



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
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**SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' EMOTIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL  
WELL-BEING AMIDST SCHOOL CLOSURES DURING THE NATIONAL  
LOCKDOWN PERIOD**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

**MASTERS IN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

in the  
Department of Educational Psychology  
Faculty of Education  
University of Pretoria

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**PRETORIA**

March 2023

*I dedicate this research to my parents, who never stopped encouraging me to follow my dreams and who have always stood by my side. To my partner, who reminds me daily that nothing is impossible when God is involved and has supported me throughout this journey. Above all, my Heavenly Father, who made this journey possible and who always reminds me daily of who I am and Whose I am.*

# DECLARATION

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I hereby declare that the dissertation/thesis titled **Secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being amidst school closures during the national lockdown period**, which I submit for the degree of Masters in Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.



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## ETHICS STATEMENT

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The author, whose name appears on the title page of this mini-dissertation, has obtained the applicable research ethics approval for the research described in this work. The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required regarding the University of Pretoria's *Code of Ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research*.



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Cleo Albertus

STUDENT

# DECLARATION FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

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## TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

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*For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future- Jeremiah 29:11*

## ABSTRACT

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The school closures during the national lockdown affected teachers' emotional and occupational well-being. The sudden transition from in-person to online teaching placed high expectations on teachers to deliver quality education, which profoundly affected their well-being. Teachers' well-being is an important contributing factor to quality education; it was, therefore, important to ascertain the challenges secondary school teachers experienced and how they coped amidst the school closures. A qualitative methodological approach was adopted, using an exploratory case study design to conduct this study of limited scope. In addition, purposive sampling was used to select ten secondary school teachers, five each from a public and private school in Gauteng, South Africa. The Teachers' well-being Conceptual framework gave prominence that well-being is a multi-dimensional concept that should be nurtured and provides a theoretically informed perspective of aspects of well-being. The findings shed light on the mental, physical and social well-being challenges that affected the ten secondary school teachers, the challenges they experienced transitioning to online teaching and the intrinsic and extrinsic coping strategies they used, such as social media and faith, to cope. The study illustrated the impetus for School Governing bodies to prioritise implementing coping strategies to provide support to address teachers' well-being. This research contributes to the dearth of literature on teachers' well-being during school closures in Gauteng, South Africa. It is recommended that further research is conducted to address teachers' emotional and occupational well-being and identify the support needed to assist teachers in their professional development.

**Keywords:** Secondary School Teachers, Emotional and Occupational Well-being, Coping strategies, School Closures, Lockdown



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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DBE	Department of Basic Education
ERI	Effort reward imbalance
FET	Further Education Training
ICT	Information communication technology
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
RSA	Republic of South Africa
TWB	Teachers' well-being
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WB	Well-being
WHO	World Health Organisation

# CHAPTER ONE: CONTEXTUALISING STUDY

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Teachers' well-being is considered an important contributing factor to quality education (Benevene et al., 2020; Madondo, 2021). This study of limited scope explored teachers' emotional and occupational well-being amidst school closures. The 2020 national lockdown that necessitated school closures notably impacted how teachers managed their well-being when traditional ways of teaching and learning, which had been in-person for centuries, were compromised (Meier & West, 2020). Benevene et al. (2020) and Alves et al. (2020) state that managing teachers' well-being proactively to provide quality education is imperative, as teachers are responsible for educating learners in classroom spaces. Educating learners during the national lockdown was challenging for some teachers when conventional teaching and learning methods were impacted (Meier & West, 2020). It is vital that teachers' well-being is prioritised since teachers fulfil an influential role in the lives of learners and are considered agents of change to support learners during their education journey (Madondo, 2021).

For this study, it is crucial to explain the terms *emotional well-being* and *occupational well-being* in their entirety, as the study aims to explore the effect of school closures during the National Lockdown period on secondary teachers' emotional and occupational well-being. Teachers' well-being is described as a "multifaceted concept" comprising various components, of which nurturing emotional and occupational well-being is paramount (Benevene et al., 2020, p. 1). According to Acton and Glasgow (2015, p. 101), teachers' emotional and occupational well-being involves experiencing a sense of "personal and professional fulfilment," which results in a happier disposition while experiencing work and personal life satisfaction. According to Talbot and Mercer (2018), emotional well-being is the ability to manage and regulate a range of positive and negative emotions. Similarly, Schonert-Reichl (2017) and Yin et al. (2016) state that emotional well-being involves managing stress and adapting to everyday challenges.

In contrast, occupational well-being is described as employee job satisfaction, which implies finding fulfilment in work and experiencing enjoyment (Cumming, 2017). In addition, Zacher and Schmitt (2016) state that occupational well-being includes dealing with work stress, emotional exhaustion, and balancing work and personal life. Therefore, teachers'

emotional and occupational well-being is a priority since they are responsible for the holistic development of learners, including their well-being and academic achievement (Dabrowski, 2020). There is a dearth of research focusing on the effect of school closures on secondary school teachers' well-being in South Africa and the transition from in-person to online teaching and learning, which is the impetus for this research.

Chapter 1 will provide a comprehensive overview of the research by first discussing the background of the study, the problem statement, the rationale, and the purpose of the investigation. In addition, it will discuss the research question, the aims and the objectives of the study. Thereafter, it will provide an overview of the research methodologies utilised, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3; the conceptual framework developed to inform the study, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2 and the chapter outlines.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND OF STUDY**

The outbreak of the novel Coronavirus disease in 2020 (COVID-19) has been considered “one of the largest public health crises of our time” (Lades et al., 2020, p. 902). Governments worldwide, including South Africa, implemented various measures, such as the lockdown, self-isolation, and social distancing, which impacted the lives of many individuals (Giandhari et al., 2021; Lades et al., 2020). During the school closures and the national lockdown period, teachers had to adapt and navigate a new way of teaching and educating learners using technology (Cece et al., 2022; Hascher et al., 2021). This new approach created a lot of uncertainty and stress, which impacted some teachers' emotional and occupational well-being. Unfortunately, not all teachers were equipped or trained to deliver classes online; neither were learners or parents equipped or prepared for remote online learning and home-schooling using technology and software (Cece et al., 2022; Hascher et al., 2021). In addition, most schools did not have adequate information and communication technology (ICT) resources to support distance learning (Cattan et al., 2021).

Teachers were overwhelmed initially having to teach learners using new technology and software when they did not have adequate exposure to online training methods and software (Baker et al., 2021; Chan et al., 2021; Li et al., 2020). Similarly, Besser et al. (2022) and Cachón-Zagalaz et al. (2020) highlighted how stress, anxiety and depression became more prevalent among teachers and were exacerbated due to social distancing, communication and connectivity issues experienced by learners, parents and school staff. Hascher et al. (2021) and Jakubowski and Sitko-Dominik (2021) further emphasised that

teachers' occupational well-being diminished due to the expectation placed on them to provide quality education under challenging conditions and uncertainty experienced during the lockdown period. Consequently, the lockdown affected teachers socially, psychologically and emotionally, as they experienced exhaustion, frustration, and isolation (Chan et al., 2021; Jakubowski & Sitko-Dominik, 2021).

The challenges with the lockdown emphasised that education is not only a human right but an “integral part of human society,” and the importance of ensuring that learners have access to quality education cannot be overlooked regardless of the circumstances (Kathula, 2020, p. 31). Therefore, teachers must strive for a happy medium to manage their emotional and occupational well-being during extremely challenging periods by taking cognisance of their social, psychological and emotional well-being. The central role of schools is to develop teachers to ensure that learners' academic knowledge and abilities are nurtured and to encourage teachers to thrive and aspire to lifelong learning (Hascher et al., 2021). Consequently, schools assume responsibility for contributing to a sustainable and equitable future in a globalised society (Hascher et al., 2021).

To ensure teachers thrive and flourish in their professions, schools need to prioritise their well-being, providing them with coping mechanisms for emotional and occupational well-being. When teachers' well-being is prioritised, teachers will be committed, passionate and functioning at optimal levels to navigate complex and challenging situations, such as the national lockdown (Hascher et al., 2021; Turner & Theilking, 2019). However, when teachers experience poor well-being, they will be less inclined and motivated to provide quality teaching and are more likely to leave the profession, resulting in the attrition of experienced staff due to feeling overworked and undervalued (Glazzard & Rose, 2020).

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The school closures due to the national lockdown in 2020 had a notable impact on the well-being of teachers (Hascher et al., 2021). This unexpected crisis in 2020 brought about a sense of fear and anxiety around the globe since teachers and learners had to unexpectedly adapt to a new way of teaching and learning (Spaull & Van der Berg, 2020). Most teachers had no time to plan or adjust to the new way of teaching (Spaull & Van der Berg, 2020). The lack of technology and exposure to software training to facilitate online learning disadvantaged teachers and learners, especially those from poorer schools and communities (Hascher et al., 2021; Onyema et al., 2020; Spaull & Van der Berg, 2020).

Teaching went from in-person to online, disrupting the traditional way of teaching and learning (Onyema et al., 2020; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021).

Teachers were placed under tremendous pressure to provide the same high-quality online teaching that they were accustomed to during in-person schooling (Baker et al., 2021; Chan et al., 2021; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021). Furthermore, teachers' homes became the classroom and boundaries for their private and professional life were blurred; parents contacted teachers beyond working hours, contributing to increased stress, anxiety, and frustration for teachers (Jakubowski & Sitko-Dominik, 2021). The limited research on secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being during school closures highlighted the gap in the literature which needed to be addressed. Teachers had to sink or swim, which necessitated this research since teachers are significant contributors to quality education to ensure learners' success and development.

## **1.4 RATIONALE**

Education plays a pivotal role in the lives of learners, and having a quality education system is critical to developing a "well-educated citizenry" (Peral & Geldenhuys, 2016, p. 2). As an educational psychologist in training, I believe that teachers fulfil a pivotal role in the lives of learners and contribute to their well-being. Peral and Geldenhuys (2016) asserted that many contributing factors ensure learners receive a quality education, which is why it is essential for teachers to be passionate and motivated. Subsequently, teachers are expected to play a supportive role in the lives of learners; however, if their emotional and occupational well-being is overlooked and compromised, it could have negative consequences for teachers (Fredrickson, 2013; Wessels & Wood, 2019).

Considering that teachers' well-being is a critical component of quality education, teachers' emotional and occupational well-being should be prioritised, as they are the forerunners in supporting learners (Wessels & Wood, 2019). It is important to explore and unearth what teachers' experienced and how their emotional and occupational well-being was impacted amidst the school closures during the national lockdown period. This study of limited scope formed part of an existing study that focuses on the factors that contribute to the well-being of young learners and teachers. There are limited studies in South Africa on secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being; as such, the rationale for this study was to gain insight into how secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being was affected amidst the school closures.

## **1.5 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

The purpose of this study of limited scope was to explore and understand the consequences of school closures during the national lockdown period on secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being. In addition, it sought to gain an understanding of the social, psychological and emotional challenges teachers experienced and what coping strategies were used by teachers that enabled them to cope during the school closures.

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **1.6.1 Primary Research Question**

*How did the school closures during the national lockdown period affect secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being in Gauteng, South Africa?*

### **1.6.2 Secondary Research Questions**

- 1. What challenges did secondary school teachers encounter whilst transitioning to online teaching during the national lockdown period?*
- 2. What enabled secondary school teachers to cope amidst school closures during the national lockdown period?*

### **1.6.3 Aims and Objectives**

The aims and objectives of this study of limited scope are:

#### **Aims:**

To explore the effect of the school closures during the national lockdown period on secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being.

#### **Objectives:**

- ❖ To understand the effect of school closures on secondary school teachers' well-being and how to support them better to promote well-being;
- ❖ To understand the challenges secondary school teachers faced during the transition from in-person to online teaching and how they mitigated the challenges experienced; and
- ❖ To understand what enabled secondary school teachers to cope during the school closures and national lockdown period.

## **1.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The Teachers' well-being (TWB) conceptual framework, which will be covered in more detail in Chapter 2, was developed using the Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) theory created by Siegrist (2012) and the Well-Being (WB) framework developed by Viac and Fraser (2020). The TWB conceptual framework developed for this study highlights that well-being is multidimensional and complex, and it integrates various concepts of well-being, including mental, social and physical. It also provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges teachers are predisposed to and the outcomes, such as stress and burnout, if teachers' well-being is not addressed.

## **1.8 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study made the following assumptions: Secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being was affected by the school closures during the national lockdown period. This assumption was based on the sudden transition from in-person to online teaching and navigating a new way of learning. In addition, it was assumed that secondary school teachers faced challenges during the school closures, both emotionally and occupationally. Moreover, it is assumed that teachers developed coping strategies during the national lockdown period amid the school closures that enabled them to cope during the difficult period.

## **1.9 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION**

### **1.9.1 Teachers' Well-being**

According to Hascher et al. (2021), teachers' well-being is a combination of positive factors, including job satisfaction, positive emotions and self-efficacy and negative factors, including stress, feeling undervalued and lack of job satisfaction. Teachers' well-being is considered a significant contributing factor to quality education and the ability to meet teachers' and learners' needs and expectations (Benevene et al., 2020).

### **1.9.2 Emotional Well-Being**

According to Charles (2010, p. 1070), emotional well-being is "the ability to self-regulate one's feelings and emotions." It involves having positive moods and high self-esteem or

values (Barry et al., 2017). Additionally, emotional well-being encompasses coping emotionally, adapting to everyday life, and managing stress (Yin et al., 2016).

### **1.9.3 Occupational Well-Being**

Occupational well-being is described as employee job satisfaction, which implies finding fulfilment in work and experiencing enjoyment (Cumming, 2017). Occupational well-being could involve both positive and negative aspects. The positive element encompasses feeling valued at work and balancing work and personal life (Zacher & Schmitt, 2016). Negative factors include burnout, stress, job dissatisfaction, ill health, and emotional exhaustion (Zacher & Schmitt, 2016).

### **1.9.4 Secondary School Teachers**

According to the Department of Basic Education, [DBE] Republic of South Africa [RSA] (DBE, 2021), teachers are influential in uplifting and transforming society. Teachers require a bachelor's in education degree or a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and must be registered with the South African Council of Educators (DBE, 2021). For this study, secondary school teachers refer to the qualified teachers who teach senior phase, Grades 7 to 9, and Further Education and Training (FET), Grades 10 to 12, in Gauteng, South Africa.

### **1.9.5 School Closures**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), Coronavirus (COVID-19) was described as an "infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2; formerly called 2019-nCoV" (Giandhari et al., 2021, Terry et al., 2017, p. 234). Consequently, swift action was taken by the Government, resulting in a national lockdown and the closures of schools to limit the spread of the virus (Spaull & Van der Berg, 2020). Due to this abrupt nationwide lockdown, schooling changed, and teaching and learning moved online, despite the lack of training or preparedness.

## **1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY APPLIED TO THIS STUDY**

This section provides a brief overview of the various components of the research methodology utilised in this study. The research methodology will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, including the advantages and disadvantages of the various research components used.



### 1.10.1 Research Paradigm

An interpretivist paradigm was chosen for this study. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), an interpretivist paradigm takes into context multiple realities and adds significant meaning and value. The interpretivist paradigm allows for a deeper understanding of the phenomena being explored and lived experiences of individuals (Pham, 2018).

### 1.10.2 Methodological Approach

The qualitative research methodology approach was adopted to guide this study and assisted with answering the research question. Tracy (2019) stated that qualitative research involves the researcher immersing themselves in the research topic to generate deep insight and understand the phenomenon being explored. Table 1.1 below summarises the research methodology, which is discussed in Chapter 3.

**Table 1.1**

*Overview of the Research Methodology*

<b>Research Paradigm</b>	Interpretivist Paradigm
<b>Research Methodology</b>	Qualitative Research methodology approach
<b>Research Design</b>	Exploratory Case Study Design
<b>Selection of Participants</b>	Purposive Sampling of ten teachers from two secondary schools in Gauteng: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Five from School A (Private School)</li><li>❖ Five from School B (Public School)</li></ul>
<b>Data Collection Methods</b>	Semi-Structured Recorded Interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Supplemented by Collages</li><li>❖ Verbatim transcription of all ten interviews captured in Microsoft Word.</li></ul>
<b>Data Analysis</b>	Inductive Thematic Analysis
<b>Quality Criteria</b>	Credibility, transferability, authenticity, Dependability, confirmability, trustworthiness
<b>Ethical Consideration</b>	Informed consent, voluntary participation, privacy, Confidentiality and anonymity.

### **1.10.3 Research Design**

An exploratory case study research design was used to explore secondary school teachers' lived experience of the school closures during the lockdown period and how it affected their emotional and occupational well-being.

### **1.10.4 Selection of participants**

For this study, purposive sampling, a form of non-probability sampling, was used in selecting participants to adhere to the purpose of the study (Sharma, 2017). The selected participants were secondary teachers responsible for teaching various subjects from Grade 8 to Grade 12 who spoke English and had to transition to online teaching amidst the school closures during the national lockdown period.

### **1.10.5 Data Collection**

Data collection involves using qualitative methods to collect data and address the research question for the study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The data collection methods used included individual semi-structured interviews and collages. These methods generated in-depth information and highlighted themes relevant to the phenomenon under study (Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Van der Westhuizen & Maree, 2010).

### **1.10.6 Data Analysis**

The generated data were analysed using inductive thematic analysis. This involved “identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (‘themes’) within qualitative data” (Terry et al., 2017, p. 297). This study followed Braun and Clarke’s (2021) six phases of thematic analysis to gain an in-depth understanding of the data collected from participants. In addition, the collages were analysed thematically to enhance the perspective of teachers’ well-being gathered from the interviews.

## **1.11 QUALITY CRITERIA**

Qualitative research is “multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach” when seeking to understand phenomena or individuals' lived experiences (Aspers & Corte, 2019, p.142). To establish trustworthiness in qualitative research, various quality criteria should be adhered to, including authenticity, transferability, credibility, dependability and confirmability (Leung, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2019).

## **1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical considerations are essential when conducting research, especially when working with human participants (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). Therefore, various measures were considered to ensure that the research was ethically conducted and that the researcher adhered to all protocols (Pearson et al., 2015). Written permission was obtained from the Ethics Committee, the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria and the Gauteng Department of Education. In addition, written permission was obtained from principals and teachers of the two selected schools to conduct the study. All parties involved were informed about the purpose of the research and the procedures involved in the data generation process. After being fully informed about the study, the teachers were provided with consent forms, which they signed, indicating their voluntary agreement, informed consent to participate in the research and permission to have the interview sessions recorded.

In addition, they were informed about their right to refuse participation or withdraw after consenting without any negative consequences during the study. Ultimately, the teachers were assured that any information shared would be kept confidential and their identities protected. If a participant became distressed, the interview would have been stopped immediately, and the participant would have been debriefed and provided with counselling service contact details. Specific measures were followed regarding data storage and records, for example, storing the recorded audio and transcripts on a password-secured device at the University of Pretoria.

## **1.13 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY CHAPTERS THAT FOLLOW**

The remaining chapters of this study were outlined as set out below to ensure a well-structured research report in which the content flows logically and in which the research aims, and questions are addressed:

### **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The literature review provides a comprehensive overview of teachers' well-being, the effect of the school closures during the national lockdown period on teachers, and learning and development. After that, the chapter focuses on the challenges encountered during the school closures and transitioning to online teaching. Lastly, it looks at the coping mechanisms that enabled teachers to cope during this period. Chapter 2 also introduces a conceptual framework that supports the literature.

### **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

This chapter details the research process used to conduct the study. It discusses the research paradigm, methodological approach and research design. In addition, it elaborates on the selection of participants, the research site, data collection techniques, data analysis and ethical domains.

### **Chapter 4: Research Findings**

Chapter 4 presents and discusses the findings gathered from the data analysis conducted through inductive thematic analysis. This approach allowed for the generation of themes and sub-themes to aid in answering the research question.

### **Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations**

This chapter will reflect on the findings presented in Chapter 4, supported by literature, and the research questions addressed. The contributions, limitations, recommendations and conclusion are discussed.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Teachers' well-being plays an essential role in providing quality teaching and developing learners' success, as teachers are involved in the holistic development of learners (Hascher et al., 2021). The literature discussed in this chapter seeks to understand the national lockdown's effect on teachers' emotional and occupational well-being in depth. The literature review will explore the effect school closures had on learning and development, the challenges teachers experienced, the transition to online teaching and learning and how those challenges affected teachers' emotional and occupational well-being. In addition, it will review what coping strategies teachers relied on to cope during the national lockdown and discuss the Teachers' Well-Being (TWB) conceptual framework, which was conceptualised from the Effort Reward Imbalance (ERI) theory of Siegrist (2012) and the Well Being (WB) framework of Viac and Fraser (2020).

### 2.2 TEACHERS' WELL-BEING

The term well-being is multidimensional; there is no one-size-fits-all definition of well-being (World Health Organization [WHO], 2013). According to WHO (2020, p. 1), "health contributes to well-being and well-being contributes to health; in addition, well-being can be seen as a concept or an entity in itself or a composite of various elements." The definition of health is "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 2013, p.4). In other words, well-being is considered a person's overall state of being and health, comprising all dimensions of well-being (WHO, 2022).

Teachers' well-being is essential to teaching quality, learner performance and achievement (Branand & Nakamura, 2016). In addition, it is associated with school effectiveness and decreased professional retention rates (Turner & Theilking, 2019). There are different dimensions of well-being; however, for this study, teachers' emotional and occupational well-being will be the main focus. Teachers' emotional well-being involves their emotional competence, which consists of them coping with stressors experienced in their profession (Braun et al., 2020; Ross et al., 2012). For example, working with non-compliant

learners and dealing calmly with insubordination, despite experiencing frustration and exhaustion (Braun et al., 2020; Ross et al., 2012). According to Ruggeri et al. (2020, p. 1), emotional well-being is “the combination of feeling good and functioning well; the experience of positive emotions such as happiness and contentment.” In addition, emotional well-being is developing one’s potential, experiencing feelings of some control over one’s life, having a sense of purpose, experiencing healthy relationships, and enjoying life not only when life is going well (Ruggeri et al., 2020).

Wang et al. (2021) and Braun et al. (2020) further reiterate that teacher emotional well-being includes teachers being able to express and reflect on emotions experienced, both positive and negative, allowing for self-regulation and the awareness of self in everyday life. It includes teachers' self-efficacy, defined as “teachers’ self-judgments which can affect learner outcomes” and their capabilities as teachers (Ross et al., 2012, p.118). However, it is not only about personal skills and teaching competencies but understanding how contextual factors, such as resources or lack thereof, can affect effective teaching and student support (Braun et al., 2020; Ross et al., 2012).

Occupational well-being is described as job satisfaction, which implies finding fulfilment in work and experiencing enjoyment, thereby feeling valued and balancing work and personal life (Cumming, 2017; Zacher & Schmitt, 2016). Consequently, retaining qualified and experienced teachers has become an important issue as high turnover rates have become a concern (Parker et al., 2012). The balancing act between work and well-being is challenging, indicating that professional, personal, and interpersonal success is linked to high levels of occupational well-being (Parker et al., 2012; Ruggeri et al., 2020). However, if work and well-being are managed holistically, it will increase productivity and creativity (Parker et al., 2012; Ruggeri et al., 2020).

Four main aspects contribute to teachers' occupational well-being: working conditions, professional competence, working in and with communities, and job satisfaction (Laine et al., 2017). In addition, occupational well-being could involve both positive and negative aspects; the positive aspects encompass but are not limited to enjoying work and having good working relations with colleagues and learners (Parker et al., 2012; Zacher & Schmitt, 2016). In contrast, the negative aspects will lead to low productivity and a lack of motivation (Parker et al., 2012; Zacher & Schmitt, 2016). If teachers enjoy their work and have support during stressful times, they will be able to cope with stress and high workloads and manage their overall well-being (Bottani et al., 2019; Laine et al., 2017).

