



**Exploring the Leadership Responsibilities of School Management Team Members in
Promoting Teachers' Well-being in the Madadeni Circuit**

by

Nonhlanhla Sphehile Peacefull Sibiya

223152193

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College of Humanities, School of Education

at the

University of KwaZulu Natal

Supervisor: Dr Lynette Lulama Mbatha

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Declaration

I, Nonhlanhla Sphesihle Peacefull Sibiyi, declare that.

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DATE: 31 October 2024

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my lovely family: my husband, Dr Mandlenkosi Richard Sibiya, and our children, Avela, Bayandiswa,ENZOKUHLE and Mhlengi, for supporting me throughout my studies. I would also like to dedicate this study to my parents, Miss Thokozile, Thandazo Dlamini, and Mr Thabani Zulu, and my siblings Sphelele, Temu, Bobo, Moni, Njabulo, Gagashi, Nodoli, Thabiso and Wandile. Your words of encouragement have carried me through.

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- School Management Team members who participated in the study via survey questionnaires and interviews.

Abstract

School Management Team (SMT) members are critical in promoting teacher well-being and improving educational outcomes. Therefore, by supporting teacher well-being, SMT members can indirectly improve learners' outcomes, as happy and supported teachers are better equipped to provide high-quality education. Thus, the study aimed to explore the role of SMT members in supporting teacher well-being and identify best practices that can contribute to a healthy and conducive work environment for teachers. A qualitative research design was used, and the interpretivism paradigm was chosen to understand how SMT members, as participants, use their leadership practices and strategies to promote and maintain teacher well-being. Survey questionnaires were distributed to five participants, and semi-structured individual interviews with two SMT members were employed. The data from the five purposely sampled participants was analysed using thematic analysis. The study found that the SMT members recognised that teacher well-being comprises physical, emotional and mental health, which is influenced by numerous factors such as stress, workload and work-life balance. Another finding was that SMT members understood that if the workload is not distributed fairly, this might cause high-stress levels. The main contribution of this study lies in its potential to positively impact the education sector by highlighting the critical role SMT members play in promoting teacher well-being. As the study recommends, the SMT members must encourage, support, and guide teachers to attend wellness programmes.

Keywords: School Management Team, teacher well-being, school safety.


List of Abbreviations

SMT	School Management Team
SA	South Africa
DoE	Department of Education
DBE	Department of Basic Education
EAP	Employee Assistance Programmes
HRM	Human Resource Management
HRD	Human Resources Development
SACE	South African Council Education
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
PERMA	Positive emotions, Engagement, Relations, Meaning, Accomplishments
HOD	Head of Department

Letter from the Language Editor

EDITING CONFIRMATION LETTER

Douglasdale 2055


suko@wordlabs.co.za

20 October 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Please let this letter serve as confirmation that I, Sukoluhle Mlambo, provided technical editing services for **Nonhlanhla Sphesihle Peacefull Sibiya** for her dissertation titled, **“Exploring the Leadership Responsibilities of School Management Team Members in Promoting Teachers' Well-being in the Madadeni Circuit”**. I uphold the following editing standards:

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I confirm that I have met the above standards of editing and professional ethical practice.

The content of the work edited remains that of the student.

Sincerely,



S. Mlambo, PhD

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

School-related well-being is important because schools play a vital role in helping teachers and learners adopt healthy lifestyles and understand how their decisions affect their health and well-being. Happiness and good health are examples of well-being because they encompass mental and physical health, physical and emotional safety, a sense of accomplishment, purpose, achievement, and belonging (Sisask et al., 2014). In this regard, teacher well-being is considered the most crucial factor contributing to learner achievement, success and satisfaction, irrespective of social status (Roos & Borkoski, 2021). This means that for learners to have good well-being in school, teachers must also maintain good well-being (McCallum & Price, 2016). This is because teachers' work revolves around the education of their learners, and learners' success reflects the teachers' dedication and hard work. As a result, effective teachers can positively influence their learners' emotional, spiritual, social, cognitive, and physical well-being (Rubie-Davies, 2014). Furthermore, teachers also contribute to their learners' academic development and the school's overall success (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007). Sisask et al. (2014) argue that teachers with good well-being can help learners struggling with mental health issues and produce better commitment and satisfaction among these learners (Kern et al., 2014a).

Regrettably, even though there are potential benefits to focusing on teacher and staff well-being, it is not considered a significant priority in most schools. Many professionals, such as university lecturers, are increasingly concerned about their student's well-being to support them in their academic endeavours (Eloff et al., 2023). However, school teachers face several unique challenges related to their well-being, which often go unnoticed or not addressed. For instance, in the U.K., Grenville-Cleave and Boniwell (2012) found that teachers had significantly lower happiness levels (job satisfaction and quality of life, etc.) than professionals in other occupations such as health, social work, finance, and human resources. This chapter provides background for the study, discusses the problem addressed in this research and lays out the study's aims and objectives. Furthermore, it presents the rationale for the study,

provides a brief outline of the methodology used in the research and concludes with an overview of the upcoming chapters.

1.2. Background of the Study

Teacher well-being has been a growing concern globally, with many educators reporting high levels of stress and declining well-being over time. However, research suggests that the extent and nature of stress vary depending on contextual factors, such as workload, policy demands, and support systems (Jerrim & Sims., 2020). Rather than categorising teaching as universally among the most stressful professions, it is more accurate to highlight that many teachers experience significant well-being challenges, which can impact their job satisfaction and retention. A comprehensive survey of 30,000 teachers revealed a stark decline in professional passion. While 89% reported being passionate about teaching at the start of their careers, only 15% maintained that passion at the time of the survey (American Federation of Teachers, as cited in Lever et al., 2017). This alarming trend underscores the critical need for effective interventions to support and sustain teacher well-being.

Teacher well-being is not merely a personal concern but a systemic issue that affects the entire educational ecosystem. Page and Vella-Brodrick (2009) assert teacher well-being is crucial to school performance and success. The challenges to teacher well-being are multifaceted, including high professional demands, school safety concerns, and various physical and psychological stressors (Jennings & Yoder, 2019). These factors impact individual teachers and have broader implications for student outcomes, school effectiveness, and national economic growth (Sieberhagen et al., 2009).

In South Africa, the issue of teacher well-being is particularly urgent. Stress is considered a severe occupational risk in the country (Rothmann, 2005), with far-reaching consequences for the education sector and beyond. The adverse effects of stress on teachers' health and wellness can disrupt the smooth functioning of schools and, by extension, impede the nation's economic growth through reduced productivity and increased absenteeism (Sieberhagen et al., 2009). The South African education system faces unique challenges that compound the global issues affecting teacher well-being. These include rapid societal changes, resource constraints, and the ongoing transformation of the education sector post-apartheid. Within this context, the role

of school leadership, particularly the School Management Team (SMT), is crucial in addressing and promoting teacher well-being.

School Management Teams are increasingly recognised as critical players in shaping the school environment and, by extension, influencing teacher well-being. Berkovich and Eyal (2017) have reliably identified SMT members' behaviours as a leading factor affecting school teacher well-being. This influence extends to various aspects of the school environment, including teachers' sense of safety and professional satisfaction (Ganu et al., 2017).

