-1340), the health of parents is important in contributing towards healthy family well-being since their well-being affects the functioning of the entire family system. A family that has more protective factors has an increased ability to mitigate the risk factors as they arise. For instance, friendships and family contexts affect children's well-being because they contribute to the development of social skills (Rees & Main, 2015:65). In addition, family and distant relatives have been identified as one of the protective factors for children due to their ability to provide care, happiness, trust, and a sense of belonging (Fattore & Mason, 2017:278,279).

Additional elements identified as protective factors when faced with adversity include communities and culture (Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche & Pfefferbaum, 2008:145). Communities incorporate protective factors if the environment is safe and conducive to child well-being by providing essential facilities such as schools and parks for children to play. Additionally, culture is part of a community because it teaches the important norms and values that guide behaviour (Idang, 2015:98,99; Papazoglou, 2019:2625). How communities function influences the development of children, which in turn determines the type of people they will become and the roles they will take in the future within these communities. Moreover, it is important to provide

children with an opportunity to actively participate in communities, which in turn will help them develop essential skills such as acceptance of others, teamwork, and differing opinions.

### **2.5.2 Risk factors for child well-being**

Regardless of protective factors that have a positive impact on a child's well-being, risk factors can harm the well-being of a child. Children are regarded as the most vulnerable group when adversities emerge because they lack social power and are young. Therefore, children's well-being is at risk of being compromised by the circumstances that surround them. These include living in low-income households (that cannot afford to pay for education and provide food) and unsafe communities where there is violence and unclean environments. Boyden and Mann (2005:3) also indicated other factors that negatively impact child well-being, such as exploitation, poverty, environmental degradation, forced migration, and armed conflict (Boyden & Mann, 2005:3). These negatively impact children's physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Furthermore, children who have lost parents or guardians are more vulnerable because such loss leads to other losses. They entail losing someone who used to protect them, assist in decision-making, and support them to develop into productive adults (SOS Children's Villages International, 2017:4).

Family instability is also a risk factor that can impair a child's well-being. Children living in an unstable environment are negatively affected because they lack happiness and struggle to adjust to societal pressures such as receiving quality education (Akram, Anjum & Akram, 2015:177). Therefore, the provision of care and affection might be required for their well-being. Family instability as a risk factor also indicates the importance of allowing children to participate in issues that affect their lives to determine their perceptions regarding their growth and well-being. Manyena et al. (2008:312) support the participation of children by emphasising the importance of investing in children's ability to reduce risks, which will contribute to the reduction of risks for upcoming generations.



Despite the protective and risk factors, emphasis should be on the agency of the child which should be respected and hence they should be included in participation. The inclusion of children in matters that affect them can be achieved by developing and implementing policies and legislation that advocates for the consideration of children's perceptions on issues that impact their well-being.

## **2.6 MANDATE PROMOTING AND SAFEGUARDING OF CHILD WELL-BEING**

The international, regional, and local mandates to promote and safeguard child well-being include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); 2030 Agenda; African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC); Agenda 2063, the Africa We Want; Constitution of the Republic of South Africa; Children's Act 38 of 2005; and the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030. These will be discussed in the following sub-sections.

### **2.6.1 International mandate**

Child well-being is holistically reflected in the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**; it includes rights that award opportunities for improving the well-being of children by focusing on their economic, emotional, social, cultural, material, and psychological being (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014:1). The CRC includes children's rights to guide the development of policies focusing on the enhancement of children's well-being. For instance, Article 12(1) of the CRC recognises children's rights to express their perceptions on all issues that influence their well-being. Article 3(1) further emphasises the importance of focusing on the best interest of the child when implementing decisions that impact them (United Nations, 1989). Therefore, it is evident that upholding children's rights is an investment in children's futures (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014:15). Thus, promoting and protecting the rights of children can contribute to creating sustainable futures for them.

Child well-being can also be discussed in conjunction with the **2030 Agenda** and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015). The 2030 Agenda emphasises the importance of developing the lives of all people



by focusing on the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It intends to create a sustainable world by protecting the planet, eradicating poverty, and encouraging sustainable development worldwide (United States, 2015). This is mentioned in SDG 3 of the 2030 Agenda, which emphasises the importance of social, economic, and environmental development in enhancing the well-being of all people (Nunes, Lee & O'Riordan, 2016:3). Enhancement of well-being includes investment in children and uplifting vulnerable groups, including children (United Nations, 2015).

Moreover, the well-being of children is important because they are perceived as change agents who can formulate goals that act as a medium to channel their infinite capabilities to create a better world (United Nations, 2015). Furthermore, some SDGs directly impact children's well-being, including the provision of quality education (SDG 4); achieving gender equality (SDG 5); provision of sanitation and clean air (SDG 6); and ending of poverty (SDG 1) and hunger (SDG 2).

The CRC and 2030 Agenda paved the way for studies on child well-being that are based on children's perceptions. However, such studies were conducted in developed countries, and the findings cannot be utilised effectively in developing countries due to different historical and cultural contexts (Camfield, Streuli & Woodhead, 2010:411).

### **2.6.2 Regional mandate**

The regional mandates that contribute positively toward child well-being in Africa are the **African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child** (ACRWC) (African Union, 1990) and the **Agenda 2063, the Africa We Want** (hereafter Agenda 2063) (African Union, 2015:1). The ACRWC contributes to child well-being by addressing issues that have an influence on children by emphasising children's rights. The ACRWC considers the fact that children are entitled to peace, religion, conscience, and freedom of expression. Its purpose is to secure the private life of a child and protect the child against various forms

of exploitation that are detrimental to his or her physical, social, moral, cultural, and mental development (African Union, 1990).

The Charter states that children have an incomparable and fortunate position in society because it must care for and protect children by enhancing their moral, health, mental, social, and physical development. It emphasises the importance of creating an environment that encourages security, freedom, and dignity for children (African Union, 1990). This is emphasised by Article 4 of the ACRWC, which advocates for children's best interests when making decisions that affect them (Hansungule & Boezaart, 2017:45).

Moreover, the Charter advocates for the inclusion of African values and experiences when addressing children's rights such as challenging African beliefs about child marriage; preventing the use of children as street beggars; allowing girl children to return to school after pregnancy; promoting children's rights to education with specific emphasis on the girl child; protecting children living with disabilities; encouraging the state to support parents in times of need to enhance the well-being of the children; and protecting those who are displaced and have refugee status (African Union, 1990).

**Agenda 2063** focuses on the growth and development of African people in a sustainable manner (African Union, 2015:1). This is achieved through the involvement of all people in the process of development (African Union, 2015:7). This is supported by the statement: "No child, woman or man will be left behind". Its purpose is to protect and enhance the rights of vulnerable populations such as children, women, people living with HIV/AIDS, and persons with disabilities (African Union, 2015:7). Agenda 2063 goals will be achieved by the following seven aspirations for the envisioned Africa.

The first aspiration is to develop a prospering Africa through inclusive growth and sustainable development. It focuses on the eradication of poverty through education, skills development, and the creation of economic opportunities for all (African Union, 2015:2,3). This can contribute to the well-being of children by providing quality education and creating sustainable futures through job creation that links with the skills acquired. The second aspiration is building a

politically united continent through Pan-Africanism and Africa's Renaissance. It advocates for unity among African countries to end gender, racial and other forms of discrimination and injustices to achieve justice, independence, and freedom (African Union, 2015:3,4). By using an integrated approach towards addressing socio-economic issues in Africa, children's well-being can be enhanced, leading to sustainable futures.

The third aspiration is to create an Africa of better governance, democracy and respect for human rights, justice, and the rule of law. This requires creating a continent that awards communities with the ability to participate in social, economic, and political decisions as a strategy towards achieving justice without fear or favour (African Union, 2015:5,6). Creating an environment that is free from discrimination will give children an opportunity to exercise their right to participate and ensure that their voice is heard. The fourth aspiration is to create a secure and peaceful Africa. Forming a protected environment requires developing a continent that is free from conflict, drugs, human trafficking, and other organised criminal activities that negatively contribute to the well-being of people (African Union, 2015:6,7). Children's well-being will be impacted positively since their growth and development requires a peaceful and productive environment.

The fifth aspiration is to develop an Africa that is based on identity, values, heritage, and ethics. It advocates for the creation of communities that embrace their cultures and heritage while embracing the values of respect, hard work, and social cohesion (African Union, 2015:7). Children's well-being focuses on different factors, which include respecting their religion and culture. The sixth aspiration is to create an Africa which requires people such as women, youth, and children to drive development. It requires that individuals who are classified as vulnerable be empowered to be part of the decision-making processes to achieve social, economic, political, and environmental development (African Union, 2015:8).

The last aspiration is to have an Africa that is resilient, influential, united and a global player and partner. It requires having an Africa that can fund its development and work towards using global unity to end racism, xenophobia,

discrimination, and exploitation (African Union, 2015:10). Therefore, individuals, society, and the government have the responsibility to work as partners towards enhancing the well-being of children by eradicating barriers which in turn will contribute towards their sustainable futures.

### 2.6.3 Local mandate

There are local mandates that guide the caring and protection of children. These include the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Children's Act 38 of 2005, and the National Development Plan 2030. Children form part of the vulnerable population (Department of Social Development, 2013:30) and are, therefore, protected by the Bill of Rights in the **Constitution of the Republic of South Africa**. Children's rights are indicated in Section 28 of the Constitution (1996), which includes rights

to family care or parental care or appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment; to a name and nationality; to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse, or degradation; and to basic shelter, nutrition, health care services and social services.

These rights are implemented by utilising other legislations, namely the Children's Act 38 of 2005, Child Justice Act 75 of 2008, Sexual Offences, and Related Matters Act 32 of 2007 and Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997. In the context of this study, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 will be discussed.

The **Children's Act 38 of 2005** is guided by the Constitution and outlines principles and procedures for the care and protection of children. It requires that decisions made must be in the best interest of the child (Section 9) and advocates for the voice of children in matters that impact them (Section 10). The Act aims to enforce the children's rights and responsibilities by uniting families to ensure that a child is cared for and protected or placed in a place of safety when no family is available to carry out such duties (Children's Act 38 of 2005).

The Act requires that different services and resources be made available to protect children from neglect, harm, and abuse. The Act also requires that the

rights of children be protected and promoted by all, including the State. The State can, therefore, achieve this by promoting the dignity and worth of the child by preventing discrimination; encouraging and supporting the rights of children with disabilities; and considering the children's need for growth and development by ensuring that they have access to activities that are in line with their ages and developmental capacity (Children's Act 38 of 2005, section 10, 11, 13).

The most important right that contributes to the well-being of children is the right to participate and have a voice. This implies that children must participate in issues that concern their care and well-being, which depends on the child's age and development (Children's Act 38 of 2005, Section 10). In addition, the Act advocates for the well-being of children by emphasising that parents must take care of the child by being a guardian and providing financial support (Children's Act 38 of 2005, Section 18).

The **National Development Plan (NDP) 2030** emphasises the reduction of inequality and poverty as a strategy for creating a better future for South Africans (National Planning Commission, 2012:1,24). The plan will bring change to people's lives in various ways. First, the plan advocates for addressing the Apartheid geography through the provision of safe land as a measure of creating a humane and sustainable environment (National Planning Commission, 2012:259). Second, the vision of the NDP 2030 focuses on the creation of a rural community that is awarded an opportunity to participate in economic, social, and political activities, which will be supported by the agriculture, tourism, mining, and fisheries departments (National Planning Commission, 2012:217).

Third, the NDP 2030 requires that in 2030, all South Africans should have access to quality education that must be made compulsory to achieve quality standards that are comparable to international ones (National Planning Commission, 2012:296). This is emphasised in Chapter 11, which focuses on the social protection of children by ensuring that they have access to social care and safety, health services, nutrition, and quality education (National Planning Commission, 2010:358). Therefore, the children's well-being can be enhanced

to create sustainable futures for them by creating safe and sustainable environments, providing quality education, and improving the economic participation of rural communities.

The international, regional, and local mandates contribute positively toward the well-being of children. However, many children in South Africa live in degrading conditions that contribute negatively to their well-being and act as an obstruction to creating pathways for sustainable futures. This can be changed if proper and practical ways of implementing these mandates are identified while guided by theoretical approaches to improve child well-being.

## 2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Child development and child well-being are intertwined with societal conditions that have a reciprocal relationship between children and the environment. The well-being of a child should, therefore, be understood considering all the various systems that the child interacts with either directly or indirectly. The **ecosystems theory**, which was utilised as the theoretical framework for the study, conceptualises this reciprocity and interdependence between systems. The ecological systems theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1995) “views the child as embedded in a series of complex and interactive systems” (Louw et al., 2014:29). Miley, O’Meila, and Dubois (2009:38) identify that a change in one part of the system alters another part of the system, which changes the functioning of the entire system. Applied to the study, it means that the researcher looked at the children’s perspectives on child well-being in totality, including every area that affects their lives positively or negatively.

The **microsystem** forms the immediate environment of the child and consists of the child’s family, peers, school, church, and immediate neighbourhood (Arnett & Maynard, 2017:25; Louw et al., 2014:29). Thus, this system has its subsystems and is the system in which the child actively participates (Onwuengbuzie, Collins & Frels, 2013:4; Newland et al., 2019:397). A variety of studies link aspects such as positive family and peer relationships to child well-being, while aspects such as parental stress and psychological problems, attachment problems, and poor parent-child interactions can negatively affect

the well-being of the child within the microsystem (Ayala-Nunes et al., 2018:814; Newland et al., 2019:398). In the context of the ecological systems approach, an understanding of the system that is closest to the client and its influence is important for social work intervention (Langer & Lietz, 2014:33).

The **mesosystem** refers to a system where different microsystems encounter and influence each other. Children's academic performance, for example, does not only depend on classroom teaching but is enhanced when parents are involved in the school as well as in the learning process of the child at home (Louw et al., 2014:29). The well-being of children who grow up in poverty can be enhanced by connections between community resources and activities such as school and after-school programmes and youth groups (Berk, 2013:27). During assessments, social workers consider the child's relationships in the different microsystems and how these can influence each other in fostering well-being (Langer & Lietz, 2014:33). Nadan and Kaye-Tzadok (2019:474) suggest that the virtual world that is created by online social technologies should be considered an environment that influences children's subjective well-being. They describe the virtual context as "an arena through which children communicate with friends and family and in which their social relationships are practised in varied microsystems" (Nadan & Kaye-Tzadok, 2019:472).

The **exosystem** contains social settings such as the parents' informal and formal support networks and social networks of friends and extended family members, the parents' work settings, the media, religious institutions, and access to basic services (Arnett & Maynard, 2017:25; Berk, 2013:28; Louw et al., 2014:29). Within this system, the child does not actively take part; however, the development of the child is indirectly affected by the events that occur in the exosystem (Onwuegbuzie, Collins & Frels, 2013:4). Factors such as unemployment, poverty, and social isolation have a negative influence on the exosystem (Berk, 2013:28; Louw et al., 2014:29). Notably, poverty or low socio-economic status is seen as one of the most influential factors in terms of child and family well-being (Ayala-Nunes et al., 2018:812). Interventions to support parents and enhance the quality of parenting can buffer children against adverse social environments (Alaya-Nunes et al., 2018:814).



The **macrosystem** refers to the broader systems in society that influence a child's development over time, including culture, values, ideologies, customs, resources, policies, legislation, politics, programmes, and environmental aspects (Arnett & Maynard, 2017:26; Langer & Lietz, 2014:33-34; Louw et al., 2014:29). As with the other ecological levels, the nature of the macrosystem influences the subjective well-being of a child (Newland et al., 2019:398). Research, for example, shows that the subjective well-being of children was higher in countries that have policies that promote aspects such as preschool education, family services, family benefits, and paid parental leave (Ayala-Nunes et al., 2018:814).

Bronfenbrenner included a temporal or time dimension – the **chronosystem** – to indicate that children's environment is not static but changes over time (Berk, 2013:28; Louw et al., 2014:30). Changes occur because of children's development as well as changes in their immediate and wider environment, for example, relocation, school entry, or loss of a parent (Louw et al., 2014:30). The temporal dimension can be linked to the fact that well-being is a dynamic process (Casas & Frönes, 2019:2; Minkkinen, 2013:3), and that changes can occur from one developmental stage to the next and over time.

An ecological approach gives a comprehensive overview of child well-being, whereby the focus is on “a wide array of dimensions nested in children's proximal and distal contexts that are known to be directly or indirectly influential on different dimensions of well-being” (Alaya-Nunes et al., 2018:816). The ecological approach affirms that there is a mutually dependent relationship between people and the environment to deal with stressors in their lives and in using their available coping mechanisms; aspects that social workers need to consider understanding their clients (Masoga & Shokane, 2017:4).

Social workers can gain a comprehensive understanding of their clients, including children, by acquiring knowledge regarding a specific phenomenon within the local context. Below, child well-being within the South African context will be discussed.



## 2.8 CHILD WELL-BEING WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Children worldwide, including in South Africa, are faced with circumstances of deprivation regardless of South Africa's effort toward the implementation of the SDGs to improve the well-being of all people (SAHRC & UNICEF, 2016:5). Statistics South Africa's General Household Survey 2002–2018 indicated that the total population of the country was approximately 57.7 million people, which comprised 19.7 million children under the age of 18 years. Many of these children are faced with negative childhood experiences such as inequality, poverty, poor health, inability to exercise children's rights, and poor education (Rees & Main, 2015:30; SAHRC & UNICEF, 2016:5).

Other factors that contribute negatively to the well-being of children include domestic violence, family dysfunction, absent parents, and single-parent households (Patel, 2015:200; Richter & Dawes, 2008:86; Richter, Desmond, Hosegood, Madhavan, Makiwane, Makusha, Morell & Swartz, 2012:3). Moreover, climate change has been identified as one of the factors that harm the livelihoods of children through phenomena such as floods and droughts. These in turn affect children due to a reduction in income and food supply, which leads to health complications such as malaria, diarrhoea, cholera, and bilharzia (Republic of South Africa, 2012:18-22).

Furthermore, South Africa is faced with the challenge of implementing the 2030 Agenda due to social and economic inequalities (Lombard, 2015:484). Therefore, children in South Africa are vulnerable because of the inability to address the problems they face due to the country's socio-economic profile (Van Breda & Theron, 2018:237). The susceptibility of children has worsened since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to an increased hunger rate.