If occupational well-being challenges are not addressed, it can lead to low job satisfaction and burnout due to repeated exposure to job stressors (Bottani et al., 2019). As a result, these negative aspects will impact teachers' emotions toward their work and their interactions with learners (Ross et al., 2012; Zacher & Schmitt, 2016). Consequently, burnout results in high-stress levels and absenteeism, high attrition rates, poor job performance and physical and emotional exhaustion, thereby negatively affecting the quality of education learners receive (Cumming, 2017; Laine et al., 2017). In addition, burnout can result in depersonalisation, lack of achievement and feeling incapable (Bottani et al., 2019; Laine et al., 2017). Hence, occupational well-being and mental health have an established relationship; it is essential to note that mental well-being is not the absence of mental illness but aspects of life going well (WHO, 2022).

Studies highlight that poor emotional and occupational well-being can lead to teachers having less patience, disengaging and developing negative relationships with learners (Bottani et al., 2019). Consequently, teachers can experience depersonalisation toward learners, resulting in low productivity, demotivation, and indifference (Bottani et al., 2019; Laine et al., 2017; Ruggeri et al., 2020). Thus, it is vital to highlight the importance of addressing and prioritising teachers' well-being to ensure learners receive quality education and teachers are occupationally satisfied.

## **2.3 THE EFFECT OF SCHOOL CLOSURES DURING THE LOCKDOWN ON TEACHERS**

Teachers play a very influential role in the lives of their learners and are considered the front-line workers responsible for engaging learners and facilitating learning (Dabrowski, 2020). Some teachers have defined the core reason for their vocation choice as making a difference in learners' lives by supporting them to achieve lifelong success through constructive teaching (Engzell et al., 2021). Teachers are responsible for facilitating learners' emotional and social skill development and acknowledging differences (Cochran-Smith et al., 2020; Dabrowski, 2020). In addition, teachers also need to remain objective and collaboratively work with other teachers and parents to ensure the holistic development of each learner (Cochran-Smith et al., 2020; Dabrowski, 2020; Yao et al., 2020). Due to the ever-changing times, teachers are expected to work in and with diverse classroom environments, including "learners' ability levels, socio-economic backgrounds and demographic composition," which can be challenging and stressful (Viac & Fraser, 2020, p.

7). Furthermore, research shows that teaching strategies and methods adopted and implemented by teachers impact learners' academic performance and achievements (Blazar & Kraft, 2017; Yao et al., 2020).

Teachers have always had challenging roles and responsibilities long before the national lockdown. According to Viac and Fraser (2020, p. 7), the responsibilities of teachers are “multiple and complex,” which was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers are responsible for educating learners to achieve academic success and providing them with skills to deal with emotional and social development to ensure well-rounded individuals (Besser et al., 2022; Cachón-Zagalaz et al., 2020). In addition, due to the national lockdown and the closing of schools, teachers worldwide had to transition to a new way of teaching, from in-person to online (Catalano et al., 2021; Jones & Kessler, 2020). Consequently, teachers and learners who were fortunate enough to have access to computers and the internet had to learn how to use online platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom and Microsoft Teams to continue teaching and learning (Jones & Kessler, 2020; Strauss, 2020). In addition, teachers had to ensure that learning materials were made available online for learners to access when required (Catalano et al., 2021; Jones & Kessler, 2020). Consequently, many teachers reported high-stress levels because they had to always be available for their learners and families (Jones & Kessler, 2020).

Many teachers and learners from disadvantaged areas often lack ICT training and skills essential for community development (Dube, 2020; Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). These deprivations were exacerbated during the school closures due to the National Lockdown period, highlighting the gap between the poor and the rich (Dube, 2020; Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). The unfortunate reality for many learners from government schools who live in disadvantaged areas found themselves excluded from schooling and unable to engage in online learning due to a lack of infrastructure, and unequal access to digital educational resources and materials, especially during the pandemic (Catalano et al., 2021; Dube, 2020). In addition, for teachers and learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, the environments they were staying in were not conducive to learning (Dube, 2020; Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). For this reason, many teachers experienced helplessness and felt they were not effectively fulfilling their roles during the pandemic, negatively affecting them psychologically, emotionally and occupationally (Dube, 2020; Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019).



## 2.4 THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL CLOSURES ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Educational institutions have a moral obligation to foster values, awareness, skills and knowledge in learners to build a sustainable future for the next generation (Burke, 2013). In addition, educational institutions' critical roles and values are often overlooked and undervalued (Burke, 2013). According to Maniar (2019), education facilitates and cultivates mental well-being and cognitive abilities necessary to survive in our competitive and ever-changing world. Today's youth are becoming not only adults of tomorrow but the future leaders of their respective countries (Bago et al., 2020; Kathula, 2020). The type of leaders we produce is determined by the education system's quality of education provided to learners (Bago et al., 2020; Kathula, 2020).

Accordingly, a school aims to “stimulate curiosity in learners' young impressionable minds and equip them with tools to become better human beings” (Deb, 2018, p. 2). There has been a shift from education just being a means to acquire a degree and become financially stable; to an instrumental tool leading to a child's holistic development (Deb, 2018; Morrison et al., 2019). The idea is that education shapes learners' personalities and teaches them to deal with life situations and develop resiliency (Deb, 2018; Morrison et al., 2019). Research shows there are multiple benefits to education, such as cognitive stimulation, which allows individuals to think for themselves and find solutions to problems; thereby leading to innovation and creativity, which can benefit not only the individual but also society and make a difference (Kathula, 2020; Van, 2020). Hence, ensuring learners receive good quality education starts with qualified and healthy teachers providing the required knowledge and information (Kathula, 2020; Morrison et al., 2019).

Globally, the education sector has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and experienced many changes (Grewenig et al., 2021). Schools were closed, and many countries went into lockdown at different times. Various teachers and learners who had access to technological resources had to resort to online teaching platforms to ensure learning continued, with limited assistance and access to the new world of online teaching and learning (Grewenig et al., 2021; Robosa et al., 2021). The school closures have been one of the most significant disruptions to the education system in history, impacting teachers, learners, and their families (Grewenig et al., 2021; Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). The sudden shift to online teaching and learning challenged teachers and learners emotionally and intellectually because of information computer technology (ICT) constraints and the

secondary effects, such as digital fatigue, due to the long hours spent using the computer (Robosa et al., 2021; Schaefer et al., 2020).

According to Tadesse and Muluye (2020, p. 160), the school closures affected approximately 87% or more of the learners and teachers, resulting in them losing out on “1.8 trillion hours of in-person learning.” The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) (2021) confirmed these findings, highlighting the significant loss in teaching and learning hours. The pandemic exacerbated social and economic inequalities, especially in South Africa and other developing countries (Engzell et al., 2021; Grewenig et al., 2021). Teachers and learners who attend private schools and come from wealthier families have better access to digital infrastructures and can adapt (Di Pietro et al., 2020; Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). However, this was not the case for students from government schools who came from disadvantaged backgrounds and were not adequately resourced, putting them at a disadvantage (Di Pietro et al., 2020; Tadesse & Muluye, 2020).

During the pandemic, the interruption of face-to-face learning in schools raised many questions about the consequences for learners’ and teachers’ ability to learn and teach (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). Research showed that globally about “50% (826 million) of learners had no access to a computer and internet connectivity at home and approximately 56 million learners could not use their mobile phones due to lack of data and some not having a mobile phone in Sub-Saharan Africa” (Tadesse & Muluye, 2020, p.165). According to Engzell et al. (2021) and Kuhfeld et al. (2020), learners and teachers had difficulty adjusting to online learning platforms and solutions. They found it challenging to keep themselves accountable, and effectively monitor and complete assessments (Engzell et al., 2021; Kuhfeld et al., 2020).

Despite finding possible solutions to keep the education system running, due to a lack of internet connection and, at times, electricity, teaching and learning were hampered (Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). The lack of educational materials and poor training in online learning methodologies resulted in many teachers and learners from developing countries, such as South Africa, being negatively impacted as they lost valuable teaching and learning time (Di Pietro et al., 2020; Tadesse & Muluye, 2020).

## **2.5 THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED TRANSITIONING TO ONLINE TEACHING**

The COVID-19 pandemic placed many demands on teachers; apart from the additional workloads and difficulty adapting to a blended learning approach, teaching virtually and providing emotional support to learners added another complex dimension during the lockdown as a result of the pandemic (Baker et al., 2021; Engzell et al., 2021). According to Gurung (2021), teachers experienced difficulty reaching learners who lived in disadvantaged and rural areas because of a lack of digital resources and internet connectivity. Studies showed that teachers struggled to motivate learners and maintain effective relationships with them online due to the impersonality of online learning and lack of support and training (Binu Sahayam et al., 2022; Engzell et al., 2021; Gurung, 2021). Subsequently, ensuring that learners understand and engage with the work is vital for learning in an online environment. Klapproth et al. (2020) further reiterated that not every teacher and learner had access to digital platforms, making it challenging to track learners' progress and ensure they are properly engaging with the work.

For many teachers, online learning became a burden and research showed that about 81% of teachers put in 14-hour days, which caused physical and mental fatigue (Robosa et al., 2021). As a result, teachers experienced high stress levels during the COVID-19 pandemic, and not only were teachers affected, but learners also suffered (Besser et al., 2022; Cachón-Zagalaz et al., 2020). Research studies reveal that during school closures, teachers experienced anxiety, stress, depression, and emotional exhaustion, negatively affecting their emotional and occupational well-being (Atmaca et al., 2020; Jeong et al., 2016). Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. (2021) confirmed these findings stating that the stress teachers were exposed to during the pandemic was accompanied by uncontrollable fear and anxiety, often resulting in depression and insomnia because of the uncertainty of the pandemic and the increased workloads.

In addition, Al Lily et al. (2020) asserted that the challenges teachers experienced amidst the pandemic, such as anxiety, depression, frustration, and loneliness, affected their ability to teach optimally. Meanwhile, Lagat (2021) and Robosa et al. (2021) supported the study by saying that teachers' worry and concern about their learners added to their stressors, including the emotional and psychological exhaustion teachers experienced, causing teachers to feel demotivated and unproductive and negatively impacting their well-being. Furthermore, this highlights the importance of exploring teachers' emotional and

occupational well-being amidst the pandemic and identifying better ways to enable teachers to cope.

## **2.6 THE COPING STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY TEACHERS TO COPE DURING SCHOOL CLOSURES**

Coping strategies are described as various techniques and support mechanisms that assist individuals in coping with stressors or challenging situations (Sameer et al., 2020). According to Algorani and Gupta (2022), there are four major types of coping strategies, namely, a) emotion-focused, b) problem-focused, c) meaning and religion, and d) social support, emphasising that social support, meaning-making and religion, are the strategies individuals turn to during stressful times to help them cope. The coping strategies mentioned above can also be categorised as intrinsic coping strategies, which involve individual means of coping such as faith, meditation or exercise and extrinsic strategies, which involve external support such as family, friendship, and work support (Gultekin & Acar, 2014).

Emotion-focused coping reduces the emotions associated with particular stressors but does not necessarily address the problem (Van den Brande et al., 2020). The aim is to regulate emotional distress by altering the emotional response. According to Yang (2021), using emotion to cope can result in a positive outcome; however, if not, it can result in negative consequences. Van den Brande et al. (2020, p.4) state that in contrast to emotion-focus coping, problem-focused coping strategies are “attempts to control work stress by defining and interpreting problems, planning solutions, and choosing a course of action.” This coping strategy has been most influential in tackling life’s problems, giving individuals agency over their choices (Zaman & Ali, 2019).

Additionally, spirituality and meaning-making employ cognitive strategies to process and provide a sense of purpose in specific situations (Algorani & Gupta, 2022). This coping strategy, similar to emotion-focused coping, is best applied when an individual cannot control the situation (Leipold et al., 2019). Individuals who believe in religion have spiritual beliefs about justice, values, and existential goals and may apply this copying style (Leipold et al., 2019). Furthermore, social coping strategies arise when individuals seek emotional and tangible support from the community, family and friends (Algorani & Gupta, 2022). For example, children will look to their parents and teachers for help, and adults will solicit support from their families, friends or colleagues (Leipold et al., 2019).

During the national lockdown, teachers had to use coping strategies to assist with emotional and occupational well-being, as mentioned above by the various authors. Yuliana (2021) proposed meditating, journaling and using cognitive framing as intrinsic coping strategies to help balance emotional stress. In addition, Zaman and Ali (2019) suggested that to solve a problem; individuals must ensure they have all the information to make an informed decision by documenting problems and brainstorming with peers to find solutions before implementing solutions. Furthermore, Lai et al. (2020) indicated that some individuals found strength in religion to cope and stay positive during the lockdown. Li et al. (2020) stated that social media platforms helped some individuals remain connected to friends and family.

Teachers' social life became enmeshed in work during the national lockdown, causing anxiety and stress; their homes were turned into shared workspaces forcing them to develop and adopt coping mechanisms to assist with wellness and well-being (Hanno et al., 2022; Mari et al., 2021). The terms wellness and well-being are used interchangeably regarding coping; however, the concepts are not the same. Wellness is the positive steps taken to address mental, social and physical deficiencies that contribute to well-being, "something everyone seemingly aims for and arguably has a right to" (McCallum & Price, 2016, p.2). While well-being is not a new concept, promoting and addressing teachers' well-being and adopting healthy coping mechanisms can assist teachers in coping with emotional and occupational challenges (Benevene et al., 2020; Baker et al., 2021).

While teachers found coping strategies for themselves, some were concerned for their underprivileged learners with no access to technology and those with learning difficulties (Harris et al., 2020; Oakman et al., 2020). Klapproth et al. (2020) suggested proactive and functional coping mechanisms, such as group communication with peers, teachers and parents, to support teachers in dealing with the rapid changes and high stress precipitated by the national lockdown. Teachers and learners accessing digital resources could manage through flexibility, adaptability, and innovativeness (Sokal et al., 2020).

However, many teachers whose emotional and occupational well-being were severely affected due to feelings of burnout, lack of support and emotional exhaustion developed unhealthy coping mechanisms or none at all (Baker et al., 2021). These coping mechanisms included turning to substance abuse, procrastinating and abandoning responsibility (Klapproth et al., 2020; Oakman et al., 2020). Baker et al. (2021) further reiterated that many teachers, as a way of coping, resigned not only because of the toll the teaching profession and pandemic were having on their well-being but also because they

felt their effectiveness as a teacher was failing, negatively impacting their self-efficacy and confidence.

The above literature explored the impact of school closures amidst the national lockdown on teachers' well-being, the transition to online learning, and the coping strategies that could be utilised. It showcased the need to create a healthy and safe work environment for teachers to verbalise their emotional and occupational well-being challenges. Furthermore, it highlighted the socio-economic significance and the type of support teachers received.

Section 2.7 will discuss the Teachers' Well-Being (TWB) conceptual framework that incorporates an assessment of the emotional and occupational well-being challenges teachers experience and the consequences if their mental, social and physical well-being is not supported.

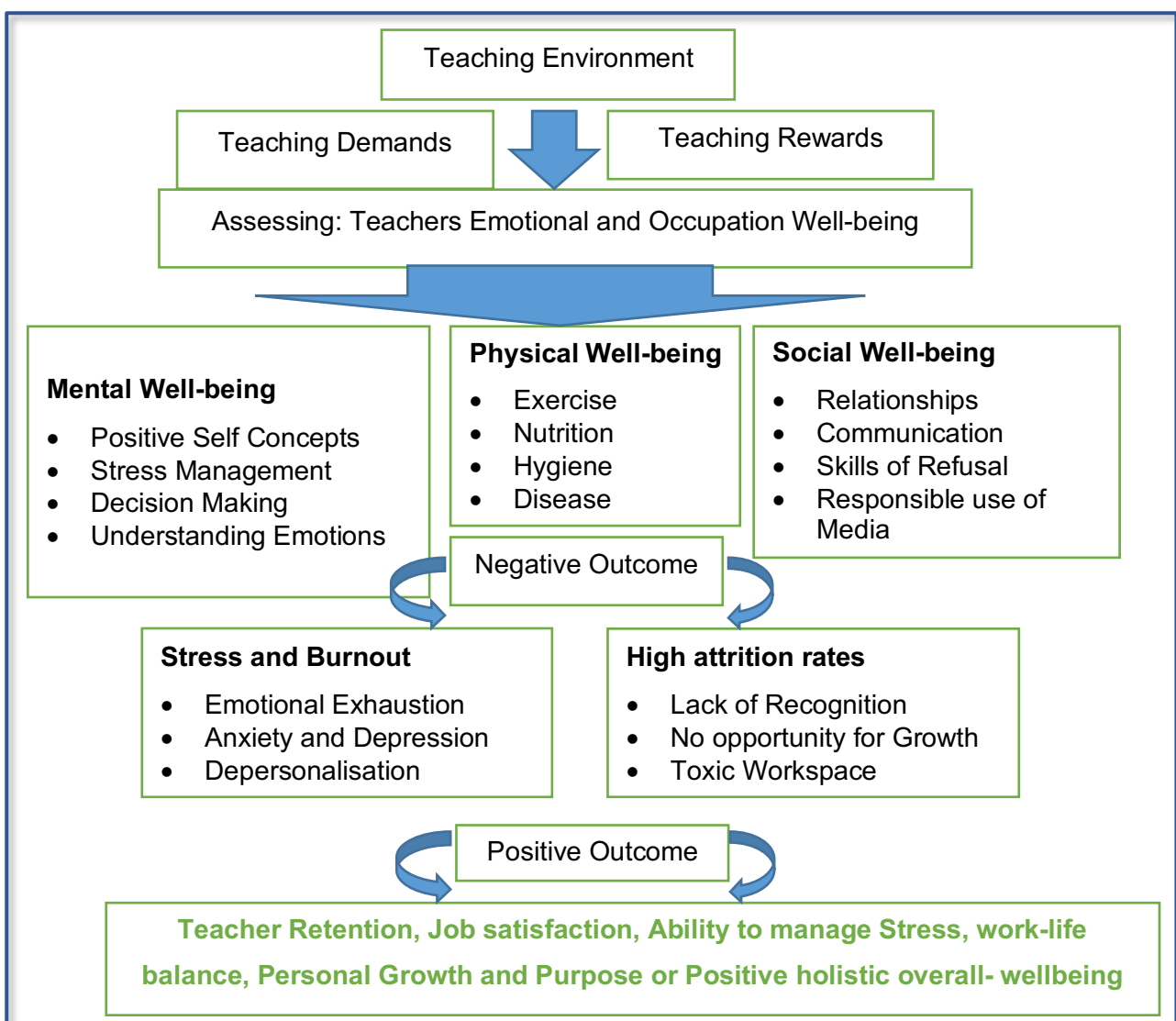
## **2.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: THE TEACHERS' WELL-BEING FRAMEWORK**

The study was guided by the Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) theory of Siegrist (2012) and the Well-Being (WB) framework of Viac and Fraser (2020) to create the conceptual framework, which is now referred to as the "Teachers' Well-Being (TWB) conceptual framework," presented in Figure 2.1 below. The ERI theory emphasises that an imbalance between effort and reward could affect a person's well-being and has been used to assess adult professionals' experience in the workspace (Siegrist, 2012). It could be applied in the teaching environment to address teaching demands and rewards, looking at the positive and negative issues impacting teachers' emotional and occupational well-being.

According to Carter and Andersen (2019), searching for the meaning of well-being has emphasised how complex it is. The increased emphasis on well-being in conversations, communities, global media, and literature in many different ways has highlighted the complexity of addressing well-being (Carter, 2016). Carter and Andersen (2019) further indicate that well-being resides in two schools of thought: hedonic, which focuses on happiness and is seen as all-encompassing pleasurable experiences, and eudemonic, which is viewed as being faithful and true to one's inner self. In Carter (2016), philosophers Hobbes and Bentham viewed well-being as "a pursuit of human appetites, [whereas DeSade had the view that it is a] pursuit of sensations and pleasure, [and Bentham claimed that] through maximising pleasure and self-interest that the good society is built" (Carter, 2016,

p. 13). In addition, eudemonic well-being addresses judgments about the meaning and purpose of one's life, as well as what contributes to happiness and what helps people flourish (Steptoe et al., 2015).

The ERI theory of Siegrist (2012) and the WB Framework of Viac and Fraser (2020) established that well-being is imperative for health and happiness to ensure a focused approach to life and living. The TWB conceptual framework identifies various dimensions that must be addressed to enhance teachers' mental, physical, and social well-being (Viac & Fraser, 2020). The ERI theory and WB Framework embody three central tenets, namely mental, physical, and social well-being, which are central to nurturing emotional and occupational well-being and necessary for teachers to excel in their roles (Siegrist, 2012; Viac & Fraser, 2020).



**Figure 2.1: Teachers' Well-being (TWB) Conceptual Framework** for teachers' Emotional and occupational well-being

The coping mechanisms highlighted under mental, physical and social well-being in the conceptual framework are relevant to ensuring well-being. They have been recommended extensively to aid and facilitate the well-being of individuals in education and other professional work environments (United Nations [UN], 2020). In addition, when emotional well-being is compromised, stress, burnout, and high attrition rates could occur, affecting an individual's ability to manage feelings and maintain a healthy mental state (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Consequently, the need to address teachers' well-being is imperative because when occupational well-being is compromised, job satisfaction, the building of relationships, and work-life balance are affected, which is necessary for the holistic well-being of teachers (Roffey, 2012; Siegrist, 2012; Viac & Fraser, 2020).

The mental, physical and social well-being challenges highlighted are supported by the theories of Siegrist (2012) and Viac and Fraser (2020), maintaining that emotional and occupational well-being is at the centre of teachers performing optimally. If teachers' emotional and occupational well-being is impacted, their social, mental and physical wellness will be affected, leading to burnout and attrition of teachers (Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Siegrist, 2012; Viac & Fraser, 2020). These adverse effects imply that teachers need to adopt healthy coping mechanisms to manage their social, mental and physical well-being. Such mechanisms can incorporate counselling, exercise and allowing a space for teachers to share lived experiences through storytelling (Acerbi, 2019; Dzurec, 2020). In adopting a storytelling approach, the "quality is not attributed to truthfulness but psychological appeal," it attracts listeners because they can share lived experiences and feel encouraged to speak about the challenges they experienced (Acerbi, 2019, p. 1).

Siegrist's (2012) and Viac and Fraser's (2020) framework highlight that well-being is a multi-dimensional concept which must address the mental, social and physical challenges individuals experience and help them develop resilience. Mental, physical and social well-being is an integral part of overall health and a holistic balance for the psychological functioning of an individual self, allowing individuals to cope and function within their environment (Bhugra et al., 2013). The school closures during the national lockdown and the sudden transition to online learning influenced teachers' emotional and occupational



well-being. In addition, the lack of emotional support, the lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and the emotional and occupational stress and anxiety highlighted some challenges teachers experienced transitioning to remote teaching (Ede et al., 2021). Furthermore, the unknowns of when schooling will return to normal and the lack of connection and communication between teachers and learners due to the lack of resources compounded the stress teachers experienced (Ede & Nwaogazie, 2022).

The TWB conceptual framework created for this study integrates various concepts of well-being and provides a comprehensive overview of the positive and negative impacts to which teachers are susceptible. Consequently, it also highlights that if teachers' well-being is not addressed, it can negatively affect schooling effectiveness and quality teaching. Thereby, it assists in understanding the effect the school closures had on secondary teachers' emotional and occupational well-being in South Africa during the national lockdown period.

## **2.8 SUMMARY**

The above literature review provides an overview of teachers' emotional and occupational well-being during the national lockdown. In addition, it discussed the impact of the school closures on teaching and learning, the challenges experienced by teachers whilst transitioning to online teaching, and the coping strategies utilised during the school closures. The literature review further discussed the TWB conceptual framework guided by the ERI theory and WB Framework to highlight the importance of addressing the different dimensions of teachers' well-being, particularly emotional and occupational well-being, to ensure quality education is provided to learners. In addition, the TWB conceptual framework looked at the different concepts contributing to well-being, such as mental, physical and social well-being. Furthermore, it explored the positive outcomes of well-being and the effect on the well-being of teachers if it is not addressed.