Despite the acknowledged importance of SMTs in promoting teacher well-being, there is a notable gap in research exploring this relationship, particularly within the South African context and specifically in the Madadeni circuit. While a body of literature exists on teacher well-being in general (Ross et al., 2012; Zee & Koomen, 2016), studies focusing on the role of SMT members in this area remain scarce. Additionally, limited research has addressed the influence of SMT members' behaviour on teachers' emotional processes (Cliffe, 2011), a critical component of overall well-being. The Madadeni circuit, located in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa, provides a unique context for examining the role of SMTs in promoting teacher well-being. Like many others in South Africa, this circuit faces challenges related to resource allocation, student performance, and teacher retention. Understanding how SMTs within this context can effectively promote teacher well-being is crucial for developing targeted interventions and policies.

Given the critical role of teacher well-being in educational outcomes and the potential influence of SMTs, this study aims to bridge a significant gap in our understanding of effective leadership practices in the South African context. Understanding these aspects is crucial for developing targeted interventions to improve teacher well-being, enhance job satisfaction, reduce turnover, and ultimately contribute to better educational outcomes for students in the Madadeni circuit and beyond.

In conclusion, this study seeks to contribute to the growing knowledge of teacher well-being and school leadership, specifically focusing on the unique context of the Madadeni circuit in South Africa. In examining the role of SMTs in promoting teacher well-being, this research aims to inform policy and practice, ultimately contributing to a more supportive and effective educational environment for teachers and students.

1.3. Problem Statement

The teaching profession globally, particularly in South Africa, is facing a well-being crisis that threatens education quality and sustainability. This problem is multifaceted, encompassing stress, burnout, safety, and job satisfaction, contributing to teacher attrition and decreased educational outcomes.

Research across various countries has consistently shown that teaching is highly stressful (Maphalala, 2014; Nkosi, 2020). For instance, a shortage of 3,000 teachers in Israel has been attributed to excessive strain and burnout (Detal, 2019). Studies in the United Kingdom have revealed high-stress levels and low job satisfaction among teachers (Kyriacou, 1987). Work overload has been identified as a primary cause of teacher stress (Austin et al., 2005; Ortan et al., 2021). These issues are not isolated but represent a global trend that significantly impacts teacher retention and the overall quality of education.

In South Africa, the problem of teacher well-being is particularly acute and compounded by unique local challenges. Despite efforts by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) through legislative provisions, incidents of violence against teachers, including killings and abuse, persist, especially in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) schools (Sibisi, 2021). Many teachers are leaving their jobs due to feeling unsafe at school, and those who remain are often afraid to discipline students for fear of retribution. The Health and Safety Act of 1993 mandates that employers create and maintain a safe work environment, yet implementation and enforcement in schools remain problematic (Sieberhagen et al., 2009).

While School Management Teams (SMTs) are tasked with crucial responsibilities in promoting teacher well-being, there appears to be a significant gap between their mandated roles and the reality in many schools. School Management Teams are expected to implement systems to guide, inspire, and mentor staff and develop and implement school-level well-being plans (SACE, 2000). They are responsible for creating a harmonious environment, providing easy access to reporting mechanisms and ensuring appropriate responses to well-being concerns. These teams are mandated to provide leadership regarding mental health and create a stress-free, healthy workplace. However, the persistent issues of teacher stress, burnout, and safety concerns suggest that these responsibilities are often not effectively fulfilled.

Despite the recognition that teacher well-being is crucial not just for individual teachers but for the entire education system (Lauermaann & König, 2016), there is a lack of research specifically examining the effectiveness of SMT strategies in promoting teacher well-being within the South African context, particularly in high-stress areas like KwaZulu-Natal. The barriers that prevent SMTs from effectively implementing their mandated responsibilities regarding teacher well-being and the specific leadership practices that are most effective in supporting teacher well-being in challenging educational environments remain underexplored.

Given the critical nature of this problem and the identified research gaps, there is an urgent need to explore the leadership strategies and practices of SMTs that are most effective in supporting teacher well-being. This study aims to address this need by investigating the current practices of SMTs in promoting teacher well-being in the Madadeni circuit of KwaZulu-Natal and by providing evidence-based recommendations for policy and practice to improve SMT effectiveness. The study seeks to contribute to developing more effective leadership practices that can enhance teacher well-being, reduce attrition, and ultimately improve the quality of education in South African schools.

1.3.1. Research Objectives and Questions

The study aimed to explore the role of SMT members in supporting teacher well-being and to identify best practices that can contribute to a healthy and conducive work environment for teachers. The following objectives were developed to achieve this aim:

1. To explore the perceptions and understandings of School Management Team members regarding their leadership responsibilities in promoting teacher well-being.
2. To analyse the leadership strategies and practices used by School Management Team members to support teacher well-being within their school context.
3. To examine the key enabling factors and constraints that influence the effectiveness of School Management Team members in fostering teacher well-being.

This study was guided by the following primary research question: How do School Management Team (SMT) members perceive and enact their leadership responsibilities in promoting teacher well-being, and what factors influence these efforts? The following secondary questions were developed:

1. What are the perceptions and understandings of School Management Team members regarding their leadership role in supporting teacher well-being?
2. What leadership strategies and practices do School Management Team members implement to promote teacher well-being?
3. What are the key enabling factors and constraints that impact School Management Team members in fostering teacher well-being?

1.4. Rationale and Significance of the Study

The impetus for this study stems from the recognition that teacher well-being is a critical factor in the overall functioning and success of schools, with far-reaching implications for educational outcomes and the sustainability of the teaching profession. Globally, the teaching profession is characterised by high-stress levels, increasing professional demands, and concerns about school safety, significantly impacting teacher well-being. Within this context, the role of School Management Teams (SMTs) in promoting and maintaining teacher well-being has emerged as a crucial area of inquiry, particularly in the unique educational landscape of South Africa. This study focuses specifically on the Madadeni circuit in KwaZulu-Natal. This area exemplifies many challenges South African educators face, including resource constraints, high student-to-teacher ratios, and socio-economic pressures. This research addresses a significant gap in the literature by investigating the leadership strategies and practices employed by SMT members to ensure teacher well-being in this context. It contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical application in educational leadership.

The findings of this study will have immediate practical significance, offering evidence-based recommendations that can guide SMT members not only in the Madadeni circuit but across diverse locations in South Africa on effective strategies for promoting teacher well-being. These insights can enhance SMT members' managerial proficiency and ability to cultivate healthy working environments for teachers, which may lead to improved job satisfaction, increased retention rates, and, ultimately, enhanced student educational outcomes. From a theoretical perspective, while this study does not aim to advance new theoretical constructs, it explores the applicability of the PERMA (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment) framework in understanding teacher well-being within the South African context. By considering how SMT members engage with the core elements of

PERMA to support teacher well-being in schools, this research offers insights into the practical implications of existing theoretical models in educational settings. Moreover, the study's focus on the interplay between leadership practices and teacher well-being contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable and effective educational leadership in challenging environments. The potential long-term implications of this research extend beyond the immediate school environment, potentially informing policy decisions at the district and national levels and contributing to developing more resilient and effective educational systems in South Africa and beyond. This research fills a significant gap in the literature by addressing this critical yet understudied aspect of educational leadership. It provides a foundation for future studies exploring the complex relationships between school leadership, teacher well-being, and educational outcomes in diverse contexts.