The pandemic exacerbated inequality, which led to the rich acquiring additional wealth while the poor became poorer (Laurencin & McClinton, 2020:2; Oxfam: The Hunger Virus, 2020:2). The pandemic resulted in lockdowns worldwide which limited movement and resulted in economic decline. As a result of the economic decline, many people lost their jobs and incomes, were affected by

poverty, and faced a new challenge of providing for their families (Fortuna, Tolou-Shams, Robles-Ramamurthy & Porche, 2020:443; Oxfam: The Hunger Virus, 2020:3).

Moreover, the South African government struggled to provide social assistance successfully due to lockdown restrictions, which contributed to a lack of funds for social services since funds were redirected to combat the pandemic (Fortuna et al., 2020:444; Oxfam: The Hunger Virus, 2020:5). However, the R500 billion social and economic relief fund was established, leading to the increase of existing social grants and the introduction of the Social Relief of Distress grant of R350 that supported unemployed persons (Villiers, Cerbone & Van Zijl, 2020:9). Although the South African government provided the R5billion stimulus package to support vulnerable groups, the distribution of funds and resources was negatively affected due to high numbers of people affected, theft, and corruption (Oxfam: The Hunger Virus, 2020:14).

The South African government also contributed to children's well-being by ensuring that social workers rendered effective services to children (Oxfam: The Hunger Virus, 2020:15). Thus, social workers have a responsibility to promote the well-being of children by using legislation and implementing social work roles.

## **2.9 SOCIAL WORKERS' CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS CHILD WELL-BEING**

Social workers have a role in advocating for the rights of children and improving their well-being. Below, social workers' challenges in contributing to children's well-being and their roles in enhancing well-being are discussed.

### **2.9.1 Social workers' challenges in contributing to child well-being**

Social workers play a major role in identifying and addressing socio-economic and environmental issues that negatively affect communities. However, they are faced with challenges that may deter them from delivering quality and life-changing interventions to individuals, families, and communities, which may hinder their contribution toward child well-being. First, social workers in child and family services have high caseloads which affect the quality of services

provided to children and families and their response time during emergencies. Second, social workers are offered inadequate supervision which deteriorates the quality of services rendered to children. Third, it was challenging for social workers to provide quality services that will improve the well-being of children because they receive inadequate training on the provisions and regulations of the Children's Act (Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012:407).

Fourth, not much has changed since 2014 leading to social workers struggling to contribute to the well-being of children since the profession is undermined, which leads to most of the social workers' recommendations being rejected and not implemented in courts (Ruch, 2014:2147). In addition, social workers are provided with limited budgets, which makes it challenging to address all the negative factors that influence the well-being of children (Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012:400). Regardless of the challenges social workers face, they can contribute positively towards the well-being of children in various ways. These will be discussed in the next section.

### **2.9.2 Social workers' contribution toward child well-being**

South Africa adopted the developmental approach in social welfare and social work to enhance social change and the well-being of all people within their natural environments (Patel, 2015:127). The developmental approach encourages social workers to be advocates when rendering services to children (Lombard & Viviers, 2014:83). Social workers can achieve this by advocating for sustainable development to create an environment that is free from toxicity to ensure sustainable futures and that will protect the well-being of vulnerable groups (Hawkins, 2010:69). The effort towards creating sustainable development correlates with the principle of promoting human rights and human development, which requires social workers to uphold the rights of the people while using their inherent capabilities to achieve social and economic development (Lombard, 2019:56).

It is also essential to consider children's perceptions of their experiences and views when rendering services for enhancing their well-being since they have valid knowledge that is based on their personal experiences (Fattore & Mason,

2017:276,277). In other words, children are in the best position to portray the meaning of their well-being and how it can be improved. This is linked to the principle of participation which requires the inclusion of people's voices as part of embracing human rights in the new democracy (Lombard, 2019:59). Closely linked to this principle is collaboration through partnership, which requires identifying clients as active participants in the helping process by finding ways in which their problems can be addressed with the assistance of the social worker (Lombard, 2019:60). Therefore, children must be awarded opportunities to share their perceptions, which must be taken into consideration when making decisions on matters that affect them (Casas, 2019:337). Achieving this requires that social workers work actively with children by including them as partners in interventions.

Using the developmental approach, social workers have the responsibility of bridging the micro and macro divide to promote social justice. This can be achieved by a dual focus on the micro level such as providing therapeutic intervention to individuals while engaging in social action to address the injustices in communities (Lombard, 2019:58). In other words, social workers can assist children who are impacted by poverty and other injustices through counselling and support and by advocating for structural changes and policies to improve services for children.

## **2.10 SUMMARY**

Recent studies have shifted from studying the well-being of children through the lens of adults to identifying the subjective well-being of children by assessing their perceptions regarding their experiences within their natural environment. This is important since promoting and investing in the well-being of children is regarded as the means of breaking the cycle of poverty and addressing injustices.

There are risk factors that negatively impact the well-being of children worldwide. These include environmental degradation, violence, crime, poverty, forced migration, and family instability. Regardless of the risk factors impacting children's well-being negatively, the well-being of children can be enhanced by

focusing on social, economic, and environmental indicators. There are also protective factors that can be employed during interventions that are directed towards enhancing the well-being of children. These include policies based on the voice of the child, positive family systems, providing quality education, and improved service delivery.

Children's well-being can be promoted and enhanced by implementing several policies and legislation. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa requires that the rights of children be protected and promoted, which is further emphasised by the CRC and the ACRWC, which require focusing on children's economic, cultural, social, material, emotional, and psychological well-being. Like the CRC and the ACRWC, the 2030 Agenda and the Agenda 2063 emphasise the importance of developing people sustainably, including a focus on investment in children. This must be achieved by considering children's best interests as stipulated in the Children's Act 38 of 2005.

The NDP 2030 requires that children's well-being be enhanced through poverty and inequality reduction strategies to create a safe and sustainable South Africa for all. Social workers can contribute to enhancing children's well-being using the developmental approach by engaging children and providing them with opportunities to be partners in intervention processes and decisions that affect them.

The next chapter focuses on the research methodology of the study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter outlines the research approach, type of research, and research design. The research methods are discussed by indicating the study population, sampling techniques, and data analysis and collection methods. Data quality is also discussed in terms of enhancing the trustworthiness of the research findings and the implementation of the pilot study to determine the effectiveness of research methods in providing appropriate answers to the research question. Moreover, the ethical consideration that guided the research project is discussed.

#### 3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

Well-being is socially and culturally constructed and dependent on a person's subjective views (Mashford-Scott et al., 2012:235; Minkkinen, 2013:4). The research paradigm most suitable for this research was interpretivism which views reality as a social construct that can be understood by studying people in their social settings (Nieuwenhuis, 2019a:67). The researcher adopted the viewpoint that children can interpret events and provide multiple perspectives of well-being.

Since the researcher collected and analysed children's perspectives on child well-being, she had chosen the qualitative research approach for the study. The qualitative research approach uses verbal descriptions to portray the phenomenon being studied (Fouché & Delport, 2011:64; Nieuwenhuis, 2019a:59). Qualitative research assisted the researcher in understanding rather than explaining child well-being and data relied on the words of participants rather than numerical data. One limitation of qualitative research is that the research findings cannot be generalised (Anney, 2014:272). The study had an exploratory and descriptive purpose. The researcher explored a topic on which limited research has been conducted in the South African context, and then provided a qualitative description of the phenomenon (Fouché & De

Vos, 2011b:95-96; Neumann, 2014:38), that is child well-being from children's perspectives.

### **3.3 TYPE OF RESEARCH**

This research aimed to get an understanding of the perspectives of children on child well-being that could inform social work practice to develop effective and sustainable service delivery programmes best suited to the needs of children. The study could thereby contribute to solutions to problems or inform policy that promotes sustainable futures for children, which links the study to applied research (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:94; Rubin & Babbie, 2017:145).

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A case study design was appropriate for the study as the design is the preferred strategy to use when "how" and "why" questions are asked (Nieuwenhuis 2019b:90). In the case of this study, the focus was on how children describe their well-being. This research design proposes a close collaboration between the researcher and participant, which allows participants to freely share their stories and thoughts and, in doing so, enables the researcher to understand the participants' social world (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:320; Nieuwenhuis 2019b:90). More specifically, the instrumental case study was used to explore the participants' perceptions of child well-being to better understand the phenomenon and the participants' needs and views on the phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008:544-559; Nieuwenhuis, 2019b:90). Studying children's views provided insight into child well-being in a South African context.

### **3.5 RESEARCH METHODS**

The research methods employed for this study are discussed below.

#### **3.5.1 Study population and sampling**

The goal of the study was to collect data on the perspectives of children in middle childhood, between the ages of 8 and 12 years, on child well-being within the South African context which Bless, Higson-Smith, and Sithole (2013:164) indicate as the set of elements that the research focused on. The

researcher conducted the study in Sunnyside, Region 3 of the City of Tshwane municipality, which demarcated the area of the target population for the study (Bless et al., 2013:164).

Non-probability sampling, in particular purposive sampling, was utilised to include child participants who were able to provide answers to the research question and yielded rich information on their well-being (Neumann, 2014:274; Strydom & Delpont, 2011:392). The inclusion criteria for the study sample were as follows:

- Children between the ages of 8 and 12.
- Children who can converse in English.
- Children whose parents or guardians permit them to participate in the study.
- Children who assent to voluntarily participate in the study.

The researcher used snowball sampling to recruit participants for the study (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:393). The researcher contacted persons in her social environment, excluding persons from the researcher's work environment or social work caseload, to ask for their assistance in gaining access to parents or guardians of potential participants. The researcher subsequently contacted parents or guardians who gave informed consent to their children to participate in the study (see Appendix B). In each instance, the researcher only contacted the children of those parents/guardians who indicated their willingness for their children to participate in the study and agreed that their contact details be made available to the researcher. Furthermore, the children had to give their consent to participate in the study, and their agency to decline participation was respected (see Appendix C). Ten participants were recruited, depending on whether data saturation had been achieved at "a point during the interviews when the researcher realises that no new information is being garnered from the participants" and further data collection was no longer useful (Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:34). Data saturation was reached with participant 10 and the researcher did not need to recruit more participants.



### 3.5.2 Data collection methods

Interviews, specifically semi-structured interviews guided by an interview schedule, were used to collect data. The interview schedule (see Appendix A) contained a set of open-ended predetermined questions that were used to guide the discussion and allowed participants to share their perceptions without limitations (Mock, 2005 in Mafokane & Shirindi, 2018:40). Semi-structured one-to-one interviews are useful for gaining information on participants' views on a topic and provide the researcher with the flexibility to explore information in more detail (Bless et al., 2013:197; Greeff, 2011:351-252). The method was useful in this study for several reasons. First, it helped the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of children's perceptions of child well-being by illuminating information and probing where answers required further clarification. Second, it provided the researcher with time to prepare the questions that the participants were asked and, third, semi-structured interviews produced reliable and thick descriptive data from participants (Adams, 2015:492-494).

The interviews were digitally recorded with the permission of the participants and their parents or guardians, and the researcher took field notes during the interview to enable her to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011:404; Nieuwenhuis, 2019b:110). Given that children may not understand the full scope of the factors that influence child well-being, the researcher used visual communication cards to complement the interview schedule (Nieuwenhuis, 2019b:103). The visual communication cards contained pictures of domains related to child well-being as described in the literature, for example, a family, home, school, running water, and food (See Appendix A). However, the researcher first used open-ended questions so that the children could express themselves freely and then introduced the visual cards as further prompts to ensure that the different domains of child well-being were addressed. Thus, the cards served as a funnelling technique to gain information on more specific aspects of child well-being (Greeff, 2011:352-353).

The cards were used to direct the exploration of information and to keep the child's focus and attention without relying too heavily on questioning. However, the researcher initially struggled with using both the interview schedule and visual communication cards at the same time during the pilot study, which caused a repetition of some of the items that were discussed. This was addressed by marking the mentioned items as the interview proceeded on the visual communication cards. In addition, it was difficult for the participants to comprehend some of the research questions, which was resolved by rephrasing in a manner that simplified the research questions.

### **3.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis first involved the transcription of interviews, and an analysis thereof to determine themes and sub-themes for reporting the data (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015:124; Ebersöhn, Eloff & Ferreira, 2019:177). Thematic analysis as a data analysis method is underpinned by the philosophy of qualitative research (Nowell et al., 2017:4). Data analysis occurred in the following phases (Clarke et al., 2015:230; Nowell et al., 2017:4):

#### **3.6.1 Familiarisation**

In this phase, the researcher organised the data and field notes into files and actively read and critically re-read the data to become familiar with the entire data set (Clarke et al., 2015:231, Nowell et al., 2017:4-5; Schurink et al., 2011:408–409). The researcher went through the interview transcripts and notes taken during the interviews to obtain a general idea of the content of the data and made notes of thoughts, questions, or initial interpretations while reading through the data (Bless et al., 2018:342; Nowell et al., 2017:5).

#### **3.6.2 Coding**

The researcher created initial codes of important elements in the data that were interesting concerning the research question (Clarke & Braun, 2013:121). This involved systematically working through the data, revisiting it repeatedly, assigning codes to data in the form of short phrases, and reviewing the codes assigned (Clarke & Braun, 2013:121; Nowell et al., 2017:6). Coding and

assigning a label to each code formed the foundation for the development of themes in Phase Three of data analysis (Clarke et al., 2015:234).

### **3.6.3 Generating themes**

The researcher sorted through the different codes and combined relevant codes into initial or potential themes (Nowell et al., 2017:8). The themes captured data that was important for answering the research question and presented a certain level of meaning or showed a pattern within the data set (Braun, Clarke, Hayfied & Terry, 2019:844). These levels were established employing overarching themes and sub-themes and displaced in a table to visually show the identified themes (Braun et al., 2019:844-845; Clarke et al., 2015:236). A thematic map helped the researcher to develop individual themes and search for the relationships between them (Clarke et al., 2015:38).

### **3.6.4 Reviewing themes**

The researcher started to refine themes to see how they fit together concerning the research question (Nowell et al., 2017:9). Codes that overlapped or did not have enough data to support were restructured, combined, or deleted, or a new code was constructed (Clarke & Braun, 2013:121; Nowell et al., 2017:10). When this phase was concluded, the researcher had an overall idea of what the different themes entailed and how they fitted together to tell a coherent story (Braun & Clarke, 2006:92; Nowell et al., 2017:9-10).

### **3.6.5 Defining and naming themes**

This phase aims to ensure that each theme's uniqueness is captured (Braun et al., 2019:846). The researcher wrote theme definitions consisting of a short description that explained the scope and boundaries of each theme and assigned them names that described the essence of each theme (Clarke et al., 2015:240). The name was clearly defined to make an immediate impression and give the reader an idea of what the theme is about (Clarke et al., 2015:240; Nowell et al., 2017:10).

### 3.6.6 Writing the report

Phase Six involves the final analysis and write-up of the report, which is an integral part of the process of data analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2013:121). The research report should provide the reader with a coherent story of the research. Through this research report, the researcher endeavoured to write a concise, coherent, non-repetitive, logical, and interesting account of the data (Nowell et al., 2017:10-11). The findings presented in Chapter 4 are substantiated by literature and interwoven with the participants' quotes to enhance the merits of the study.

Although thematic analysis can provide a rich, detailed, and complex account of the data, researchers must be aware that because of its flexibility, it can lead to inconsistencies. This makes measures of trustworthiness important (Braun & Clarke, 2006:78; Nowell et al., 2017:2-3). Ensuring data quality was thus an important aspect of the study.

## 3.7 DATA QUALITY

Data quality was ensured by employing measures to enhance the trustworthiness of the research findings. The researcher made sure that the perspectives of the participants were represented truthfully (Bless et al., 2013:236; Schurink et al., 2011:419). To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher considered credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Nowell et al., 2017:3).

### 3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility ensures that the researcher presents and interprets the information collected from the participants correctly and in support of the research question and research methodology (Schurink et al., 2011:419-420). The researcher used the *peer debriefing* strategy by discussing the data on research methodology with her supervisor, as well as *member checking* by discussing the research results with at least two participants in the study (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:193, 196). The participants indicated that they were satisfied with the transcripts as they showed a true reflection of their experiences. The researcher

also ensured credibility through *reflexivity* by constantly being aware of how her preconceived ideas may have influenced data collection and analysis (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:192). The researcher took notes during the interviews which she consistently reflected on.

### **3.7.2 Transferability**

To enhance the transferability of the research findings, the researcher used the strategy of *thick description* of the participants, context, and research design to compare this study's context with other contexts in practice (Anney, 2014:278; Nieuwenhuis, 2019c:144-145; Nowell et al., 2017:3). It is difficult to generalise qualitative research findings (Schurink et al., 2011:420), but transferability was enhanced by describing the research setting and findings comprehensively (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195).

### **3.7.3 Dependability**

The researcher enhanced the dependability of the research by clearly and logically documenting the research process so that others will be able to follow and judge this criterion for trustworthiness (Nowell et al., 2017:3). The researcher furthermore used *peer debriefing* to support the dependability (auditability) of the study (Schurink et al., 2011:420). The peers (fellow colleagues) thoroughly examined the documentation of the research, determined gap areas, and recommended changes to be made.

### **3.7.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to how the data are analysed to reach the findings of the research, which should be in a neutral way and not biased by the researcher's motivation or interests (Nowell et al., 2017:3). The researcher used *peer debriefing and member checking* for this purpose (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:197). As confirmability links with objectivity, the researcher also used *reflexivity* as a strategy to maintain an awareness of how her views, actions, and decisions could lead to personal bias that could impact data collection and analysis (Schurink et al., 2011:421).

### 3.8 PILOT STUDY

The researcher conducted a pilot study “to determine whether the methodology, sampling, instruments and analysis are adequate and appropriate” (Bless et al., 2013:394); thus, whether the chosen research methods were effective in producing data to answer the research question (Arain, Campbell, Cooper & Lancaster, 2010:2; Mafokane & Shirindi, 2018:41). The pilot study was conducted by using two participants who met the sampling criteria. First, the researcher determined whether the interview questions were adequate and understandable for children aged 8 to 12 years. The pilot study revealed that participants did not understand some of the questions because of the way they were structured, which led to the simplification of some questions in the interview guide. In Section A, Question 4 on gender was changed to: “How do you describe your sex: male, female or other than that?”. In Section B, the phrasing of Question 2 was changed to: “Which people must be part of a child’s life for a child to be well?”. In Question 5 “environment” was replaced with “outside your family”. Finally, Question 7 included an explanation that “community” refers to where people stay and live such as Sunnyside.