My research considered many international scholars' contributions to nurturing teachers' well-being (Benevene et al., 2020; Lai et al., 2020; McCallum & Price, 2016; Siegrist, 2012; Viac & Fraser, 2020; Yuliana, 2021). The research concluded that coping strategies are important for teachers to manage their overall well-being, mitigate stress and burnout, and implement retention strategies for work-life balance, job satisfaction, and personal growth. The dearth of literature affecting secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being during the school closures in South Africa, Gauteng is evident.

Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the gap in the literature and make suggestions for coping strategies to be prioritised.

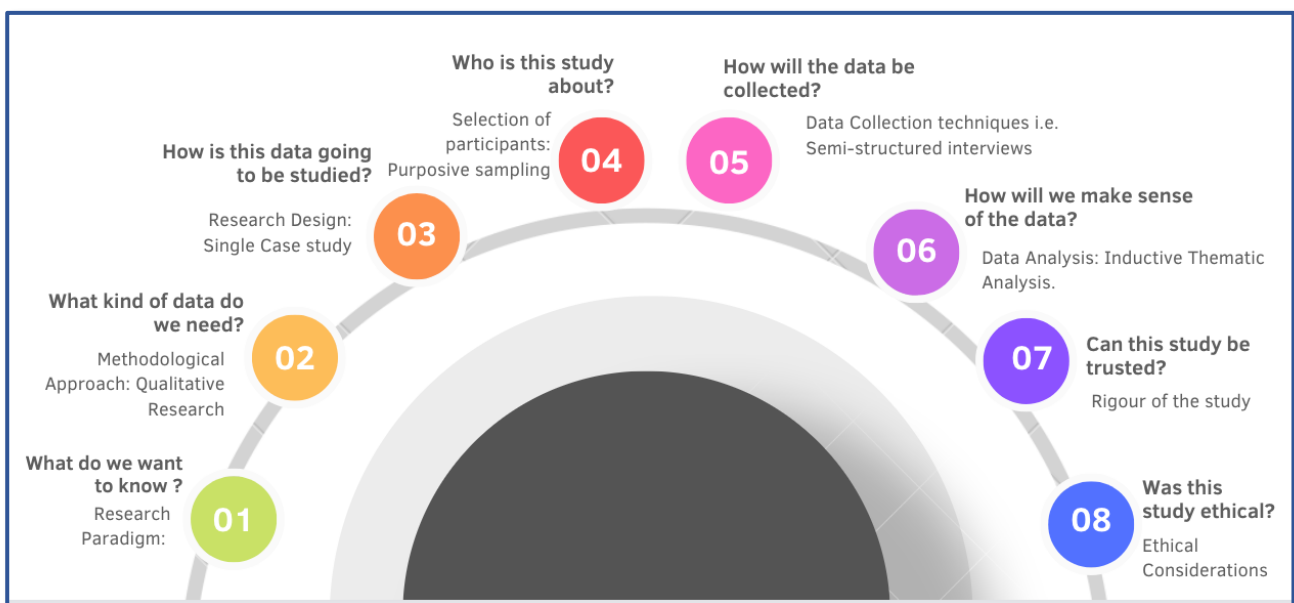
The next chapter will provide a detailed approach to the research methodology employed for this study.

# CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Teachers' well-being, the impact of school closures on learning and development, and the challenges experienced and coping mechanisms adopted to cope were discussed in the previous chapter. In addition, it highlighted the gap in the literature on teachers' emotional and occupational well-being during the national lockdown period in South Africa. It was, therefore, anticipated that this study could make a meaningful contribution to the research field by providing secondary school teachers in South Africa an opportunity to share their experience of the school closures during the national lockdown period and its effect on their emotional and occupational well-being.

In this chapter, the methodology employed for this study by providing an overview of the research paradigm and methodological approach chosen and its appropriateness will be discussed. In addition, the research design, selection of participants and data collection techniques will be discussed. Furthermore, a detailed description of the data analysis procedure and interpretation will be addressed. Thereafter, the quality criteria and ethical guidelines adhered to within this study will be discussed. Figure 3.1 below outlines the key concepts covered in this chapter and their relationship to the research study.



**Figure 3.1:** Outline of sections addressed in Chapter 3 using Canva Software

### **3.2 META-THEORETICAL PARADIGM: INTERPRETIVISM**

A research paradigm is a “way of understanding reality, building knowledge, and gathering information about the world” (Tracy, 2019, p. 38). Interpretivism involves “understanding the social world people have constructed” and embraces subjectivity (Blaikie, 2007, p. 124). It aims to provide “a perspective of a situation and to analyse the situation under study to provide insight into how a particular group of people make sense of their situation or the phenomenon they encounter” (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p. 60). It originates from a constructionist view stating that reality is socially constructed and highlights the importance of having an awareness of the uniqueness or context of the phenomenon being studied is essential (Tracy, 2019). In addition, Pham (2018, p. 3) also reiterates that interpretivism focuses on understanding “the diverse ways of seeing and experiencing the world through different contexts and cultures.” Interpretivism believes “both reality and knowledge are constructed and reproduced through communication, interaction, and practice” (Tracy, 2019, p. 40).

For this study, an interpretivist paradigm was chosen as it helped me, as the researcher, to gain insight into the participants' lived experiences. It enabled me to interpret how individuals develop meaning in their current context. Through the data collection process of semi-structured interviews and collages, I explored secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being amidst the school closures during the national lockdown. In addition, interpretivism accommodates many perspectives, experiences and versions of the truth to gather in-depth, rich information (Thanh & Thanh, 2015).

The focus of the research was to understand what effect school closures had on secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being during the national lockdown period. Interpretivism allowed me to dig deep and see teachers as research participants, not labelled objects. Furthermore, Rapley's (2017) rationale states that an interpretive paradigm is socially constructed, embraces subjectivity, acknowledges multiple realities and adds value and meaning. I gained an in-depth understanding of the challenges secondary school teachers experienced during the school closures, the coping strategies utilised and the effect it had on their emotional and occupational well-being.

### **3.3 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM**

Interpretivism advanced my approach and thinking to understand participants' subjective experiences during school closures. During the national lockdown, I gained valuable insight into the emotional and occupational well-being challenges experienced by some secondary

teachers in Gauteng, South Africa. According to Pham (2018), the advantages of using an interpretive paradigm are that it allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of individuals and assists with gathering authentic information pertaining to the research topic. Putnam and Banghart (2017) and Wellington and Szczerbinski (2007) stated that an interpretive approach provides the researcher with the space to thoroughly explore, observe and probe interviewees' feelings, thoughts and views from multiple perspectives. This viewpoint was achieved through the semi-structured interviews, the collages that interviewees created, and the follow-up conversations I had after analysing the data to confirm that the transcribed data was accurate and authentic.

Despite the advantages mentioned above regarding interpretivism, there are some challenges: One challenge includes the inability to generalise findings to the broader population, thus raising transferability issues and questions of replicating the findings (Scotland, 2012; Wahyuni, 2012). However, considering this study is qualitative, the aim was not to generalise the findings but to ensure the methods used are transferable and can be duplicated if necessary. A second challenge is the possibility of social desirability bias and researcher bias due to the researcher's interpretation of the data being subjective instead of objective. Hence, it is essential to have an external researcher analyse the data and assure the participant that confidentiality and anonymity are respected (Mack, 2010; Phothongsunan, 2010).

According to Guba (1981), these are the central doctrines of the interpretivist paradigm. In addition, ensuring participants that confidentiality and anonymity are adhered to cement the relationship of trust. This process enabled me to ensure the credibility of the research and refuted any biases about not being objective. The interpretivist paradigm used to guide this study aligns with the purpose of the research as it sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the effect of school closures during the national lockdown period on secondary teachers' emotional and occupational well-being in South Africa.

### **3.4 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

#### **3.4.1 Qualitative Research Approach**

A qualitative approach was used for this study. Qualitative research draws on constructivist beliefs and is described as "the systematic inquiry into social phenomena in natural settings" (Teherani et al., 2015, p. 669). Social phenomena are "how people experience aspects of their lives and how individuals and groups behave" (Teherani et al., 2015, p. 669).

Additionally, Doldor et al. (2017) and Mohajan (2018) assert that qualitative research is beneficial when the intention is to understand the individuals' meaning-making of events, emphasising their personal experiences. By adopting a qualitative approach, the participants are given a voice, allowing them to share their experiences (Doldor et al., 2017; Pathak et al., 2013). A qualitative approach examines people's experiences through various techniques, such as interviews or focus groups, and studies phenomena in their natural setting to assess how experiences and behaviour shape or influence lives (Hennink et al., 2020). Consequently, a qualitative approach aligns with the purpose of the study and the interpretivism paradigm selected.

The qualitative research approach is a dynamic and interactive process of data collection, analysis and theory building (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). During the research process, it is essential to be open-minded, flexible, empathetic and good at listening to create the space and opportunity for participants to speak freely and allow for understanding and new insight to emerge (Tracy, 2019). Qualitative research emphasises the meaning the participant ascribes to a phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Niewenhuis, 2016). Consequently, this aligned with the purpose of my research study, which was to understand the effect of school closures on teachers' emotional and occupational well-being during the national lockdown, making it an appropriate choice.

There are many advantages to using a qualitative research approach. Firstly, it allows for gathering rich, detailed information about "participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences, as well as interpreting the meaning of their actions" (Rahman, 2020, p. 104; Bishop et al., 2008). Secondly, it adopts broader epistemological viewpoints and interpretive techniques, which aids in understanding and a holistic view of human experiences (Doldor et al., 2017; Rahman, 2020). Additionally, Weil (2017) adds that qualitative research helps to understand different individuals' voices, meanings and experiences, which this study sets out to do. Lastly, qualitative research is an interactive approach that is flexible in structure and can help understand complex issues (Rahman, 2020).

In addressing the disadvantages of qualitative research, the first is non-generalisability due to the small sample size, thus limiting the applicability of the findings to the broader population (Rahman, 2020; Weil, 2017). Secondly, according to Rahman (2020, p. 12), qualitative research is very time-consuming and considered a "long hard journey" due to the in-depth process of interviewing, transcribing and analysing. As previously mentioned, this study did not aim to generalise findings; instead, it sought to gain in-depth insight into participants' lived experiences. Furthermore, this disadvantage allows for future

research and transferability of the study to other contexts, provided the research focus is similar (Finfgeld-Connett, 2010).

### **3.4.2 Role of the Researcher**

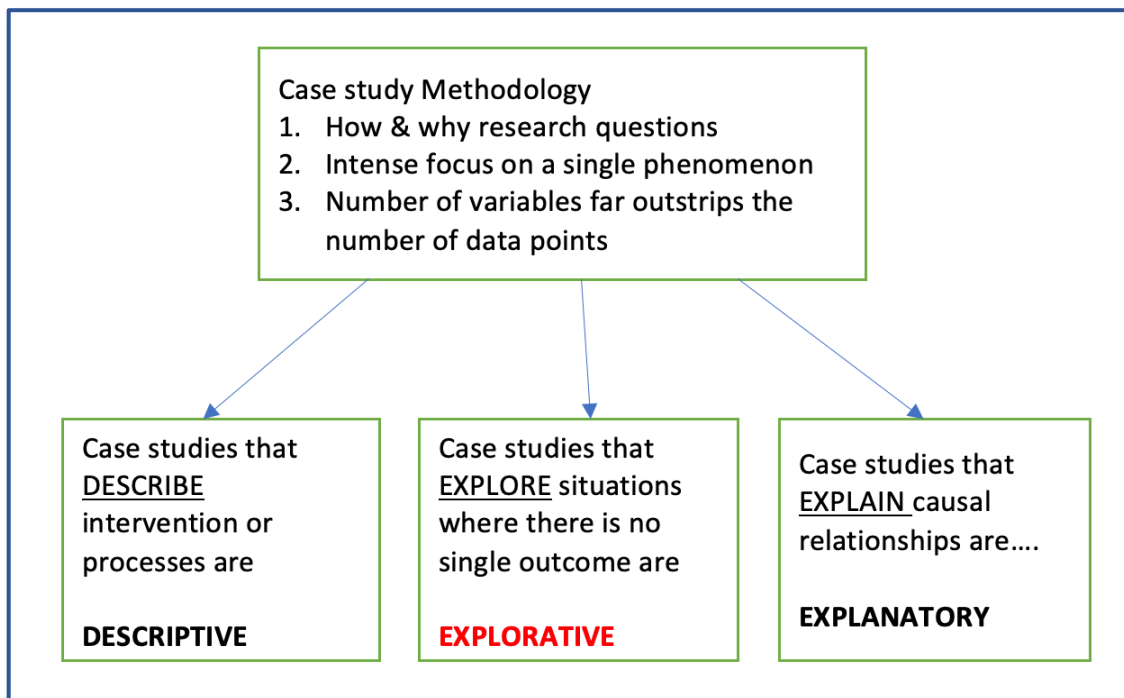
In accordance with the suggested positioning of a researcher and the nature of qualitative studies, the researcher plays a vital role in the research process as a primary research instrument and an active part of the research context (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Pulla & Carter, 2018). I played a central role as the primary investigator in the conceptualisation of the present study, as well as the data collection, qualitative analysis and writing up of the study. During the data collection process, the researcher was assisted by a research facilitator: an independent co-coder assisted with the coding process. Due to the nature of the study, a participant-orientated approach was adopted, encompassing participants being actively involved in the data collection process by creating collages on what well-being means to them and participating in semi-structured interviews and discussions. Furthermore, it required the researcher to be reflexive throughout the research process (Pulla & Carter, 2018). In addition, an in-depth-exploration and understanding of the participants and their lived experiences were required (Pulla & Carter, 2018; Sutton & Austin, 2015). One of the primary responsibilities of a researcher is to ensure that the participant's anonymity and confidentiality, as well as the information shared, is protected and safeguarded, which was adhered to throughout the research process (Tracy, 2019). In addition, I was guided by my supervisor to ensure all research protocols were adhered to avoid bias or judgement and ensure that the findings were reported with the utmost sincerity and accuracy.

## **3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A research design is a “plan, structure and strategy of investigation” adopted to examine and answer the research question of interest (Asenahabi, 2019, p. 77). A research design is selected when the researcher has identified the epistemology of the study and methodological approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gaus, 2017). Various research designs are available to conduct qualitative research; however, the design choice depends on the nature of the study and the research questions being addressed (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kazdin, 2021).

To address this study's primary and secondary research questions, the research design selected for this study was a case study. There are three case study designs:

Descriptive, explorative and explanatory, as shown in Figure 3.2 below. This case study can be classified as an exploratory case study and was deemed suitable to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of secondary school teachers during the national lockdown period and the effect the school closures had on their emotional and occupational well-being. Exploratory studies are viewed as open-ended and aim to provide insight into the phenomenon of investigation (Yin, 2014). It is, therefore, evident that this study has both descriptive and exploratory components.



**Figure 3.2:** Types of Case Study Design

### 3.5.1 Exploratory Case Study Design

A case study is “an intensive study about a person, a group of people, or a unit” (Heale & Twycross, 2018, p. 7). It investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Ridder (2017), case studies contribute to and advance knowledge and are widely used in applied sciences, including health, education and psychology. A case study research design works flexibly with emerging data and does not dictate prescribed data collection and analysis methods, thereby avoiding methodological constraints (Tetnowski, 2015). In addition, exploratory research enables the researcher to answer questions about the problem and address the how or why questions (Yazan, 2015).

Exploratory case studies seek to establish a deeper understanding of a problem which is not clearly defined (Tetnowski, 2015). They are conducted to understand the



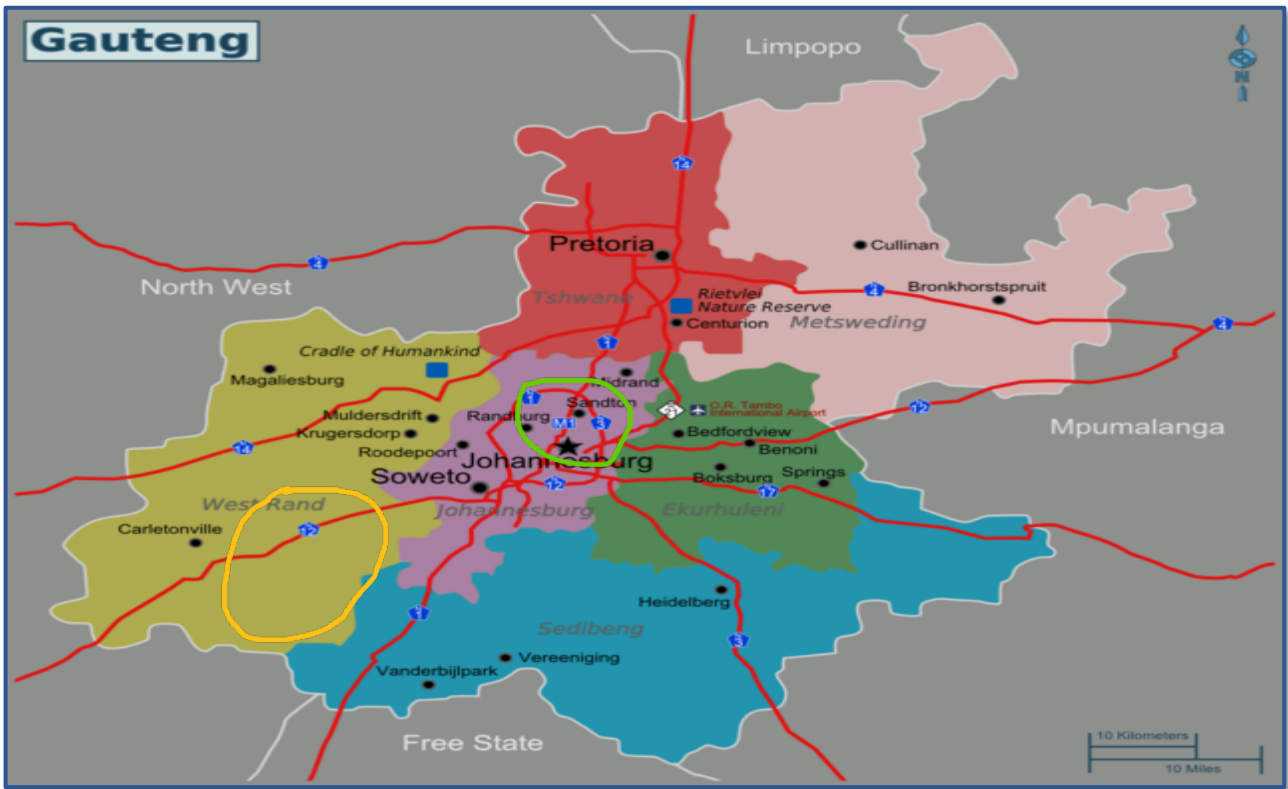
existing problem better but will not provide conclusive results. Exploratory studies are low-cost, interactive and open-ended, and there is no set of rules to carry out the research per se, as it is flexible, broad and sporadic, using more than one data collection method to answer the research questions (Flavell et al., 2019; Khatri, 2020). Ridder (2017) stated that exploratory case studies are chosen to research topics with limited knowledge or information. It applies to this study because it can provide an in-depth exploration of secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being during the school closures and lockdown period and address the literature gap. Furthermore, it "involves careful and in-depth consideration of the nature of the case, historical background, physical setting, and other institutional and political contextual factors" (Hyett et al., 2014, p. 4).

There are multiple advantages to using case study design, such as allowing for extensive exploration of the research questions being addressed and producing reliable and robust information (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gustafsson, 2017). Due to the participant insight, a case study provides rich data to be analysed in depth. In addition, case study designs can lead to theory development from the collected data and promote researcher reflexivity (Yin, 2014). The development of theory requires acknowledging your role as a researcher and examining your beliefs, values and judgements, which could influence the research being conducted (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, it is a multi-purposeful process that can be descriptive, exploratory and explanatory, allowing for a thorough investigation into the phenomenon being studied (Ridder, 2017).

In contrast, case study designs are not without criticism. One criticism is the possibility of generating irrelevant data, which could be time-consuming (Crowe et al., 2011). Another challenge is the lack of transparency and scientific rigour, which can be raised due to potential bias (Gustafsson, 2017; Tetnowski, 2015). Furthermore, single case studies can be challenging to determine the impact and generalise findings (Ridder, 2017). However, generalisability is not an issue with this study, as the aim was to gain insight and understanding rather than to generalise the findings.

### **3.5.2 Research Site**

The schools selected for the research were referred to as School A and School B to maintain confidentiality and protect the identity of the two schools. In Photograph 3.1 below, the area in which School A is located is circled in yellow, and the area in which School B is located is circled in green.



**Photograph 3.1:** Indication of where the research sites were located

School A is a public secondary school located in a township area in the local municipality of the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality. It is a school where adolescents from low socio-economic backgrounds attend. Photograph 3.2 below provides a glimpse of the school grounds and the classrooms of School A.



**Photograph 3.2:** School A's area of location and premises

School B is a private secondary school located in an affluent area in the North of Johannesburg, Gauteng. It is a school that many middle to upper-class adolescents attends.

Photograph 3.3 below provides a snapshot of the school grounds, the area and the buildings of School B.



**Photograph 3.3:** School B area of location and premises

### 3.5.3 Selection of Participants

Participant selection is essential in the research design process, as participants provide the data to address the topic and questions being explored (Maree, 2016). In qualitative research, participants are selected based on their ability to inform the research questions and understand the phenomenon under scrutiny (Reybold et al., 2013; Sargeant, 2012). Researchers use their expertise to choose specific participants on purpose, not randomly, which will help the study meet its goals and objectives (Campbell, 2020). For this study, purposive sampling, a non-probability method, was used to obtain a sample of ten secondary school teachers from two schools in Gauteng, South Africa, to participate in the research. Five teachers from a public school (School A) and five from a private school (School B) were selected to be part of the study after each school's principal shared the research information with the prospective participants.

Purposive sampling is described as selective and based on judgement, as it relies on the researchers' judgement when selecting participants (Sharma, 2017). The participants met the criteria for purposive sampling to address the research question. According to Reybold et al. (2013, p. 700), purposive sampling frames "who and what matters, implying that it is a mechanism for meaning-making and not just uncovering it." Furthermore, purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research and is considered a strategy that helps identify and select participants with expert knowledge to address the purpose of the study (Reybold et al., 2013). By using purposive sampling, I could gather rich data from teachers who had first-hand experience with the effect of school closures during the national lockdown and how it affected teachers' emotional and occupational well-being. The criteria set out below were used when selecting participants.

### The inclusion criteria for selection as a participant:

- ❖ The participants must be Secondary school teachers (Grades 8 – 12).
- ❖ The participants must have been affected by the school closures during the National Lockdown period.
- ❖ The participants must speak English.
- ❖ The participants must teach at the schools and reside in Gauteng, South Africa.
- ❖ The participants must agree to participate voluntarily and sign consent forms.

Male and female participants were included in the study. No racial, ethnic or other specifications that could potentially be viewed as discriminatory were applied in the inclusion criteria.

### The following prospective participants were excluded:

- ❖ Participants who taught Grades RR – 7;
- ❖ Participants unable to express themselves adequately in English;
- ❖ Participants who did not agree to participate voluntarily by signing informed-consent forms; and
- ❖ Participants not residing in Gauteng, South Africa or teaching at the school

**Table 3.1**

*Demographics Information Table*

SCHOOLS	GENDER	AGE	ETHNICITY
A: Public School	4 Male Teachers 1 Female Teaches	30 – 50	4 Coloured 1 Black
B: Private School	3 Female Teachers 2 Male Teachers	25 – 50	3 White Females 1 Indian Female 1 White Male

The advantages of purposive sampling include gathering real-time data and capturing participants' lived experiences (Sharma, 2017). Secondly, the selected sampling method allows the researcher to gather rich, in-depth information that can assist in identifying potential supportive interventions (Campbell, 2020; Sharma, 2017). Thirdly, according to Campbell (2020), purposive sampling enables researchers to target a niche population with similar characteristics and feelings to share their experiences.