1.5. The Research Design and Methodology

This study adopted a case study approach using qualitative research techniques. A case study with qualitative methods emphasises the quality and depth of the data generation and analysis processes (Neuman, 2011). This technique was chosen because it uses descriptive information to construct a rich, comprehensive understanding of a specific experience (Creswell, 2012). The interpretivism paradigm was chosen to understand how SMT members, as participants, use their leadership practices and strategies to promote and maintain teacher well-being. Data was collected through survey questionnaires and semi-structured individual interviews with three SMT members. I discuss ethical procedures, research design and methodology in more detail in Chapter 4.

1.6. Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the PERMA theory because it focuses on the factors contributing to human flourishing and well-being. In this regard, PERMA was suitable for this research as it aimed to explore the leadership responsibilities and strategies of School Management Team (SMT) members in promoting teacher well-being. It sought to understand their perceptions of their leadership role, analyse the strategies and practices they implement, and identify key enabling and constraining factors that influence their efforts in fostering a supportive school environment. This framework is further discussed in Chapter 3. Seligman (2011a), the founder

of the PERMA model, identifies Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment, as key contributors to overall human well-being, Meaning, and Accomplishment as crucial contributors to overall human well-being.

1.7. Definition of Key Terms

Below is a discussion of the key concepts used in this study.

1.7.1. School Management Team

The School Management Team (SMT) is a structure responsible for ensuring that the school's policies are effectively implemented and for the day-to-day running of the school. According to the Department of Education (2000), SMTs are also tasked with ensuring that the vision and mission of the school are accomplished. The SMT consists of the school principal, deputy principal(s) and heads of department. In this study, the SMT members are the school principal, deputy principals and department heads.

1.7.2. School Safety

Davies et al. (2022) define safety as being free from threats that could cause harm. According to Mubita (2021), school safety involves numerous crises a school community addresses to safeguard the overall wellness of its members, including teachers and learners. These safety crises include mental health, fire safety, bullying, crime in the community, traffic safety and school climate (Safe and Sound School, 2014). Mubita (2021) further points out that school safety means establishing a safe learning environment for learners and teachers, from their homes to their schools and back. School safety includes safety from any violence, abuse, disaster, and psycho-social issues.

1.7.3. Well-being

Danna and Griffin (1999) define well-being as encompassing the mental, physical, and general health of individuals and their experiences of satisfaction both at and outside of work. Hill et al. (2021) emphasise the diverse conceptualisations and uses of well-being across different disciplines, including individual life satisfaction, subjective feelings, and judgments about the

meaning and purpose of life. For this study, the subjective aspect of well-being, based on individuals' perceptions and the objective element, based on conditions, were considered. The objective is to explore effective leadership strategies and practices that support teacher well-being.

1.8. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is structured into six chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 provides the background to the study, a statement of the problem to be investigated, primary and secondary research questions to be answered, the study's aim and objectives, and the study's significance. It also includes a summary of the theoretical framework adopted in this study, definitions of terms, the research design and methodology, selection of participants, data generating techniques and procedures, data analysis and study limitations.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature regarding the leadership role of SMT members in ensuring teacher well-being. In this chapter, the following issues are discussed: understanding well-being; definitions and dimensions; factors contributing to high stress and the importance of a conducive and safe environment for teachers; the global trends of teacher well-being; the role of School Management Team in promoting teacher well-being and creating a healthy school environment; the role of school leadership in influencing teacher well-being, the meta-theoretical field of Human Resource Management and Development; strategies for promoting and maintaining teacher well-being in education; workplace well-being; organisational commitment and retention in South Africa; employee health and well-being practices in South Africa; a comprehensive school employee wellness framework; and the legislative framework governing workplace health and safety in education.

Chapter 3 focuses on the theoretical framework adopted by this study. This chapter discusses well-being theory, empirical evidence supporting the PERMA theory, and criticism and critiques of Seligman concepts.

Chapter 4 focuses on the research methodology that was adopted in this study. Moreover, it details the population and the sample, the research paradigm used, the research instruments

employed, and the sampling techniques used to select the population and the sample. Additionally, the issues of reliability, validity and ethical consideration are discussed.

Chapter 5 presents the study's results to answer the research questions and a detailed analysis and interpretation of the findings.

Chapter 6 concludes the study and discusses the limitations and recommendations for further research.

1.9. Conclusion

This chapter serves as an orientation to the study of the leadership role of SMT members in supporting and maintaining teacher well-being at a specific senior secondary school in KwaZulu-Natal. This chapter includes an introduction, a statement of the problem and the rationale for the study. Furthermore, it discusses the formulation of the research questions, aims and objectives, the location of the study and the theoretical framework. The final section outlines the study's limitations and provides definitions of key terms, along with an overview of the structure of the dissertation. In Chapter 2, I provide a literature review regarding the leadership role of the SMT members in supporting and maintaining teacher well-being.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented an introduction and background to the current study, cementing the problem being investigated and clarifying the aim and the research questions posed in this study. The current chapter discusses literature related to the study. This literature includes previous studies that have been conducted on the leadership responsibilities of SMT members in promoting teachers' well-being. As educational environments continue to undergo significant changes and face numerous challenges, understanding the factors that contribute to teacher well-being has become increasingly important. By exploring the available literature, this review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current knowledge on this topic, identify gaps in the existing research, and generating insights that can inform future initiatives and interventions to enhance teacher well-being. Overall, this literature review serves as a critical foundation for the present study, which seeks to explore the role of SMT members in promoting and maintaining teacher well-being in the context of the Madadeni Circuit.

The literature review begins by defining and situating teacher well-being in South African education, followed by an exploration of global trends related to teacher well-being in education, and its impact on work productivity. It examines the different legislative frameworks for governing workplace health and safety and safety in general and in education specifically. This is followed by an outline of programmes and strategies to deal with employee's well-being, and a discussion on factors contributing to high stress and the importance of a conducive and safe environment for teachers. The role of SMT in promoting teacher well-being and creating a healthy school environment is explored followed by a discussion on a comprehensive framework for school employee well-being that emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic. This framework highlights how the pandemic affected teacher well-being. The literature review concludes with examining these aspects.

2.2. Defining Teacher Well-Being

Well-being is a complex and multidimensional concept that lacks a universally agreed-upon definition (Hascher & Waber, 2021). While it is often broadly categorised into positive and negative well-being, such a general approach risks conflating multiple psychological and occupational constructs. In this study, teachers' well-being is specifically defined in the context of their professional experiences, focusing on their occupational commitment, job satisfaction, and work-related stress or burnout. This narrower definition provides conceptual clarity and ensures that well-being is understood in direct relation to the leadership responsibilities of School Management Team (SMT) members. To maintain consistency, this study examines teachers' well-being through two primary dimensions: professional engagement (which includes job satisfaction, motivation, and emotional commitment to teaching) and occupational stress or burnout (which encompasses emotional exhaustion, workload pressure, and work-life balance challenges). These dimensions were clearly communicated to participants to ensure a focused and shared understanding of the concept. Teacher well-being is a multifaceted concept encompassing various dimensions. Nielsen et al. (2017) argue that well-being encompasses psychological outcomes, stress and anxiety, alongside physiological consequences such as lower blood pressure and physical exhaustion. In support, Aslam (2023) defines well-being as encompassing mental, physical, and general health alongside experiences of satisfaction within and beyond work. Additionally, Hill et al. (2021) and Zhang et al. (2024) acknowledge the diverse understandings of well-being across disciplines, encompassing life satisfaction, subjective feelings, and purpose in life. This indicates the multifaceted nature of the concept of well-being. While this may not be the only reason, Zakira et al. (2021) found that these components of well-being may have a detrimental impact on the workplace, employee satisfaction, performance, and overall health. Thus, workplaces must promote the positive components of well-being to ensure productivity and employee satisfaction (Siu et al., 2015).