Second, the researcher assessed whether the data collection method was effective to obtain relevant data, the approximate duration of the interviews and whether changes needed to be made to the research methods (Strydom & Delport, 2011:394-395). The results revealed that the data collection method was effective to collect the answers that supported the research question, and the duration of the interviews was approximately 30 minutes. Third, the researcher tested the use of visual prompts (Casas, 2019:339), which prompted children to share additional factors within their environment that affected their well-being. Since the pilot interviews yielded sufficient data, the data was included in the data set for the study.

### **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical considerations state the moral principles, procedures and methods that must be adhered to by social researchers, guide them in terms of suitable action to take, and address complex ethical issues (Strydom, 2011:114). These considerations ensure that researchers do not only prioritise the need to carry out research but also take the responsibility to maintain the well-being of participants (Mills, 2014:24). The researcher considered the following ethical aspects for the study:

#### **3.9.1 Permission for the study**

Obtaining institutional ethical approval before research begins and maintaining high ethical standards throughout a research project are important aspects of conducting scientific research (Mogorosi, 2018:7). Before starting with the research, the researcher obtained ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Pretoria (see Appendix D) to ensure that the research is aligned with ethical standards (Bless et al., 2013:31-32).

#### **3.9.2 Actions and competence of the researcher**

The researcher implemented the study based on the knowledge and skills gained in attending an advanced module in research as part of the master's programme that she is enrolled on. Researchers should always respect the dignity and rights of participants (Bless et al., 2013:31). The researcher is a registered social worker and bound by the professional conduct of the South African Council for Social Service Professions (n.d), namely, to respect the human rights and dignity and worth of all human beings. To further enhance her competencies, the researcher conducted a thorough literature study on the research topic and engaged with the research supervisor throughout the study (Strydom, 2011:123). The research findings were presented truthfully in this research report, and the work of other researchers or authors was duly acknowledged (Babbie, 2017:72; Strydom, 2011:123).

### 3.9.3 Avoidance of harm

As children are a vulnerable group, the researcher regarded the fundamental research principle of avoiding any physical and/or emotional harm to the participants as especially important in the study (Bless et al., 2013:33-34; Strydom, 2011:115). The focus of the study was on the participants' perspectives of child well-being and not their experiences associated with it. However, it is not easy to divorce perspectives from experiences and the researcher was aware that participants could experience emotional distress when they discussed aspects related to child well-being. The researcher implemented measures to prevent harm to the participants. First, during the recruitment of participants, the researcher, with the help of parents or guardians, ensured that children who were deemed too vulnerable to participate in the study were not included (Babbie, 2017:63; Strydom, 2011:115).

At the start of data collection, the researcher ensured that children knew that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that the researcher would respect their wish not to answer a question if they decided so without facing any negative consequences (Babbie, 2017:66; Strydom, 2011:115). The researcher was vigilant to notice signs of discomfort during the interviews. If a participant was to experience emotional distress because of participation in the study, the researcher was ready to refer him or her for counselling that was to be offered free of charge and with the consent of the parent or guardian. The researcher planned for free telephonic or online counselling by a social worker from the Department of Social Development. However, it was not necessary to refer any participant.

The principle of beneficence was important in this study as the information gained during data collection can enhance the well-being of children (Bless et al., 2013:29; Strydom, 2011:116). Participation in the study was meaningful to them, which is an important aspect for children in middle childhood (Martorell et al., 2014:395; Thomas, 2005:93). However, as was stated in the informed consent letter of parents/guardians and assent letters of participants, there were no material incentives to participate in the study.



Within the context of COVID-19, special measures were taken to ensure the safety of the participants and the researcher. These measures were stipulated in the letters of informed consent and assent.

#### **3.9.4 Voluntary participation, informed consent, and informed assent**

Participation in the study was voluntary and the participants had the right to withdraw at any time during the research process, with no negative consequences for them (Maree, 2019:48). Research participants should never at any point feel or perceive that they are forced to be part of a study (Strydom, 2011:118). This aspect is particular in the case of children, which was the similar in this study. As already indicated, the child participants were asked to provide their assent and their parents or guardians gave informed consent for their children to participate in the study. An age-appropriate letter of informed assent was compiled for the participants (see Appendix C) and a letter of informed consent was compiled for their parents or guardians (see Appendix B). These letters contained information on the goal of the study, the procedures, what participation would be about, and possible advantages or risks for the participants (Maree, 2019:48; Strydom, 2011:117). The researcher made sure that the participants understood what would be expected of them by again reading through the informed assent letter before the start of the data collection interviews.

#### **3.9.5 Privacy and confidentiality**

The researcher upheld the ethical principle of privacy by allowing the participants to decide what information they wished to share or not share during the interviews (Strydom, 2011:119). As earlier alluded to, participants were informed that they could refrain from answering a question or questions if they so wished. With children as participants, the researcher was aware of researcher reactivity, which refers to how she could influence participants' responses by the way she asked questions, by affirming or non-affirming non-verbal communication, or through their actions during the data collection interviews (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:192). The researcher awarded the participants

privacy by liaising with their parents who provided enclosed spaces for the interviews in their specific homes.

Confidentiality was upheld in that all personal information about the participants and the data obtained from them were treated confidentially (Maree, 2019:48, Strydom, 2011:119). The researcher used pseudonyms for the participants and ensured that no identifying documents of the participants were accessed by persons other than the researcher and the research supervisor. Raw data was kept securely during the study and after the conclusion of the study, will be stored securely for 10 years at the Department of Social Work and Criminology in line with the stipulations of the University of Pretoria. Only the researcher will be able to link responses to a specific participant (Strydom, 2011:119). It was stipulated in the informed and consent letters that if the data was to be used again, it would be for research purposes.

### **3.9.6 Deception of subjects**

The researcher ensured that the participants and their parents or guardians were informed about the true nature of the research and that no deception occurred (Bless et al., 2013:34). The researcher thus guarded against withholding information or misrepresentation of the nature of the study (Strydom, 2011:118-119). The researcher is not aware of any unintended misunderstandings regarding the research which she had to clarify for the participants (Strydom, 2013:119). The researcher used debriefing to determine whether any misunderstandings occurred (Bless et al., 2013:34).

### **3.9.7 Debriefing of participants**

Strydom (2011:122) refers to the debriefing of participants as a process which provides a learning opportunity for both the researcher and the research participants. With the participants being children in middle childhood, the researcher took note of the assertion by Bless et al. (2013:35) that debriefing must be done “to ensure that participants are not left with bad feelings of doubts about themselves based on their performance in the study”. Arnett (2016:23), Louw and Louw (2014:257), and Martorell et al. (2014:395) support this by asserting that children’s sense of mastery and self-concept is important during

this life stage. The researcher ended each interview with a debriefing by giving participants a chance to talk about their experience of taking part in the study, rectifying misconceptions that might have occurred, and monitoring whether the participants experienced any discomfort due to their participation in the study (Babbie, 2017:71; Strydom, 2011:122). The researcher limited herself to the boundaries of her role and kept the interviews focused on data gathering and debriefing, and not on providing counselling for the participants (Maree, 2019:49). In addition, no participant required a referral to a counsellor.

### **3.9.8 Publication of findings**

The ultimate purpose of research is to release the findings to the scholarly community and the broader public. The findings of the study presented in this research report will be accessible through the library of the University of Pretoria. The research report contains an accurate overview of the study, with no manipulation of the findings (Babbie, 2017:72; Strydom, 2011:126). As stated in the letters of informed assent and consent, the findings of the research will possibly be published in an academic journal and/or presented in conference papers.

### **3.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The researcher experienced specific limitations in conducting the study. First, obtaining participants on time became a challenge due to COVID-19. Parents were concerned about their children's safety and that of their families. Second, the difficulty in obtaining participants through snowball sampling delayed the data collection process, which affected the researcher's timelines. Third, the findings of the qualitative study cannot be generalised as perspectives of South African children; however, it has contributed knowledge from children's perspectives on how they see child well-being.

### **3.11 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the qualitative research approach and the interpretivism research paradigm which were used for the study were discussed. The research goals for the study were both explorative and descriptive since they explored and described children's perspectives on their well-being. The study was applied research as it envisages contributing solutions and informing policies that promote child well-being.

The relevance of a case study design, with a specific focus on the instrumental case study design, was described and the research methods were explained. Thematic analysis and the strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the data, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were discussed. This was followed by the pilot study, the ethical considerations for the study, and, finally, the limitations of the study.

The findings of the study will be presented in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 4

### EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the chapter is to report, interpret, and discuss the research findings that have been acquired from 10 participants who were children between the ages of 8 and 12 years. The research findings provided answers to the research question for this study, which was as follows:

*What are children's perspectives on child well-being as a pathway to sustainable futures within the South African context?*

The research findings will be discussed in two sections starting with the biographical information of the participants and followed by the themes and sub-themes that developed from the findings. The chapter ends with a summary. The research findings will be linked with the ecosystems theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, which was the theoretical framework of the study.

#### 4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The following section provides a comprehensive analysis of the demographics of the participants. In the table below, the participants' biographical data is displayed. The participants indicated their age, sex, grade, the number of people living in the household and the families' breadwinners. The identities of the participants are protected by indicating them as "participants" (P) 1–10 throughout the research report.

Table 4.1: Biographical information of participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Grade	No. of family members	Breadwinners
P1	11	Female	3	6	Mother and father
P2	11	Female	3	6	Mother and father
P3	9	Female	3	4	Father
P4	11	Female	6	5	Mother and aunt
P5	8	Male	4	4	Mother and aunt
P6	12	Male	8	4	Mother and aunt
P7	12	Male	4	5	Mother and father
P8	9	Male	3	5	Father and two brothers
P9	11	Female	3	6	Two aunts, grandmother, and uncle
P10	8	Female	5	4	Mother and father

As Table 4.1 indicates, the researcher interviewed 10 participants, who were children between the ages of 8 and 10 years. Most of the participants, comprising four children, were 11 years old. Other participants were equally distributed among the ages of 8, 9 and 12 years old, which comprised two participants in each age group. The average age of the children was 10 years. As required for the sample, all the participants were within the middle childhood stage, which is characterised by children who are ranging from 6 to 12 years old.

The participants of the research study indicated that they were in school grades that ranged from Grade 3 to Grade 8. Most of the participants were in Grade 3, a total of five participants. Two of the participants indicated that they were in Grade 4 while two participants were in Grade 6 and Grade 8, respectively. The age range was selected because children transition into increasingly diverse surroundings and occupations. During the adolescence phase, children start to spend more time away from their families, stay longer at school, and participating in extracurricular activities. They start to form their own identities as they learn more about the world around them (Maunder & Monks, 2019:212).

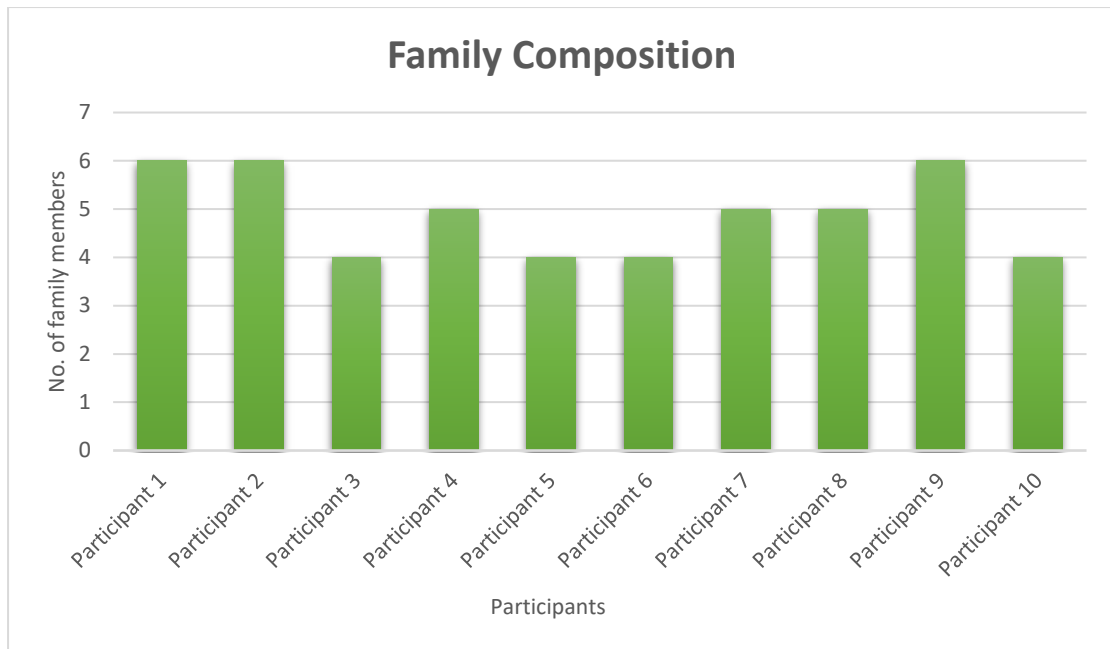


Figure 4.1: Family Composition

Three participants, namely Participant 1, Participant 2, and Participant 9, indicated that they lived with six family members. This was followed by Participant 4, Participant 7, and Participant 8, whose households comprised five family members each. The rest of the participants (Participant 3, Participant 5, Participant 6, and Participant 10) stayed with four family members each. Determining the size of the family was crucial since having family members around gives children a sense of security and affection. The values of love, respect, faith, hope, and care, as well as cultures, ethics, and customs are passed down through families and are the foundations of children's strength (Browning, Chiappori & Weiss, 2014:89).

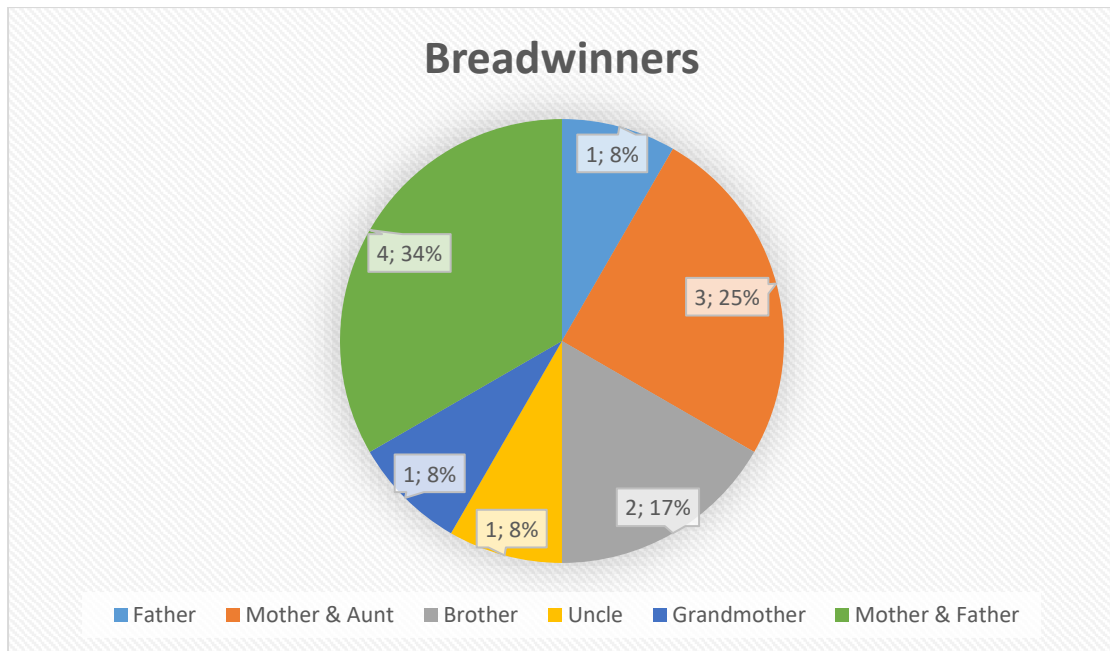


Figure 4.2: Breadwinners

The breadwinners of the participants' families comprised the grouping of mother and aunt, father, mother and father, brother, uncle, and grandmother. The grouping of mother and father as being both breadwinners of the family was highly prevalent in many families, namely four (34%) participants. This was followed by the mother and aunt combination of breadwinners, which was prevalent among three (25%) participants, while only the father contributed financially to the household for one (8%) participant. Three (25%) participants indicated that both their mother and aunt were financial contributors to the family. One (8%) participant indicated that two brothers, a grandmother, and an uncle in the family were breadwinners.

The identification of the breadwinners was useful because it assisted the researcher to compare the participants' experiences with their current family backgrounds. For instance, Browning et al. (2014:92) found that the prevalence of the nuclear family may offer children consistent parental guidance. Children who experience stability and consistency in their life are more likely to behave positively, achieve academic success, and participate more actively in extracurricular and community activities, which were consistent with the findings of the study discussed below.



### **4.3 THEMES AND SUB-THEMES**

The themes and sub-themes that evolved from the analysis of the research findings are presented and fully discussed in this sub-section. Table 4.2 summarises the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the research findings. Direct quotes from the participants will be used to explain the themes and sub-themes and to integrate them with the literature.

Table 4.2: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
<p><b>1.</b> Children’s understanding of child well-being</p>	<p>1.1. Social wellness 1.2. Physical wellness 1.3. Emotional wellness 1.4. Educational wellness</p>
<p><b>2.</b> Social factors influencing child well-being</p>	<p>2.1. Relationship with immediate family members              2.1.1. Nuclear family              2.1.2. Extended family              2.1.3. Blended family            2.2. Peer relationships            2.3. Relationship with the community</p>
<p><b>3.</b> Economic factors influencing child well-being</p>	<p>3.1. Parental income 3.2. Financial resources</p>
<p><b>4.</b> Environmental factors influencing child well-being</p>	<p>4.1. Recreational spaces 4.2. Clean neighbourhood</p>
<p><b>5.</b> Promoting child well-being through child participation</p>	<p>5.1. Child participation in the household 5.2. Child participation in the community</p>
<p><b>6.</b> Contributing factors to child well-being for sustainable futures</p>	<p>6.1. Positive role modelling 6.2. Environmental protection 6.3. Entrepreneurship 6.4. Entering the job market</p>

### 4.3.1 Theme 1: Children's understanding of child well-being

Findings indicate that children understand child well-being as emotional wellness, physical wellness, social wellness, and educational wellness. These will next be discussed as sub-themes.