The disadvantages of purposive sampling include the risk of researcher bias, as it relies on the researcher's judgement in selecting participants and interpreting the information gathered (Campbell, 2020; Sharma, 2017). In addition, the representative nature of a sample is difficult to defend as generalisability is questioned due to the nature of the sample size (Sharma, 2017). These disadvantages were addressed by understanding that the purpose of the study was not to generalise the findings but to gain insight into secondary school teachers' experiences of the school closures during the lockdown period.

Furthermore, the researcher utilised multiple data generation methods such as semi-structured interviews and collages to provide various points of view and allowed teachers at Schools A and B an opportunity to voluntarily take part in the study, with the understanding that their rights and privacy would be protected, as well as the schools' identity. To address the primary research question, the participants selected were secondary school teachers. Guided by the above literature, public and private school teachers were chosen.

### **3.6 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES**

Data collection involves collecting data through various qualitative methods to address the research question for the study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The data collection methods selected for this study include individual semi-structured interviews and collages. The data above collection methods enabled me to explore secondary school teachers' experiences during school closures and the effect these had on their emotional and occupational well-being. Additionally, these methods created a platform to explore the challenges teachers' experienced transitioning to online teaching and what mechanisms enabled them to cope during the national lockdown. These methods assisted in gathering in-depth information and highlighted themes relevant to the phenomena under study (Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Van der Westhuizen & Maree, 2010).

The semi-structured interviews and collages used to collect data ensured the study's rigour for eliciting data to strengthen and confirm the results. The reason for using semi-structured interviews and collages for the research strategy is to facilitate interrogation of the empirical situation to ensure the study's validity. The techniques used to collect data are discussed in detail below.

### **3.6.1 Semi-structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews create a space for dialogue between the participants and me, allowing me to understand the participants' perspectives (Al Riyami, 2015). Additionally, it permits the prompting and investigation of information that otherwise could not be observed (Al Riyami, 2015). Individual semi-structured interviews generated in-depth knowledge and understanding and allowed participants to elaborate on specific questions. The interviews, which lasted  $\pm$ 30-45 minutes each, were conducted in English and audio recorded on a password-protected electronic recording device. Five teachers from school A and five from school B participated in the interview process and consented to the semi-structured interviews being audio recorded. I was patient and open-minded, ensuring the participants felt comfortable, showed empathy and applied good listening skills.

The semi-structured interviews were guided by broad questions, which can be found in Annexure B; however, I prompted and probed throughout the interview to expand on the discussion and ensure that I accurately understood what each participant said. The interviews were recorded to capture the verbal information and allowed participants to express themselves without the hindrance of note-taking, which could be a limitation by interrupting their thought process (Yin, 2014).

### **3.6.2 Collage**

In the early 20th century, Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque introduced collage as a technique for cubist modern art pioneers (Gerstenblatt, 2013). The term collage originates from the French word *collé*,—meaning glued (Gerstenblatt, 2013). It is considered a creative art-based approach to expressing oneself and making meaning (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2011). According to Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2011) and Gerstenblatt (2013), a collage fragments space, repurposes objects to contextualise multiple realities, and allows participants' voices to be seen and heard. It is seen as a reflective process that aids in identifying emerging themes and linking them back to elements found in the interviews (Gerstenblatt, 2013).

Before conducting the interviews with the teachers, I requested them to create a collage on what teachers' well-being meant to them. The reason for utilising collages to collect data is that it provided a creative way for participants to freely share their perspectives on well-being and gain deeper insight into their experiences. For the past two decades, qualitative research has expanded to include arts-based methods, such as literary

techniques (e.g., fiction, poetry, and autoethnography), performance (e.g., dance, ethnodrama, and theatre), visual art (e.g., painting, photographs, collage, sculpture, and art installations), new media (e.g., video, blogs, and zines) as well as folk art (e.g., quilts), to represent stories and voices traditionally silenced by textual and linguistic data collection and analysis methods (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2011; Cole & Knowles, 2008).

The advantage of using a collage is that it allows the participant to express themselves and their feelings freely, which allows for greater understanding, self-awareness and engagement (Gerstenblatt, 2013). I requested that participants do a collage so it can be viewed as a researcher-generated artefact, as suggested by Merriam and Grenier (2019). Another rationale for using collage in this study is to enrich the information drawn from the semi-structured interviews, thereby allowing teachers to reflect graphically on their thoughts, attitudes, feelings, and emotions, augmenting the data from the interviews about their experiences amid the pandemic (Colakoglu, & Littlefield, 2011).

A potential challenge of using the collage is the difficulty interpreting what it means and remaining objective. This challenge was addressed by asking participants in the interview process what teachers' well-being meant to them, specifically emotional and occupational well-being, to ensure accurate data correlation. Another challenge raised by Butler-Kisber (2010) is using images from magazines or internet sources that are not the participants'; however, due to the study being for research and academic purposes and not for monetary gain, this would not be a problem for this study.

Collage-making started in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and is considered a "reflexive, participatory and embodied way of collecting qualitative data" (Vacchelli, 2018, p. 171). It is a creative method of collecting data through words and pictures that create a story (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Vacchelli, 2018). In addition, it is viewed as a form of elicitation aimed at activating memory, especially suppressed memory and memory and experience (Butler-Kisber, 2010). As indicated by Colakoglu and Littlefield (2011), visualising a collage when conducting interviews assists participants in thinking more deeply about their responses and feelings since pictures stir up memories and feelings and help with reflection.

The rationale for using collage in this study is to enrich the information drawn from the semi-structured interviews, allowing teachers to reflect graphically on their thoughts, attitudes, feelings, and emotions, augmenting the information from the interviews about their experiences during the school closures.

### 3.6.3 Outline of Data Collection Process and Site Visit Dates

Table 3.2 below displays the data collection process and procedure followed at Schools A and B. It provides an overview of the participants involved in the study and the resources used to conduct the interviews.

**Table 3.2**

*Data collection process*

<b>SCHOOL A AND SCHOOL B (GRADE 8-12)</b>	
<b>Day 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ I met with the principal and teachers of each school on separate days and explained my study and the process I intended to follow during the interview.</li> <li>❖ Prospective teachers were provided with informed consent forms to go through in their own time before deciding to participate voluntarily in the study.</li> <li>❖ These forms provided participants with more information regarding the aims and objectives of the study and what would be expected of them before they signed the consent form on the day the interviews were conducted.</li> <li>❖ The principal then provided me with the willing participants' names and a date I could conduct my research.</li> </ul>
<b>Day 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The principal of each school allocated a private room to conduct the interview where the teachers and I would not be interrupted, and privacy would be maintained.</li> <li>❖ The interviews took place the day before the schools opened for the 3<sup>rd</sup> term, which resulted in no school disruptions or teaching time being affected.</li> <li>❖ Before the interview, we discussed the participant's questions or concerns and signed the consent forms together.</li> <li>❖ I ensured the participant's privacy and confidentiality by giving them a number to identify themselves and ensuring their personal information, including their school's identity, would be kept private.</li> <li>❖ The interviews I conducted with the teachers lasted for 30 to 45 minutes.</li> </ul>
<b>Participants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Researcher</li> <li>❖ Teachers</li> </ul>
<b>Sources of Data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Semi-Structured interviews</li> <li>❖ Collages</li> </ul>



### 3.6.4 Study Timeline and Procedures

Most schools fit the study's criteria; however, teachers' willingness and availability to participate were an essential part of the criteria, so I chose Schools A and B. When I contacted the principals of these schools via email, they responded positively and agreed for me to conduct my research at the schools after they consulted with their teachers. I sent each principal from School A and School B a follow-up email of thanks and attached my consent forms and the questions I would be asking participants. An in-person meeting was set up with each school to discuss my research and the research process with the principals and teachers. This meeting allowed teachers to have the opportunity to consider if they wanted to take part in the study.

After the first meeting, the principals from each school contacted me with the five teachers willing to participate. The principal signed a consent form permitting me to proceed with interviews. Each teacher signed the consent form for the interviews and consented to use the collages before I started the interview process. I was given a date for each school before the learners returned for the start of the third term. The principal assisted me with setting up interviews with the teachers at their convenience during the period they were preparing for learners to return to school before the start of the third term. Table 3.3 provides the dates for the site visits, followed by Table 3.4, outlining the data collection procedure.

**Table 3.3**

*Site Visit Dates*

Site A: School A		Site B: School B	
Dates of site visit to School		Date of site visit to School	
Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 1	Visit 2
06-07-2022	18-07-2022	08-07-2022	20-07-2022
This involved explaining to the prospective participants what the study was about and what was required of the participants who chose to participate.	This visit included conducting semi-structured interviews with the five participants who had volunteered and signed consent forms, agreeing to	This involved explaining to the prospective participants what the study was about and what was required of the participants who chose to participate.	This visit included conducting semi-structured interviews with the five participants who had volunteered and signed consent forms, agreeing to

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be audio recorded  
for transcription.

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be audio recorded  
for transcription.

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**Table 3.4**

*Procedures Followed at each school*

<b>STAGE</b>	<b>PROCEDURES FOLLOWED AT SCHOOL A AND SCHOOL B BEFORE DATA COLLECTION</b>
1.	An email was sent to the principals of School A and School B inquiring if they would be willing for me to conduct my research at the schools with five of their teachers. Attached to the email was the information about the research study, including consent forms and questions that would be asked.
2.	An introductory meeting was held with the principal and all the teachers at each school the day after they closed for the school holidays. I discussed the study and went through the consent forms and questions, and the process to complete the collages. Potential participants were informed that the interviews would be recorded and their identities would be kept confidential, as they would all get a number identifying them.
3.	The principals from School A and School B confirmed via email that five participants volunteered to participate in the study. They indicated that I could come to the school the day before the 3 <sup>rd</sup> term started so as not to disrupt any teaching or learning.
4.	School A (Public school)– the interviews were conducted on the 18 <sup>th</sup> of July 2022 in a private interview room. The principal said it would be best to come the day before the 3 <sup>rd</sup> term starts as there would be no learners, and the teachers could give me their full attention. Each teacher was given consent forms to sign and had an opportunity to ask any questions or raise any concerns they had and were reminded that the interviews were recorded.
5.	School B (Private school)– the interviews were conducted on the 20 <sup>th</sup> of July 2022, before the learners returned from the school holidays in a private interview room. Each teacher was given consent forms to sign and had an opportunity to ask any questions or raise any concerns they had and were reminded that the interviews were recorded. No teaching or learning was disrupted through the data collection process.

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### 3.6.5 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is an inductive process which provides meaning to research rather than searching for the truth (Terry et al., 2017). It is a “process of the description, classification and interconnection of phenomena with the researcher’s concepts” (Graue, 2015, p. 8). Thematic qualitative data analysis is a method for “identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (‘themes’) within qualitative data” (Terry et al., 2017, p. 297). An inductive thematic analysis approach was used to interpret the data collected from the selected participants. This choice was feasible because it is convenient and efficient to analyse qualitative data. Additionally, thematic data analysis aims to analyse and interpret the data to ensure a “rigorous and high-quality analysis” of the phenomena (Terry et al., 2017, p. 18).

This study relied on Braun and Clarke’s (2021) six phases of thematic analysis to gain an in-depth understanding of the data collected from participants. Firstly, the six phases include the first phase of *becoming familiar with the data*, and for this study, all recorded interviews were transcribed and read through repeatedly. Secondly, *generating initial codes* involves developing a list from the data regarding topics of interest that inform the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Thirdly, *searching for themes* implies generating or constructing themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Searching for themes *means* seeking to “develop or construct patterns (themes, categories) across cases” (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 37). Fourthly, *reviewing potential themes* requires quality checking, refining, and reviewing of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Fifthly, *defining and naming themes* entails further refining the selected themes and analysing each theme's data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Lastly, *producing the report* involves writing up the findings gathered from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

The advantages of employing thematic analysis include that it is an accessible and flexible method of analysis that highlights similarities and differences (Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Nowell et al., 2017). Secondly, inductive thematic analysis can provide a rich understanding of participants’ “experiences, thoughts, or behaviours,” which this study seeks to understand (Kiger & Varpio, 2020, p. 846). Although flexibility is an advantage, it can be challenging as it can result in inconsistencies and compromise coherence (Nowell et al., 2017). The limitation will be addressed by establishing credibility by drawing credible information from the participants' original data and ensuring that the participants' viewpoints are correctly

interpreted when analysing the transcripts and data collected. Table 3.5 depicts six phases of the data analysis as per Braun and Clarke (2012).

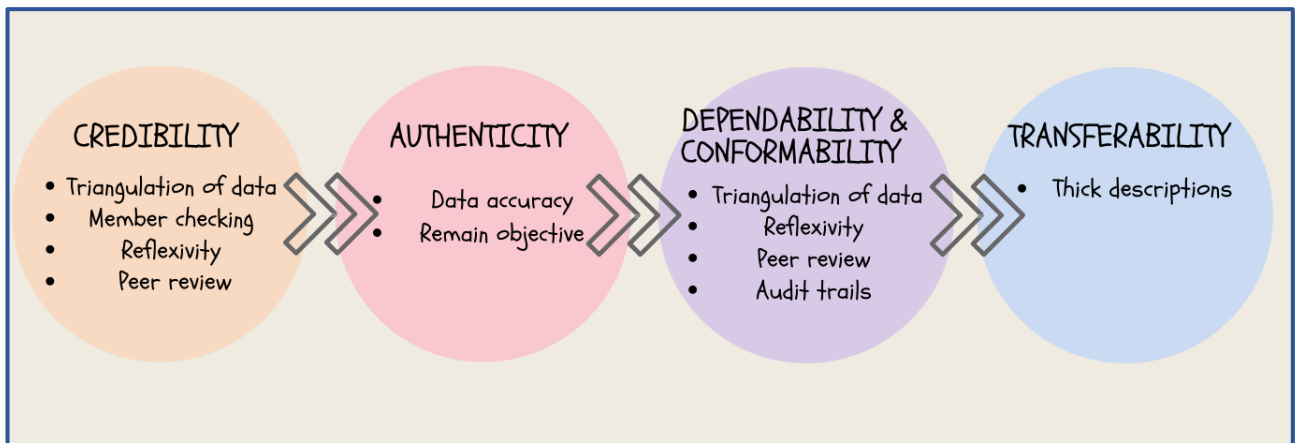
**Table 3.5**

*Stages of Data Analysis*

<b>STAGE 1</b>	<b>Familiarisation with data:</b> Applying Braun and Clarke's (2012) analysis process involved becoming familiar with the data and looking at patterns with similar meanings. This was done by repetitively listening to audio recordings and reading the transcribed data from the teachers from School A and School B. In addition, I analysed the collages on teachers' perspectives of well-being.
<b>STAGE 2</b>	<p><b>Generating codes:</b> This phase involved analysing and coding the data. All the interviews were converted into Microsoft Word and imported into ATLAS/TI.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ This process involved line-by-line coding using ATLAS/TI.</li> <li>❖ Once all the codes had been generated, the co-coder and I went through the codebook. We cleaned up the codes to ensure that the correct empirical observation was recorded and to merge the comments under the correct code if required.</li> <li>❖ After the clean-up of the codebook, I created networks and links to the codes to assist with finding themes.</li> </ul>
<b>STAGE 3</b>	<b>Searching for Themes:</b> The next stage involved creating the themes and sub-themes based on the networks that were made.
<b>STAGE 4</b>	<b>Reviewing of Themes:</b> I reviewed and refined the themes and sub-themes created with the co-coder and supervisor to ensure quality checking.
<b>STAGE 5</b>	<b>Definition and naming themes:</b> Once the themes and sub-themes were agreed upon, I reviewed all the data in each theme.
<b>STAGE 6</b>	<b>Writing up the findings:</b> Lastly, the findings were written up, and a detailed description of each theme was provided, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

### 3.7 RIGOUR OF THE RESEARCH

Research promotes the production of reliable knowledge ethically (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Trustworthiness signifies the study's rigour; four criteria assist in judging the rigour of the study: “credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability” (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017, p. 49). In addition, authenticity contributes to the trustworthiness of the study, which is reflected through the cultural, social, individual and shared sense of the reality of individuals (Tracy, 2019). Furthermore, establishing rapport with participants and being open and transparent about confidentiality allowed for collecting adequate and reliable data through audio recordings and accurate transcriptions. The step-by-step data collection process allowed for maintaining the study's trustworthiness. Figure 3.3 below indicates the strategies used to ensure each element of rigour, followed by a brief discussion on each.



**Figure 3.3:** Strategies used to ensure the rigour of the study

#### 3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility is the accuracy of the findings and the researcher's ability to accurately investigate the phenomena under investigation (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017). Credibility was achieved by using semi-structured interviews and collages to develop a comprehensive understanding of the effect of the school closures during the national lockdown period on secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being. In addition, collages and audio recordings supported the interview process, which enhanced the credibility of the data collection (Yin, 2014). The researcher was aware of potential bias and remained neutral and objective throughout the process. Furthermore, each recording was transcribed verbatim to ensure the data captured from the participants was accurate and respected.

### **3.7.2 Authenticity**

Commitment to data accuracy, transferability, and verifiable research findings is imperative for qualitative research (Alase, 2017). Authenticity refers to the objectivity of the research data gathering and ensuring the perspectives of participants' beliefs, values, insights, attitudes, experiences and culture are captured and reflected accurately in the analysis (Alase, 2017). After interpreting the data, I had follow-up interviews with participants to review the analysis, confirming that the interviews were accurately transcribed and that their thoughts were correctly communicated. Research needs to be trustworthy and authentic. The quality of the data and the ability to authenticate the findings are essential aspects of qualitative research; thus, as the researcher, it was imperative to remain neutral when conducting the interviews and reflecting on them to ensure objectivity throughout the research process.

### **3.7.3 Dependability and Confirmability**

Dependability is defined as the consistency of research findings and the researcher's effort to consider evolving conditions in the phenomenon under study, design, or approach (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017). Therefore, recording the semi-structured interviews highlighted that the data came from the participants, not the researcher ensuring dependability. Confirmability is the "steps taken by the researcher to demonstrate that the findings emerged from the data collected from the participants" (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017, p. 51). To ensure confirmability, a detailed account of the data generation process was provided and to limit researcher bias, the data, interpretation, and findings came solely from the data sources (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Confirmability was achieved through semi-structured interviews and collages with participants from one private and one public school from different social demographics, which assured the rigour of the research.

### **3.7.4 Transferability**

Transferability can be described as how well the method and findings could be applied to other situations and fit outside the study (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017). One strategy to ensure transferability in this study was to gain a rich, in-depth understanding of the research phenomena and a good understanding of teachers' experiences during the national lockdown period amid the school closures and the effect it had on their emotional and occupational well-being. Furthermore, the data generation methods could be used and employed in different settings, and field notes were taken (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017).

### **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

When conducting research, ethical considerations are essential, especially when working with human participants (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). To ensure this study was conducted ethically, written permission and ethical clearance were obtained from the Faculty of Educational Psychology Ethics Committee at the University of Pretoria and the Gauteng Department of Education before commencing any research activities. In addition, written permission was obtained from the principals and teachers of the public and private secondary schools selected to conduct the study. All parties involved were informed about the purpose of the research and the procedures involved in the data generation process before being asked to sign the consent forms.

As a researcher, it is crucial to remain objective and prevent social desirability bias by reassuring the participant that everything spoken about is treated confidentially and anonymity is respected (Leung, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Because the study explored the participants' well-being during the national lockdown period, participants were provided with counselling details in case they became distressed during the interview. During the information session provided to participants, the researcher explained the purpose and objective of the research, what would be required of the participants, and answered any questions that prospective participants might have had regarding the study or research process. Participants were also informed of the ethical principles subscribed to during the research, including:

#### **3.8.1 Informed Consent**

Prospective participants were provided with the informed-consent forms two weeks before the data-gathering days, allowing them time to familiarise themselves with the research. These forms provided participants with more information regarding the aims and objectives of the study and what would be expected of them before they signed it on the day the interviews were conducted. It also explained the research procedure and informed participants about their right to refuse participation or withdraw after consenting without any negative consequences during the study. The forms assured participants that their identifiable information would not be made public and their data would be kept confidential.

### **3.8.2 Risk-Benefit Analysis**

The risk-benefit analysis aimed to ensure that the direct and indirect benefits outweighed any risks posed by participating in the present study. Indirect benefits included giving a voice to participants to share their experiences and thoughts about the school closures during the national lockdown period. The study will contribute to the academic knowledge and the gap in the literature regarding secondary teachers' well-being in South Africa. Additionally, I envisage the following outputs from this study:

- ❖ Publishing the research in a peer-reviewed journal
- ❖ Presentations at national and international conferences

The present study was a low risk to the participants as they were not subjected to harm or any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes. Some participants might have experienced emotional difficulties during the research process when discussing their well-being during a challenging period. I was trained to use the data collection methods and to be sensitive to the research participants' needs. Participants were assured they could stop the interview at any time without adverse consequences. If a participant became distressed, the interview would have been stopped immediately, and the participant would have been debriefed and would have had access to a psychologist and/or counsellor. The same process would have been followed should they have experienced emotional difficulty *after* the research process had been completed. These services were available to the participants at no cost to them.

### **3.8.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Participants were assured that any information shared would be kept confidential and their identities protected, as they would be assigned pseudonyms.

### **3.8.4 Co-Coding**

The textual data (audio recordings) gathered using qualitative research methods were transcribed and co-coded by the researcher and an independent qualitative researcher. The co-coder and independent researcher signed confidentiality agreements to ensure that the participants' identifiable information would not be made public. The transcriptions were also anonymised after the second data collection phase by giving participants pseudonyms to protect their identities.



### **3.8.5 Incentives and Reimbursements**

Participants were not compensated for participating in this research project, and there was no conflict of interest in selecting participants.

### **3.8.6 Data Storage**

The data gathered and participants' identifiable information was stored in a safe place at the University of Pretoria (UP). Only I had direct access to all the hard copies of this material. The co-coder received an anonymised ATLAS.ti project bundle and deleted the bundle from her computer after completing the co-coding process. The electronic data was stored on a password-protected computer where only I had direct access to the information. The printed and electronic data will be stored for fifteen years in accordance with UP policy, on which it will be shredded, deleted and destroyed responsibly.

## **3.9 SUMMARY**

This chapter outlined the research paradigms, the methodological approach used, and the reasons for the choices. It further discussed the design, research site and selection of participants. In addition, the data collection and generation processes and data analysis procedures used were included. The chapter concluded by providing an overview of the strategies implemented to ensure the study's rigour and ethical considerations.