The current study adopts the definition of teacher well-being as a concept that combines psychological (cognition, emotion, motivation, behaviour, personality, etc.), affective (emotions, moods, feelings, etc.), physical (health, exercise, etc.), social, economic and other components that may affect a persons' productivity in the workplace. Teacher well-being is a central concept in this study as it seeks to explore how SMT members ensure teacher well-being in schools. In this study, well-being is seen as having two facets: positive and negative.

Positive well-being relates to factors that enhance teachers' performance and productivity within the school environment. In contrast, negative well-being includes factors that may impede teachers' ability to perform their duties and reduce productivity in the workplace.

2.2.1. Workplace well-being in South Africa

Workplace well-being is a critical factor influencing employee productivity, job satisfaction, and overall organisational effectiveness. Research has shown that a positive work environment enhances employee engagement, reduces stress, and improves retention rates (Hansen et al., 2015). In the education sector, teachers' well-being is particularly significant, as it directly impacts teaching quality, student outcomes, and school performance. When teachers experience high levels of workplace well-being, they are more likely to remain motivated, committed, and resilient in their profession. Conversely, poor workplace well-being characterised by stress, burnout, and lack of support can lead to reduced teaching effectiveness and high attrition rates.

Mabaso et al. (2021) stated that many organisations have developed an understanding of the importance of employee retention by creating an environment that resonates with employees. School managers need to understand that physical and mental health are significant. Therefore, they need to invest time and resources in employee wellness. Steel, Griffet and Hom (2002) indicate that the primary obligation of human resource (HR) managers is to understand the motives that create employee commitment and then use that information to leverage employee retention and productivity. Meyer and Allen (1991) explain organisational commitment as an individual's strong feeling about the organisation and the identification with the organisation. This clearly outlines the level of mental and physical attachment, as well as the effective commitment of employees to the organisation or school. Organisational commitment is closely linked with employee happiness; those who are happy and are treated correctly and fairly in the workplace tend to be more committed to that organisation.

According to Sieberhagen et al. (2009), work-related stress causes various health problems. They further explain that work requires effort and leads to a lack of freedom, negative feelings and energy expenditure. This indicates that work can be draining, causing stress and tension simultaneously. Sieberhagen et al. (2009) also note that stress is an inevitable aspect of working life, with both positive and negative implications. This can influence employees' decisions to

leave their jobs voluntarily or involuntarily, impacting employee retention rates. High employee turnover can negatively affect business performance and success, making supportive SMTs crucial for enhancing teacher retention, efficacy, and overall school success (Hughes, 2012).

Globally, teacher well-being has become a growing concern, with studies highlighting the increasing demands placed on teachers due to curriculum changes, administrative pressures, and student behaviour challenges (Hascher & Waber, 2021). In many countries, interventions to support teacher well-being focus on professional development, workload management, and fostering supportive school environments.

In South Africa, the issue of teacher well-being is particularly pressing due to factors such as large class sizes, resource constraints, and socio-economic challenges in many schools. Research on workplace well-being in South Africa (Hansen et al., 2015) has emphasised the need for strong leadership support, effective stress management strategies, and well-being initiatives tailored to the local educational context. Studies suggest that the role of School Management Teams (SMTs) is crucial in creating an environment that fosters teacher well-being, as leadership practices significantly influence teachers' levels of stress, job satisfaction, and professional commitment.

This study builds on existing research by exploring how SMT members in the Madadeni Circuit understand and fulfil their leadership responsibilities in promoting teachers' well-being. By examining workplace well-being in this specific context, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how leadership interventions can support teacher retention, job satisfaction, and overall school performance in South Africa.

2.2.2. Employee health and well-being practices in South Africa

According to Sieberhagen et al. (2011), encouraging the physical and mental health of the school environment, is essential for enabling teachers to support learners' health and academic success. Every teacher, no matter the role they play, contributes to a school's goals. Teachers can give their best when they feel their best. School employee wellness programmes can assist. Schools can offer an employee wellness programme for teachers. Such programmes can offer healthy eating and physical activity services. When staff model these healthy behaviours, they can also reinforce them among students. Moreover, supporting school employee wellness

programmes can improve teacher retention and productivity, minimise employee absenteeism and reduce employee health care costs (Sieberhagen, 2008).

Safety as well as employee health and wellness are significant in workplaces or organisation. According to Dlamini et al. (2022), human, social, and economic costs associated with work accidents, injuries and disease have long been concerns for all parties involved, especially working individuals at both national and international levels. To stop or prevent the recurrence of work-related injuries and fatalities, all employees should understand occupational health and safety. Dlamini et al. (2022) explain that the core principle of occupational safety and health is to protect the safety and health of workers through the establishment of a safe working environment.

Employers must try to support and encourage employees to participate in programmes that promote and protect their health and wellness in the workplace. For instance, healthcare services, as these services contribute to building a safe and supportive environment for self-care, an essential component in ensuring that these practices are beneficial and non-stigmatising (Maideen et al., 2022). Sieberhagen et al. (2009) mention that although work can be very stressful, it creates energy for the employee and positively influences employees. They further suggest that positive feelings include cheerfulness and other feelings of wellness. Happy and stress-free employees significantly impact their health, contributing positively to their well-being. For instance, a stress-free environment can lead to fewer health complications and lower risk of other diseases commonly associated with stress. Sieberhagen et al. (2009) assert that to address work stress, organisations need to implement interventions at all levels of stress occurrence. On the other hand, Wadesango et al. (2015) emphasise the importance of managing stress among SMTs to maintain their own well-being and effectively support their staff.

2.3. Global Trends of Teacher Well-Being in Education

Senyonga and Hecker (2021) argue that most countries, including South Africa, regard the teaching profession as a highly stressful career, and the causes of stress vary. Education Support Partnership Health Survey (2017) reported that teachers in the United Kingdom deal with significantly high levels of stress and low levels of well-being. In a different context, Oplatka's (2011) Israel study found that stressful conditions affect that country's whole education system, causing many teachers and school principals to quit the profession. Buskila

and Chen-Levi (2021) concur with Oplatka's findings, indicating that teachers in Israel have a low professional self-image and work under stressful conditions. Given the persistence of the problem of stressful situations in schools that may lead to teachers quitting the teaching profession, it is essential to note that the current study on addressing teacher well-being is critical not only in South Africa but also on a global scale.