#### 4.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Social wellness

Participants' definition and understanding of child well-being based on the social domain comprised the inclusion of groups, animals, objects, and positive relationships with other people. Participants identify relationships they have with friends, family members, and people outside the family such as teachers and pastors as positive. Such relationships must be characterised by the provision of parental care, a conducive home environment that is free from negative conflict, and necessities such as housing, food, and water. The following quotes attest to the above findings:

P2: *Because of the treatment and how I feel about myself in this place... Children can see that their parents care for them and live happily and they can know that they are cared for.*

P6: *I know because I have both parents. We have everything we need inside the house such as food and water. We do not fight in the house because if we fight, my father says that it is not good because we are teaching the kids bad manners.*

Participants indicated that being loved and taking care of themselves partly enhances their overall well-being. This was coupled with showing respect towards others and receiving respect in return, which is supported by the following participants:

P2: *They must make sure that they give respect to others so that they can get respect back...By receiving respect, you can be able to see how good you are without letting children down.*

P7: *You must be cared for and happy and what, and having some friends to feel them better.*

Furthermore, experiencing affection and attaining success through educational accomplishment in a caring environment is important for improving children's well-being. Receiving an education is important as it enhances one's employment opportunities, prospects of growth and development, and the potential of being an entrepreneur who accumulates wealth and creates employment opportunities for others.

P1: *By teaching me and doing good things to me and not bad things.*

P3: *Love and success...Ahm. By learning, by studying, by getting a job, by focusing on things that are right for you.*

Participants do not feel safe in their communities due to the prevalence of criminal activities, which compromise their safety. Therefore, they perceived child well-being as receiving protection from the family and community and having access to a home, hospital, and police station. Protecting oneself from engaging in deviant behaviours such as abuse, smoking, and drinking is part of enhancing child well-being.

P2: *They must have a home. Ahm, a hospital and also a police station...It provides safety.*

P3: *By protecting yourself and eating healthy food and avoiding abuse and not smoking and drinking...If you are smoking as a kid, you will die.*

Findings by Gillet-swan (2014:71) indicate that children's understanding of their well-being is derived from social interaction through the sense of self and identity. It is also derived from the developmental foundations of well-being such as child development, parental involvement, family background, intergenerational linkage, and the avoidance of pain and risks (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014:5; Conti & Heckman, 2012:4,11). Bronfenbrenner emphasises the importance of having close relationships by stating that children have direct interaction with structures and locations that are known as the microsystem.

These include family, friends, schools, and the community (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015:2; Espelage, 2014:258).

The development and maintenance of a positive relationship with peers have been identified as a positive contributing factor towards enhancing children's well-being (Emmett, 2013:69; Gillet-swan, 2014:68). Developing a positive relationship with peers linked with Bronfenbrenner's argument that human development occurs when there is a consistent interaction between the biopsychological human organism and the surrounding environment over a long period (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015:2).

Child well-being is perceived as the integration of fulfilment in life and feelings of happiness (Clarke, 2020:269). If children are faced with negative emotions and behaviours, they experience low subjective well-being compared to children who are exposed to positive emotions and behaviours (Clarke, 2020:280). Therefore, it is important to understand child well-being according to children's perceptions and experiences since children belong to a class of people who are morally responsible, have rights and should be respected for their contribution to society through their talents and capabilities (Thomas, Graham, Powell & Fitzgerald, 2016:508). The physical domain of a child's well-being is closely related to the social domain, which is discussed below.

#### **4.3.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Physical wellness**

Participants provided their perceptions and experiences of child well-being by indicating the importance of receiving assistance and support. They emphasised the importance of eating healthy food and exercising through participating in sports to remain fit and prevent vulnerability to illnesses:

P2: *They must be healthy...Children who are unhealthy get more diseases and they can easily be infected by diseases so they can get diseases that can be treated easy without giving them problems.*

P3: *If you are doing a sport right, you go to the park to practice the sport and when you go to do the sport, you can win...*

*Ahm. Not to be like sitting on the couch being lazy. You need to do some sport.*

P10: *Eating healthy keeps you strong and the soldiers in your body will fight for you. You won't get like disease.*

Children's inability to engage in physical activities due to safety issues has been regarded as a health concern. Engaging in physical activities during childhood results in health benefits such as the reduction of blood pressure and adiposity; lowered levels of body fat as they become adults; and enhanced bone density, blood lipid, and glucose metabolism (Ergler, Kearns & Witten, 2013:178; Ward, Duncan, Jarden & Stewart, 2016:44). Other benefits of engaging in physical activities during childhood include enhanced emotional well-being, cognitive abilities, and risk-taking tendencies (Ward et al., 2014:5,45). Bronfenbrenner emphasises the importance of engaging in physical activities by requiring individuals to constantly engage in an activity for an extended period to ensure that they become effective in performing it (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015:2).

Active play positively influences children's attention span and problem-solving capabilities. Therefore, two hours per day of engaging in physical activities is recommended. Teachers, parents, and the government must create opportunities for play by providing safe play areas to allow for increased independence during play and increasing play time during school hours (Goldstein, 2012:3). In addition, play enhances the development of the brain and increases the intelligence of children. Brain development leads to the growth of the ability to understand other people's emotions and adapt to different environmental conditions (Goldstein, 2012:5; McMurray & Ondrak, 2013:294).

However, safety concerns prevent parents from allowing their children to play outdoors without parental supervision. This has led to the implementation of safety measures such as the replacement of outdoor play activities with indoor ones (Ergler et al., 2013:179). Bronfenbrenner articulates this by showing the negative influence of a disorganised environment. It results in children internalising delinquent behaviours, suffering from conduct disorders,

experiencing delayed cognitive and social growth and development, and having mental health problems (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015:4).

Regardless of the safety concerns, outdoor play activities with peers are important for contributing to child well-being because they can facilitate learning about children's environment and the development of their identities with less parental supervision. They also contribute to reducing stress and anxiety and enhancing children's self-esteem (Ergler et al., 2013:179), which is discussed at length below. Bronfenbrenner supports the importance of outdoor play activities by asserting that the exosystem as a social environment indirectly affects the well-being of children without their direct involvement in the implementation of tasks or activities leading to change (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015:2; Espelage, 2014:258).

#### **4.3.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Emotional wellness**

The participants provided their comprehension of child well-being by emphasising the importance of maintaining mental wellness. Enhancing mental well-being can be achieved by taking care of oneself, eating healthy food, playing with others, and engaging in self-affirmation.

P4: *Ahm. It makes them feel worthy of themselves and it makes them feel wanted and it makes them feel good and they do not have to worry about what the next meal is.*

P10: *A child must take care of herself by bathing, eating good food and play with others.*

The involvement of parents in their children's lives affects their emotional well-being and is regarded as an important contributor to children's well-being.

P1: *Support...When you are going through bad things, you must get help from someone, like support.*

Children's understanding of their emotions and mental states occurs throughout their childhood (Mizuno & Koyasu, 2012:2025). This occurs because individuals possess three psychological needs, namely autonomy, competence, and

relatedness, which must be met to enhance well-being. The fulfilment of these needs not only enhances children's well-being but also contributes positively to their academic progress due to a proper balance between personal and school life (Clarke, 2020:280; Sprung, Munch, Harris, Ebesutani & Hofmann, 2015:3).

Messina and Zavattin (2014:210) assert that children's comprehension of their emotional well-being is influenced by having a positive relationship with a caregiver who acknowledges their emotions and cognitive development that allows for abstract thinking and understanding psychological consequences of distress to their well-being. Children who have positive relations with their caregivers become attached to them because caregivers value and provide them with comfort. Positive relationship with caregivers creates a safe space for sharing their experiences and emotions through the utilisation of flexible communication strategies that allow for both negative and positive communication (Messina & Zavattin, 2014:211). The importance of the parent-child relationship on the emotional well-being of children is emphasised by Bronfenbrenner, who asserts that such a relationship can be destroyed due to increased family and parenting strain, which in turn may lead to behavioural problems (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015:10). In research conducted using data from the 2007 National Survey of Children's Health by Ashiabi and O'Neal, it was reported that children highly benefitted from enhanced interactions with parents (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015:11).

Children's emotional well-being can also be described based on specific domains. These include experiencing emotions such as joy, sadness, and fear and being able to recognise, express, manage, and regulate them. In addition, it includes a comprehension of the nature, causes, influence, and tactics for regulating experienced emotions (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014:2). Education also affects children's emotional wellness. The influence of the quality of education on child well-being is discussed in detail in the following section.



#### **4.3.1.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Educational wellness**

Education has been described as one of the components that contribute to the development and growth of children. Enhancing educational well-being must be supported by the provision of shelter and food.

P4: *I am in a good school. I get clothes, food, roof over my head and ya that is basically it...I get to learn new things. I get to learn more and know my marks. I get the education.*

Education enhances children's well-being through modelling both parents' and teachers' positive behaviours.

P1: *A family...By teaching them good things, not bad things.*

P4: *Ahm. A teacher, maybe like someone from the church, the priest...The teacher can also talk to the child. Ahm, it is also like your second mother in the school and yes.*

Gillet-swan (2014:72) supports the above findings by stating that children's definition of child well-being within the educational domain shows a shift towards a positive focus on futures through the integration of positive and aspiring elements of well-being. Schools are currently perceived as places for producing future leaders and embracing and promoting the well-being of children by providing a strong foundation from which children mature into adults (Clarke, 2020:267; Thomas et al., 2016:516). Therefore, educational goals should be constructed to include academic and supportive functions (Clarke, 2020:270).

Children's perceptions and experiences are important because they provide new information regarding child well-being. This data can be used to improve policies and draft legislation that affects children's livelihoods (Gillet-swan, 2014:2). In addition, school environments that support kindness and provide socio-emotional support contribute to higher academic achievement and engagement (Clarke, 2020:283). The importance of a conducive school environment is further highlighted by Huynh and Stewart-Tufescu (2019:85)

who suggest that a relationship between a learner and teacher that is characterised by warmth and positive conflict influences a child's experiences and perceptions of their well-being and encourages learning.

Furthermore, a democratic, humanistic, equitable, and stress-free educational environment facilitates the practice of diversity, inclusiveness, and the growth of children's skills (Cefaia, Clouderb, Antognazzac, Bolandd, Cavionie, Heysb, Madrazof & Solborgg, 2014:87,88). Educational programmes are therefore designed to accommodate various aspects of children's social, emotional, and physical well-being (Gillet-swan, 2014:65). Bronfenbrenner also argues that circumstances and processes that have close contact with children have a more prominent influence on the growth and development of children (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015:10).

#### **4.3.2 Theme 2: Social factors influencing child well-being**

Social factors enhance children's well-being. These will be discussed by assessing the relationship that children have with immediate family members. This will be broken down into different family structures, namely the nuclear family, extended family, and blended family. Social factors will also be revealed through the analysis of the quality of relationships that children have with their peers and the community.

##### **4.3.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Relationship with immediate family members**

The participants identified immediate family members and close relatives as important people who can improve their well-being. These people must create a warm, caring, and nurturing environment and provide basic resources such as food, shelter, and clothing.

P3: *My mom, my aunt, my entire family.*

P5: *My father, mother, sister and my friends... Family love and protect children from danger.*

Family support is a valuable resource that develops an individual's response pool and strengthens other resources in an individual's life. It is an important

social dimension for preventing distress and stressors in life (Pattusamy, 2017:814). Parents who embrace children and create a supportive family environment are perceived by their children as helpful, warm, kind, and caring. They encourage their children to have development plans for attaining their goals, encourage the development of self-individualisation, and allow their children to take risks (Horn & Kimiecik, 2012:12).

The family unit was once thought to consist of a nuclear family where the husband serves as the head of the home and is responsible for all financial matters, while the wife is responsible for raising children and building the home. Such perception has changed over time in most societies. Families are now understood to include other types of family units such as the extended family and blended family (Sear, 2021:1). Social factors that affect the well-being of children within these family units will be discussed in the section below.

#### *4.3.2.1.1: Nuclear family*

The findings indicated that three participants came from a nuclear family structure that comprised the father, mother, brothers, and sisters. The father figure was portrayed as the breadwinner in most families. The categorisation of the father as the breadwinner is rapidly changing since mothers are also active financial contributors to their families.

P2: *My mother, father and my brother. We are three... My mother and my father makes money to take care of us.*

P3: *It is my mother and my father and me and my sister... My father work at Embassy.*

P7: *Mama, papa, bhutie and sesi and me... Mama and papa by working hard.*

Sear (2016:2; 2021:5,6) assert that the nuclear family comprises a male breadwinner who exhibits certain features such as working together with the female in raising children and forming bonds with children. This is the opposite of the perception of the woman within the nuclear family, which is to invest time

in child rearing and taking care of their health. A nuclear family includes parents and their legal children. A nuclear family is also regarded as a crucial component in most societies due to its ability to unite family members and exert authority (Bansal, Dixit, Shivram, Pandey & Saroshe, 2014:641).

The participants indicated that their families played a major role in their lives in improving and maintaining their well-being through the provision of food and other necessities to encourage schooling and protection from negative incidents that occur in communities.

P2: *They buy food for us and take care of us by making sure that we go to school.*

P3: *By taking care of me... By protecting me from bad things.*

Bansal et al. (2014:642) support this view by asserting that children who are raised in a nuclear family develop a bond with their parents and self-identity due to the limited number of adults that children can imitate within the family. Bronfenbrenner supports the importance of nuclear families by valuing and emphasising the individual needs and the individual's ability to achieve success, which must be integrated with the support of other systems in the environment (Christensen, 2016:25).

Nuclear families are conducive to raising children in a productive and warm environment because they provide a sense of freedom, enable members to avoid stress and discomfort from interaction with other nuclear families, and are economically maintained. They prioritise the importance of family health other than the health of each family member, invest in enhancing family relationships, and assess the interaction of the family with the social environment at different stages of the family life cycle (Bansal et al., 2014:642; Regnerus, 2017:752).

#### *4.3.2.1.2: Extended family*

The findings indicate that five participants came from the extended family structure that comprised a set of the nuclear family unit and other relatives such as the grandfather, aunt, uncle, and cousin.

- P4: *My mom, my dad, my grandmom, my aunt and my baby cousin.*
- P5: *My mom, my brother and my aunt.*
- P6: *Four people. My mom, my aunt, my brother, my sister.*
- P8: *Five. Aunt, sister, brother, brother, father, brother.*
- P9: *Aunt, grandmother, uncle, cousins.*

Extended families are also known as joint families that comprise the descent of the female or male line that live together with their offspring in one household and, therefore, follow the authority of one of the family members (Bansal et al., 2014:642; Sear, 2016:2). These may include uncles, grandparents, aunts, and cousins (Cross, 2018:2; Tingvold, Middelthon, Allen & Hauffl, 2012:2).

The participants depicted their experiences of living in extended families as positive and encouraging because they are provided shelter, school resources (school uniform and cell phone), and given affection by their parents. They explained that the close relationships they have with their uncles, cousins, and grandparents positively contribute to their futures through encouragement and financial contribution.

- P4: *Education, food, shelter, they must not be forced to work. They need loving parents, ahm clothes. That's it.*
- P5: *Houses, clothes, shoes.*
- P6: *Like a safe place to live in where nobody can harm us... They should have their school uniforms and their shoes and school shorts, school socks and everything that they need for school.*
- P8: *Cellphone... To do my school work*
- P9: *Staying with parents... They give me love.. Participant 9: My aunt, my aunt, uncle and grandmother. My aunt is a social*

*worker, my aunt works at a school, my grandmother works at the kitchen, my uncle works at the firm.*

Children who grow up in extended families are provided with sufficient guidance, are cared for, and do not struggle financially due to shared expenses by adult family members. They also benefit from receiving overprotection and protective shelter that promotes their well-being (Bansal et al., 2014:642). Such protection and care fill the void when the parents are absent from the children's lives (Cross, 2018:2; Tingvold et al., 2012:7). In addition, the extended family structure provides family members with the limited economic capacity to come together and live in a household where household income and other basic resources are made available through joint effort (Cross, 2018:6; Reyes, 2020:783).

Bronfenbrenner believes in the extended family structure because within the ecological systems, there are ecological transitions that individuals go through during their developmental stages. In other words, human development comprises an interaction between the biological and psychological characteristics of the individual and the surrounding environment, which requires the interconnections of all the components involved to realise the human potential (Eriksson, Ghazinour & Hammarström, 2018:419).

#### *4.3.2.1.3: Blended family*

The findings showed that two participants came from a blended family that comprised the biological mother, stepfather, stepsister, and stepbrother.

P1: *My mother. She is working and she also do chores. My dad, she is he is also working and making fun in other things. My adopted sister, she is in Grade 12 and she's smart and she makes fun of other things and we play a lot.*

P10: *We are 5. It is me, my stepdad, my stepbrother, my mom and stepsister.*

Children growing up in blended families is a current reality due to the increased divorce rates, remarriages, cohabitation, and single parenthood (Sloan, 2021:29). A blended family is also called a “complicated family unit”, a reconstituted family or stepfamily that includes both parents who bring children from previous relationships and create a new family structure. It also includes people who are not married but have a child together, people who were rejected and abandoned by the previous spouse and people who come from broken marriages (Sloan, 2021:28; Moore, 2011:18).

The participants also indicated the benefits of living in a blended family such as receiving assistance from all sides with more emphasis on the importance of being assisted and supported by the father figure. The findings also indicated that children need a positive and open relationship with their parents. Such associations can foster productive communication.

P1: *By taking care of me like everytime I have a situation, mama is there to assist me... Papa is always there when I need help from him. Like sometimes if like there is something wrong with me, he is going to come and assist me. When you are going through bad things, you must get help from someone, like support... Sometimes when mama is not here, papa will support me and bhuti and sesi.*

P10: *I need love, support and being close with my parents. Like if I am not okay or there is something bad that happened at school, I should tell my father or mother because they can help me. They help me all the time when I feel bad.*

The well-being of children who are raised in blended families is not compromised if the environment is loving and supportive and utilises healthy coping skills to ensure that children have internal resources to deal with life challenges and develop meaningful relationships in the communities (Sloan, 2021:36). Therefore, parents and blended families can work towards improving their children's well-being by following certain measures. First, parents need to organise family times that encourage the development of a strong bond. This

can be done by playing fun activities, having dinner together, and going on holidays (Summer, 2013:12). Second, parents must prevent the development of favouritism and hatred among the children by ensuring that all the tasks and chores are divided fairly among all the children in the household (Summer, 2013:12).