The following chapter will describe the study's findings and discuss the themes and sub-themes that emerged during the analysis.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

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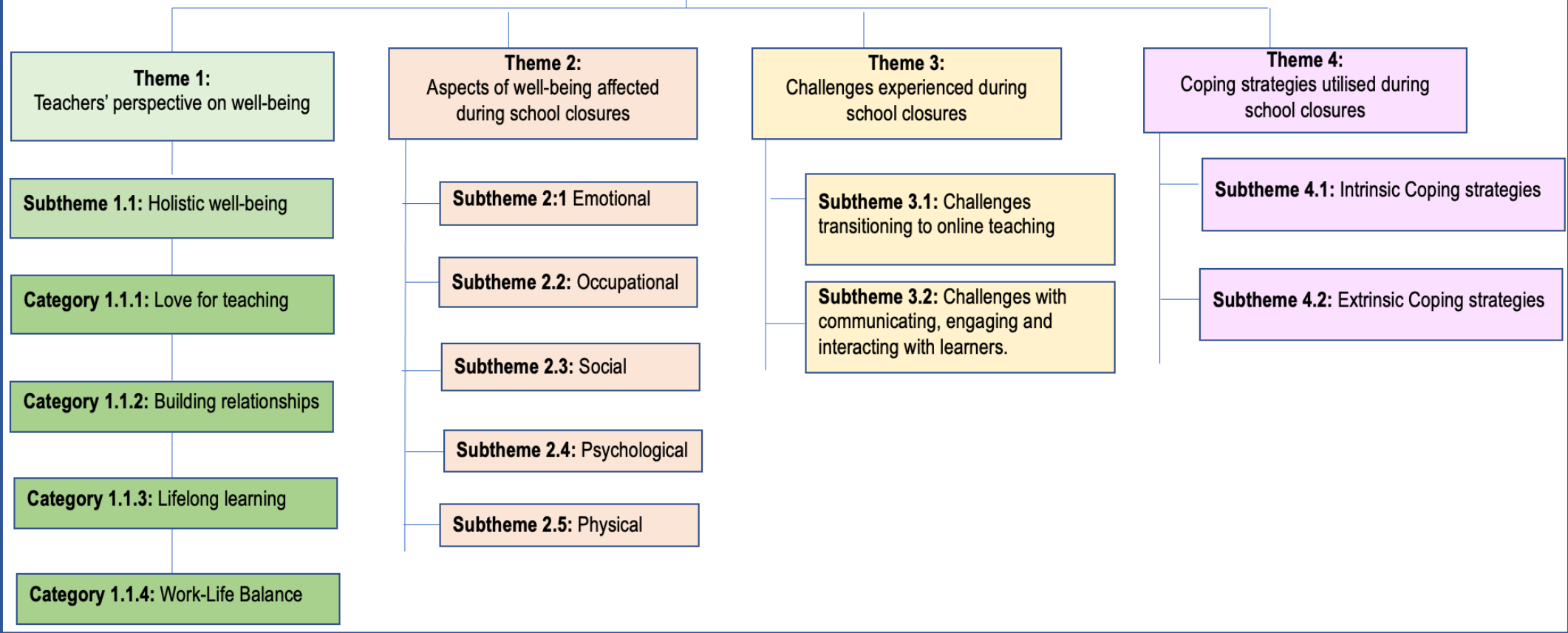
### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of the findings from the data analysis conducted. A visual representation of each theme and subtheme is provided, followed by each theme's inclusion and exclusion criteria presented in tabular format. Each of the themes and subthemes will be discussed in this section in detail. Relevant quotations, excerpts from the interview transcriptions, and collages are included and explained. Each theme and subtheme concerning the findings are discussed in this chapter.

### **4.2 RESULTS OF THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

Four themes with subthemes emerged from the generated and analysed data. The themes that emerged are 1) Teachers' perspective on well-being; 2) factors of well-being influenced due to the school closures and national lockdown period; 3) challenges experienced by secondary school teachers during the school closures; and 4) Coping strategies utilised during the school closures. The themes and sub-themes are depicted in Figure 4.1

**Secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being amidst school closures during the National Lockdown period**



**Figure 4.1:** Themes and sub-themes

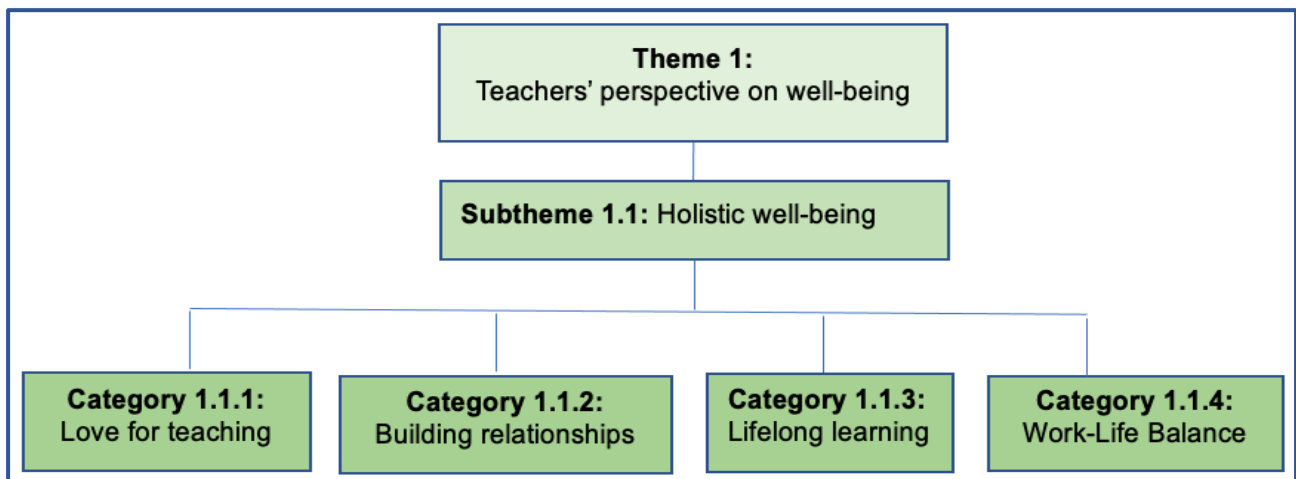
### 4.2.1 Participant identification

Participants were given numbers to identify them and protect their identities. When a quote is inserted, the participants' identities will be documented in the format P1M, a male participant, and P1F, a female participant, to indicate their gender.

## 4.3 DISCUSSION OF THE THEMES

This section will elaborate on the findings for each theme and discuss the subthemes created during data analysis.

### 4.3.1 Theme 1: Teachers' perspective on well-being



**Figure 4.2:** Graphical representation of Theme 1

Figure 4.2 reflects Theme 1 and its associated sub-themes. The term well-being is multi-dimensional and not a one size fits all approach (WHO, 2013). It is a person's overall state of being and health, encompassing all dimensions of well-being, including social, physical, emotional, psychological and occupational (WHO, 2022). This theme addresses secondary school teachers' perspectives on what well-being meant to them as teachers. During the interviews, each participant provided their views on well-being and created a collage about what teachers' well-being meant to them.

Within the theme of well-being, one subtheme emerged: namely holistic well-being, which was further fragmented into categories: (1a) Love for teaching, (1b) Building relationships, (1c) Lifelong learning and (1d) Work-life balance. Table 4.1 below provides the inclusion and exclusion criteria for each subtheme, followed by a discussion of the subtheme.

**Table 4.1**

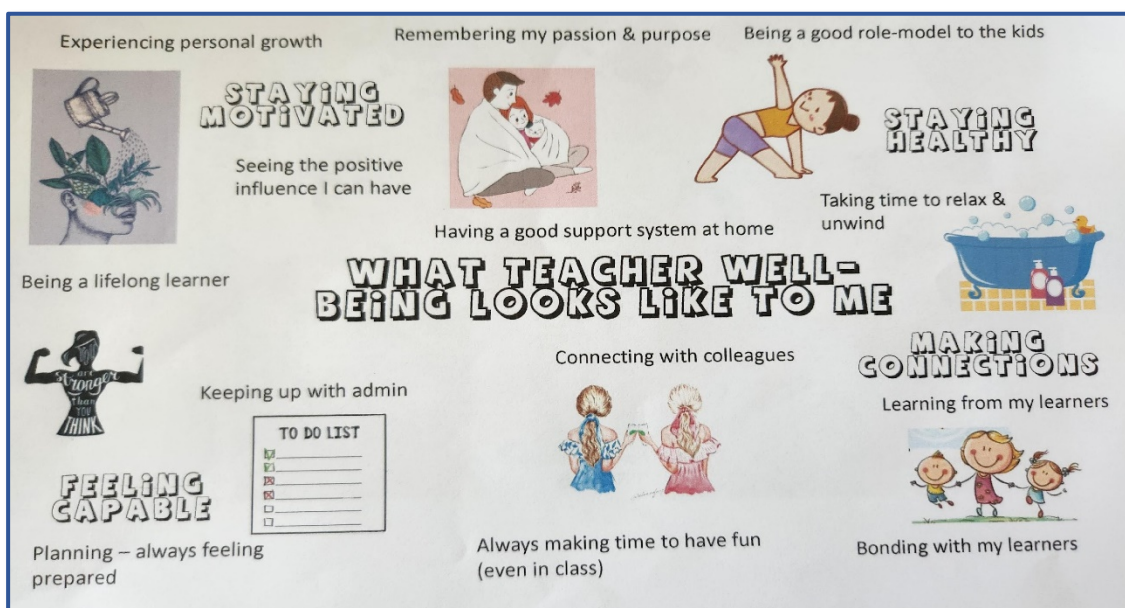
*Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the subtheme of Theme 1*

THEME 1: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE ON WELL-BEING		
Subtheme	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<b>Subtheme 1.1:</b> Holistic Well-being	Any reference to the perspective of well-being as a teacher, including emotional, physical, psychological, social and occupational factors that contribute to well-being.	Any reference that did not speak to the well-being perspective or referred to challenges or coping strategies.

**4.3.1.1 Subtheme 1.1: Holistic Well-Being**

In this context, holistic well-being refers to the emotional, physical, psychological, social and occupational factors contributing to well-being. According to WHO (2022), well-being is a person’s overall state of being and health, comprising all dimensions of well-being. When participants were asked what well-being means to them as teachers, it was evident in the interviews and the collages created by the participants that it means being holistically well and supported.

Teachers’ well-being is important to quality education, as Hascher et al. (2021) and Turner and Theilking (2019) stipulated. Photograph 4.1 provides Participant 9’s interpretation that well-being includes physical health, being organised, building relationships and ultimately being well in general:



**Photograph 4.1:** Collage–Participant 9F

In addition, some participants found the question of teachers' well-being complex and struggled to provide answers initially. However, after careful consideration, Participant 9 provided a holistic overview of well-being as seen above in Photograph 4.1 and supported by Participants 4 and 10's responses:

*"Teachers' well-being, shoo, that is a difficult question. Um, I think teachers' well-being is when the teacher is healthy in terms of physical and emotional health. It is about being financially strong and happy" (P4M., 7-10). "I guess; it's a difficult question, actually. Well-being refers to my state of mind, which refers to my emotional, mental, and physical state. In other words, how well I'm doing in those areas." (P10F., 8-10)*

#### **4.3.1.2 Category 1.1.1: Love for teaching**

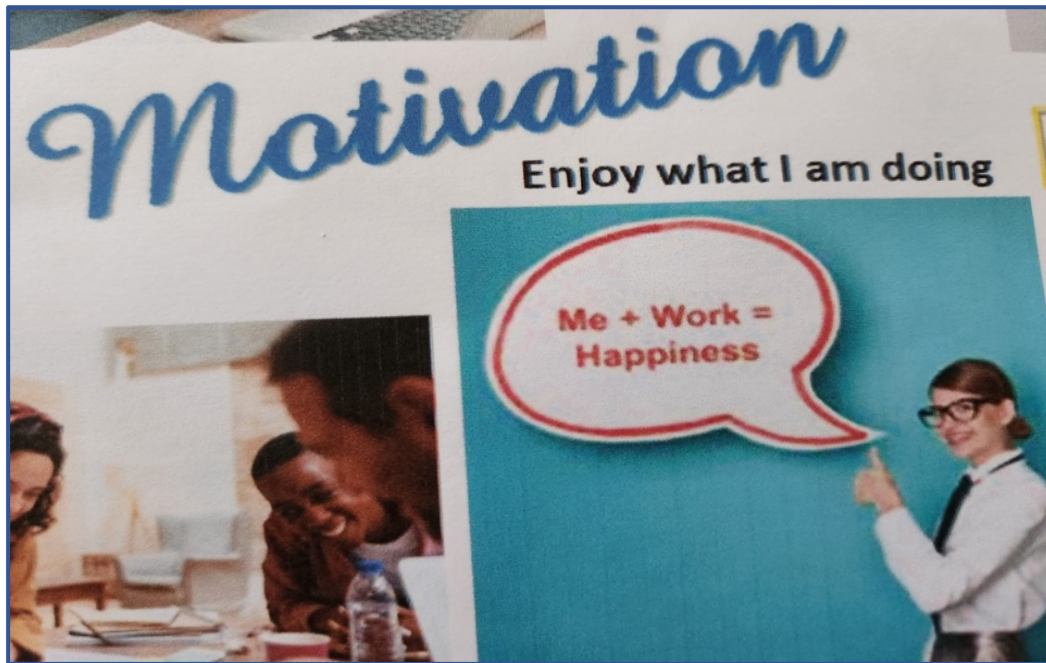
According to Fried (2001, p.44), a passionate teacher is "someone in love with a field of knowledge, deeply stirred by issues and ideas that change our world, drawn to the dilemmas and potentials of the young people who come into class every day." One of the participants referred to teaching as a calling that teachers should love and be passionate about. She spoke about her love for teaching, that the profession brings her joy and that she is happy being a teacher:

*"To me personally, I see teaching more as a calling than as a job. I have an absolute passion for teaching. And because of that, it fits into my well-being and love for teaching" (PF3., 6-8)*

Participant 1 reiterated his love for the teaching profession, which gave him joy:

*I think teachers' well-being is, being happy, being joyful. It's something you need to do and want to do. So, when I look at teachers' well-being, I think, you know, you need to love doing it, and if you don't love what you do, then your well-being will be affected. (P1M., 12-15)*

Furthermore, Photograph 4.2 exemplifies motivation and dedication to the teaching profession, and being motivated increases teachers' happiness.



**Photograph 4.2:** Collage–Participant 6F

#### 4.3.1.3 Category 1.1.2: Building relationships

Relationships are vital for “early childhood education principles, curriculum, and pedagogy” (McLaughlin et al., 2015, p. 31). Research illustrates that teacher-learner relationships are vital to a learner’s success and development; however, so is the importance of teacher-colleague relationships, which contribute to job satisfaction and well-being (Bottani et al., 2019; Cumming, 2017). Photograph 4.3 supports the view of three participants who discussed the importance of building relationships with their colleagues in their interviews:



**Photograph 4.3:** Collage—Participants 8F, 9F, 10F

Miller (2021) stated that it was important to build authentic relationships, which was essential during online teaching and learning. He indicated that it is vital to build relationships with colleagues to ensure connection and support during difficult times (Miller, 2021). This view was further supported by Participant 10, who said:

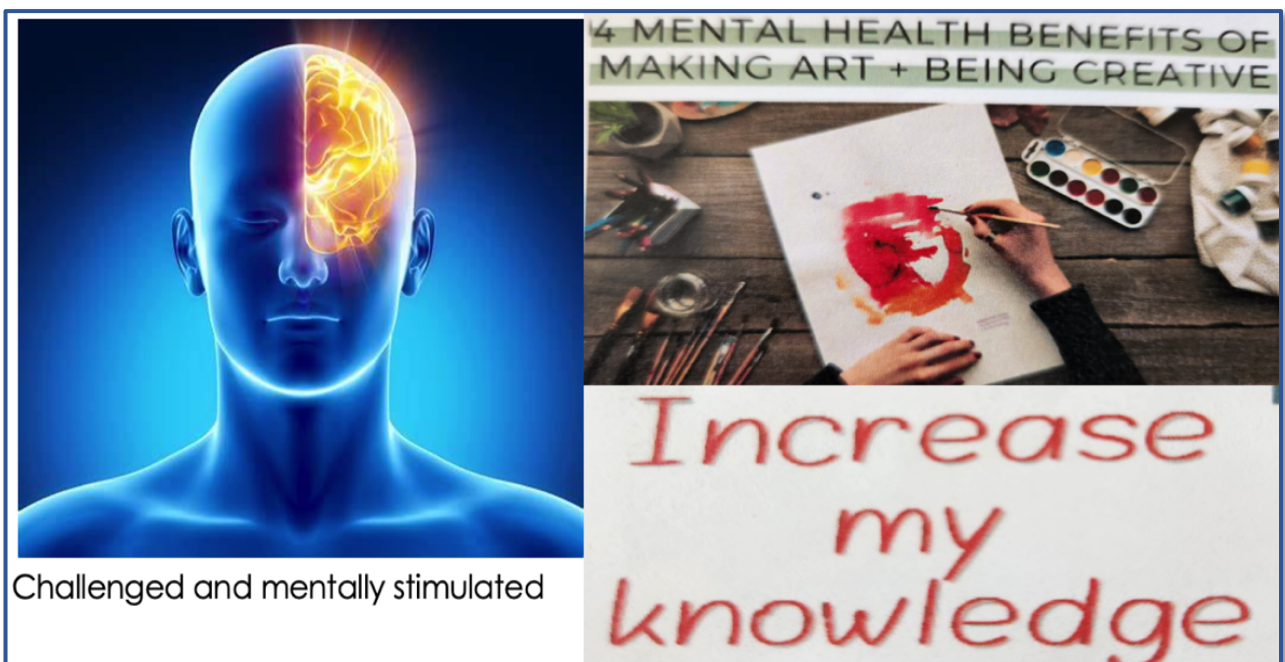
*“I know I repeat this a lot, but the relationships you have with your colleagues carry you a lot.” (PF10., 183-184)*

Participant 9 highlighted the importance of building relationships with the learners, which has a positive influence on teachers’ occupational well-being:

*I think a very big part of well-being for me comes from the kids themselves. From spending time with them, and interacting with them, I think it is a big part of why I love teaching every day is different, because the kids make it different. (PF9., 8)*

**4.3.1.4 Category 1.1.3: Lifelong learning**

Participants acknowledged the importance of continuous learning and growth. According to Kimmons (2020, p.1), “to be the best teacher possible, it is essential to be a lifelong learner.” Albert Einstein (n.d.) said: “The whole idea of being a lifelong learner is to feel alive; once you stop learning, you start dying.” Photograph 4.4 provides a visual presentation of participants reflecting on the importance of being lifelong learners as teachers:





**Photograph 4.4:** Collage–Participants 10F, 7F, 6M

The importance of continual learning as a teacher was further communicated by Participant 9, who said that learning new skills improved their well-being and kept them motivated in their profession:

*The whole idea of being a lifelong learner, so continuously improving in teaching, but also trying to expose myself to a lot of other stuff like studying a few little things along the way. That kind of thing makes me feel more motivated at the end of the day and contributes to my well-being. (PF9., 24-27)*

**4.3.1.5 Category 1.1.4: Work-Life Balance**

Johari et al. (2018) defined work-life balance as balancing work and personal life, encouraging individuals to balance their roles and responsibilities to help them manage their professional and personal lives. The literature indicated that the lack of work-life balance could lead to high attrition rates, absenteeism, poor job satisfaction, and low motivation (Viac & Fraser, 2020). However, achieving a work-life balance can lead to higher productivity, less absenteeism and attrition rates due to less stress and having time for oneself, in other words, self-care (Johari et al., 2018; Viac & Fraser, 2020).

Some participants highlighted the importance of work-life balance as a contributing factor to teachers' well-being:

*"I think well-being is about being able to separate work from personal life and developing a balance between the two" (P8F., 7-8)*

*"And obviously, having a work-life balance. I try to do school at school, and I go home, you know, wind down, relax" (P9F., 17-18)*

Additionally, developing a work-life balance and establishing boundaries could lead to better self-care, which is essential for the well-being of teachers, which is presented in Photograph 4.5, the collage created by Participant 7:

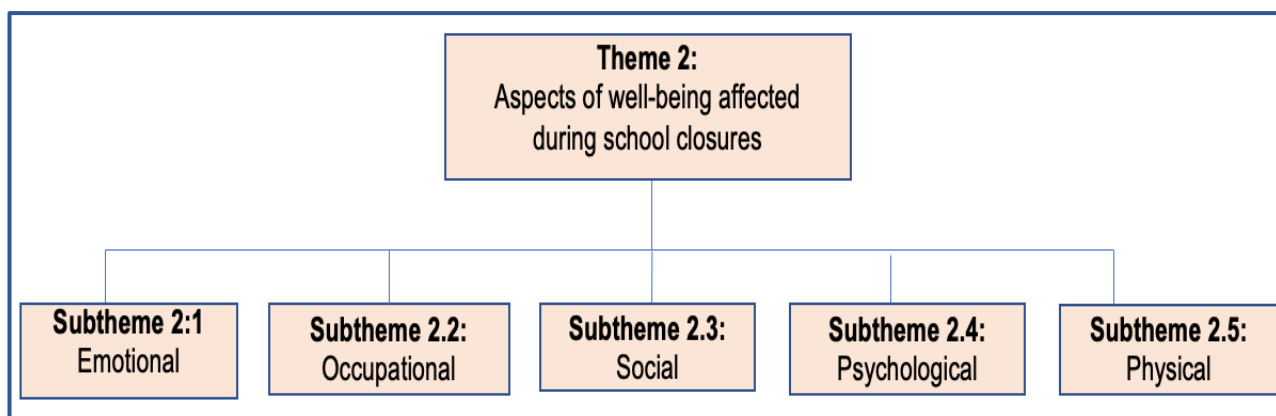


**Photograph 4.5:** Collage–Participant 7F

Based on the findings for Subtheme 1.1 and the following categories, it was palpable that teachers' well-being is imperative to ensure quality education, job satisfaction, high motivation and productivity. Although some participants found it difficult to verbalise what well-being meant, it was evident that they understood what well-being signified. The participants interpreted well-being as "a concept or an entity in itself or a composite of various elements" (WHO, 2020., p. 1). In addition, a common thread among participants was that well-being was not singular but holistic and incorporated emotional, physical, and psychological aspects.

Furthermore, the work of Parker et al. (2012) and Ruggeri et al. (2020) supported the benefits of teachers developing a work-life balance in contributing to their well-being, leading to personal and professional success, less stress and lower attrition rates. It was evident that relationship-building with colleagues and learners was essential to the teaching profession and contributed to their job satisfaction and love for the profession.

### 4.3.2 Theme 2: Aspects of well-being affected during the school closures



**Figure 4.3:** Graphical representation of Theme 2

Teachers' well-being was affected on many levels during the school closures and national lockdown. Theme 2 provides a discussion on the aspects of teachers' well-being that were impacted during school closures; it encompasses five subthemes that emerged, namely: 1) Emotional, 2) Occupational, 3) Psychological, 4) Physical, and 5) Social. Table 4.2 below provides each subtheme's inclusion and exclusion criteria, followed by a discussion of the subthemes.