In South Africa, the Education Support Partnership Health Survey (2017) found that 25% of teachers were experiencing stress in their workplaces. A recent critical literature review by Fourie and de Klerk (2024) revealed that South African teachers face stress that dampens their well-being and affects their productivity and success at work. These studies emphasise that stress negatively affects teachers as they perform their school teaching duties, supporting the evidence that positive well-being and stress are inversely related (Seligman, 2011a). Furthermore, in addition to stress, factors such as low pay scales, lack of resources, learner diversity, huge workload, and lack of parental involvement in education (Botha, De Jager & Evans, 2023) may discourage teachers from continuing with the profession. The presence of these factors causes teachers to be dissatisfied with the profession, indicating that schools do not address their well-being well. Thus, teacher well-being has emerged as a critical area of research within the field of education, recognising its profound impact on the quality of teaching, learning outcomes, and overall school functioning (Botha et al., 2023; Fourie & de Klerk, 2024; Hascher & Waber, 2021).

2.4. The Impact of Employee Well-Being on Work Productivity

Several research studies have indicated a positive correlation between employee well-being and work productivity. In a self-reported study of mental well-being and office productivity, Puig-Ribera et al. (2015) found that high physical activity levels in the office lead to higher productivity levels in academic and administrative employees at university. In a study of Swedish government agency employees, Haapakangas et al. (2018) reported that the physical environment, privacy and communication were strongly related to high productivity and positive well-being. Among Hungarian teachers, Kun and Gadanez (2022) found that the main components that contribute to positive well-being and productivity are realising their goals, feedback from teachers, SMT, parents and learners, finding meaning at work, and their social relationships. The PERMA framework for explaining well-being underscores that these factors are all critical for positive well-being and productivity in the workplace. Hence, management

needs to prioritise employees' well-being to ensure productivity, as Mead (1998) puts it, 'make cents.' In schools, this responsibility falls on SMT, which must take care of the well-being of teachers to enhance overall productivity. If teachers' well-being is neglected, there may be negative consequences.

Negative factors such as work-related stress have been shown to contribute to low productivity at the workplace and possibly may lead to employees quitting their work (Botha et al., 2023). Such negative factors in the workplace can be regarded as occupational risks that can negatively impact employee's health, well-being, and, ultimately, organisational productivity (Sieberhagen et al., 2009). Since findings indicate that teachers may want to quit their jobs due to negative well-being-related factors (Botha et al., 2023; Fourie & de Klerk, 2024), SMT members must ensure positive teacher well-being, especially their positive emotions in the workplace, to ensure job satisfaction and retention (Bardach et al., 2022; Dreer, 2024). A recent review of research has indicated that research on teaching well-being is still in its formative stage (Dreer & Gouasé, 2022). This study is essential for understanding the measures taken by SMT members to counteract negative teacher well-being in the workplace. Thus, well-being and the workplace are two productivity-related elements that need to be intensely investigated in contemporary research, an agenda being undertaken in this study. Furthermore, given the findings that the South African DBE is dedicated to creating and maintaining good well-being for teachers (Kruger, 2019), it is crucial to explore how SMT members, as employees of the DBE, are ensuring the well-being of teachers.

2.5. The Legislative Framework for Governing Workplace Health and Safety

According to Steinman (2009), in South Africa employee wellness and safety in education are guided by the following legislation: the *South African Constitution* 1996; the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* 85 of 1993; the legal framework for employee health and wellness management; *Compensation for Occupational Diseases and Injuries (COIDA) Act* 130 of 1993; *Employment Equity Act* 55 of 1998; the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act* 5 of 1997, *Labour Relations Act* 66 of 1995, the *National Policy for Health Act* 116 of 1990, and HIV/AIDS Policy. These policies are discussed in detail in the following sub-section, and their relationship with teacher well-being is elucidated.

2.5.1. The South African Constitution 1996

The *South African Constitution 1996* aimed to alleviate all the injustice of the past and to promote equality for all South African citizens. This legislative framework is about the protection of employees based on their rights and responsibilities. The *South African Constitution 1996* sets out the widest summary for “human rights, employment, labour relations and good practice”. Hence, it contains concepts associated with wellness and well-being regarding the absence of discrimination, equity, and fair labour practices (*South African Constitution 1996*, section 23). This legislative document mentions that “everyone has a right to work in an environment that is not harmful to his or her well-being” (*South African Constitution 1996*, section 24(a)), and health care services should always be the priority in the workplace to ensure employee well-being (*South African Constitution 1996*, section 27(1)(a)). For the education sector, this means it is necessary as a duty for the DBE and the SMT to ensure that these constitutional rights are safeguarded in schools, and failure to do so means that teachers have the right to refuse to work in an environment that is not suitable for their positive well-being. This may include school buildings that are not in good working condition. These schools are not safe because of teacher violence or even work environments that jeopardise the psychological well-being of teachers.

Furthermore, an educator may refuse to go to work if there are wellness and safety issues that may interfere with their ability to complete their duties while in a good state of mind. Thus, matters contributing to negative teacher well-being are considered unconstitutional conduct and should not be practised in schools. Hence, this study needs to investigate how South African SMT members ensure teacher well-being as a constitutional right for teachers.

2.5.2. Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1993

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993* regulates employees’ health and safety based on aspects like work-related accidents and the obligation on the school principals and SMT members acting as the employers, who are expected to provide and maintain a safe working environment (Kruger & Jacobs, 2019), that promotes teachers’ well-being and mitigates stress (Cvenkel, 2018). The *Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1993* explains that the employer must create and maintain a safe place of work and environment that does not harm or endanger the health of employees. Employees tend to be unproductive when their

health is compromised. Therefore it is vital for SMT members as employers (Kruger and Jacobs, 2019) to invest time and money in ensuring teachers' safety and wellness in schools. Thus, it is essential to explore how those in managerial positions within education, such as the SMT, practically ensure the well-being of teachers according to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* of 1993.

2.5.3. Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997

The *Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997* is intended to provide effect to the right to fair labour practices, as mentioned in Section 23(1) of the South African Constitution of 1996, by establishing and providing for the regulation of basic conditions of employment. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 ensures that the hours that are worked by employees in the workplace do not exceed a certain maximum stipulated by this Act. In addition, employees are also allowed to take breaks during working hours. This Act further mentions that these employees can take annual, sick, and family responsibility leave and are paid for overtime, working on Sundays and during public holidays. This is done to avoid work-related stress and pressure on employees. The Act stipulates that employees should not be stressed, which may affect their working abilities and cause poor health. This Act also has rules and regulations that must be followed or adhered to when terminating the employee contract. In this regard, an employer cannot just decide to terminate the employment of a particular employee without following the stipulated rules and regulations of employment. If this happens, it may cause other employees within the company to be doubtful about their roles, constantly feeling like they can be dismissed at any time, which can affect their well-being and overall productivity within the company. Thus, this Employment Act also applies to teachers and understanding how SMT members implement the conditions of the Act practically is vital for comprehending teacher well-being in schools.

2.5.4. Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM)

The *Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM)* refers to a workload that should be "equitable" to ensure that no teacher is overloaded with work (ELRC, 2005). However, this Act can be limited, especially when an educator experiences ongoing health issues, for instance, mental health challenges. In such cases, that educator can be given a lighter workload than others. This

could facilitate a quicker recovery for the educator. Additionally, an educator is entitled to take sick leave for reasons related to his or her health/wellness as per the South African Constitutional Act. Therefore, a school must reduce the workload of that educator to prevent learners from falling behind in the syllabus during the educator's absence due to illness.