Third, parents need to normalise providing positive feedback to children through praise and encouragement since it can help in building rapport and increase the chances of building a successful family (Summer, 2013:13). Positive communication between parents and their children has been recognised as the most important factor in improving children's well-being. Therefore, parents are required to provide positive feedback and encouragement to ensure that their children's growth and development are stimulated (Horn & Kimiecik, 2012:16). The ecosystems theory supports the importance of parental care by recognising the prevalence of parental monitoring to protect children from victimisation and violence from the community. This is regarded as the mesosystem structure that comprises interactions between family characteristics and children's attributes and abilities (Espelage, 2014:259,260).

Children's well-being is also influenced by their interactions with their peers. This will be discussed in the section below.

#### **4.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Peer relationships**

Peer relationships are a key element in improving children's well-being. They contribute to the participants' abilities to share their emotions and receive support and participate in fun activities such as swimming.

P1: *Like when you swim, you can be with your friends who can swim fast.*

P2: *Friends support you when you are outside the family.*

P8: *My friend, [...], [...] my friend. They support me when I am not ok... I meet with my friends and we have a good time.*



Children are social beings that spend huge amounts of time interacting with many other children who pose potential influences in their lives. This may include interaction with friends and siblings (Rohrbeck, 2005:471). Children in the middle childhood stage show increased complex and multifaceted interactions with their peers that are characterised by sharing thoughts, emotions, and intentions. The ability to have intricate interactions adds to the continual improvement in social skills that help children to achieve their goals and solve their interpersonal dilemmas (Cross, 2015:41; Rohrbeck, 2005:473).

Children view their peers as agents of behavioural modification and control, which results in favourable peer relationships whereby they prevent non-normative social behaviour and embrace positive behaviours that are routed from societal norms and values (Rohrbeck, 2005:470). Bronfenbrenner supports the value of peer relations by stating that an understanding of an individual's life requires a better understanding of their interaction with their friends within the microsystem (Christensen, 2016:26).

Peer relationships improve child well-being because they provide: closeness, affection, and emotional security; promote growth and development of interpersonal sensitivity; and enhance self-esteem and self-evaluation (Rohrbeck, 2005:475). Positive peer relationships have also been associated with academic achievement since they provide children with the opportunity to communicate and listen to one another, provide support, and share their own learning experiences that can add value to their futures (Furrer, Skinner & Pitzer, 2014:101,106).

#### **4.3.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Relationship with the community**

The participants indicated that the involvement of the community and its resources enhances their well-being. They indicated that it is important for children to acquire education from the school and the community that must model positive behaviours and help them become future leaders. The participants also indicated the importance of going to church to interact and find the protection, engaging in entertaining activities such as acting and doing art, and being innovative as part of creating their sustainable futures.

- P1: *Ehm. Teaching them like how to not like using knives and beat people up for no reason.*
- P7: *Like you can do art. Maybe like acting. You can do acting. Maybe you like inventing, you just wish to invent and tell about your story and invent what you want to invent. Maybe you want to be a geologist? Is that right?*
- P9: *Church... We pray and ask God for protection*

Children's interaction with their teachers is a valuable relationship. In these interactions, teachers can provide children with learning material and develop and reinforce their academic skills (Furrer et al., 2014:102,105). As a result, these interactions significantly influence children's well-being by enforcing pro-social behaviour and positive role modelling of their teachers (Stukas et al., 2016:6).

Participants required certain resources from the community to ensure that their well-being is improved. These include proper sanitation, electricity, clean water, clean air, and transportation that can protect children from vulnerability. The participants needed to have access to proper school infrastructure, hospitals, and clinics.

- P2: *Sanitation and toilets help children to live well because you are living in a place where there are no toilets, and you just piss all over around, it means that more diseases will come and will affect everybody in that community.*
- P3: *Ahm, if you don't have oxygen, how will you breathe?*
- P4: *Transport, and water and electricity... It takes them to different places like school. Ahm stops to the house and to come to sports trips... The lights in the evening and you use your appliances... To keep yourself clean and to drink and yes.*

P6: *Yes. Transport, they need transport for when they are going to school so that nobody can take them. That is all. Oh and church. They need to go to church so that they can praise God.*

P7: *Mmmm. To have, they can have school and hospital, clinic. They can watch television but most of all studying books and doing something that they like about themselves.*

Children are rarely empowered by being made to share their perceptions and experiences in matters that influence their well-being although there is an increased recognition of the importance of considering their voices during decision-making processes (Gillett-swan, 2014:64,2). In research conducted with children between the ages of 8 and 12, who are part of childcare programmes in Winnipeg, Canada, four items that positively affected children's well-being and their eagerness to be at school were identified. These include the quality of the relationships with teachers, safety measures at school, children's ability to perform, and positive behaviour (Huynh & Stewart-Tufescu, 2019:93).

Participant 3 also indicated the importance of having a name because it defines a person's identity and a sense of belonging within the community and the rest of the world.

P3: *A name... If you don't have a name, is like how does other people, when other people ask your name, what are you going to say?*

Names carry historical information regarding an individual's culture, family lineage, and historical connections. Names are also important when forming new relationships and instilling respect for other people when addressing them (Jagiela & Gębuś, 2015:220). They also contribute to the development of one's personality and show a symbolic link between society and the individual (Gerharz, 2015:117).

The participants need their communities to protect them from negative situations such as child labour and bullying from other children, which negatively affects their self-esteem and may lead to the development of suicidal thoughts and the occurrence of suicide.

P4: *...they must not be forced to work.*

P7: *Well. Let us say a child can be bullied by the other child. Maybe some children were bullied so they had enough. They call the principal, or parents or some friends to help them not to get bullied. And the reason why bullying is not good is because you find that a person is saying that person is ugly while you find that the person is very beautiful and that bully is jealous because that person is beautiful. Then that child who is that beautiful will kill him or herself.*

Worldwide statistics indicate that 160 million children are involved in child labour, with 79 million engaging in hazardous work (UNICEF, 2020:2). Therefore, communities have a huge responsibility to protect children from child labour through the enforcement of agreements and laws that govern the country. Stakeholders within the communities can also educate the communities about the danger of child labour and effective measures that they can implement to protect children (Frimpong, Oppong, Babah, Mensah, Acquah & Ache-ampong, 2021:2).

The participants do not feel safe in their communities due to the increasing incidents of child kidnapping. As a result, they depend on their pets that protect them and alert their parents when they are in danger.

P7: *Their parents and some of their good friends and closest friends could help. And let us say pets. Yes. They can help maybe smart dogs they might help and maybe let us say ahh the girl was kidnapped, that dog might let us say that person was holding the child and kidnapping her and trying to kidnap her or him, the dog bite that person. Then after that person feel some pain, he let her go. Then that girl and that dog runs*

*away and tell their parents that I've been saved by my dog and there was a kidnapper who wanted to kidnap him or her.*

P10: *Pet. I love my dog. It plays with me, protect me from strangers on the road.*

Children's positive relationship with pets plays a major role in improving their self-esteem and self-confidence. Pets can protect children from danger due to the bond they create with the family. Pets also decrease stress levels and aid the development of children's emotional and social skills (Robin & Ten Bensel, 2016:66).

The community needs to consider children as part of active participants who can contribute through volunteering and helping disadvantaged people in communities.

P3: *They must help homeless people... By giving them food, by giving them money, by giving them things to sell so they can get money.*

P7: *Ahm. Doing, being well to other people and doing things that will make a person feel well. And a person who is poor and does not have a house, stay outside, let us say a child who is rich can give that person some money or something to feel the better.*

Children can share their perceptions and experiences regarding their well-being because of their proven capability of conceptualising complex topics such as the marginalisation of people, citizenship, and quality of life (Gillett-swan, 2014:65,66). However, it requires gaining a thorough understanding of child well-being from children's direct perspectives and requires a full comprehension of its shared terminology and specific definitions due to its complex and multi-dimensional nature (Clarke, 2020:265). Therefore, children can be active participants in the community by joining entertainment groups that foster intellectual development, religious organisations, and volunteering groups (Clarke, 2020:282).

### 4.3.3 Theme 3: Economic factors influencing child well-being

The participants indicated the importance of the financial stability of their parents by stating that parents can improve their well-being by providing necessities such as food, clothing, health care, and school resources.

P2: *By giving them healthcare, providing medicine for them...  
Clothing, education and also health care.*

P3: *Ahm. By giving a shelter and family care and basic nutrition.*

P10: *My father and mother work hard so that we have everything  
good... Food, house, clothes and school stuff.*

Children are regarded as social actors who are shaped by the dynamics of their encounters and conditions that surround their environment. Since children are the future leaders who will influence the economy of the future and the quality of life of all citizens, they must be provided with quality life through the provision of care and necessities, which requires financial stability (D'Agostino, Gagliardi, Giusti & Potsi, 2019:2). The provision of financial resources is regarded as economic well-being that paints the picture of how society achieves material wealth that provides them with financial freedom, which must be analysed through children's perspectives (Bakar, Osman, Bachok, Ibrahim & Mohd Zin Mohamed, 2015:290).

Transitional poverty measurements that focus on income as the main factor failed to identify and acknowledge the realities of children when measuring child poverty. Therefore, it is recommended that child well-being is addressed by embracing different approaches and measures without excluding the monetary dimension (D'Agostino et al., 2019:3). This is portrayed in the perspectives of the participants as discussed in the following sub-themes.

#### 4.3.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Parental income

Parental income plays a major role in the development and growth of children. It paves the way in ensuring that children achieve their dreams and create sustainable futures for themselves. The participants indicated that through the

care of their parents, they can acquire the education that empowers them to become future leaders. This can be achieved through attaining employment or becoming an entrepreneur who creates job opportunities for others.

P1: *Maybe like getting a job or something that can bring food on the table... Maybe like starting their own business like not worrying to go to other places and argue with people to get a job.*

P7: *Yes. Maybe you might be or a doctor. Its a dream that you want to be and you must follow your dream and do want to follow your dream. Nobody cannot stop you. No one would rather stop you in making your dream.*

Parental income has been identified as the most important determinant of child well-being (Mazumder, 2011:3). It is linked to high academic achievement, which is further enhanced by the provision and availability of educational and cultural resources. Examples of resources include the investment in children's education by hiring tutoring services and the provision of proper financial information (Al-Matalka, 2014:147; Walter, 2018:4).

Parents are regarded as the most important and influential people in the lives of children due to their ability to develop, sustain, and shape their children's creativity and tolerance. This can be achieved through good parenting, the provision of a stable environment, cognitive stimulation, and open communication (Al-Matalka, 2014:146). In addition, financially stable parents can provide their children with quality health services that can prevent the development of chronic illnesses and high mortality (Reinhold & Jürges, 2012:563). The ecosystems theory supports the effect of parental income by recognising the direct and indirect influence of different systems on the development and behaviour of young people (Espelage, 2014:257).

The importance of parental income is apparent when a person has lost their employment and does not have alternative economic ways of generating income. This limits the individual's capacity to purchase food, pay utility bills, and afford rent (Green, MacPhail, Alananzeh & Fernandez, 2022:2).

Furthermore, child well-being also depends on the utilisation of coping mechanisms that can assist parents to create a work-life balance that will enable them to effectively participate in the labour market to address child poverty and enhance children's well-being (Ruxton, 2012:10). Parental income enables parents to provide financial resources that can empower their children to build sustainable futures. This is further explored in the section below.

#### **4.3.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Financial resources**

The improvement of child well-being is also influenced by the provision of required resources to ensure that children can achieve their dreams. These resources are electricity, quality education, shelter, and clean water. Providing these forms part of investing in children's futures, which benefits adult members of the household through the care that the child will provide when they become independent adults. For instance, participants indicated that they will be able to provide proper housing and transport for their parents once they become independent and responsible adults.

P3: *I am working hard and building a shelter for family... If you work hard like, if you work hard, the more money you get and the more you can help other people that are in need... If they don't have a shelter, they have to beg for food and they will be homeless so the best thing is to find a job and some money and find a shelter.*

P6: *I should buy my parents a house and a car and everything they need to improve my well-being and make sure they are happy, love them and protect them and guide them.*

P7: *What must children have to live with, well maybe houses, maybe electricity to, yah maybe electricity, water to be hydrated, a television maybe to watch some cartoons, a transport to go to school and some laptop maybe to watch some movies and some phone. Maybe something happen and they might call their parents, something just happened,*



*something went wrong, or maybe they are just playing video games on their phones or maybe they might study.*

P9: *Like clothes, money to go to trips.*

Children should live in a sustainable society that provides community members with opportunities that will assist them in achieving financial freedom, does not destroy the resources of future generations, and meets the needs of the present generation sustainably (Bakar et al., 2015:288). This can be achieved by improving child well-being through the eradication of overcrowding and providing electricity, water, and collecting garbage to prevent pollution (Bakar et al., 2015:292; Ruxton, 2012:11). The ecosystems theory supports the creation of a sustainable environment by stating that individuals live in a macro-environment that influences everyday activities through the interdependence of social, economic, environmental, political, and technological factors (Christensen, 2016:24).

Parents can provide financial resources to enhance the well-being of their children. First, parents must ensure that they have adequate housing, provide their children with allowances, and acquire jobs to ensure that their children do not lack basic resources (Kaila, Nix & Riukula, 2022:3). Second, parents who earn high incomes can invest in quality education to ensure that their children acquire initial quality jobs and become resilient to labour-market shocks that may occur due to economic instability (Kaila et al., 2022:4,25; Machebe, Ezegbe & Onuoha, 2017:1616).

Based on the above analysis on the importance of financial resources to children, an economic crisis should be prevented because it negatively influences the social dimension within the scope of childhood. Economic crises result in young children being deprived of material resources and entering the job market at a young age to support the family and furthering own education (D'Agostino et al., 2019:3). Lack of financial resources can negatively affect a child's educational career, cognitive stimulation, and destroys the relationship between parents and parents and their children (Havermans, Vanassche & Matthijs, 2017:4). In short, economic factors affect child well-being through

indicators that are categorised under health, basic needs, social development, and personal development (Bakar et al., 2015:288). Environmental factors influence these indicators. This will be discussed in the following section.

#### **4.3.4 Theme 4: Environmental factors influencing child well-being**

The development and maintenance of recreational spaces that are free from pollution and have safety measures have been identified as one of the factors that improve children's well-being. Participants indicated that they need playgrounds in their communities. The availability of playgrounds can motivate them to engage in physical exercises and keep them safe from criminals.

- P1: *They must have like a playground to play at and like swimming pools... By like getting fit.*
- P5: *A playground, swings... Children can have fun and be safe.*
- P7: *Yes. Maybe a library and maybe a place that you can stay. Maybe a friend. Maybe parents went to work and they didn't tell you and you are alone. Maybe you need someone's help to stay safe. You find out that the person would come here and kidnap you and the parents might not know.*

Children and young adolescents are important people in society. Their perspectives regarding the environment should be sought through research and considered in the implementation of programmes. Children's well-being also requires the improvement of the quality of recreational spaces to ensure that they facilitate positive social interactions and personal growth of children (Oloumi, Mahdavinejad & Namvarrad, 2012:432). Children's subjective well-being is affected by the nature of the environment and is regarded as an affective and cognitive evaluation of children's lives (Adams & Savahl, 2017:2).

Many factors contribute to the development and growth of a neighbourhood that is free from violence and has a sense of harmony. These factors include the planning of a building design and ensuring that the planning process is suitable and will be effective in encouraging play for children (Latfi & Karim,

2012:305,307). In addition, spending time in a natural setting has proven to improve the well-being of children within the hedonic and eudemonic aspects because it enhances life satisfaction, provides children with purpose and meaning in life, and improves their quality of life (Adams & Savahl, 2017:2).

Although involvement in community recreation is regarded as an important aspect of children's well-being, there are concerns about gaining access to recreational facilities, lack of support from programme staff and safety concerns due to high crime rates (Rader, Byrd, Bounds & Gray, 2015:1010,1011; Schleien & Miller, 2014:61,63).

The following sub-themes explore the impact of environmental factors by discussing the availability of recreational spaces and clean neighbourhoods.

#### **4.3.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Recreational spaces**

The participants indicated the importance of having clean and recreational spaces that can enhance their well-being through engaging in sports. They stated that recreational spaces can prevent obesity and improve self-esteem. These can be achieved by implementing safety measures such as hiring security personnel to protect children from criminals and ensuring that children play inside the yard.

P2: *Ahm. You can improve the environment lets say where you are playing or going to school. You can improve the safety by making sure that the environment is safe where you are... Children can be kept safe, for example, in the estate they are kept safe because there are security guards guarding them to make sure there are no problems where they are playing around and no dangerous objects.*

P4: *Ahm. Study harder. Ahm, I can do sports. I can do extra curriculum. And that's it...They can get more active and your self-esteem, you can have your self-esteem improved and they become healthy and not overweight and so children can be more active.*

P8: *I will play in a safe place. I must not play at night... I can get lost and kidnapped if I play in a bad place. I must not go at night because of robbers.*

P9: *I must play in the yard... So that cars do not hit me.*

The availability of recreational spaces allows children to develop and nurture friendships and acquire age-appropriate abilities. They also empower children with decision-making and self-determination skills and assist with establishing a positive lifestyle (Schleien & Miller, 2014:62). The ongoing interaction between children enables them to become aware of individual differences, learn to be positive and sensitive towards the needs of others, become more accepting and create friendships outside their socio-economic demographics (Schleien & Miller, 2014:62,63).

Recreational spaces create positive emotions and provide children with feelings of control, privacy, and security. They provide children with a comfort zone that allows them to reflect on their issues and forget about their challenges (Oloumi et al., 2012:433). Recreational spaces must comprise parks, leisure centres, shopping centres, post offices, connectivity of paths, provision of sidewalks, police stations and safety and artistic pleasure to encourage physical activity and social interaction among children in the community (Bohn-Goldbaum, Phongsavan, Merom, Rogers, Kamalesh & Bauman, 2013:2; Latfi & Karim, 2012:306). The chronosystem acknowledges the importance of creating recreational spaces by asserting that change occurs in both the individual and the environment. Therefore, it is important to allow for positive changes to occur in the neighbourhoods to enhance the well-being of its inhabitants (Espelage, 2014:261).