**Table 4.2**

*Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the subthemes of Theme 2*

THEME 2: ASPECTS OF WELL-BEING AFFECTED DUE TO THE SCHOOL CLOSURES		
SUBTHEME	INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
<b>Subtheme 2.1:</b> Emotional well-being	Any reference to aspects that influenced emotional well-being	Any reference to aspects that influenced occupational, psychological, physical and social well-being
<b>Subtheme 2.2:</b> Occupational well-being	Any reference to aspects that influenced occupational well-being	Any reference to aspects that influenced emotional, psychological, physical and social well-being
<b>Subtheme 2.3:</b> Social well-being	Any reference to aspects that influenced social well-being	Any reference to aspects that influenced emotional, occupational, psychological and physical well-being
<b>Subtheme 2.4:</b> Psychological well-being	Any reference to aspects that influenced psychological well-being	Any reference to aspects that influenced emotional, occupational, physical and social well-being

THEME 2: ASPECTS OF WELL-BEING AFFECTED DUE TO THE SCHOOL CLOSURES		
SUBTHEME	INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
<b>Subtheme 2.5:</b> Physical well-being	Any reference to aspects that influenced physical well-being	Any reference to aspects that influenced emotional, occupational, psychological and social well-being

#### 4.3.2.1 Subtheme 2.1: Emotional Aspects

Emotional well-being involves being able to regulate feelings and emotions, as well as being able to manage stress precipitated by everyday life (Barry et al., 2017). If emotional well-being is affected, it can lead to depression, anxiety, and an inability to manage stress (Yin et al., 2016). Participant 3 communicated that she was very fearful of contracting the virus and of spreading it to loved ones at home, as well as to friends and colleagues:

*I was Frantic; I was frantic. I think it was the 25th or the 26th of March. Yes, I was scared for my health. And I think my family feared for me as well; they would not let me out, you know, because they know that I have a comorbidity; anything could happen. So, it wasn't an easy time. (P3F., 91-92)*

Participant 1 voiced the emotional turmoil he experienced being worried about contracting the virus:

*The constant worrying took an emotional toll. Man, I think all of us had this fear: Am I the next person that's going to contract the virus? So, to me, it was more about the fear that a staff member would get the virus, and even in my case, I am more worried about taking it home because I do not have comorbidities, but my family does. So that affected me emotionally. (P1M., 24-28)*

Teachers had to continue teaching during the school closures and the national lockdown to ensure they covered the syllabus. Learners' homework and exams had to be graded, and Participant 7 expressed feeling overwhelmed, stressed and anxious having to manage workload:

*"It was a very stressful time like I feel a lot of people say they feel rested, and I was just stressed, and I don't know" (P7F., 33-34)*

According to Participant 8, the stress and anxiety felt were tangible upon returning to school:

*When I got back to school, it felt like this whole mountain coming crashing down on my shoulders. When I realised, well, now they're expecting us to make up the lost time in no time at all. Uhm, I actually felt that my anxiety levels were at its worse than in previous years. It was an anxious time.* (P8F., 108-111)

Consequently, Participant 4 felt guilty and helpless for not being able to provide the same level of quality teaching online, as they did in person due to the school closures:

*"Emotionally, I felt guilty; I felt that I was doing a disservice, pertaining to the learners and letting them down"* (P4M., 82-83)

Participant 9 expressed feeling guilty not being at school and needing to keep busy:

*And then there was like this weird guilt I felt because no one could see what I was doing. So, I was like; I must make sure that I'm actually busy the whole day because, you know, I can't just sit and, like, watch an episode of something. I need to make sure that I am doing what I am supposed to be doing, even though no one is watching.* (P9F., 171-175)

The uncertainty of how long the school closures and lockdown would last was very frustrating for Participants 5 and 6. They felt confined at home and emotionally drained by the uncertainty and inability to teach learners in a conventional classroom:

*"I also felt frustrated, especially during the lockdown, because I was not able to teach properly; I felt like I was losing my purpose and value as a teacher"* (P5F., 92-93)

*It got frustrating after about two or three weeks. It got really, really frustrating because of all that uncertainty, despite the comfort of being at home, working from home and all that. There was always this constant doubt and fear, and do not know what was going to happen, and it was emotionally draining.* (P6M., 33-36)

Participant 4 expressed feeling loneliness and depression, which affected him emotionally:

*"I think, at times, you felt alone. Um, even though you had people around you, you felt alone. I think the other thing is that you did not want to get too attached because you could lose people"* (P4M., 171-173)

Furthermore, Participant 3 shared that she experienced depression during the school closures, which affected her emotionally:

*So, I was definitely depressed and emotionally tired; there were just some days I could not get out of bed. I would cry constantly. I was depressed about being at home, not being in the classroom, and not being able to teach in person and physically be there for the kids. (P3F., 107-110)*

#### **4.3.2.2 Subtheme 2.2: Occupational Aspects**

Cumming, (2017) describes occupational well-being as an aspect of job satisfaction and the ability to manage work stress and pressures. It is about finding fulfilment in work and experiencing enjoyment, thereby feeling valued and balancing work and personal life (Zacher & Schmitt, 2016). However, if the negative aspects of occupational well-being are not adequately addressed, it can lead to low job satisfaction, high stress, and burnout due to repeated exposure to job stressors (Bottani et al., 2019).

Subtheme 2.2 highlights the negative and positive aspects of occupational well-being that impacted teachers. Participants mentioned being stressed, anxious and concerned for learners' well-being and their job security. Participant 7 felt uncertain about the future, questioning what would happen when schools reopen and how it would affect them professionally:

*“Occupationally, it was very frustrating because of the unknown of the future and not knowing when we would go back to school. Initially, the lockdown was only for a few weeks; then it turned into months” (P7F., 70-72)*

Participant 10 described feeling dissatisfied with her working situation during the school closures due to the impersonal online teaching methods, and the lack of contact with the learners was demotivating:

*There were moments where I felt that if I had a good lesson, and the kids were involved, then yes, I was happy. However, as soon as you have a lesson where no one responds, or the kids don't show up, or anything like that, my job satisfaction on an occupational level was affected. I would be demotivated and unhappy. If I am honest, I didn't have job satisfaction. (P10F., 126-130)*

Furthermore, participants communicated feeling undervalued and replaceable, which affected their occupational well-being:

*“At times, I felt I was replaceable and undervalued, which was not a great feeling”*  
(PF3., 40)

*So, I feel that teachers, in general, can really feel replaceable, and I don't think that I'm in that mental state where I want to be a teacher forever. I think, at the moment, my job is a bit mundane; it is not where I see my happiness.* (P8F., 190 192)

When schools reopened, the learning gaps were apparent, and rules and regulations to stagger students' return exacerbated the situation (Engzell et al., 2021). Participants were concerned about their learners' well-being; they felt they could not provide adequate support online with the resources they had available, which affected their occupational well-being. Participant 3 expressed concern about learners feeling disillusioned and spoke about counselling learners and encouraging them:

*And I think what made it worse was some of the kids felt equally as frustrated and unhappy. You know, because of not having our teachers at school, not being able to learn under normal circumstances. Many of them wanted to drop out, so I basically had to, um, you know, talk to them, counsel them, convince them that it is important that they hang in there and see things through.* (P3F., 23- 27)

From a positive perspective, participants mentioned that they learned new skills, such as teaching online and using social media platforms to distribute work and improve communication with learners:

*“I think one of the positives was, we started using technology. During this period, we started learning different techniques of communication with students. I think we as teachers had to upskill ourselves”* (P4M., 115-117)

Participant 6 reinforced the positive aspects of learning new skills during a crisis and how it sharpened his problem-solving skills, which were valuable at the time:

*So, problem-solving, I can say that was a positive skill that I learnt during the lockdown because we were in a crisis. And because of this crisis, as an educator, I had to find ways to improvise. So, we developed new skills of how to teach if we could not teach the normal way. My skills in improvising were sharpened during that era because I wasn't so good at PowerPoint or Virtual Teams meetings, you name it. I wasn't good, but I learnt and developed my skills in that regard. So, really, that was a positive. (P6M., 212-218)*

#### **4.3.2.3 Subtheme 2.3: Social Aspects**

Social well-being can be described as building positive personal and professional relationships in one's life (Kohls et al., 2021). It involves feeling a sense of belonging and feeling relationally connected within a community space (Shiba et al., 2022). In addition, if an individual's social well-being is neglected, it could lead to feelings of loneliness, disconnection, and isolation (Kohls et al., 2021; Shiba et al., 2022).

In this context, social well-being refers to loss of connection, frustration, struggles with social distancing and inability to build relationships. Furthermore, it looks at the national lockdown's positive and negative effects on relationships. Participants expressed a loss of connection with colleagues, learners and friends during the school closures due to the lack of engagement and interaction:

*So socially, it affected me in the sense that I could not interact as I did before COVID. You know, we party, we go to families for dinner, we visit each other in the hospital when we are sick and show support, and now we could not do that. You go to church, and when you go to church, you interact, and I could not do that, so my social circle became smaller; that is how I was affected socially. (P2M., 381-385)*

Participants 1 and 3 mentioned the struggles and frustrations of the social distancing rules, which affected how they interacted on a social level with family, friends, and colleagues but also being fearful of spreading the virus:

*Man, at first, during the hard lockdown, that affected me because I am a person that likes to socialise; I need to speak and engage with others. Although we had WhatsApp groups, that is totally different from speaking personally to someone, having that in-person contact, hugging and all of that. I really did not enjoy being restricted socially.” (P1M.,177-181)*



*“So, um, socially, it was difficult, you know, not being able to interact with family members as before and having to keep your distance due to the fear of spreading or contracting the virus.” (P3F., 156-158)*

Participant 10, who joined the school at the beginning of the national lockdown, expressed how they did not have the opportunity to build relationships with their colleagues, which affected them socially, as they did not have time to foster professional relationships:

*So, I just started at the school, and then suddenly, we were in lockdown, and schools closed. So, on a social level, for most of us at the school, because I think there were only two teachers who were not new in the school, and the rest of us were all new that year, we could not build relationships with our colleagues. So that definitely affected us and me socially. (P10., 147-151)*

However, participants expressed that their relationships with their families and close friends were strengthened, which resulted in them appreciating one another more:

*As I mentioned, my personal relationships grew with close family members and with my boyfriend during the lockdown because we were confined to a space where we were forced to deal with each other. And I was very lucky because my boyfriend was with me visiting my parents on the farm, and that helped us build our relationship to the point where we're married now. (P8F., 142-146)*

The importance of family and relationships mentioned by Participant 8 above was supported by Participant 4:

*I had my close friends, and we were tight. So, in terms of that, that solidified that I'm still human. I'm still alive. I still have relations. I think the small group of friends I had kept me grounded socially because we would come together, we could forget for a few moments, laugh, smile, and share our frustrations, which was important because the frustrations did not build up on the inside. The time together always made us appreciate our families more and the time we had together. (P4M., 229-334)*

#### 4.3.2.4 Subtheme 2.4: Psychological Aspects

Psychological well-being pertains to how a person feels about themselves, their self-esteem and their sense of worth (Randall et al., 2021). It speaks to experiencing positive feelings and emotions, such as happiness and the ability to be mentally well despite adversity (Greenier et al., 2021). However, if a person's psychological well-being is neglected, it could lead to experiencing negative feelings such as sadness or doubt (Greenier et al., 2021; Randall et al., 2021). Psychologically the lockdown affected some participants' mental well-being in that it affected their work performance and had a ripple effect on their personal life, as highlighted by Participant 2:

*The lockdown really affected me negatively because you are not your best self in terms of how you perform, how you interact, how you cope with difficult situations and a plethora of other life issues that always impact you as an individual. It really affected me psychologically. (P2M., 69-72)*

Participant 3 stated that the inability to perform optimally in the classroom as a teacher affected her psychologically and caused her to feel stressed:

*Shoo, I was really stressed, hey. I found that I was not performing as I should have, and I felt guilty for not being at school, which affected me psychologically. And I felt worse because someone else that was not qualified had to jump in and take over an entire Grade 12 group each, which wasn't easy. I felt I couldn't support the teacher that was teaching in my place because I didn't know how because it was a total, just totally new thing. (PF3., 174-178)*

Consequently, Participant 7 experienced feelings of sadness affecting her psychologically and was concerned about learners missing their friends and attending school:

*Uhm, the school closures affected me, I would say, in a negative way. Like I felt very down and out and especially for the kids seeing them missing school and missing their friends. It made me very sad, actually. (P7F., 65-67)*

Participant 9 said that she prides herself on what she does as a teacher; however, she felt as though she was failing, which affected her psychologically:

*"I take pride in my work, and during the lockdown, it affected me mentally because I felt like was not doing enough and not doing things well enough. It made me feel inadequate"* (P9F., 164 -166)

Upon returning to school under lockdown restrictions, Participant 4 communicated feeling exposed, not being in a safe space anymore where they could take time for themselves if they were having a tough day:

*I think the other thing was; I did not even have my classroom where I could be based, you know. Maybe you have a tough day you can retreat to the classroom, and it was tough because, as a teacher, we started rotating. So, you go to one class, and you must rush to the next class. So, I think, ja, psychological, that took a toll. You didn't have a place where you could go and break down, where you could go and recoup, and that was hard. (P4M., 194-199)*

Participant 5 expressed the need to have psychological support at school to assist teachers during the transition period back to school:

*"Uhm, maybe if they actually had counsellors on site to assist the teachers, that would have been helpful, especially for those who were struggling" (P5M., 202-203)*

#### **4.3.2.5 Subtheme 2.5: Physical Aspects**

According to Randall et al. (2021), physical well-being is about feeling physically healthy, being active, and moving the body without physical limitations. It includes fuelling your body appropriately, with good nutrition, having good quality sleep, and being healthy (Randall et al., 2021). This subtheme looks at how the physical well-being of secondary school teachers was affected during the school closures, both negatively and positively, in terms of their physical health and behavioural choices.

Participant 1 verbalised that the national lockdown allowed him to focus on being healthy; it made him realise the importance of being fit and healthy and not taking being healthy for granted. For example, this participant went through a health and lifestyle transformation:

*I think physically; I realised that obesity was a danger to my health, especially when I got sick with COVID, and I had problems breathing. I realised that I had to start losing weight. At that time, I was 125kgs. Uhm, For the last, let's say, a year now, I have lost 15kgs. So, COVID made me start to realise the importance of my health. (P1M., 162-165)*

Participant 2 mentioned that his hygiene improved as he became health conscious:

*“So, the lockdown made me more conscious now in terms of health and general personal hygiene. Honestly speaking, it really improved my personal hygiene” (P2M., 535-536)*

According to Syed (2020), when smoking or using any substance, overdoing physical activity to cope or trying to escape challenging situations is referred to as avoidance which can be harmful. Participant 6, on the other hand, mentioned how the national lockdown negatively affected his physical well-being and indicated that he adopted bad habits, such as smoking and stopping exercise altogether:

*I didn't use to look like I look now (Laughs). Uhm, one of the things, ironically, is that during the pandemic and the cigarette ban, I started smoking again, which was horrible. I just stopped exercising; I used to jog five kilometres three times a week. I wasn't a bodybuilder or anything, but I was really fit. But, ja, COVID-19 changed all that. (P6M., 143-147)*

Participant 9 indicated that she increased her physical activities during the lockdown, which improved her fitness:

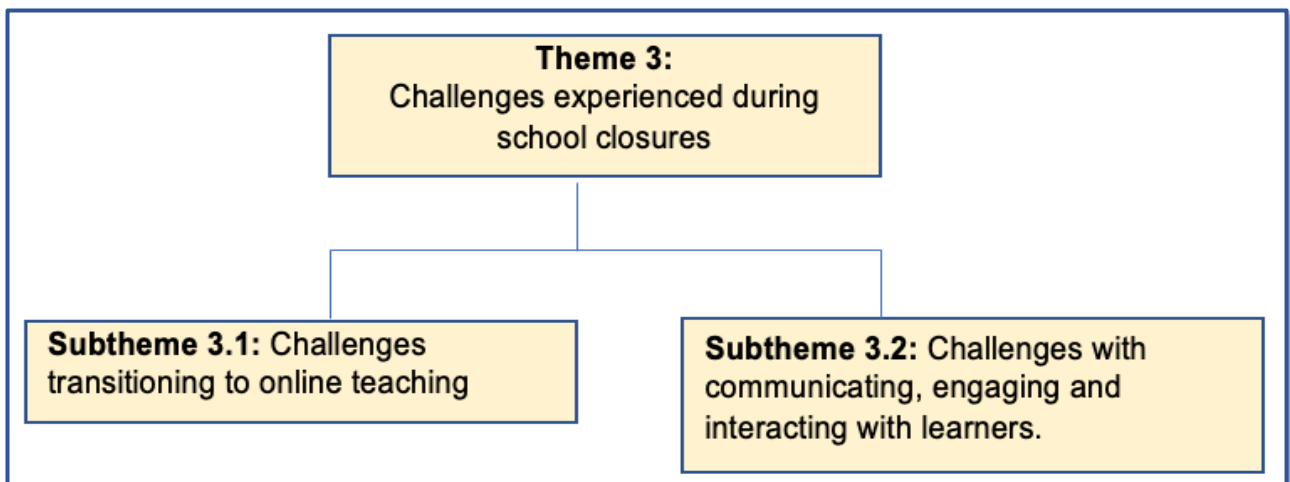
*I was probably the healthiest and fittest that I've ever been because I am really lucky that I could train at home and use the equipment that we had. We've got a treadmill and some weights, amongst other fitness props. So, I was on the treadmill every day just because it made me feel like I was doing something outside and being active. (P9F., 220-223)*

Based on the findings, the school closures during the national lockdown positively and negatively affected secondary school teachers' emotional, occupational, physical, psychological, and social well-being. Interviewed participants expressed fear of contracting or spreading the COVID-19 virus and infecting family members, especially those with comorbidities. They admitted to feelings of guilt and helplessness not being physically present at school, which left them stressed and anxious.

Additionally, participants' job satisfaction was positively and negatively affected; on the one hand, they developed new skills by learning to teach online and on the other hand, they found teaching online quite impersonal. Furthermore, upon transitioning back to school, some participants felt they did not have a safe space where they could be vulnerable, especially after a tough day. Lastly, on a physical level, some teachers became more health

conscious, while others retreated, became more sedentary, and turned to vices like smoking.

#### 4.3.3 Theme 3: Challenges experienced by Secondary school teachers during school closures



**Figure 4.4:** Graphical representation of Theme 3

The school closures were disruptive to all stakeholders involved in education, including teachers, learners, parents, the school governing body and the Department of Basic Education (Grewenig et al., 2021; Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). The sudden transition from in-person to online teaching presented some challenges for teachers and learners. These challenges stemmed from a lack of access to technology, inadequate training on online teaching and difficulty communicating and engaging with learners effectively (Robosa et al., 2021; Schaefer et al., 2020).

This theme, throughout the findings, addresses the challenges secondary school teachers experienced during school closures. The interviewed participants highlighted various challenges encountered, such as learners being unable to make up for missed lessons, hence not meeting the curriculum requirements, and teacher and learner absenteeism when schools reopened. In addition, there were feelings of isolation, disconnection and disruption in learning, for example, when students would not engage or were not present online.

Within the theme of challenges experienced, two subthemes emerged: 1) the challenge of transitioning to online teaching, and 2) the challenge of communicating, interacting, and engaging with learners. Table 3.4 below provides the inclusion and exclusion criteria for each subtheme, followed by a discussion of each subtheme.

**Table 4.3**

*Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the subthemes of Theme 3*

<b>THEME 3: CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS DURING SCHOOL CLOSURES</b>		
<b>SUBTHEME</b>	<b>INCLUSION CRITERIA</b>	<b>EXCLUSION CRITERIA</b>
<b>Subtheme 3.1:</b> Challenges transitioning to online teaching	Any reference to lack of access to resources, teaching online or using social media to teach	Any reference not related to transitioning to online teaching or speaking to challenges with communicating and engaging with learners
<b>Subtheme 3.2:</b> Challenges communicating and engaging with learners	Any reference to challenges with communicating with learners, engaging or interacting and lack of time	Any reference not related to communicating with learners, engaging or interacting and lack of time or speaking to lack of access to resources, teaching online or using social media to teach

#### **4.3.3.1 Subtheme 3.1: Challenges transitioning to online teaching**

In this context, challenges transitioning to online teaching refer to using technology to teach online due to the school closures and not doing it effectively because many learners did not have access to technology to access the materials shared online. According to Tadesse and Muluye (2020, p. 160), the school closures affected approximately 87% or more of the learners and teachers, resulting in them losing out on “1.8 trillion hours of in-person learning”.

Some teachers found it challenging to adapt to a blended learning approach since teaching virtually and providing emotional support to learners added another complex dimension during school closures (Baker et al., 2021). Similarly, the uncertainty of not knowing if learners were focused during online teaching sessions frustrated teachers because they did not have their cameras on (Klapproth et al., 2020).

Participants 10, 5 and 9 concurred with Baker et al. (2021) and Klapproth et al. (2020):

*It was difficult; it was very challenging teaching online. We had to use computers and were dependent on technology a lot, and learners having access to technology, which was not always the case. So, that was a massive challenge. There had to be a lot more collaboration between you and the child; there had to be more involvement because I could not see their faces. So, it was challenging because I never knew a hundred per cent if the child was actually learning. (P10F., 22-27)*

The following statement by Participant 5 further expressed her frustration, as many learners did not have access to technological resources, and she could not teach effectively:

*“I found teaching online to be a challenge because not all the learners had access to computers or had internet or data to use their phones, so I was not able to teach properly”*  
(P5M., 26-28)

Consequently, the sudden transition to online teaching and inadequate training left many teachers feeling overwhelmed and unsure:

*Um, well, I think most of us just felt a little bit out of our depth with trying to incorporate technology and teach online, and the biggest difficulty was not all kids always had access to all kinds of technologies.* (P9F., 34-36)

#### **4.3.3.2 Subtheme 3.2: Challenges with communicating, engaging, and interacting with learners**

The findings revealed that participants found online teaching impersonal and that it hampered their teaching ability. Teachers struggled to motivate and maintain effective relationships with learners due to the impersonal nature of online teaching and the lack of support and training from school governing bodies (Binu Sahayam et al., 2022; Engzell et al., 2021; Gurung, 2021). This subtheme refers to teachers' inability to connect with the learners effectively prior to school closures. It addresses teachers' struggles to engage with learners, reduced teaching time's impact on learners' development, the inability to make up for lost teaching time, and the gaps created in education during the school closures.

Participant 4 found online teaching to be impersonal and said that it hindered his ability to teach effectively:

*“Yes, my ability to teach was affected in the sense that I could not do what I normally do or have one-to-ones with my learners. It was a struggle to engage with the learners and teach them properly”* (P4M., 44-46)

Participant 9 mentioned the difficulty in trying to communicate and connect with learners, and often being unsuccessful, unsure of whether they were doing their work:

*There was no communication or connection with the kids. Oftentimes, it was parents sending us messages for work, and you are not even connecting with the kids. A lot of the kids did not bother to do any of the work. So, you did not know what was happening with them. (P9F., 86-89)*

Participant 6 further highlighted the lack of interaction and how disconnected they were from their learners:

*Uhm, I like connecting with my kids, as a teacher, not just in the classroom but during break times as well. There is so much that you can pick up through body language, and you can even see that kid is not okay today; there is something wrong, and you know, maybe extend some comfort, or try to see if you can help or find out what is going on that kind of thing. And that was completely lacking during the lockdown. (P6M., 42-46)*

Participant 10 mentioned that the school closures created strain and stress for teachers, gaps in learning for students, and they could not make up for lost time due to technology inefficiencies:

*I think the school closures created a lot of strain and stress now for us as teachers. And the reason why I say that is our learners have gaps, massive gaps, and you cannot make up for the lost time. (P10F., 218-220)*

Furthermore, almost two years after the school closures, Participant 2 mentioned that they are still trying to make up for the lost teaching time:

*"Honestly speaking, right now, we are running 'helter skelter' trying to catch up on lost time" (P2M., 443-444)*

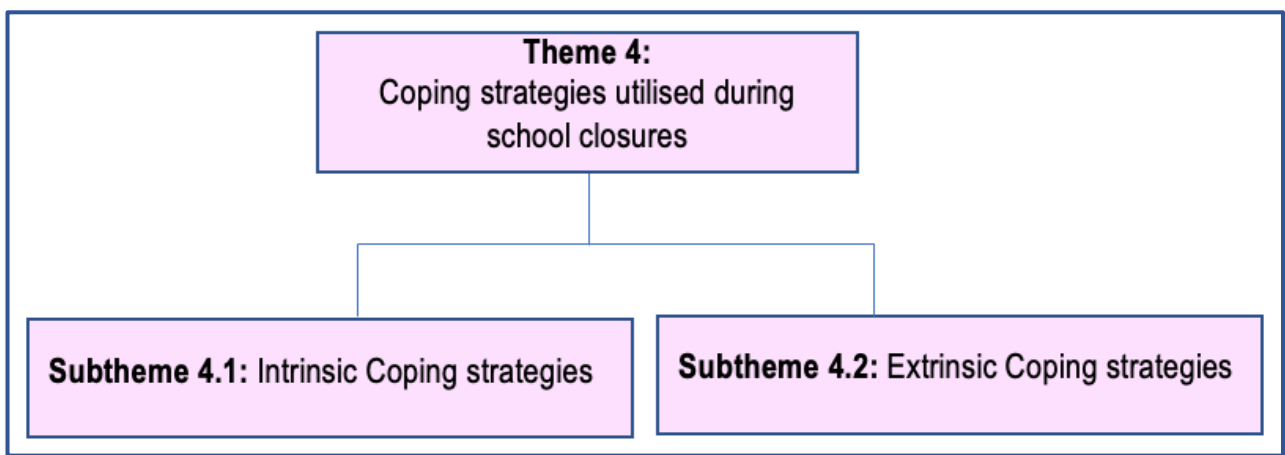
The findings from Subthemes 3.1 and 3.2 indicated that secondary school teachers faced many challenges that affected them emotionally and occupationally. The sudden transition to online teaching was difficult as participants were not adequately trained to teach online. Despite having solutions to continue teaching, many learners did not have access to technology, the internet, Microsoft teams and Zoom to access education sessions or



materials (Di Pietro et al., 2020; Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). Consequently, participants' ability to connect, engage and communicate with their learners was affected negatively.