2.6. The Legislative Framework For Governing Workplace Health And Safety In Education

2.6.1. Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998

The *Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998* is intended to “provide for the employment of educators by the State, for the regulation of the conditions of service, discipline, retirement and discharge of educators and matters connected in addition to that” (p. 2). Section 11 of the *Employment of Educators’ Act* authorises the employer to discharge an educator from service on the following grounds: firstly, “on account of continuous ill health” (p. 15). This means that the DoE prioritises the wellness of the educator. Thus, there is no need for an educator to continue working when they are not feeling well. That is why educators are allowed to take sick leave if needed. Secondly, “on account of unfitness for the duties attached to the educator’s post or incapacity to carry out those duties efficiently” (p. 8). This implies that if an educator cannot perform their duties for various reasons such as health condition and work environment, they should be released from that school and allowed to find another school where they can perform those duties effectively.

For instance, if an educator has asthma and works in a rural school with a gravel road (which causes too much dust), they must be released to work in urban schools. Section 18 of the *Employment of Educators’ Act* empowers an employer to terminate the employment relationship with an educator if they commit the following acts of misconduct: 1(c) “Wilfully, intentionally or negligently damages or causes loss to the property of the State, a school or adult learning centre” (p. 9); (d) “In the course of duty endangers the lives of himself or herself or others by disregarding set safety rules or regulations” (p. 9). Since this is adhering to Policy and Acts, even though it may negatively affect teachers’ well-being, it sends a message that while their well-being is essential, following the *Employment of Educators Act* rules is equally important.

2.6.2. South African Council for Educators Act 31 of 2000

Another vital piece of legislation concerned with employee wellness and safety in education is the South African Council for Educators Act 31 of 2000, which is the professional body associated with the Code of Professional Ethics for teachers and regulates relationships between the community, the DBE, SACE, teachers and learners, colleagues, and parents. The South African Council of Educators Act 31 of 2000 results from the amendment of chapter 6 of the Employment of Educators Act. This Act establishes a Code of Professional Ethics in terms of its section 5(c)(i). It is vital to point out that educators as professionals are also subject to a Code of Professional Ethics established in terms of the SACE Act 31 of 2000. This Act provides for disciplinary actions that may be taken against an educator who is found to have violated the expected standards of conduct in the Code of Professional Ethics. For instance, in Section 3.13 of the Code of Professional Ethics, an educator must take reasonable steps to ensure learners' safety during teaching and learning. Similarly, the SMT members must ensure that educators work in safe environments protected against injuries. However, Damore and Murray (2009) indicate that there is often a gap in implementing collaborative practices in the working environment.

2.7. Programmes and Strategies to Deal with Employees' Well-being

It is essential for a school to implement best practices to improve the human resources abilities that are vital for the school's existence. According to Sajeevanie (2015), human resource management (HRM) practices are a significant factor in gaining a competitive advantage. Thus, relevant HRM plays a substantial role in developing teacher commitment that assists in achieving school goals (Mohyin et al., 2012). Moreover, effective HRM practices lead to the development of organisational commitment (Maaitah et al., 2017). Mudor and Tooksoon (2011) mention that strategic management of HRM practices can be an essential source of teacher satisfaction, reducing turnover, lowering absenteeism, and increasing teacher loyalty to the school.

Human Resource Management (HRM) and Human Resource Development (HRD) have been defined in different ways by numerous authors, but what is common in the definitions is the emphasis on managing people to achieve organisations' goals and developing various activities to support employees. Haslinda (2009, as cited in Richman, 2015) defined HRM as leading

people's talents to accomplish organisations' goals. But Boxall et al. (2007), as quoted in Kaufman, 2014, p. 1, defined HRM as the “coordination and utilisation of people, the labour input for the production of goods and services in all types of economics and organisations”.

Promoting and maintaining teacher well-being in education is about developing programmes that encourage, support and safeguard employee wellness (McPeck et al., 2009). Wellness programmes in the working environment are divided into three categories: preventive interventions, screening activities, and health promotion activities. According to Lever et al. (2017), preventive interventions focus on assisting teachers in making positive changes in their health behaviours, for instance, individual health counselling and health education classes. Screening activities focus on identifying health risks in teachers. Thus, this may include but is not limited to, completing a health risk questionnaire and measuring teachers' weight.

Health promotion activities focus on promoting healthy lifestyles for all teachers, such as providing subsidised gym memberships and offering healthy meals in the cafeteria. Teachers are the most valuable human asset at school; hence, the school should provide policies that include programmes that focus on employees' health. Furthermore, the principal must give or encourage teachers to participate in the professional development of social-emotional skills, resilience, and understanding of the impact of trauma on the individual (Steenman, 2009; McPeck et al., 2009). Also, the principal must support creating professional learning communities that will assist in fostering a shared sense of purpose and resilience (Schaik et al., 2019). With employee wellness programmes, schools can promote health and reduce health-risk behaviours of employees, and in addition, can reduce levels of stress in adults (Taute, 2008; Morris et al., 2013).

Additionally, mindfulness and exercise are recommended as effective strategies for managing stress and improving well-being among individuals (Frieswijk et al., 2006). Managing stress, lowering the risk of illness, and increasing energy could ultimately enhance their physical and mental health and ability to perform their roles effectively (Caring for Your Mental Health, 1995). Macan et al. (1990) suggest that perceived control of time is a crucial predictor of reduced stress levels and enhanced job performance. However, Bhattacharya and Tandon (2023) found that time management was a challenge that managers faced in ensuring teacher well-being during COVID-19.

Supporting teachers is always a vital part of constructing an influential school culture. According to Lever et al. (2017), employee assistance programmes (EAP) are intended to assist employees in balancing family life and work. On the other hand, Taute (2008) defines EAP as an organisation's tool that can be used to enhance employee and workplace effectiveness through productivity issues and prevention. In this regard, EAPs are more concerned with interventions to stimulate efficacy and, thus, productivity in the work environment. Employee Assistance Programmes assist teachers with challenges impacting their teaching (Lever et al., 2017). They are counselling and consulting programmes where teachers express their challenges. The programmes assist teachers in dealing with their everyday difficulties, providing opportunities to increase their productivity and morale. The school environment should be a place where every teacher feels at home. Therefore, the principal must implement the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993*, as this Act aims to establish and maintain a safe workplace and not risk to the employees.

Although there has been criticism of wellness programmes in schools, such as poor implementation, the programmes play a significant role in ensuring a conducive working environment. Parks and Steelman (2008) state that school wellness programmes focus on physical and environmental dimensions. Physical wellness focuses on aspects of healthy living. For instance, teachers need to be well informed of the negative impacts of drugs, smoking and alcohol abuse (Blaise Jr, 1996) because the use of drugs can affect the well-being of teachers (Walton et al., 2016). Environmental wellness focuses on the physical surroundings of teachers, including safety, lighting, comfort and air quality (Sackney et al., 2000). Thus, these factors can promote or detract teachers' health at school. Therefore, the school facilities must be set up so they are not stress-provoking but should instead be stress-eradicating. Both learners and teachers must work in safe and comfortable environments (Sackney et al., 2000). Therefore, the principal must implement wellness programmes in the school environment.

2.8. Factors Contributing to High Stress Rate in the Education Sector

Rothmann (2005), Lever et al. (2017), and Sieberhagen et al. (2009) highlight several factors contributing to the high stress rate in the education field, such as large class size, inadequate resources, workload and learners' behavioural challenges. This is despite legislation like the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997, which states that employees should not be stressed as this may affect their working abilities and cause poor health. Poor health results

from stress, which can be used to check or evaluate whether workplace pressures positively or negatively impact employees (Sieberhagen et al., 2009).