Furthermore, recreational areas promote exercise, which lowers the risk of obesity, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, stroke, elevated blood pressure, and depression. The benefits also include improved cognitive functionality, increased self-esteem, and enhanced academic achievement (Kelly & Doherty, 2016:225,227; Wray, Martin, Ostermeier, Medeiros, Little, Reilly & Gilliland,

2020:104,105). Recreational spaces improve child well-being when they are properly maintained and free from pollution. This is further discussed below.

#### **4.3.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2: Clean neighbourhood**

The participants require their community to be free from pollution that can negatively affect children's health. The absence of pollution can prevent the prevalence of deadly diseases among children and minimise the occurrence of deforestation.

P2: *They can improve their environment by reducing pollution because there are more deforestation right now... They can make clean up services so that they can reduce pollution so that there will be no more diseases.*

P4: *Ahm. Like, things like air pollution, like pollute... I don't understand...They do not get sick. There is not so much diseases. Ahm, they can be clean and there is no pollution.*

Breathing clean air is regarded as a basic human right, which has been violated through the prevalence of air pollution that has threatened human health globally (Wu, Liao, Lai & Wong, 2022:88). A clean environment holds advantages such as increasing physical activity among members of the community and positively influencing the health and wellness of the residents (Jones-Rounds, 2012:7). It also enables the residents to effectively cope with their psychological distress and to effectively manage their life issues due to the relationship between vegetation and its restorative abilities (Jones-Rounds, 2012:8).

Children are at risk of suffering from different chronic respiratory diseases that are caused by polluted air. The occurrence of respiratory diseases usually occurs because children have higher breathing and metabolic rate, which results in increased oxygen consumption as per the unit of their body mass. Also, their height contributes to consuming more air pollutants compared to adults (World Health Organisation, 2018:4; Wu et al., 2022:89,92). The production of electricity by using fossil fuels is a contributor to air pollution. Air

pollution due to the production of electricity can be addressed by planning and implementing an action plan that is directed towards sustainable development as a measure of achieving sustainable countries and cities. The action plan will include the use of renewable energy to generate electricity, which will minimise the emissions of carbon dioxide and radioactive waste (Moussa, 2020:471).

The 2030 Agenda outlines the SDGs that support the creation of a clean neighbourhood by linking it to health-related achievements, which can be achieved by creating safe, sustainable, and inclusive cities. The 2030 Agenda emphasises the importance of eliminating environmental hazards that pose a threat to the health of children. This can be attained through implementing evidence-based policies that can protect children from exposure to air pollution to reduce disease, and mortality, and enhance their well-being (World Health Organisation, 2018:1). Bronfenbrenner refers to the individual as an active participant responsible for implementing certain measures to improve the environmental conditions (Hertler, Figueredo, Peñaherrera-Aguirre, Fernandes & Woodley of Menie, 2018:326). Therefore, children can also enhance their well-being by becoming active participants in issues that affect their lives. This is further explored below.

#### **4.3.5 Theme 5: Promoting child well-being through child participation**

The participants stated their desire and willingness to become active participants in both their households and community. They indicated that they could support their families, and this must be followed by reward and recognition.

P2: *By seeing how good your child is with the work that she or he does, you must support him or her with everything with most of the things.*

P9: *Help my parents when they need me, respect.*

Child participation awards children the freedom to participate in issues that affect them and equips them with the skills to cooperate with adults (Vis & Fossum, 2015:279). Children are allowed to discuss and decide on matters

such as legal policies, government policies, community issues, and school and family (Stoecklin, 2013:446). When children's voices are heard, their development is enhanced through increased self-belief and self-esteem (Stoecklin, 2013:449). Therefore, child participation is a right that allows children to engage with the community and acquire active citizenship through accessing information (Vis & Fossum, 2015:280). This is further discussed in the sub-themes below.

#### **4.3.5.1 Sub-theme 5.1: Child participation in the household**

Participants can become active participants in their households in several ways. They indicated that it is important to create a balance between completing household chores such as cleaning and engaging in entertainment activities such as watching television and playing with siblings.

P3: *By cleaning the house and they must watch less TV... Ahm. Like if you grow up and you find your own house, you know like how to clean... If you watch more TV, you must do the test and you don't, you just repeat the grade.*

P5: *Eat, sleep, watch TV and play with their brothers and sisters.*

Participants indicated the importance of learning and portraying positive behaviours such as following the household rules and showing respect. These include studying hard, completing assigned chores, getting enough sleep, and following health standards within the family.

P4: *You can study hard. You can wash. You can do chores. You can sleep... (Coughing) Excuse me. They need to have hygiene. Ahm keeping them clean. Keeping them healthy. Not letting them sick... Ahm, if you behave, you can get more stuff. You can get more privileges and also respecting others like your mother, your father, people at school, people around you.*



P8: *Be a child that listens and respect at home and school.  
Getting good sleep.*

Participants showed more interest in assisting their parents with cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry. They also emphasised the importance of taking care of young siblings by feeding them and washing their clothes.

P6: *To clean the house and to cook for the mom and the dad,  
take care of their little brothers and pack their clothes then  
they can go out and play.*

P7: *Maybe cleaning the house or making, washing dishes or  
maybe some children can cook if they want to if they to make  
their parents proud, they can. And then some of them they  
just wash their parents' clothes or their clothes. Or their little  
brother or little sister's clothes.*

Participants indicated the role nature plays in providing them with peace and skills, which is achieved by creating a garden that can be utilised for planting vegetables and flowers.

P1: *Maybe like to do the garden and water the plants... Like You  
must just enjoy doing these kind of things. It gives you peace.*

P10: *I help my parents with making tea, chopping vegetables,  
cleaning the house, washing the car. Oh and my father  
teaches me how to plant flowers, vegetables.*

The family environment is important in providing opportunities for children to acquire the skills they need to live independently when transitioning to adulthood. Assigning specific tasks to children directly contributes to the participation profile of a household (Drummond, Gomes, Wendy, Coster & Mancini, 2014:101). Children actively participate in their household chores when parents provide the required and sufficient resources, as well as guidance (Shi, 2016:5; Gal & Duramy, 2015:455). Children's active involvement occurs because the family system plays a major role in shaping the development and



growth of individuals while preventing the influence of larger social systems (Hertler et al., 2018:325).

Therefore, it is important to understand and embrace the support that children can provide in their households due to the increasing demand for care to enhance the quality of life of each family member (Evandrou, Falkingham, Gomez-Leon & Vlachantoni, 2018:322). This also depends on the family's socio-economic composition, the parents' needs, and the extent to which parents collaborate with their children (Evandrou et al., 2018:323). Furthermore, parents with more children have increased chances of being cared for and protected by their children when they grow older and cannot fully take care of themselves (Shi, 2016:2,3).

Children engage in different types of tasks such as domestic chores comprising tidying, dusting, ironing, and Hoovering the floor; caring for adult relatives such as grandparents; doing groceries for the household; and performing outdoor activities such as washing the car, lawn-mowing, and gardening (Morrow, 2016:6). Children's gender can determine their responsibilities in the household. For instance, girls usually engage in tasks of taking care of younger children by feeding, dressing, and taking them to day-care (Morrow, 2016:4). Furthermore, children can participate within their communities to effect change.

#### **4.3.5.2 Sub-theme 5.2: Child participation in the community**

The participants stated that children have the skills and abilities to actively participate in issues that negatively affect their communities. One participant indicated that children have rights and should guard against the violation of those rights. The rights they enjoy include rights to education, shelter, and basic nutrition. The participant also asserted that for every right, there is a responsibility that the child must not neglect.

P3: *Rights and responsibilities... Ahm like, there is this responsibility. The right is that you have a right to education. You have a right to a shelter. You have the right to seek nutrition.*

A participant indicated that children can be trained about the dangers of pollution and be equipped with the skills and resources to engage in cleaning activities that can keep their neighbourhood free from pollution.

P4: *They can attend school, Ahm they can clean their environment. Ahm, only speak to people who respect them and yah that's all... They do not need to feel like they are alone and they do not need to feel like they are being treated badly. They feel safe and they can feel free to talk to the person.*

Three participants highlighted the concept of volunteering by indicating its influence on the number of vulnerable people in communities. Volunteering could be achieved by raising funds and implementing social programmes to enhance the well-being of others. More often, children are non-judgmental and have passion for everyone, which can be a positive contributing factor in making a difference in communities.

P7: *A child can, let us say a grandmother does not have any money and a child doesn't have any food, they are both hungry and they don't have much money. Some people they just ignore that child and they don't do nothing. A man who comes by give that child food, that child says I'm going to give that food to my grandmother. Then after that person saw the girl giving the grandmother food, that person took many food to give them and many money in that thing. When they just open it, they were so impressed and so happy. I like it when people are helping poor people because they might be good people and also children... Well. They could help other people. They could be not like, they must not have bad behaviour, they must be, they must be they mustn't bully other children, they mustn't make themselves special in order to bring other people's attention. They just help, they just do, they just do what they must do, they just give chances. Children can give chances but older people cannot.*

*Children... God can give them chances because they are still young and they do not know things about ahm older people. You know what I'm saying?*

P8: *I must talk to people, ask donation from community to help others and myself. I must tell the community my problems to get help.*

P10: *Feed hungry people. Give them clothes and blankets.*

Children's participation facilitates change in both attitudes and policies. The changes occur when children demonstrate their ability to, directly and indirectly, influence policy and contribute to strategies and action plans (European Union, 2021:3). Children's participation falls under two domains, namely the availability of opportunities for children to contribute to formal decision-making processes and the possibilities for children to interact on a global level (Gal & Duramy, 2015:451; Kwarteng, 2012:19).

Children must be included as active participants in the evaluation of social programmes to improve their effectiveness. Their involvement empowers them and gives them a sense of ownership that helps in achieving the objectives of the social programme (Hulshof, 2019:2). The involvement of children is supported by the ACRWC, which identifies child participation as part of children's responsibilities in communities (Kwarteng, 2012:2). The ecosystems theory also shows the direct and indirect influence of the successive layers of the ecosystem on the individual after achieving maturity that occurs over time (Hertler et al., 2018:325).

Children's active participation is also supported by the CRC, and this is stated in Article 12 as follows:

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

The article provides children with both substantive and procedural rights. Based on the substantive right, children must be allowed to be active participants in

issues that affect their everyday lives and decision-making processes. The procedural right further requires children to challenge and take appropriate steps in protecting their rights (Hulshof, 2019:4; Moyo, 2015:175). Children's rights can be protected by informing them about a decision that has already been made; consulting children to enable them to express their perspectives; creating opportunities for children to contribute to influence positive outcomes; and allowing children who have the intellectual and emotional capacity to make independent decisions (Moyo, 2015:173).

Children's Act also supports the right to participation, which is stated in section 10:

Every child that is of such an age, maturity and stage of development as to be able to participate in any matter concerning that child has the right to participate in an appropriate way and views expressed by the child must be given due consideration.

Children who can express their views, regardless of their age, should be provided with a suitable platform to share them through verbal and non-verbal methods (Moyo, 2015:174). When children's viewpoints are considered and they are allowed to participate in decision-making, some safeguarding standards must be followed. These include ensuring that policies and strategies are informative and transparent; preventing the coercion of children into sharing their perspectives; treating children's perspectives with respect; providing children with opportunities to develop new ideas and activities; ensuring that children participate in issues that link with their reality; facilitating the process in line with children's age and cognitive capacities; ensuring that participation is inclusive; equipping adults through skills and preparation to support children during the participation; and informing children on how their perspectives were analysed and how they will be utilised (Hulshof, 2019:4; Moyo, 2015:178).

#### **4.3.6 Theme 6: Contributing factors to child well-being for sustainable futures**

Some factors enhance the overall well-being of children, which in turn creates sustainable futures for them. The participants mentioned the importance of being surrounded by immediate family members such as parents and siblings who provide them with love and support. The extended family members such

as grandparents, aunts, and uncles were included in promoting the well-being of children.

P7: *Ahm. Family. Let us say a mother, a father, a brother or sister and uncle or an aunt. A grandmother or a grandfather or a friend or a pet could make me feel better.*

The participants also emphasised the importance of having a clean environment that is free of pollution to protect children from diseases like Cholera and Diarrhoea. Creating and maintaining a clean environment can be achieved by educating the community about the importance of preventing pollution and measures that can be taken to protect the environment. These measures include discouraging littering.

P4: *No pollution. Clean air... Ahm, It also teach them not to throw papers outside and keep outside clean so they can have a clean environment for themselves... Ahm. They do not get diseases from clean water like Cholera or Diarrhoea. Ahm, so they don't suffer from diseases.*

Sustainable futures can be created successfully using young people's inputs that provide current solutions to global problems, which requires them to be idealistic, creative, and highly competent (Vuong, 2020:8). Young people who are empowered with a scientific mindset and possess the appropriate entrepreneurial attitude to confront world's problems create sustainable futures for all (Vuong, 2020:9). Sustainable futures are also created through the achievement of sustainable development, which focuses on creating a balance between enhancing the quality of human life and effectively utilising the resources to ensure that future generations' needs are not compromised (Borg, Winberg & Vinterek, 2017:152).

One of the measures of achieving sustainable development is the integration of education and sustainable development concepts, which enhances children's well-being by creating attitudes and positive behaviours that in turn positively affect children's health, intellectual, and social behavioural development. Ensuring sustainable development also requires the provision of

opportunities in which children can be active participants and stakeholders in the future (Borg et al., 2017:152).

Childhood is regarded as a crucial stage that comprises values, lifestyles, norms, identities, and habits that assist children in making impactful decisions later in life. The lifestyle choices that children make directly influence the ecosystem and may lead to a decline in available resources (Bradbery, 2014:223). The following section discusses the measures that participants noted as crucial in creating sustainable futures for them.

#### **4.3.6.1 Sub-theme 6.1: Positive role modelling**

Participants learn positive behaviours by modelling the behaviours of influential people within their environment. Parents and family have been identified as the most crucial component of modelling positive behaviours. The participants indicated the importance of following parental teachings by indicating that it stems from previous generations. The participants model positive behaviours such as preventing behaviours that exhibit lawlessness, practising healthy standards, eating healthy foods, and exercising to keep fit.

- P1: *Like the manners that your parents teaches you in the house, you must also do them outside. Like outside don't be lawless... Like, the people must not see that your family, your parents are training you very well.*
- P3: *It is because like they gave birth to my grandmother and my grandmother gave birth to my mother and then my mother gave birth to me.*
- P4: *They can produce all time for healthy food, they can give you more attention. They can help you with your homework. They can take you out. They can go jogging with you. Yah... It gives you man power and it gives you all the vitamins. And what else you need in your body so that you can't feel weak.*

P10: *My parents teach me that I must do good. It is not good not to greet elders. It is not good when I don't help others when they are hurt.*

The community also has an important role in promoting children's well-being. Communities can achieve this by engaging with children respectfully, teaching them that violence is inappropriate, creating a clean and sustainable environment for them by preventing pollution, and directly ensuring the safety of children from incidents such as kidnapping.

P3: *Ahm. Like if you are like don't have anyone around to protect you, to help you when you are in need, you need someone to protect you and help you when you are in need.*

P4: *They must not be violent. People must learn to speak to the children. They must respect each other and the children must be safe and they must feel wanted, loved. They must be surrounded by people who love them.*

P7: *Maybe when the water is dirty, maybe they might call their neighbours and tell them they mustn't drink water from there because they are dirty. They might call people that makes the water be clean. Maybe something happened to a child and was kidnapped. That child, that girl was kidnapped by a person and that child might go to their parents and tell them that their child was kidnapped. If they do not talk, maybe the kidnappers would rather kidnap other children and make them say, they have to know how to keep their children safe.*

Teachers are also regarded as role models that can direct children toward a bright future.

P9: *Doing school work, listen to your teachers and parents... My teacher teaches me good things... They learn and grow to be adults and become a social worker that helps poor children.*



P10: *I love my teacher. He encourages me to work hard so that I can be successful... I will have money and buy myself good things like car, house.*

Modelling has been identified as a positive influence in children's lives due to its ability to lead to the development of pro-social behaviour. Achieving positive behaviour is mainly influenced through the modelling of a parent, coach, peers, or influential persons in the community who portray positive behaviour such as respect, honesty, and trustworthiness. These behaviours are later enhanced in life through the observation of career mentors and supervisors when they implement decisions, communicate ethical principles, and utilise the reward system to encourage the use of ethical behaviour (Brown & Treviño, 2014:589; Chan et al., 142). Children follow the behaviours of hardworking people, have successful careers, are honest, empower others with knowledge and have a sense of humour and status in society (Sanders, 2013:33).

Parents are regarded as important contributors to positive behaviours in children. They are perceived as the first personal coaches that enable positive behaviour in their children by providing excellent treatment, utilising positive actions and attitudes, and guiding children in the right direction (Brown & Treviño, 2014:589; Dorie, Jones, Pollock & Cardella, 2014:24; Perbowosari, 2018:40).

Positive parenting leads to the advancement of a child's character due to the imitation of the characteristics and elements of the parent's character (Perbowosari, 2018:41). Parents play a positive role in the development of career paths of their children, which is further enhanced when parents have specific occupations that children can learn from (Dorie et al., 2014:25). Bronfenbrenner indicates that activities that take place within people's immediate system have a positive influence; an enhancement of an individual's socio-economic background and overall well-being occurs (Espelage, 2014:260).

Teachers also play a role in shaping children's futures and are perceived as positive role models. They achieve this through implementing nutrition



education and empowering children with viable health practices such as washing hands and keeping themselves clean (Laguna, Hecht, Ponce, Jue, Brindis & Patel, 2020:121). Teachers can empower children to acknowledge the existing conditions of society that are affected by social, cultural, and political inequalities and poverty. The acknowledgement of societal ills will assist children in making the right life choices that will positively affect the environment in the future and assist in addressing the injustices and inequality in society through the improvement of the economy and implementation of ecologically sustainable practices (Bradbery, 2014:223; Zeiske, Venhoeven, Steg & van der Werff, 2021:1121).

Although there is a growing focus on the family, peers, and teachers as positive role models to children, there is also a growing recognition of the importance of neighbourhoods and communities in supporting children's futures (Borg et al., 2017:151; Chan, Rhodes & Scales, 2013:142). The contribution of communities in enhancing child well-being occurs in an environment that encourages young people to develop high-quality relationships with caring adults who influence them to engage in activities and skills development programmes to achieve better outcomes (Chan et al., 2013:144).