In addition, the research findings highlighted that teachers were frustrated since they were not always sure whether learners were engaged during online classes. The literature supported the findings that some teachers felt stressed and worried during school closures due to being unable to make up for the lost teaching time and the inability to interact with the learners about their well-being (Atmaca et al., 2020; Robosa et al., 2021).

#### 4.3.4 Theme 4: Coping strategies utilised during the school closures



**Figure 4.5:** Graphical representation of Theme 4

Teachers worldwide had to learn to use different coping strategies to manage the pressures they experienced during the school closures and the sudden transition to online teaching (Hanno et al., 2022; Harris et al., 2020; Mari et al., 2021). A range of coping strategies was utilised during the lockdown period, including social media dependence, family support, gardening and exercising (Iddi et al., 2021).

This theme refers to coping strategies that enabled secondary school teachers to cope amidst school closures during the national lockdown period. Within the theme of coping strategies, two subthemes emerged: 1) Intrinsic coping strategies and 2) extrinsic coping strategies. Table 4.4 below provides the inclusion and exclusion criteria for each subtheme, followed by a discussion on each of the subthemes.

**Table 4.4**

*Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the subthemes of Theme 4*

<b>THEME 4: COPING STRATEGIES UTILISED DURING THE SCHOOL CLOSURES AND NATIONAL LOCKDOWN PERIOD</b>		
<b>SUBTHEME</b>	<b>INCLUSION CRITERIA</b>	<b>EXCLUSION CRITERIA</b>
<b>Subtheme 4.1</b> Intrinsic Coping strategies	Any reference to intrinsic support coping strategies, including faith, keeping to a routine and being adaptable	Any reference to extrinsic support or coping strategies or anything not related to coping or support strategies
<b>Subtheme 4.2</b> Extrinsic Coping Strategies	Any reference to external support coping strategies, including family, school, government, colleagues, social media	Any reference to intrinsic support or coping strategies or anything not related to coping or support strategies

#### **4.3.4.1 Subtheme 4.1: Intrinsic Coping strategies**

During the school closures, some teachers experienced high stress and anxiety and needed to find ways to cope with the personal and professional stressors they faced (Mari et al., 2021). In this context, intrinsic coping strategies refer to relying on individual and personal resources to adapt to the change in environment and circumstances during a crisis (Hanno et al., 2022).

From the participants' responses regarding intrinsic coping strategies, it was evident that participants utilised various coping strategies, including faith, sticking to a routine, being adaptable, planning and prioritising what was important at a specific point and time. Participant 4 was able to cope during the school closures and lockdown because of his faith and trust in God:

*I can say now my strength and ability to cope I drew from my religion, God and the bible, not just from my family and my friends. But literally, I think because I am founded in Christ, it really kept me sane. (P4M., 77-79)*

Additionally, Participants 8 and 9 mentioned the importance of planning and keeping to a schedule to ensure they completed tasks and stayed organised in the event something happened unexpectedly:

*Um, I think prioritising work planning. If I did not plan properly, I would have struggled more than I did. So, planning is definitely important, as well as prioritising your work and getting through the most, as fast as you can, because you never know what is going to happen or when someone is going to get sick. (P8F., 264 267)*

It was also important for this particular participant to maintain her normal work routine as a means of coping during the school closures because it gave her a sense of purpose:

*And for the actual working part, I stuck to my normal routine. I woke up at the same time every morning, did my thing, like when we went to school before the lockdown, and exercised. I got dressed and became me. (P9F., 59-60)*

#### **4.3.4.2 Subtheme 4.2: Extrinsic Coping Strategies**

Baker et al. (2021) emphasised the importance of school bodies providing teachers with coping strategies to ensure they felt supported. Various authors suggested the following coping strategies: meditating, journaling and using cognitive framing to help balance emotional stresses; documenting problems and brainstorming with peers to find solutions before implementing solutions; and finding strength in religious beliefs and speaking to a counsellor or friend to get a different perspective of their reality (Lai et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2020; Yuliana, 2021; Zaman & Ali, 2019).

This subtheme refers to coping and support teachers receive from family and school governing bodies (SGB). In addition, how social media platforms and occasional in-person meetings assisted them. From the participants' responses, apparent reference was made to the value they placed on the School Governing Body supporting teachers during the national lockdown. Participants made the following observations in response to the questions when discussing school support:

*So, our School Governing Body came to support our chairman, the treasurer; they were here nearly every day to ensure everyone is okay. So, they were more hands-on. If you have those types of people, then it puts you at ease when you have those people supporting you, not like you alone. (P1M., 275–278)*

Nchabeleng (2020) stated that the curriculum would be trimmed down to manage teaching loads, accommodate exams, and manage the timetable. Participant 5 alluded to the

importance of this support by the government, which was to trim down the curriculum to assist teachers with the completion of the syllabus:

*“Okay, from the government, the first support they actually gave us was, basically, how to trim the curriculum down” (P5M., 176-177)*

Participant 2 further reiterated the role government played in supporting teachers:

*What made us cope as educators was support from government and the department or the administration; they also took it upon themselves to adjust how we could sail through the semesters. So, they helped us by adjusting the timetable and school holiday schedule; we had a lot of support from the administration and the department of education. (P2M., 460-463)*

Globally, some teachers and schools used ICT and social media communication platforms to support the sudden transition to remote teaching and learning when schools were closed due to the national lockdown period (Affouneh et al., 2021; Borup & Archambault, 2020). Many participants referred to the use of social media platforms as a means of communication, engagement, and a method of teaching, which was evident in the following quote:

*I found that the kids were really open to communicating on social media. I think because they can relate to it, that was a positive for me because I would engage with kids that would not normally talk or want to share their issues face to face. So that was something good that I have experienced that I was able to engage with them. (P3F., 69-73)*

Participants 8 and 4 expressed how they managed to teach the learners using social media platforms and providing them with educational material using online platforms:

*We integrated the hybrid method, where if you did have access to Facebook or something, we uploaded work for the lower grades, so they could go onto Facebook and download it from a link, the work that they were supposed to do from home. (P8F., 28-30)*

*I mean, we started using Microsoft teams, we started using Zoom. We started using WhatsApp more, not just recreational or not just for learning, and I think we saw that there are more devices that we can use or more avenues that we can use for teaching. (P4M., 117-120)*

Furthermore, Participant 7 mentioned that she relied on her social networks for support to cope with the national lockdown and school closures:

*“I think, like with my family being there as the support system that helped me to cope as well” (P7F., 51-53)*

Participant 6 further supports the above quote:

*I would say my family are my primary support structure. Uhm, I cannot emphasise enough how much I rely on them and, you know, having them there with me. I do not know what I would have done if my wife had gotten stuck somewhere with work. And we were like, isolated for a period, or my son for that matter, the fact that I could have them there helped a lot. (P6M., 70-75)*

Participant 8 mentioned the importance of family as a coping strategy when she had to return to school under lockdown rules and regulations:

*Definitely my family members, my close circle of people. So, my own family, my now husband, his parents, brothers, sister, definitely family members. If it were not for them, encouraging me to, you know, get up in the morning, go back to work, or sitting there marking or helping me sanitise my stuff, I would have never been able to make it. (P8F., 71-75)*

The findings indicated that secondary school teachers utilised various intrinsic and extrinsic coping strategies to cope during the school closures and national lockdown period. The results revealed that many teachers chose to use positive and proactive coping strategies, which assisted them in coping with the stress and uncertainty during school closures. Accordingly, some teachers did struggle to meet the academic demands placed on them during the national lockdown and, therefore, needed to develop a plan to help them manage and cope (Mari et al., 2021; Sokal et al., 2020).

When the schools closed due to the national lockdown period and teachers had to shift to online teaching, technological devices and social media communication platforms were used to support the transition (Taimur et al., 2021). Participants listed the benefits of using social media communication platforms to stay connected to friends and loved ones and the learners with access to technological devices and internet connection. Furthermore, adopting intrinsic and extrinsic coping strategies aided secondary school teachers in coping during school closures.

## **4.4 SUMMARY**

Several themes and subthemes emerged from the data generated by the participants, each of which was described and discussed in detail in this chapter. The themes discussed were as follows, 1) Teachers' perspective on well-being, 2) Factors of well-being affected during the school closures, 3) Challenges teachers experienced during the school closures and 4) Coping strategies utilised during the school closures and national lockdown period. Each subtheme and theme was also discussed in relation to the literature covered as a form of literature control. In the following chapter, the research questions posed in Chapter 1 will be addressed through the study's findings. A discussion of the study's limitations and contributions, recommendations for future research, and a conclusion will follow in Chapter 5.

# CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This mini-dissertation explored ten secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being amidst school closures during the national lockdown period. As an aspiring educational psychologist and having observed and experienced emotional and occupational challenges as a student teacher during the national lockdown, it was essential to conduct this research. I observed limited intervention and support for teachers' emotional and occupational well-being, which further enhanced my interest in understanding how school closures affected teachers' emotional and occupational well-being.

This is the final chapter of this mini-dissertation of limited scope. The chapter provides an overview of the preceding chapters, discussing the findings that addressed the primary and secondary research questions and is supported by the Teachers' Well-Being (TWB) conceptual framework. The TWB conceptual framework provided a theoretically informed emotional and occupational well-being perspective. It gave prominence that well-being is a multi-dimensional concept that should be nurtured to address the mental, social and physical challenges teachers experience and help them develop resilience, as stated by Siegrist (2012) and Viac and Fraser (2020). In addition, the potential contributions of the study and limitations are discussed, and the chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

## 5.2 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the study, discussing the background of the study, the problem statement, and the rationale focusing on the effect school closures during the national lockdown had on teachers' emotional and occupational well-being. This overview is followed by a discussion of the primary and secondary research questions, and the aims and objectives of the study. The key concepts relevant to the study are defined, namely, teachers' well-being, emotional and occupational well-being, secondary school teachers and school closures. Further, a brief overview of the research paradigm, methodological approach and theoretical framework was also discussed, followed by the research process, quality criteria employed and ethical considerations in the study.

Chapter 2 explored existing literature on teachers' well-being and the effects of the lockdown on teachers' well-being. The literature review focused on the impact school closures had on teaching and learning, and the challenges teachers experienced transitioning to online teaching and learning were also presented. This was followed by a review of coping strategies adopted by teachers during the school closures to help them cope during the national lockdown. Furthermore, the TWB conceptual framework developed for this study was discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 3, the methodology employed for this study was discussed. An overview of the chosen research paradigm and methodological approach was explained and justified. The use of an exploratory case study research design and its relevance to the topic of study was provided. In addition, the selection of participants and data collection techniques utilised was discussed in detail. Furthermore, a detailed description of the data analysis and interpretation processes was discussed. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the quality criteria and ethical considerations present in the study.

Chapter 4 discussed the findings guided by the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis process. The four themes that emerged were: 1) Teachers' perspective on well-being, 2) Aspects of well-being affected during the school closures, 3) Challenges experienced during the school closures, and 4) Coping strategies utilised during the school closures. The themes were supported by the sub-themes. These themes and subthemes led to the discussion of the findings addressing the research questions in the following section.

### **5.3 ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This section provides a concluding discussion about the research questions posed in Chapter 1, drawing from the findings presented. The TWB conceptual framework suggests that teachers' well-being is predisposed to the challenges of their environment and the demands placed on them to meet teaching standards and goals and to attain value from their services as teachers (Siegrist, 2012; Viac & Fraser, 2020). Being subjected to stressful working conditions without support can affect individuals' well-being, including their emotional, occupational, social, psychological and physical attributes (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Prioritising teachers' well-being through systematically organised interventions to take account of all aspects of well-being will better capacitate teachers to manage stress,



resulting in job satisfaction and high retention rates (Howard & Howard, 2020). However, if teachers' well-being is not prioritised, burnout, high attrition and job dissatisfaction will ensue, affecting learners' progress and development (Harding et al., 2019; Viac & Fraser, 2020). As such, this study of limited scope has two secondary questions, which enabled me to answer the primary question adequately.

### **5.3.1 Secondary Research questions**

#### **5.3.1.1 First secondary research question**

The first secondary research question was: *What challenges did secondary school teachers encounter whilst transitioning to online teaching during the national lockdown period?*

The study found that the ten participants that were interviewed for this study experienced various challenges during school closures perpetuated by the national lockdown. These challenges included transitioning to online learning, learners struggling to adapt to a new technique of learning, teachers feeling that they were not delivering the same standard of teaching due to the regulations imposed, and controls on the pedagogy when schools reopened. The negative impact of social distancing requirements intensified this, creating a learning gap that some participants felt would never be breached.

The transition to the new phenomenon of online teaching was a challenge many interviewed participants felt unprepared because of a lack of readiness and training in online teaching. According to Cameron-Standerford et al. (2020), the preparation for teaching online requires a significant amount of time and involves aspects of care and rigour. The school closures and national lockdown happened suddenly, and teachers did not have time to plan or prepare adequately for the sudden transition to online teaching using information and communication technology (ICT) (Ede et al., 2021). The transition affected interaction and engagement with learners who did not have access to technological resources to access learning materials.

Technology issues were a major frustration and concern for the participants of this study, who did not know whether learners were paying attention and learning during online sessions. Participants were concerned that learners who did not have access to technology were not keeping pace and were falling further behind in the curriculum. The education gap was noticeable among learners who were at a disadvantage, and it became a reality that they could not make up for lost teaching time. Tadesse and Muluye (2020) reported that the lost teaching time teachers and learners experienced was mainly due to the lack of access

to technology, sighting that learners in public schools were more adversely affected than learners in better-equipped private schools. Participants referenced technology and digital infrastructure challenges as precursors for lost teaching time and effective interaction with learners.

Another challenge identified was communicating and engaging with learners using Microsoft teams and Zoom. Virtual discussions with learners were often unsuccessful, with quieter learners who did not enjoy being the centre of attention. Learners felt awkward being the focal point; however, this could not be avoided by using Microsoft teams and Zoom. Participants mentioned that online teaching was sometimes impersonal and hampered their ability to teach and connect effectively with learners online. Engzell et al. (2021) and Kuhfeld et al. (2020) stated that many teachers struggled to communicate and connect with learners through dialogue online, sighting technology challenges and learners avoiding speaking during online lessons. The lack of engagement culminated in stress and frustration for some participants who did not know how their learners were doing personally and academically. The literature from various authors discussed in Chapter 2 supported the findings that school closures during the lockdown disrupted the education system (Ede et al., 2021; Engzell et al., 2021; Grewenig et al., 2021; Robosa et al., 2021; Tadesse & Muluye, 2020; UNICEF, 2021). From the discussion, it is apparent that the findings support that school closures disrupted teaching and learning processes that participants were accustomed to before the national lockdown.

### **5.3.1.2 Second secondary research question**

The second secondary research question was: *What enabled secondary school teachers to cope amidst school closures during the national lockdown period?*

The findings identified that the participants of this study relied on various intrinsic and extrinsic coping strategies during the school closures and national lockdown period. Gultekin and Acar (2014) stated that intrinsic coping strategies are often emotion-focused and personal. In contrast, extrinsic coping strategies are external and involve support from family and friends, the workplace, and social media platforms (Gultekin & Acar, 2014). The findings from this study indicated that on a personal level, participants used intrinsic and extrinsic coping strategies such as their faith, religious belief and connecting with family and friends to help them stay positive. Some participants felt a sense of purpose by maintaining a schedule and sticking to the routine they were accustomed to before the school closure, being adaptable, planning, and ensuring they did not fall behind in their deliverables. Others

felt stressed and anxious, struggling to maintain a routine since their homes became their workplace affecting their daily structure.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that some participants' primary coping strategy was the support they received from their families and friends because it gave them the grounding they needed when they felt stressed and overwhelmed. In addition, other extrinsic coping strategies teachers utilised included social media communication platforms, including WhatsApp and Facebook, which enabled communication and engagement with learners when they could not be reached through other online platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Team. Affouneh et al. (2021) and Borup and Archambault (2020) supported the above findings stating that ICT and social media communication platforms facilitated the sudden transition to remote teaching and learning when schools were closed due to the national lockdown period. Although the DBE, Government and SGBs provided some support, participants reiterated that more continuous and proactive support rather than reactive support was required. The need for constant support and innovative supporting strategies necessitates the importance for future research to be conducted to ensure teachers' emotional and occupational well-being is prioritised.

### **5.3.2 Primary research question**

This study was guided by the following primary research question: *How did the school closures during the national lockdown period affect secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being in Gauteng, South Africa?*

The ten participants in this study provided insight and understanding into their lived experiences of the school closures amidst the national lockdown period and how it affected their emotional and occupational well-being.

The TWB conceptual framework supports the findings that nurturing emotional and occupational well-being is imperative for health and happiness to ensure a focused approach to life and living (Siegrist, 2012; Viac & Fraser, 2020). The findings gathered from the participants viewed well-being as multidimensional and holistic, which is in accordance with the definition of well-being provided by WHO (2022), which said that well-being encompasses various dimensions, such as emotional, social, psychological, physical, and occupational, that should be nurtured. The TWB conceptual framework identifies that these dimensions must be addressed by providing teachers with coping mechanisms such as positive self-concepts, stress management, exercise, hygiene, nutrition, responsible use of

social media, and building dependable relationships (Acerbi, 2019; Dzurec, 2020). Some participants struggled to articulate what well-being meant to them; however, upon reflection on the question, teachers made it clear that it was important to be holistically well in every aspect of their lives.

In addition, the findings further suggest that teachers' well-being meant having a profound love for teaching and endeavouring to be lifelong learners to ensure they have an innovative approach to education. This viewpoint was supported by Braun et al. (2020) and Kimmons (2020), who highlighted the importance for teachers to be passionate about their professions and have self-efficacy, which encourages lifelong learning and a healthy commitment to their profession. According to Kim et al. (2021), many teachers felt overworked and did not have the capacity or financial capability to pursue lifelong learning. In addition, some teachers' felt their identity as a teacher was questioned, and their roles became ambiguous (Kim et al., 2021).

The findings also revealed that building relationships with colleagues and learners was paramount for teachers' well-being. Being collegial was important for teachers' emotional and occupational well-being. It gave them a sense of belonging, feeling supported in their work environment and a connection within their work community. Johari et al. (2018) and Viac and Fraser (2020) supported the importance of building relationships and being collegial with colleagues and emphasised teacher-learner relationships, which contribute to learners' success and development. Furthermore, this study confirmed the value of having a work-life balance which promotes well-being and encourages the implementation of boundaries to reduce stress to avoid being overworked.

The findings aligned with the TWB conceptual framework and provided a glimpse of the negative and positive implications of school closures and the national lockdown on an emotional level. The participants mentioned that they were emotionally exhausted, fearing that they would contract and spread the virus to their relatives, which was overwhelming, evoking fear and anxiety. The increased workloads made it difficult for participants to manage, and the thought of returning to school in person was becoming daunting, considering the added work pressure and the rules and regulations of the lockdown. Barry et al. (2017) highlighted that if a person's emotional well-being is negatively affected, it can lead to depression, anxiety, and an inability to manage stress, which the TWB conceptual framework portrays. The findings demonstrated that some participants experienced depression, anxiety, guilt and helplessness due to being unable to provide adequate support to the learners. Furthermore, the findings highlighted that the uncertainty of how long the

school closures and the national lockdown would continue resulted in frustration and loneliness, which affected teachers emotionally.

Occupationally, the findings reveal that the school closures and national lockdown period affected participants positively and negatively. Research shows that occupational well-being involves job satisfaction, feeling valued and being able to manage stress; however, if occupational well-being is neglected, it can result in burnout, lack of job satisfaction, and a high attrition rate (Bottani et al., 2019; Cumming, 2017).

Some participants indicated that they struggled to connect with learners, which made them feel dissatisfied with work and frustrated because of the uncertainty. The TWB conceptual framework demonstrates that teachers will feel dissatisfied and emotionally exhausted if the teachers' mental, physical and social well-being is not supported (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Alternatively, if teachers are supported, they can manage stress better, have a work-life balance and bolster overall well-being mentally, physically and socially (Di Pietro et al., 2020; Grewenig et al., 2021).

Some participants' occupational well-being was affected negatively, making them feel undervalued and replaceable and questioning their contribution to learners' education. Furthermore, from a positive perspective, participants felt a sense of achievement when they developed new skills, which increased their proficiency using technology, leading to new ways of educating learners.

The school closures and national lockdown affected some participants psychologically. Their mental well-being took a toll due to the stress and anxiety, which affected their work performance and left them feeling demotivated. Research states that poor emotional and occupational well-being can adversely affect teachers' psychological well-being, resulting in low productivity, impatience towards learners and demotivation (Bottani et al., 2019; Laine, 2017; Ruggeri et al., 2020). Some participants claimed they were psychologically affected due to worrying about learners' well-being, especially from disadvantaged households with inadequate support. Harding et al. (2019, p.2) state that "where teachers experience poor well-being, this reduces their belief that they can help students with emotional problems." Participants expressed needing psychological support when they returned to in-person teaching. They mentioned that they needed space and a place to go after a long day where they could be vulnerable. They felt deprived of their privacy due to not having a dedicated classroom because of the national lockdown rules and regulations.

From a social aspect, the findings suggested that the rules and regulations implemented by the government to stop the spread of the virus negatively affected the participants' social well-being. These negative feelings were experienced due to social distancing, resulting in a loss of connection with the learners, colleagues, family and friends. Social connectedness is essential during crises, and when people feel disconnected, they can experience loneliness (Kohls et al., 2021; Shiba et al., 2022). Feelings of disconnection and loneliness were propagated by participants who started teaching in 2020 and did not have time to form relationships with their colleagues, making them feel isolated and not supported. On the other hand, some participants mentioned strengthened relationships with their families because of the time spent with them. The national lockdown confined families to their homes, which forced them to connect and engage, minimising the feelings of isolation and loneliness, which helped them emotionally and psychologically (Baker et al., 2021).

Randall et al. (2021) state that physical well-being is about being active and physically healthy. However, participants mentioned that it was important to have good personal hygiene and be health conscious out of respect for everyone, not just themselves. They started prioritising their health after getting sick and becoming physically active, realising the need to change. Others became sedentary and did not have any motivation to exercise; instead, they developed unhealthy habits, such as smoking, because of the emotional and psychological effects of the school closures.

The evidence gathered from the findings shows that those who participated in the study felt that their emotional and occupational well-being was affected during the school closures amidst the national lockdown period. The TWB conceptual framework provides an overview of the negative and positive effects of well-being, the repercussions on psychological, social, mental and physical aspects of individuals, and how their performance is impacted if there are no interventions provided for support (Siegrist, 2012; Viac & Fraser, 2020).

#### **5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

A limitation of the study was that it was a small-scale study of ten secondary school teachers. However, the aim of the study was not to generalise the findings. Instead, an exploratory case study design was used to gain an in-depth insight into the lived experiences of ten secondary school teachers and explore the effect of the school closures during the national

lockdown period on their emotional and occupational well-being in Gauteng, South Africa. Another limitation was that four participants did not submit their collages, despite multiple follow-ups. However, not receiving all the participants' collages did not hamper the findings as they shared their perspectives on what well-being meant to them and how it was impacted due to the national lockdown during the interviews.