According to Sieberhagen et al. (2009), the Health and Safety Act of 1993 explains that employers must create and maintain a safe place of work and environment that does not harm or endanger employees' health. Employees tend to be less productive when their health is compromised. Thus, no school can succeed without healthy and dedicated teachers (Madikologa, 2014). Therefore, every school must ensure teachers work in a conducive and safe environment. This concurs with the findings of Shava and Ndebele (2016), who affirmed the importance of leaders fostering positive working environments as part of a shared social influence to enhance goal achievement in the workplace. Nwoko et al. (2023) attest that socially supportive behaviours in schools can positively impact teachers' occupational well-being. Thus, understanding how SMT members ensure teacher well-being in schools is crucial for minimising factors such as high stress in the workplace, ultimately promoting teacher well-being. South African schools, particularly those in under-resourced and disadvantaged communities, face several structural and systemic challenges that directly impact teacher well-being and, consequently, the ability of SMTs to support their staff effectively. Overcrowded classrooms remain a significant issue in many South African schools, making it difficult for teachers to provide individualised attention to learners. This situation places immense pressure on teachers, contributing to high levels of stress and burnout (Amnesty International, 2020). SMT members must find ways to support teachers in managing these challenges, often with limited resources. Many schools, especially those in rural and township areas, experience severe shortages of teaching materials, technology, and infrastructure. Limited access to libraries, computers, and teaching aids increases the workload on teachers, as they must compensate for these gaps by creating their own materials. SMT members are responsible for advocating for and managing scarce resources, adding to their administrative burden (Bush, 2020; Amnesty International, 2020). SMT members in South African schools often juggle multiple responsibilities, including lesson planning, curriculum implementation, disciplinary management, and compliance with Department of Education policies. The pressure to meet academic performance targets further limits their ability to focus on teacher well-being initiatives, despite recognising their importance (Bush, 2020; Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019).

2.9. The Role of School Management Team in Promoting Teacher Well-Being

The previous section highlighted factors that contribute to high stress in the workplace and touched on the significance of a conducive and safe environment for teachers. As alluded to earlier, SACE (2000) states that SMT members' role and responsibilities are to implement systems and guide, inspire and mentor staff. This means that the SMT is responsible for effectively implementing policies and processes, which must be effectively communicated to staff, learners, parents and the broader community. Furthermore, the SMT members are responsible for teachers' empowerment and development, which must be facilitated through well-being awareness and deterrence training (SACE, 2000). The SMT plays a crucial role in determining teachers' emotional and intellectual wellness (Sackney et al., 2000). According to Ortan, Simut and Simut (2021), supporting teachers, being fair to teachers, and showing respect and care to teachers are significant elements of employee satisfaction. The SMT must be vigilant regarding the school environment to ensure that learners, teachers and other stakeholders work and live in a healthy environment (Sackney et al., 2000). Furthermore, the SMT must ensure that the wellness attributes are always part of their day-to-day agenda (Goldstein, 1992).

Furthermore, SMT members are responsible for providing teachers with collaborative and constructive feedback as it is a vital improvement tool and a powerful stimulus for teacher reflection and professional development (Mandouit, 2018a). This feedback can be used to address well-being, motivation and engagement as teachers continually learn and adapt to be better in their roles (Hasani & Agaj, 2014a). Overall, this means that SMT members are further responsible for developing and implementing school well-being plans and the effectiveness and management thereof.

In promoting a harmonious environment for all teachers, reporting mechanisms must be in place to provide easy access to all teachers, and where necessary, appropriate responses and actions should be followed through. According to SACE (2000), during the development of a school improvement plan, attention must also be paid to addressing concerns about teachers' well-being. Furthermore, SMT members are responsible for ensuring that teachers have all the required documents to perform their duties effectively, enabling them to report more efficiently to the SMT. This, in turn, can alleviate negative well-being.

The SMT members determine teachers' emotional and intellectual well-being (Sackney et al., 2000). According to Goleman (1995), supporting teachers, being fair to teachers, and showing respect and care are significant elements of employee satisfaction. Therefore, there is a need for SMT members to ensure that teachers feel valued and involved in the decision-making process. The SMT members must be alert to the school environment to ensure that learners, teachers and other stakeholders work and live in a healthy environment (Sackney et al., 2000). Furthermore, SMT members must ensure that well-being attributes such as psychological health, mental health, and positive emotions are always part of their day-to-day agenda for school discussions in meetings (Goldstein, 1992). In concurrence, Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) highlight the importance of organisational support and school leadership in promoting teacher well-being.

Schools can support teacher well-being by considering how the organisational climate, social interactions, and teachers' actions contribute to teacher well-being. The schools' approach to promoting teacher well-being differs between schools, and different teachers within a school have different needs for improving well-being. A school-wide discussion about what well-being means to people and how to promote it can be a helpful starting point for developing a school strategy to enhance teacher well-being. In the education system in South Africa, the SMT members play a significant role in supporting and maintaining teacher well-being in schools (SACE, 2000). In addition, SMTs are responsible for promoting effective communication, as it creates a good school climate and an environment of trust where teachers feel secure and confident to put forth their ideas without fear of being victimised (Mafa, 2019).

SACE (2000) asserts that SMT members must foster collaboration and support among all teachers, ensuring that they exhibit appropriate leadership strategies for promoting teacher well-being through proper supervision. All criminal acts must be reported as provided for by relevant legislation. This includes ensuring that teachers do not experience criminal activities such as robbery or murder from learners or community members. Thus, SMT members must provide full security to protect teachers and learners in schools so that teachers can feel safe in the work environment, which can result in positive well-being in teachers. Furthermore, SMT members can collaborate with local law enforcement and human services agencies to promote safety, care, and non-violent, child-friendly schools. In this regard, teacher well-being is a crucial issue for schools. This global challenge of teacher well-being is characterised by constant change, high professional demands, physical and psychological health issues,

emotional well-being concerns and a lack of safety in schools (Jennings & Yoder, 2019). The role of SMT members who are also experiencing extensive challenges regarding their own well-being is aligned with these challenges of teacher well-being (Collett, 2013).

The behaviours of the SMT members are reliably acknowledged as a primary factor in influencing teacher well-being (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017) and have also been associated with teachers' safety (Ganu et al., 2017). Thus, one strategy that Ganu et al. (2017) recommended is the introduction of employee wellness programmes. Implementing employee wellness programmes in the school aims to create awareness of employee wellness issues, promote a healthy and supportive working environment, and facilitate personal change (Ganu *et al.*, 2017). Hence, many schools focus on employee well-being as a tactical tool to inspire and keep skilled teachers, enhance efficiency and diminish the costs of high absenteeism and staff turnover (Madikologa, 2014). Moreover, few intervention programmes in schools aim to promote and improve positive and inner aspects of teachers' well-being at lower levels (LaMontagne et al., 2014). Therefore, this study must examine the enabling factors and constraints that impact School Management Team members in promoting teacher well-being. This study aims to contribute to the field's understanding of effective leadership practices and strategies that can positively impact teacher well-being and ultimately improve teachers' and students' overall educational experience.