#### **4.3.6.2 Sub-theme 6.2: Environmental protection**

The environment – land, air, and water – can be protected from detrimental acts such as pollution. The participants indicated that it is important to develop and maintain a clean neighbourhood that is free from any form of pollution and hazardous materials. This, in turn, protects and promotes the well-being of children by preventing deadly illnesses such as lung infections.

P1: *Clean water. And clean air... Because the dirty is going to like affect you inside your stomach, like maybe like people just spitting there so if you drink that dirty water, you will get sick... Like people just smoke and there is going to be smoke in your nose and it is not nice... Because if you just throw things on the floor, it is gonna make the whole city dirty, like you are eventually going to start getting sick with this things.*

- P2: *Ah. A clean neighbourhood... A clean neighbourhood helps children to live well because there are no dangerous harmful objects around, no pollution around or any problems... Ah. Clean air... Most people who are living in rural areas breath in polluted air which cause affect their lungs and cause death.*
- P3: *Everyone needs to be clean. You need oxygen and other people with you.*
- P6: *People who keep their neighbourhood clean... It helps by keeping your neighbourhood clean and your yard clean so that people will not come and complain.*
- P9: *It must be clean... They must not sleep dirty... Clean air... It helps my lungs to be healthy.*

Protecting the environment can create opportunities for access to necessities that can enhance the well-being of children. These include clinics and hospitals, religious organisations, community libraries, police stations, and fire stations.

- P2: *They must have a home. Ahm, a hospital and also a police station... It provides safety.*
- P4: *School, church, shelter, a clinic, a hospital, ahm that's all... Ahm they follow their religion and they get to pray and they feel safe when they are there... The clinic can help them with medication if they are not feeling well. Ahm they can treat wounds if they get injured... You can go to the library to read. It can improve your language. You can go on the computers. You can use the Internet or study there. Yes that's all.*
- P6: *A school and a house, clean water and a shop, and a fire brigade, police... That's all I have.*
- P10: *School, house, police station, library... I can have a safe place to live, police can protect, I can find good books at the library.*

The participants want the community to implement measures that will increase the safety of all people to prevent the occurrence of criminal activities and reduce the high rate of child kidnapping and human trafficking since they have detrimental effects on the victim and the victim's loved ones.

P2: *It must be a no pollution environment. It must be free of crime and all of those... Most places have more levels of crime which means there will be more kidnappings and more murders.*

P7: *Yes. What I don't like about people who are kidnapping, they just kidnap children and just kill them and take their parts and just sell them. They are not doing good and that's what I don't like and I'm not the only one who doesn't like kidnappers doing this. They just do it for money. God didn't make them to be born, to be visiting at this world to do such of disgusting things. God brought them to be like, be the children. If they just kidnap other children and just sell them, that's wrong coz I saw a mother who wanted to die when her child was being kidnapped and being killed and the body was found in Pretoria or somewhere. That is not being a good person. I don't want to like it. And I think God doesn't like it also.*

The well-being of children is highly compromised by environmental problems such as migration, poverty, scarcity of food and water, lack of health care systems, greenhouse gas emissions, rising sea levels, and the depletion of resources (Borg et al., 2017:152; Kahrman-Ozturk, Olgan & Guler, 2012:2988; Orhan, 2022:75; Satterthwaite, Hart, Levy, Mitlin, Ross, Smit & Stephens, 2013:2). Therefore, it is important to raise awareness to ensure that children are aware of the conditions of their environment and take appropriate action (Spiteri, 2015:90). Raising awareness will provide them with an opportunity to achieve environmental justice by ensuring equal access to a safe and healthy environment for all people in society (Lombard, 2019a:54).

Therefore, children's direct engagement with the environment directly contributes to their well-being by improving their physical, affective, moral, and cognitive abilities. However, it is also important to acknowledge the difficulties faced by children in developing countries such as South Africa in having limited access to safe and productive natural environments (Adams & Savahl, 2015:196). Regardless, children's perspectives regarding the features in their environment assist policy developers, architects, planners, and housing authorities in developing safe play areas that contribute positively to their well-being (Adams & Savahl, 2015:200).

For children to become active participants in protecting the environment they must be aware of the problem and its consequences on the environment, be accountable for their actions that harm the environment, identify actions that can assist them in reducing environmental harm, and be allowed to recognise their abilities that they can utilise to address environmental concerns (Spiteri, 2015:72; Zeiske et al., 2021:1120). They must also be equipped with knowledge regarding the important species and resources that add value to the planet such as animals, plants, rocks, soils, water, and micro-organisms (Hanson, 2021:4; Spiteri, 2015:118). The ecosystems theory supports children's active participation in environmental issues by indicating that some environmental forces and conditions can either positively or negatively affect people's livelihoods. The negative forces can be counteracted by using an individual as an active instrument that can influence change and further develop the environment (Hertler et al., 2018:326).

The protection and improvement of well-being are supported by the economic pillar of sustainable development that requires the reduction of environmental burden due to the production and disposal of goods and services; consumption of goods and services that positively enhance the well-being of women and children; increasing the utilisation of energy and water-efficient appliances and public transport; and the production of goods and services that are developed by following the global environmental protocols (Kahriman-Ozturk et al., 2012:2988).

For instance, Sweden emphasises the importance of creating sustainable futures and communities by asserting that achieving sustainability must be a shared responsibility between countries, communities, generations, and genders. They achieved this through the Swedish National Agency for Education (SNAE), which requires the integration of sustainable development in the educational system by certifying pre-schools with a “Diploma of Excellence and Sustainability” if they achieve specific criteria that comprise educational approaches that respect the laws and regulations of sustainability and the quality educational management processes. In addition, schools are required to not only integrate sustainability into the curriculum, but also into other processes such as sustainability in the monitoring and evaluation process, long-term goals, governance matters, and stakeholder and community involvement (Borg et al., 2017:153).

In short, the human environment can act as a tool in improving and supporting children’s well-being if their strengths and competencies are developed and if they are provided with opportunities to be active participants and agents of change in their environmental issues (Satterthwaite et al., 2012:6). Children can become active role players if they are taught their responsibilities from an early age and equipped with knowledge regarding climate change and sustainable development (Bradbery, 2014:222; Kahrman-Ozturk et al., 2012:2989; Orhan, 2022:71).

#### **4.3.6.3 Sub-theme 6.3: Entrepreneurship**

Education has been identified as one of the factors that contribute to sustainable futures for children. Through education, children can be equipped with financial knowledge that can assist them in starting their businesses and providing employment opportunities for others in the community. This, in turn, will empower them to provide social and economic support to vulnerable groups in society.

P2: *Ah. They can provide me with safety at that time. They can provide me with education.*

P7: *Like you can do art. Maybe like acting. You can do acting. Maybe you like inventing, you just wish to invent and tell about your story and invent what you want to invent. Maybe you want to be a geologist? Is that right?*

P10: *I want to have my own business one day... I will help the poor people in the streets. I will buy my parents good things.*

Entrepreneurship enhances economic growth and allows for innovation to take place (Huber, Sloof & Van Praag, 2012:20). Improving the economy through entrepreneurship can be achieved when children are empowered with both cognitive and non-cognitive entrepreneurial capabilities such as being proactive, creative, and persistent (Huber et al., 2012:2). Two explanations provide the motivation of children to become entrepreneurs. The first explanation is regarded as personality-driven, which asserts that certain traits increase the probability of an individual becoming an entrepreneur. The second explanation, the behavioural explanation, asserts that individuals learn from others through positive role modelling to become entrepreneurs (Chlosta, Patzelt, Klein & Dormann, 2012:122; Lindquist, Sol & Van Praag, 2015:270,271).

If parents are entrepreneurs, they are likely to influence children to develop an interest in entrepreneurship. In other words, having a parent who is an entrepreneur increases the probability of a child becoming an entrepreneur after completion of studies (Chlosta et al., 2012:121; Lindquist et al., 2015:269). The ecosystems theory supports the influence of having parents who are entrepreneurs by asserting that ecosystems are perceived as regulated marketplaces that encourage entrepreneurial action and allow for transactions among diverse groups of people (Christensen, 2016:24; Jacobides, Cennamo & Gawer, 2018:2257).

The planting of the entrepreneurial spirit in children during the early stages prepares them to become independent and reduces their dependence on the availability of work opportunities in the job market. Entrepreneurship is also important because it creates job opportunities for other people and equips children with the ability to address future obstacles (Bowo, 2013:36,37). Some

specific skills and strategies can be employed to empower children with an entrepreneurial culture. These include empowering them with effective communication skills, enhancing the awareness of entrepreneurship by showing them real businesses and how they operate, instilling in children a mindset of hard work, and empowering them with critical thinking abilities and effective decision-making (Bowo, 2013:37,38; Hassi, 2016:84).

#### **4.3.6.4 Sub-theme 6.4: Entering the job market**

Education does not only build entrepreneurs but also builds employable future leaders who are equipped with knowledge and skills obtained through education and training. The participants indicated that receiving a quality education is important as it enhances the prospects of good employment opportunities that will enable them to care for their families.

P2: *You can get knowledge. After getting knowledge, you can go to find a job. They hire you because of the knowledge. I think that is all.*

P6: *I will get a good job and take care of myself and my parents when they are old.*

The effectiveness of education in increasing an individual's employability is enhanced during each year of attaining education. Acquiring quality education provides an economic benefit through increased productivity and chances of engaging in formal employment (Rasmussen, Maharaj & Sheehan, 2019:9,10). The quality of education provided to children increases their chances of entering the job market. It must be based on the concept of competitiveness and the processes of socio-economic growth and development of a country. Such education must induce development and economic growth while working towards reducing poverty by creating a political environment that attracts investments (Kayani, Akbar, Faisal, Kayani & Ghuman, 2017:77).

In addition, proper investment in childhood education is regarded as the most crucial way of enhancing child well-being and increasing the productivity and educational achievement of children (Lynch & Vaghul, 2015:14). Other benefits

of investment in childhood education include reduced crime rates, increased employment and earnings opportunities, enhanced health outcomes, enhanced intellectual achievement and increased success rate at schools (Lynch & Vaghul, 2015:15). Bronfenbrenner supports the importance of acquiring quality education by asserting that individuals go through ecological transitions such as acquiring education and moving to the job market (Eriksson et al., 2018:419). Furthermore, investment in childhood education can afford children economic justice, which is regarded as economic freedom that allows an individual to actively participate in economic activities without limitations (Lombard, 2019a:54).

#### **4.4 SUMMARY**

The chapter provided the biographical information of the participants and the themes and sub-themes that arose from the findings. The themes discussed include children's understanding of child well-being, that is social, economic, and environmental factors, promoting child well-being through child participation, and contributing factors to child well-being for sustainable futures. The findings were supported by literature from previous studies and the theoretical framework, the ecosystems theory.

The next chapter provides a brief description of the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations.



## CHAPTER 5

### KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the study. It starts with a discussion of how the goal and objectives of the study were achieved. The next section presents the key findings of the study, followed by conclusions drawn from it. Finally, recommendations are made.

#### 5.2 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the study was to explore children's perspectives on their well-being as a pathway to sustainable futures within the South African context. The goal was attained by achieving the following set of objectives:

**Objective 1:** To conceptualise child well-being and participation within the framework of the ecosystems theory and sustainability.

The objective was achieved based on the literature review in Chapter 2 (see sections 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 2.7 and 2.8). Child well-being and participation within the ecosystems theory were thoroughly discussed. The term "child well-being" was described as children's experiences of happiness and success, which can be achieved by having a sense of meaning in life and effectively managing stress (Coompton & Hoffman, 2013:51). Child well-being through subjective lenses is assessed by looking at different dimensions; it shifts away from the use of adults' perception of child well-being and providing findings that can lead to sustainable futures for children (Fattore & Mason, 2017:276).

The term "child well-being" was discussed according to three dimensions, namely the social, economic, and environmental indicators (Savahl et al., 2017:31). The social indicators of child well-being comprise positive interactions with family, peers, school, and communities. The economic indicators of child well-being are closely linked to social indicators. They include child health, development, success and investment, socio-economic status, inter-generational transmission, and early life circumstances. The

environmental indicators include enhancing living conditions, the health system, and climate change (Miller et al., 2012:23).

Child well-being is influenced by protective and risk factors. Protective factors are important for preventing negative outcomes in children's futures. These include overall family health, peer relationships, policies, education, communities, and cultures (Fattore & Mason, 2017:278,279). The risk factors, which negatively influence child well-being include low income of parents, family instability, environmental degradation, armed conflict, unclean neighbourhood where there is crime and violence, and poverty (SOS Children's Villages International, 2017:4).

Child well-being was also discussed within the theoretical framework of the study. The ecosystems theory emphasises the interdependence between systems because they, directly and indirectly, influence children's well-being (Newland et al., 2019:397). The first system, the microsystem, looks at the effect of interactions with family, peers, and the community on children's well-being. The second system, mesosystem, looks at how the functioning of different systems in an integrated manner influence child well-being. The third system, the exosystem, indirectly affects the growth and development of a child and comprises religious institutions, parents' work environment, access to necessities, extended family and parents' support and social networks (Louw et al., 2014:29). The fourth system is the macrosystem, which shapes the child's growth and development over an extended period and includes customs, values, ideologies, politics, policies, legislation, environmental arrangements, and resources. The fifth system is the chronosystem which refers to the changes that take place over extended periods due to the child's development or changing environment (Louw et al., 2014:30).

**Objective 2:** To explore children's understanding of child well-being.

This objective was addressed in Chapter 4, section 4.3.1. Participants' understanding of the concept of child well-being was captured in theme one as emotional, physical, social, and educational wellness. Findings indicated that for children to achieve social wellness, they must have positive relationships

with friends, family, and community members such as pastors and teachers. In such relationships children must be provided food, water, and a productive environment created (see sub-theme 1.1).

Children can achieve physical wellness by exercising and eating healthy food. Physical exercise and eating healthy help them to minimise the chances of falling ill (see sub-theme 1.2). Emotional wellness enhances children's mental well-being and can be achieved through self-care, self-affirmation, eating healthy, and playing with others (see sub-theme 1.3). Lastly, educational wellness is linked to quality education to enhance the growth and development of children (see sub-theme 1.4).

**Objective 3:** To explore children's views on social factors that affect their current and future well-being.

The objective was attained in the findings of theme two as reported in Chapter 4 (see section 4.3.2). First, the participants indicated that the relationship with immediate family members is an important social indicator that enhances well-being by providing the necessities such as food and shelter and creating a warm, nurturing, and caring environment (see sub-theme 2.1). Second, peer relationships have been identified as a factor that positively contributes to the well-being of children (see sub-theme 2.2). Peer relationships develop children's abilities to express their emotions and provide a support base for children. Third, having close relationships with the community educates children about the norms and values that guide their behaviour and encourage them to become future leaders (see sub-theme 2.3).

**Objective 4:** To explore children's views on economic factors that affect their current and future well-being.

The accomplishment of this objective is captured in the research findings as presented in Chapter 4, section 4.3.3. The financial stability of the parents is identified as the main economic factor since it enables them to provide for their children's needs such as health care, educational resources, food, and shelter.

This is achieved when parents receive a reasonable income that caters for both their needs and those of their children (see sub-themes 3.1 and 3.2).

**Objective 5:** To explore children's views on environmental factors that affect their current and future well-being.

This objective was discussed and achieved in Chapter 4, section 4.3. The participants stated that having a clean environment that provides them with recreational spaces stimulates their growth by enhancing their self-esteem and physical health. The creation of recreational spaces should be complemented by implementing safety measures such as playing at home and safeguarding the play areas by hiring security personnel (see sub-themes 4.1 and 4.2).

**Objective 6:** To describe the children's suggestions for enhancing child participation in matters that influence their well-being.

The achievement of this objective is based on the research findings reported in Chapter 4, section 4.3.5, where participants indicated how they can be engaged as active participants in matters that affect their well-being within their families and communities. Within the family environment, participants shared that they could assist by following the rules of the household and participating in household chores such as assisting their parents with activities such as cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, and taking care of the garden (see sub-theme 5.1). Within their communities, participants can positively contribute by advocating for their rights, creating awareness of the dangers of pollution and ways to address it, and volunteering to support vulnerable persons in the communities (see sub-theme 5.2).

### 5.3 KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The key findings and conclusions from the study are as follows:

- Findings specified that participants have a basic understanding of child well-being by indicating that it affects their physical, social, emotional, and educational dimensions of well-being. Child well-being within these dimensions can be achieved through positive interactions with individuals in the community, by living in conducive circumstances that promote their growth and by receiving a quality education. Furthermore, child well-being can be promoted by raising awareness of the importance of eating healthy food and regularly exercising to prevent contracting illnesses. Being healthy and physically fit protects children's mental health and improves their self-esteem.
- > It can be concluded that children are aware of and in touch with themselves and articulate how well they are in all the dimensions of their lives. Furthermore, their understanding of well-being is advanced because findings show that they can make a connection between different dimensions of well-being and how they interlink. They noted that living in a conducive environment, for example, provides children access to resources needed to promote their growth which is important to create sustainable futures for them. An enabling environment includes an educational platform to equip children with the necessary knowledge and skills that can positively contribute to their well-being and futures. Children can therefore contribute to the development of their well-being and know what is best for them.
- The participants identified three main social factors that promote the well-being of children. These include the relationship with immediate family members, relationships with peers, and their interaction with the community. The participants emphasised the importance of creating a nurturing environment that enhances their relationship with their parents and siblings. Peer relationships are also valued because they provide

support to children by enabling them to engage in fun activities. The community can further support and protect children by educating them about their culture, norms, and values.