## **5.5 POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study contributes to knowledge about the effect of school closures during the national lockdown period on secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being. Due to the limited literature on this topic in the South African context, this study contributes and provides insight into teachers' experiences during school closures and the effects of the national lockdown on teachers' well-being. The study contributes to how emotional and occupational well-being can be managed and what coping mechanisms can be used to manage mental, social and physical well-being.

The study contributes to the importance of having access to technology and teachers receiving continuous training to ensure they are proficient in using technology for online teaching. An important contribution is that this study's participants had the opportunity for profound introspection and holistically evaluated their emotional and occupational well-being. This information contributes to the gap in the literature on secondary school teachers' experience during the school closures and the effect it had on their emotional and occupational well-being and was done unbiasedly.

## **5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section discusses recommendations for future research, practice, and training based on the presented findings.

### **5.6.1 Recommendation for future research**

Based on the findings of this study, the following future research opportunities are recommended:

- ❖ Large-scale mixed methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative research to address secondary school teachers' well-being in South Africa to enable the generalisation of findings;

- ❖ Studies to ascertain whether secondary school teachers in South Africa are using Information and Communication Technology, particularly in rural and public schools to ensure learners have bridged the technology challenge; and
- ❖ Studies focused exclusively on the support secondary school teachers need to ensure their well-being is prioritised and the effect the support provided has on aspects of teachers' well-being.

### **5.6.2 Recommendation for practice**

Based on the findings of this study, the following improvements for educational practice are recommended:

- ❖ Educational institutions, including the government and DBE, can use the findings of this study to understand how secondary school teachers were emotionally and occupationally affected by the school closures during the national lockdown.
- ❖ Principals and the SGB can understand the challenges that secondary school teachers from private and public schools experienced transitioning from in-person to online teaching.
- ❖ To assist teachers in managing their emotional and occupational well-being, principals and SGBs can implement processes to mitigate these challenges in the future by taking the following proactive steps:
  - a) Making work purposeful, validating teachers' contribution, reinforcing their role in the school, and developing learners;
  - b) Implementing one-on-one interviews with teachers to ascertain how they are doing occupationally, emotionally and psychologically, listening to work-related challenges, and celebrating their achievements;
  - c) Promoting teamwork amongst teachers and providing up-to-date technology and software that can assist with online learning in the future;
  - d) Welcoming ideas from teachers and assuring them that their opinions matter to transform stagnant environments; and
  - e) Nurturing and developing teachers' talents and strengths.

Implementing these strategies can inform how principals of schools, the Government and the DBE assist teachers in coping during crises such as the national lockdown.



### **5.6.3 Recommendation for training**

Based on the findings of this study, the following actions for training are recommended:

- ❖ Although secondary school teachers upskilled themselves to conduct online teaching sessions, it is recommended that teachers are provided with continuous training for the future to remain proficient.
- ❖ Teachers should have access to ICT for professional development and to learning communities for enhanced training in technology transformation and transition.
- ❖ Teachers should attend training conferences to collaborate with their peers and critically reflect on the school closures and the national lockdown to have reliable networks in the future.
- ❖ Considering that teachers' well-being is an important contributing factor to quality education, schools should have wellness days for teachers to promote well-being and educate teachers on how to prioritise their well-being, personally and professionally.

## **5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In conclusion, this limited-scope study demonstrated how school closures during the national lockdown period affected ten secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being in South Africa, Gauteng. The findings show that teachers' well-being is essential to ensure quality education. Participants' passion for teaching, building relationships with learners and colleagues, having opportunities for lifelong learning and developing a work-life balance contributed to their overall well-being. The frustration and uncertainty, fear of contracting and spreading the COVID-19 virus, stress, and anxiety, which resulted in job dissatisfaction and burnout, negatively affected their well-being. Moreover, participants were grateful for the time spent at home, as it strengthened their relationships and resolve. They felt empowered by the new skills they developed, which gave them perspective and hope when schools reopened.

The effect the school closures and national lockdown had on the social, mental, psychological, and physical well-being of the participants aligned with research conducted about teachers' well-being worldwide (Besser et al., 2022; Cachón-Zagalaz et al., 2020; Dabrowski, 2020; Hanno et al., 2022; Hascher et al., 2021). Researchers (Lai et al., 2020; Li & Leung, 2020; Yuliana, 2021; Zaman & Ali, 2019) stressed the importance of providing teachers with coping strategies to manage emotional and occupational well-being challenges.

This study will contribute to the existing literature that prioritises and promotes teachers' well-being. The need for continued support for teachers' well-being was accentuated by the findings and highlighted the need for further research to encourage educational institutions to provide teachers with technological skills and professional development for online teaching. Furthermore, it highlighted the technological and resource gaps in the educational system, and the effect that the school closures during the national lockdown period had on secondary teachers' emotional and occupational well-being.

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# ANNEXURE A1: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

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## Informed consent for participation in the research study below

**Name of the Researcher:** Cleo Albertus

**Faculty:** Education

**Departmental Telephone:** 021 420 3751

**Email:** [cleo.albertus@gmail.com](mailto:cleo.albertus@gmail.com)

**Name of Supervisor:** Professor Funke Omidire

**Supervisor Email:** [funke.omidire@up.ac.za](mailto:funke.omidire@up.ac.za)

**Institution:** University of Pretoria

**Co-supervisor:** Dr Sameera Ayob-Essop

**Email:** [saessop@gmail.com](mailto:saessop@gmail.com)

### Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Cleo Albertus, and I am a student at the University of Pretoria, currently enrolled in the Educational Psychology Masters programme. I am writing to you to humbly request your participation in my research study, **“Secondary school teachers’ emotional and occupational well-being amidst school closures during the national lockdown period.”** This document gives you information to help you decide if you would like to participate. Before agreeing to participate in this study, you should fully understand what is involved. If you have any questions, which are not fully explained in this document, please do not hesitate to ask the researcher. You should not agree to participate unless you are entirely comfortable with what I will discuss during the semi-structured interview.

### 1.) THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

This study aims to explore secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being amidst school closures during the National Lockdown period. As a researcher, I would like to understand how school closures amidst the National Lockdown affected teachers' emotional and occupational well-being. Teachers are expected to fulfil a supportive role in the lives of learners; however, the supporting role of teachers becomes problematic when their well-being is overlooked and compromised (Peral & Geldenhuys, 2016; Wessels & Wood, 2019). In this proposed study, I further aim to understand the challenges high school teachers experienced amid the ongoing pandemic and seek to identify the enabling factors utilised by teachers to understand how they coped during the pandemic.

The study will take place in two phases. The first phase of the study will be a meeting with the teachers to explain the collage they need to do on teachers' well-being, specifically looking at their emotional and occupational well-being. Teachers will be provided with consent forms and information on the study to fill out. During the second session, teachers will be asked relevant to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on teachers' emotional and occupational well-being. The discussion will be arranged to take place after school or at a convenient time, so that teaching time is not disturbed. The semi-structured interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed to maintain accuracy. Furthermore, photos will be taken of the collages and included in the write-up of this study.

## **2.) EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES AND WHAT WILL BE EXPECTED FROM PARTICIPANTS**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to do a collage on teacher well-being and participate in semi-structured interviews, which will take about 45 to 60 minutes. The collage can be done at home in your own time and brought to your individual interview session, in which you will reflect on the collage and be asked a few questions. You will be asked about how the School Closures / National Lockdown / Covid-19 pandemic affected your emotional and occupational well-being, what challenges you experienced and what enabled you to cope during the pandemic, as well as being probed on those questions. With your permission, the discussions will be recorded on a recording device to ensure no information is misrepresented. Throughout this process, COVID-19 rules and regulations will be prioritised. Masks will be worn throughout the sessions. Data collection will be conducted in a room with adequate ventilation and spacious enough for social distancing. I will place a sanitiser at the entrance venue for easy access. All participants will be asked to sanitise their hands before entering the venue.

## **3.) RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS INVOLVED**

Risks to participants are minimal, if any. During the data collection process, strict COVID-19 protocol rules and regulations will be adhered to; this includes wearing masks, sanitising of equipment, and social distancing. All participation is voluntary. During the interview, no harm or injury will come to participants. Participation is entirely voluntary and will not affect the livelihood of participants. Participants do not have to share any knowledge they are not comfortable with. During the interviews, you may find that some questions are sensitive; for instance, questions about your personal experiences during the school closures and its impact on your emotional and occupational well-being? If questions feel too personal or make the participant uncomfortable, they do not have to answer them. If support or counselling during or after the interview is needed, the researcher will refer you to the counselling services at the University of Pretoria. Participants may also contact the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) on their 24-hour toll-free helpline at 0800 456 789. Both services will be free of charge.

#### **4.) POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY**

You will not benefit directly from being part of this study. But your participation is important to understand the impact of the school closures during the national lockdown on teachers' emotional and occupational well-being, the challenges teachers faced, and what enabled teachers to cope during the pandemic. The information you provide will help the researcher understand the teacher's well-being and help to generate ideas on how to support and prioritise the well-being of teachers in government schools, especially their emotional and occupational well-being.

#### **5.) COMPENSATION**

You will not be paid to take part in the study, and there are no costs involved for you to be part of the study.

#### **6.) VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

The decision to take part in the study is yours and yours alone. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. You can stop at any time during the interview without giving a reason. If you refuse to participate in the study, this will not affect you in any way. Lastly, I would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. The confidentiality and privacy agreement applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

#### **7.) CONFIDENTIALITY**

I shall report the findings in a complete and honest way without any misrepresentation using formal yet comprehensible English. I will not fabricate data or alter findings to suit interest groups. I shall give credit and acknowledgements appropriately and disseminate the practical implications of our research in a comprehensible way. As a participant, you will not be subjected to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes. I will not record your name anywhere, and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your responses will be linked to a fictitious code number or a pseudonym (another name). We will refer to you in this way in the recordings, data, any publication, report, or other research output.

All records from this study will be regarded as confidential. Results will be published in journals or presented at conferences in such a way that it will not be possible for people to know that you were part of the study. The records from your participation may be reviewed by individuals responsible for ensuring that research is done correctly, including the Research Ethics Committee members. All these individuals are required to keep your identity confidential. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study unless you give permission for other people to see the records. We would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria and, where relevant, project funders. Further research may include secondary data analysis and use the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

## 8.) CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

	Yes	No
I am participating willingly.		
I confirm that the person requesting my consent to take part in this study has told me about the nature and process, any risks or discomforts, and the benefits of the study.		
I have received, read and understood the above-written information about the study.		
I have had adequate time to ask questions and I have no objections to participate in this study.		
I am aware that the information obtained in the study, including personal details, will be anonymously processed and presented in the reporting of results.		
I freely give permission to the researcher and by extension the University of Pretoria to use any data produced, with confidentiality to be maintained, for further research purposes.		
I understand that I will not be penalised in any way should I wish to discontinue with the study, and my withdrawal will not affect me in any way.		
If photos are taken it may only be used after I have seen it and agreed that it may be used.		
I give my permission for the interviews to be taped (audio-recorded) to make sure that the information is recorded and written in a detailed and truthful way.		
I have received a signed copy of this informed consent agreement.		
I willingly give permission to the researcher and by extension the University of Pretoria to use any data produced, with confidentiality to be maintained, for further research purposes.		
I understand that should I have any questions about this research, I am free to contact the researcher on their provided contact information.		
I will adhere to the government COVID-19 protocols during data collection. In this case, I am open for the possibility that the individual interviews may take place on a virtual platform.		
I understand that my real name will not be used to protect my identity.		
I am aware that I may choose not to answer any question I feel uncomfortable with and that I may ask any questions I need to.		
I understand that should I require counselling during the study, I may contact the counselling service able at the University of Pretoria and/ or the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) for support, free of charge.		

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Participant's name (Please print)

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Date

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Participant's signature

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Date

---

Researcher's name (Please print)

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Date

---

Researcher's signature

---

Date

# ANNEXURE A2: PRINCIPAL AND SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY–REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY

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Faculty of Education

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde  
Lefapha la Thuto

## PRINCIPAL AND THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY

Dear (Principal) and the School Governing Body of (School A and School B),

My name is Cleo Albertus, and I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at (School Name). I am currently enrolled in a Master's in Educational Psychology program at the University of Pretoria. My research study is titled: **"Secondary School teacher's emotional and occupational well-being amidst school closures during the National Lockdown period"**.

This study aims to explore how the school closures amidst the national lockdown period affected Secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being in Gauteng, South Africa. As a researcher, I would like to understand what challenges secondary school teachers faced and what enabled teachers to cope during the school closures amidst the national lockdown. I am working under the supervision of Professor Funke Omidire from the Department of Education at the University of Pretoria and Co-Supervisor Dr Sameera Ayob-Essop. Ethical guidelines will be provided by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria and will be adhered to throughout the study.

The study will take place in two phases. The first phase of the study will be meeting the teachers to explain the collage they need to do on teacher well-being, specifically looking at teachers' emotional and occupational well-being. During the second session, teachers will be interviewed individually and have a chance to reflect on their collage. They will also be asked a few questions to help gather information on the impact of the school closures during the national lockdown on teachers' emotional and occupational well-being. The semi-structured interviews will be arranged to take place after school or at a time that is convenient so that they do not disturb teaching time. The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed to maintain accuracy. Furthermore, photos will be taken of the collages and included in the write-up of this study.

Interested teachers, who volunteer to participate, will be given a consent form to be signed (copy enclosed) and returned to the researcher before data collection commences. All data collection will take place after school hours and will not interfere with teaching time. Teachers will participate in semi-structured interviews for 45 - 60 minutes per session. The individual face-to-face interviews will be asked to reflect on their collages and a few questions regarding teacher well-being. During the data collection process, strict COVID-19 protocol rules and regulations will be adhered to; this includes wearing masks, sanitising of equipment, and social distancing.

We would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria and, where relevant, project funders. Further research may include secondary data analysis and use the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

I ask for permission to utilise the school's premises between..... (Day) for the duration of the study. The findings of this study will remain confidential and anonymous. No costs will be incurred by either the school or the individual participants.

I would appreciate it if you could grant me permission to conduct my academic research at..... (School Name).

**Please fill in the consent form provided below if you agree to allow me to conduct this research at school. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me.**

Yours Sincerely,

**Researcher:** Cleo Albertus

**Contact:** [cleo.albertus@gmail.com](mailto:cleo.albertus@gmail.com)

**Supervisor:** Prof Funke Omidire

**Contact:** [funke.omidire@up.ac.za](mailto:funke.omidire@up.ac.za)

**Co-Supervisor:** Dr Sameera Ayob-Essop

**Contact:** [saessop@gmail.com](mailto:saessop@gmail.com)

# ANNEXURE A3: PRINCIPAL AND SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY CONSENT FORM

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Faculty of Education

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde  
Lefephe la Thuto

## INFORMED CONSENT FROM THE PRINCIPAL

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (your name), the undersigned, in my capacity as a Principal at \_\_\_\_\_ (School Name) hereby grant permission for \_\_\_\_\_ (Researcher Name) to conduct the research mentioned above at our school.

I understand that the researcher subscribes to the principles of:

- Voluntary participation** in research means that the participants may withdraw from the study at any time, and there will be no adverse consequences.
- Informed consent** means that research participants must be fully informed about the research processes and purpose. The participant must give consent to their participation in the research.
- Safety in participation** means that the human respondents should/will not be placed at risk or harm of any kind when conducting the research.
- Privacy** means that the confidentiality of human respondents should/will be protected at all times.
- Trust** means that participants will not be subjected to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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





Faculty of Education

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde  
Lefapha la Thuto

## INFORMED CONSENT FROM THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (your name), the undersigned, in my capacity as the School Governing Body Chairperson at \_\_\_\_\_ (School Name), hereby grant permission for \_\_\_\_\_ (Researcher name) to conduct the research mentioned above at our school.

**I understand that the researcher subscribes to the principles of:**

- Voluntary participation** in research means that the participants may withdraw from the study at any time, and there will be no adverse consequences.
- Informed consent** means that research participants must be fully informed about the research process and purposes. The participant must give consent to their participation in the research.
- Safety** in participation means that the human respondents should/will not be placed at risk or harm of any kind when conducting the research.
- Privacy** means that the confidentiality of human respondents should/will be protected at all times.
- Trust** means that participants will not be subjected to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

# ANNEXURE A4: TEACHERS' CONSENT FORM

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Faculty of Education

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde  
Lefapha le Thuto

## Teachers Consent Form

### **Secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being amidst school closures during the national lockdown period**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby agree to voluntarily participate in the aforementioned research project to be conducted by Miss Cleo Alyssa Albertus, a Master's student from the University of Pretoria.

I declare that the nature and aim of the research have been clearly outlined, and the data collection methods were fully explained to me by the researcher. I have been assured that my confidentiality and anonymity will be honoured throughout the study.

I give permission for the generated data to be used for further research purposes and understand that the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's name (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's name (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## ANNEXURE B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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My name is Cleo Albertus, and my research is titled: **Secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being amidst school closures during the national lockdown period.** The primary research question of this study is: How did the school closures during the national lockdown period affect secondary school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being in Gauteng, South Africa?

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to engage in an interview session with you.

This session will be treated with the utmost respect, and confidentiality will be maintained at all times. The session will be recorded with an audio recorder to tape this session; this will allow me to sit and engage with the information for research purposes only. Participants will be taken through the consent form, the nature of the study, their rights and how privacy and confidentiality will be maintained. As the researcher, I will engage in small talk to build rapport and probe the following questions below.

### INDIVIDUAL SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Gender:</b>	
<b>Age:</b>	
<b>Home language:</b>	
<b>How long have you been teaching?:</b>	
<b>What grade do you teach?:</b>	

1. Please explain what teachers' well-being looks like to you, particularly emotional and occupational well-being?
2. During the Lockdown in 2020, what was your personal and professional experience as a teacher?
3. What challenges did you experience during the School Closures / National Lockdown / COVID-19 pandemic?
4. As a teacher, what were the positive aspects, you experienced during the School Closures / National Lockdown / Covid-19 Pandemic?

5. How has the School Closures / National Lockdown / COVID-19 pandemic affected your emotional well-being as a teacher?
6. How has the School Closures / National Lockdown / COVID-19 pandemic affected your occupational well-being as a teacher?
7. How has the School Closures / National Lockdown / COVID-19 pandemic affected your physical well-being as a teacher?
8. How has the School Closures / National Lockdown / COVID-19 pandemic affected your psychological well-being as a teacher?
9. How has the School Closures / National Lockdown / COVID-19 pandemic affected your social well-being as a teacher?
10. What enabling factors helped you as a teacher to cope during the School Closures / National Lockdown / COVID-19 pandemic?
11. What kind of support did you receive during the pandemic, and from whom?
12. What could have been done differently to help your emotional well-being and occupational well-being as a teacher?
13. In hindsight, now that the covid-19 pandemic is over the worst, what advice would you suggest to teachers/management to provide adequate support for teachers' well-being?
14. Lastly, is there anything else you would like to add regarding the School Closures / National Lockdown / Covid-19 pandemic's effect on high school teachers' emotional and occupational well-being?

# ANNEXURE C: COLLAGE EXAMPLE



## ANNEXURE D: EXCERPT FROM TRANSCRIPT

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- 1 **Interviewer:** Hi, P10, how you doing?
- 2 **P10:** Hi, I am good thank you.
- 3 **Interviewer:** Okay, so as you're aware, my study is exploring secondary school  
4 teachers emotional and occupational well-being amidst the school closures during the  
5 national lockdown period. Okay. So my first question to you is, what does teacher well-  
6 being look like to you?
- 7 **P10:** The definition of it?
- 8 **Interviewer:** Yes, for you personally, as a teacher.
- 9 **P10:** I guess; it's a difficult question, actually. Well-being refers to my state of mind,  
10 which refers to emotionally and physically, how well I'm doing at that point. So, well-  
11 being is very important, and I think it relates; it has a relationship with morale as well.  
12 So, if my morale is good and If I'm happy, my well-being is good. So I think it's more  
13 emotional, more on a psychological basis. That's what I think is well-being
- 14 **Interviewer:** Amazing and definitely, it's different for everyone and being in a safe  
15 state of like, I'm content or like, that's important. That's well-being.
- 16 **P10:** Yes
- 17 **Interviewer:** And so then taking it back now, during the lockdown in 2020, what was  
18 your professional experience, like, during that time?
- 19 **P10:** Very challenging! So, it was actually the first I started at the school as well and  
20 then you know, coming into a new environment, and then suddenly you go into  
21 lockdown and things like that.
- 22 **Interviewer:** Yeah.
- 23 **P10:** It was difficult; it was very challenging teaching online. We had to use computers  
24 and were dependent on technology a lot, and learners having access to technology,  
25 which was not always the case. So, that was a massive challenge. There had to be a  
26 lot more collaboration between you and the child; there had to be more involvement  
27 because I could not see their faces. So, it was challenging because I never knew a  
28 hundred percent if the child was actually learning
- 29 **Interviewer:** Mmm| definitely and as a teacher, like that's probably one of your main,  
30 like, you know, things to find out like, is the child understanding what I'm trying to teach  
31 them.
- 32 **P10:** Yes, especially the older Grades. I mean, everything was based on one another.  
33 So, if they have that gap for a month that's a problem. And time-wise, I don't have time  
34 to go back necessarily.

35 **Interviewer:** Exactly and so just on that, the challenges. So you mentioned just having  
36 like the challenges of teaching via computer screens, and trying to engage students.  
37 Were there any other challenges that you experienced, during the during the COVID  
38 19 pandemic, not just the lockdown as a teacher?

39 **P10:** I think like I said, learners having access to technology, we are a private school.  
40 So generally, the learners do have access to technology, but I had a few learners  
41 didn't because they didn't have proper devices. They use the phones, for example,  
42 and that's super difficult.

43 **Interviewer:** Yes.

44 **P10:** And then also a massive challenge was, so lockdown was announced when we  
45 were on holiday. Uhm, so a lot of students did not necessarily have the resources with  
46 them. So, there was a lot of scanning, you know, trying to give them access to  
47 textbooks and so forth. Uhm, and also with my subject, which is accounting. They  
48 can't; they need their textbooks when it comes to filling in. So, that was the resources  
49 that weren't available to them.

50 **Interviewer:** Shoo and I think, I mean a lot of people actually realise that that it was  
51 announced during the course where no one could leave their house, so it was a  
52 sudden thing.

53 **P10:** Yes

54 **Interviewer:** And on a personal level, what was lockdown like for you?

55 **P10:** So I was at home. My parents were there and my brother and sister. So all five  
56 of us were together. So, emotionally I didn't struggle that much during the lockdown,  
57 because we had a massive support system within the family.

58 **Interviewer:** Yes

59 **P10:** We were also privileged enough, where we have a massive garden and things  
60 like that. So, we exercised twice a day; we were very active. We organised things as  
61 a family during the week and would eat outside or whatever. So we did a lot of things.  
62 So I think we were supported. I think without them, If I had to be alone, that would  
63 have been actually a mess, but because we had support and everyone was busy- I  
64 worked, my parents still worked, okay, my sister and brother still studied. So they, they  
65 cut grass, and they had painted stuff. So they were very busy. But we didn't lie around  
66 we still felt like we had a purpose. Although not our rights, but our privileges were  
67 taken away.

# ANNEXURE E: DECLARATION FROM CO-CODER



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## Declaration by Co-coder

I hereby confirm that I, Dr Sandra Steyn, acted as co-coder for the research project: *Secondary School Teachers' Emotional and Occupational Well-being During the National Lockdown Period.*

The qualitative co-coding took place in Atlas.Ti version 23 between 16 January and 10 February 2023.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions.



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Dr Sandra Steyn

BA Law, Hons Psych; MA Research Psych; PhD in Psych



*What could change if you viewed your postgrad journey as a vehicle for your personal growth instead of an obstacle to overcome or a document to submit?*