- > It can be concluded that children value the relationship they create with immediate family members, peers, and the community. They also know what it feels like and what they miss if they do not have positive relationships with significant others. These relationships are important for moulding an individual's personality and character through the transfer of values and norms of society. They also influence children's likelihood to become responsible citizens by differentiating between right and wrong and demonstrating appropriate behaviours, which in turn positively contributes to their transition into adulthood.
- Child well-being is promoted when parents achieve financial stability and can provide their children's needs for food, shelter, clothing, educational resources, and health care.
- > In conclusion, parental income plays a vital role in the growth and development of children because it ensures that they have access to basic resources to enhance their well-being and contribute to better futures. Receiving parental income requires hard work and commitment from parents to ensure that they continuously improve their earnings and positively influence their children's wellness. Children also experience the importance of education and what is required to become financially sustainable to develop well-being and a better future.
- The environment plays a major role in influencing child well-being. Child well-being is enhanced when children are provided with recreational spaces that allow them to engage in play and ensure that they are safe. However, children do not feel safe in their communities due to the rise in criminal activities and lack of safety measures. As a result, children are

limited from engaging in entertaining activities within their recreational spaces due to fear of being kidnapped and becoming a victim of human trafficking. Participants recommended safety measures that include playing inside secure yards and hiring security personnel to guard public play areas. The safety measures stipulated must be substantiated by creating a clean neighbourhood that is free from all forms of pollution and hazards that can be a danger to the well-being of children.

- > It can be concluded that the environment plays a significant role in improving child well-being since children spend most of their time interacting with people and resources within their living spaces. However, communities are infested with crime and violence, which significantly hampers children from engaging in activities that are beneficial to their well-being. Nonetheless, the environment can provide a safe space for fun, growth, and development if it is properly secured and cared for through the joint action of the parents, school, and other stakeholders within the community. In other words, it must become everyone's responsibility to take appropriate actions that will protect children's well-being.
- Findings indicate that children desire to become active participants in society through direct contributions to issues that affect them. They can contribute through involvement in decision-making on issues that affect their rights and well-being and by volunteering to participate in addressing societal problems. The participants indicated that they can be active participants in their homes by engaging in household chores such as cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, and gardening. Prioritising schoolwork, following the rules of the family, and portraying and receiving respect have been indicated as important areas where children can make contributions to the family. The participants indicated that they could also contribute to the community by exercising their rights to access education, shelter, and nutrition.

- > It can be concluded that children have the agency to become active members of society who can work together with relevant stakeholders to address societal issues that directly and indirectly influence their well-being. Encouraging the active participation of children starts within their homes by assigning them roles and responsibilities that will ensure that they become responsible citizens as they transition to adulthood. This certifies that children acquire basic skills such as effective communication, decision-making, and conflict resolution, which will ensure that they positively contribute to their communities.
- Factors that positively contribute to enhancing child well-being and sustainable futures for children include the modelling of positive behaviours by esteemed people such as parents, pastors, teachers, and peers. Children’s behaviour is influenced when the overall community accepts its responsibilities by protecting the environment from all forms of pollution, which in turn prevents the development of illnesses. Child well-being is promoted through quality education that equips children with financial knowledge and innovative capabilities that increase their chances of finding job opportunities and/or starting a business in the future.
- > In conclusion, children should be exposed to opportunities that allow for the development of positive relationships with others. A healthy interdependence between the micro (family, friends), mezzo (parents’ workplaces, clinics, hospitals, church), macro (culture, values, resources), and chronosystem (relocation, change in school) is required to ensure that children receive effective support from all systems within their environments.

## **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study, the following pathways are recommended for improving child well-being for sustainable futures:



- The findings indicate that the participants understand child well-being, and how it can be improved by giving children access to resources for quality education, nutrition, physical and mental health, recreation activities, and safe and clean environments. The researcher recommends that life skills and parental and relevant child programmes link children's rights with physical, emotional, social, and educational well-being as a pathway to achieving quality education for a better future.
- Child well-being is enhanced when a conducive environment allows for positive interactions with peers, family, and the broader community. Child-based organisations, non-profit organisations within the community and schools should create platforms and programmes for children that allow them to engage in community activities that bring social change and empower them to become active citizens.
- Relationships with immediate family members can promote a child's well-being and create a nurturing environment that moulds his or her personality through the transfer of norms and values. Therefore, it is recommended that programmes be developed to advance the capacity of parents and communities to implement appropriate parenting styles and skills that will assist their children in developing their well-being and agency to become productive citizens. This, in turn, will empower the children to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate behaviours and, therefore, act in ways that the community desires.
- The environment can shape children's growth by encouraging play. However, findings indicate that such is compromised due to the surge of criminal activities such as kidnapping and human trafficking. To resolve the safety concerns, community organisations, police services, churches, government, and other relevant stakeholders should establish community forums and engage children in developing programmes that will enhance child well-being while contributing to sustainable development. Programmes could include creating environmental awareness through clean-up campaigns, developing recreational facilities, and neighbourhood watches, and especially protecting children while they are moving around and playing in the community.

- Findings show that children have the agency to become active citizens who can form part of the decision-making processes in matters that affect their well-being. This can be achieved through implementing the Framework for Social Welfare Services Republic of South Africa National Department of Social Development, Save the Children South Africa (2018), which entails engaging children in decisions and crafting a national environmental policy that includes children's voices regarding the protection of the environment. Therefore, the government, the private sector, and the community should join hands to work towards creating a conducive environment that can protect children and promote their well-being through active participation. Parents can contribute to promoting child participation by identifying and assigning age-appropriate household chores to children.
- Creating sustainable futures for children depends on the type of behaviours they learn through the process of modelling. Children model behaviours from parents, teachers, peers, pastors, and other successful community members. Therefore, schools should implement career programmes that are aimed at educating children about the importance of success. They can achieve this by utilising successful, prominent people in the community as role models. The use of role models can be enhanced further through the transfer of financial literacy and entrepreneurial knowledge by creating programmes that expose learners to business leaders within the community. Exposing learners to entrepreneurs will create future responsible leaders who can successfully penetrate the job market and create employment opportunities through entrepreneurship.
- Future research is recommended as follows:
  - Considering that the study was conducted in a suburb, future studies could explore children's perspectives regarding their well-being in rural communities. This will provide a different perspective on child well-being since many children who live in rural communities are deprived of necessities, which impairs their development and futures.

- The study was conducted from a small sample, which does not show a full representation of all children in South Africa. The researcher recommends that future research must utilise large sample sizes to allow for generalisations of the findings, which will aid in the development and amendment of policies and legislation that influence child well-being.
- Safety concerns were indicated as one of the problems that are negatively affecting the environment, which in turn compromises child well-being. Therefore, future research should focus on identifying practical measures that can be used to increase safety and create safe recreational spaces for children to improve their well-being.
- Considering that there is a lack of research on child well-being in South Africa from children's lenses and that the study utilised the qualitative approach, future studies could use a quantitative approach to determine how children's well-being is compromised and in which dimensions, and what factors affect their well-being mostly. The research findings of this study could be used to develop a questionnaire to inform a quantitative study.
- Comparative studies must be conducted among the MSW students who participated in the study to strengthen the contribution to knowledge on child well-being from children's perspective within the South African context.

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## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES ON CHILD WELL-BEING

Thank you that you are willing to take part in this study. As I mentioned earlier, I am interested to get your views on what is important for children's well-being, therefore for them to be happy, healthy, and successful in life. I would like to ask you a few questions. Please take your time to think about the question and your answer. There are no right or wrong answers as all information is important to me. We will also make use of pictures when we talk about things that you may see as important for child well-being.

#### SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. How old are you?

8	9	10	11	12
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2. How do you describe your gender?

<b>GENDER</b>	
Male	
Female	
Other (that you may want to choose)	
Prefer not to say	

3. In what school grade are you?

Grade .....

4. How many people live in your household? (e.g. parents, siblings, extended family such as grandparents, uncles/aunts, nieces/nephews) Number: ..... Adults: ..... Children: .....  
Please tell me about them.






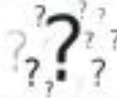








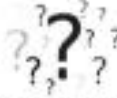
5. Who contributes to the income in your household?

(childcare grant; old age grant; formal / informal jobs)

## SECTION B: QUESTIONS ON CHILD WELL-BEING





1. How will you know if it is going well with a child?  
(e.g. emotions, health, physical wellness, positive development, doing well at school, care by parents)
2. Who (which people) should be in a child's life for a child to live well?  
  
(e.g. family, parents, grandparents, extended family, siblings, teachers, friends, pets ...)  
  
What must they be like?
3. What must children have for them to live well?  
(a home, family income, parental work, money, clothing, food, pocket money, TV, cell phone, internet access, transport, safety ...)
4. What places and services in their community will help children to live well?  
(house, school, clinic, hospital, park, church ...)
5. What must children's environment look like for them to live well?  
(clean water, clean air, green spaces, clean environment ...)
6. What can children do in their homes, in their community and for the environment to improve their own well-being?
7. How can adults involve children in their plans and programmes to improve children's well-being?

I would like you to look at some pictures about child well-being. We have already talked about information for some of the pictures, but please see whether there something in the pictures that you would like to add to what we already discussed.

WHAT IS WELL-BEING?		
 Happy	 Healthy	 Successful
 Loved	 Cared for	 Anything else that you can think of?
WHO MUST BE IN CHILDREN'S LIVES FOR THEM TO LIVE WELL?		
 Family	 Father and mother	 Brothers and sisters
 Grandfather, grandmother	 Uncles and aunts	 Friends
 Teacher	 Pets	 Anyone else that you can think of?

The images are available on the open platform Online Pictures, and licensed under CC BY-SA-NC

WHAT MUST CHILDREN HAVE TO LIVE WELL?		
 House	 School	 Clinic/hospital
 Church	 Park	 Shop
 Food	 Clothes	 Books
 Electricity	 Water	 Sanitation / toilets
 Transport	 Television	 Cell phone, laptop
<small>The images are available on the open platform Online Pictures, and licensed under CC BY-SA-NC</small>		

 Safety	 Sport	 School uniforms and shoes
 Fire station	 Anything else that you can think of?	
<b>WHAT MUST THE WORLD/ENVIRONMENT LOOK LIKE FOR CHILDREN TO LIVE WELL?</b>		
 Clean neighbourhood	 Clean water	 Clean air
 No pollution	 Forests; clean rivers and oceans	 People who keep their neighbourhood clean
 Anything else that you can think of?		 Thank you!
<small>The images are available on the open platform Online Pictures, and licensed under CC BY-SA-NC</small>		

3

Thank you for sharing your views with me. It is important that we engage children as it will help us to plan programmes and services that will improve the well-being of many children in South Africa.

## APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM



**Researcher:** Name Tinyiko Gwambe (14129494)  
**Degree:** MSW Social Development & Policy  
**Contact details:** 074 019 5894

### INFORMED CONSENT BY PARENT/GUARDIAN

**1. Title of the study**

Children's perspectives on child well-being: A pathway to sustainable futures.

**2. Goal of the study**

The goal of the study is to explore and describe children's perceptions on their well-being as a pathway to a sustainable future. In doing so the researcher will gain information on children's understanding of child well-being; thus, what makes children to be happy, healthy and successful in life. The well-being of children has a significant influence on their lives and on their future. Limited South African studies have been conducted on children's own perspectives on the topic, with the result that interventions to enhance children's well-being are mostly based on the views of adults. Listening to children's voices on the topic can assist social workers and other professionals to develop suitable interventions that will support the well-being and positive development of children in South Africa, at present and in the future.



### 3. Procedures

Your child will be requested to take part in a personal interview with the researcher, in which they will talk about your child's views on factors that can contribute to the well-being of children. The interview is expected to last about 45 to 60 minutes and the researcher will audio-record the interview to make sure that he/she captures information correctly. All the information will be handled confidentially. Your child's real name will not be used, and his/her identity will not be made known in the researcher's report.

COVID-19 guidelines for interpersonal contact will be followed during the interview. The researcher and your child will both adhere to the following guidelines during the interview:

- Wearing protective face masks that cover their mouths and noses at all times
- Disinfecting their hands with a suitable disinfectant when they meet and during the interview, as needed

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- Keeping the required personal distance of 2 meters between them
- The interview will be conducted outside or in a room with an open window or door, with no other persons in the immediate environment
- No writing materials, communication pictures or other objects will be shared, and your child will be provided with a pencil, paper and set of communication pictures.

### 4. Possible risks

The interview with your child will focus on his/her views of factors that can enhance child well-being in general, and not on his/her personal experiences related to the topic. Therefore, there are no risks foreseen in terms of your child's participation in the study. If your child, however, experiences emotional distress because of his/her participation in the interview, he/she will be referred for telephonic counselling free of charge with a suitably qualified professional person such as a social worker or psychologist.

### 5. Benefits of participation

Your child will not receive any payment or gifts for taking part in the study. However, participation in the study can provide a meaningful experience for him/her to help social workers to develop interventions that can support the well-being and positive development of children in South Africa.

### 6. Rights as a participant

I am aware that participation in the study is voluntary and that my child must not feel under any obligation to take part in the study. I understand that my child will have the right not to answer any question or questions that make him/her feel uncomfortable and that he/she can withdraw from the study at any time without having to explain why. In both instances, there will be no negative consequences for your child and the researcher will respect his/her decision.



## 7. Confidentiality

The researcher will type out the audio-recording of the interview. The recording and the typed document will be handled with strict confidentiality and will be safely stored by the researcher. Only the researcher and her supervisor at the University will have access to this information. After completion of the research, all the documents will be safely stored according to the guidelines of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria. If your child decides to withdraw from the study, his/her information will be destroyed.

The researcher will write a report on the study. Your child's name or personal details will not appear in the report. Your child can ask the researcher to get access to the information that he/she provided during the interview, if he/she wishes.

I am aware that the information provided by my child will be stored for 15 years in the Department of Social Work and Criminology, University of Pretoria, as stipulated in policy.

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## 9. Data usage

The findings of this study will be used in a research report and possibly for professional publications and conference papers. The findings may also be used for further research. If used for further research, the information will still be regarded as confidential, as described above.

## 10. Contact details

If I need more information about this research, I can contact the researcher at her e-mail at [u14129494@tuks.co.za](mailto:u14129494@tuks.co.za) or on her cell number as provided above.

## 11. Permission for participation in the research study

I, the undersigned, understand the information provided above. I understand what the research is about and why it is being done. I had the opportunity to ask the researcher questions about the study and all my questions have been answered satisfactorily.

I understand my rights as a parent/guardian of a child participant, as well as my child's rights as a participant in the study. I give my permission that my child can voluntarily participate in the research study. I have received a copy of this letter.

Parent/guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C: INFORMED ASSENT FORM



**Researcher:** Name Tinyiko Gwambe (14129494)  
**Degree:** MSW Social Development & Policy  
**Contact details:** 074 019 5894

### PARTICIPANT'S INFORMED ASSENT FORM

Dear participant



My name is Tinyiko Gwambe and I am doing research at the University of Pretoria on how children understand child well-being. With child well-being, I mean a life that enables children to grow up happy and healthy and make a success in life. Research is a study to find new information about something, and I am known as the researcher. For this study, I will talk to children about how they understand the well-being of children and will ask them questions about things they think can help children to live a good life, now and in the future. The title of my study is as follows: *Children's perspectives on child well-being: A pathway to sustainable futures.*

#### The reason for the study

Children's well-being is important for them to grow up to live a good life. There have been research studies on this topic, but there are not enough studies to find out what children's own views on their well-being are. Information from children themselves can help social workers to develop plans that will best be able to support children's well-being.

#### What will you be asked to do?



If you agree to take part in the study, you will be a research participant and I, the researcher, will talk to you about your ideas about things that can help with children's well-being. We will

talk for about 45 to 60 minutes. I will make a voice recording, if it is fine with you, to remember all the information that you share. All the information will be handled confidentially, meaning that no one but I will know what you said in our discussion.

You do not have to answer a question or questions if you do not want to. You can also stop taking part in the study at any time, if you wish. No one will be upset with you if you do not answer a question or if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

To stay safe, we will follow the following rules for COVID-19 during the discussion:

- We will both wear face masks that cover our mouths and noses at all times
- We will disinfect our hands when we meet and during the discussion, if needed
- We will keep a distance of 1.5 to 2 meters between us
- We will have the discussion outside or in a room with an open window or door, with no other persons close to us
- We will not share any materials and the researcher will provide you with a pencil, paper and set of communication pictures.

## Your rights during the study



Your parents will know that you will take part in the study because they had to give their permission. They will also know that it is important that you yourself decide if you want to join in the study or not. Please say it clearly if you do not want to take part in the study or if you want to stop taking part in the study at a later time. No one will be upset with you if you do.

You will not get any money or gifts for taking part in the study. But the information that you give can help social workers to develop programmes that will benefit children in South Africa.

All the information will be handled with strict confidentiality, meaning that only I, the researcher, will know what you said during the discussion. My teacher at the University will also look at the information. Your name will not be known to anyone and will not be mentioned in the report that I will write about the study. Your information will be safely stored at the University of Pretoria for 15 years. If the information will be used later for other studies, it will still be confidential.

If you become upset because of taking part in the discussion, you can tell me or your parents. I will ask a social worker or psychologist to talk to you to help you feel better.


## What if you have questions?


If you have any questions, you can contact me, the researcher, at cell number 074 019 5894 or send me an email at [u14129494@tuks.co.za](mailto:u14129494@tuks.co.za) You will also get a chance to ask me questions about the study before our discussion as well as at the end of our discussion.

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## My decision

After reading through this letter together with the researcher and having the opportunity to ask questions that I had about the study, I decided the following:

Yes, I would like to join the study. 

No, I would not like to join the study. 

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Because I chose to join the study, I write my name and today's date below to show that I decided to take part in the study. The researcher gave me a copy of this letter.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Faculty of Humanities  
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Bomo

## APPENDIX D: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



### Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Bomotheo



14 September 2021

Dear Ms TC Gwambe

<b>Project Title:</b>	Children's perspectives on well-being: A pathway to sustainable futures
<b>Researcher:</b>	Ms TC Gwambe
<b>Supervisor(s):</b>	Prof A Lombard
<b>Department:</b>	Social Work and Criminology
<b>Reference number:</b>	14129494 (HUM009/0821)
<b>Degree:</b>	Masters

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 26 August 2021. Data collection may therefore commence.

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 Committee  
Faculty of Humanities  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
e-mail: [tracey.andrew@up.ac.za](mailto:tracey.andrew@up.ac.za)

**Research Ethics Committee Members:** Prof KL Harris (Chair); Mr A Bizos; Dr A-M de Beer; Dr A dos Santos; Dr P Gutura; Ms KT Govinder Andrew; Dr E Johnson; Dr D Krige; Prof D Maree; Mr A Mohamed; Dr I Noomé; Dr J Okeke; Dr C Puttergill; Prof D Reyburn; Prof M Soer; Prof E Taljard; Ms D Mokolapa

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