Based on the above, it is clear that SMT members can significantly promote schoolteacher well-being. In line with this argument, a study by Page and Vella-Brodrick (2009) found that teacher well-being is crucial in enhancing the school's performance and success. Several studies, such as Ross et al. (2012); Zee and Koomen (2016), have been conducted on teacher well-being. However, there is a notable lack of research specifically focusing on the role of SMT members in promoting teachers' well-being, particularly in the Madadeni circuit. In addition, there is very little research on how SMT members' behaviour affects teachers' emotional processes (Cliffe, 2011).

To ensure the well-being of educators and promote a safe and productive school environment, SMT members need to take on a significant role. Protecting school infrastructure, such as buildings and furniture, ensures employee safety. Additionally, SMT members must uphold the working hours stipulated by the Department of Education (DoE), providing no teacher is penalised for refusing to conduct extra or weekend classes as protected by Chapter A, 3.2 (a) of PAM. This Act mandates that all educators be at school for no less than seven hours per day,

including breaks and non-teaching periods, with exceptions requiring the principal's prior permission. Encouraging teacher teamwork is also crucial, as highlighted by Thousand, Villa and Nevin (2006), who note that collaboration helps address diverse student needs and fulfil responsibilities more efficiently. It is essential to recognise that stress can manifest differently among individuals based on their coping mechanisms, leadership styles, and personal traits (Viswesvaran et al., 1999). Scholars like Mead (1998) and Acton and Glasgow (2015) emphasise the importance of fostering an environment where teachers feel motivated, energetic, and committed, as work can be draining and stress-inducing, a point also confirmed by Sieberhagen et al. (2009). Thus, the role of SMT members is critical in promoting teacher well-being and, consequently, enhancing overall school productivity.

2.10. A Comprehensive School Employee Wellness Framework


The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the need to ensure teacher well-being in schools and among employees in general. The pandemic affected teacher well-being, with Kim et al. (2022) reporting a decline in teacher well-being and citing factors such as uncertainty, workload, and negative perception of teaching as factors that contributed to the decline throughout the pandemic. Furthermore, McDonough and Lemon (2022) reported factors such as intensified duties in the workplace, managing and giving care to family and learners, and new learning technologies as factors that contributed to the decline in teachers' well-being during the pandemic. Thus, given these challenges, Strafford (2021) developed the Comprehensive School Employee Wellness Framework (Figure 2.1) to address critical aspects of employee wellness and safety. This framework serves to mitigate the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, staffing shortages, and high teacher attrition rates. The focus areas related to teacher well-being in the framework are health status, home, community, society, work experience, and work environment, concluding with workplace policies and culture.

2.10.1. Health Status Gap

Stratford (2021) asserts that there are gaps regarding the narrow scope of the health status of employees and, in general, wellness programmes. These gaps include unmatched health conditions, unmanaged mental health, unhealthy behaviours, limited coping skills, and conditions that limit activities of daily living (Strafford, 2021). The framework argues that

these work demands should be addressed in schools, and it is the role of management staff, such as SMT members, to ensure that these components are effectively implemented in schools.

Comprehensive school employee wellness framework (Stratford, 2021)		
RESOURCES	EMPLOYEES'	WORK DEMANDS
Physical fitness, optimal functioning of the body	Health status	Unmanaged health conditions (diabetes, asthma, sleep disorders)
Ability to identify and process emotions		Unmanaged mental health (Depression, anxiety, trauma)
Healthy behaviours, adequate coping skills		Unhealthy behaviours, limited coping skills (alcohol, drug abuse, tobacco, poor diet, etc.)
Ability to conduct activities of daily living		Conditions that limit activities of daily living (limited mobility, chronic fatigue)
Fulfilling community engagement (spiritual, civic, etc.)	Home, community, and society	Neighbourhood conditions (violence, unsafe housing, limited recreation spaces / groceries / health facilities)
Supportive social relationships		Strained social relationships
Financial security		Financial insecurity, unstable home environment
Overall life-satisfaction		Experiences of interpersonal / institutional discrimination
Positive feelings about work	Work experience	Job stress (limited resources, inadequate training / support, inadequate wellness support, high workload)
Meaningful work, adequate resources		Lack of autonomy / efficacy, unreasonable expectations
Positive work relationships		Hostile or unsupportive work relationships (conflict with leadership, peers, students, families)
Participation in school-level decisions / high collective self-efficacy		Limited decision-making power / collective self-efficacy
Culture of anti-discrimination	Work environment	Workplace discrimination and harassment
Safe working space (well-maintained, ventilation)		Unsafe working space (water, security and safety hazards)
Pleasant and functional workspace and break space		Inadequate workspace (noisy, poor lighting, crowded, no break space)
Adequate compensation and benefits, opportunities for advancement	Workplace policies and culture	Low salary, limited advancement, inadequate benefits
Supportive workplace culture, distributed leadership structure		Unsupportive / hostile workplace culture, limited family engagement, concentrated leadership structure
Wellness resources available		Limited or mostly irrelevant wellness resources
Work-life balance promoted		Work-life imbalance is the accepted norm
RESOURCES		WORK DEMANDS



Employee wellness scale

Figure 1 *Stratford's Comprehensive School Employee Wellness Framework*

This health status gap is essential, and this study explores how SMT members ensure that the gap is covered to promote teachers' well-being after the pandemic.

2.10.2. Lack of Coordination of School Employee Wellness Efforts Gap

According to Stratford (2021), the second gap is the lack of coordination, limited integration of efforts to address employees' health status and ensuring that workplace conditions are conducive to employees' health. Thus, the framework argues that schools often have a fragmented approach to employee health and well-being initiatives. Different departments or units may implement health-related programmes independently, without a cohesive strategy or communication plan. This fragmentation can lead to redundancy, inefficiency, and gaps in

services provided to teachers. This illuminates the need for a holistic approach that integrates various aspects of teacher well-being, including physical health, mental health, and environmental factors. Many schools may focus on one area, such as offering mental health days for teachers, but fail to address other critical components, such as stress management or work-life balance. It is crucial to explore how SMT members address this gap to ensure that teachers have positive well-being.

2.10.3. Over-Reliance on Coping Strategies

Stratford's (2021) third gap is the over-emphasis among education stakeholders on supporting programmes that build positive coping strategies "without pairing such efforts with strategies to limit exposure to conditions that lead to unwellness". The Comprehensive School Employee Wellness Framework advocates for a balanced view of available resources to promote wellness (healthy habits, safe workspaces, and supportive wellness policies) with an equal focus on mitigating professional demands that will lead to unwellness (unmanaged health and safety conditions or an antagonistic workplace culture towards health conditions. Stratford (2021) asserts that an approach that increases health and safety resources while addressing balanced work demands "will most likely achieve a sustainable wellness balance".

2.11. Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this study relates to well-being as an essential concept within work environments. It zooms down to discussing the idea of teacher well-being as a necessary mandate of the South African government policies. The legislative framework governing workplace health and safety in education was discussed, and government structures were put in place to ensure employees' well-being in the workplace. Global trends in teacher well-being were examined as factors contributing to high stress and the importance of a conducive and safe environment for teachers. Furthermore, the following themes were also discussed concerning the literature findings and relevance to the current study: the role of SMT in promoting teacher well-being and creating a healthy school environment; workplace well-being, organisational commitment, and retention in South Africa; employee health and well-being practices in South Africa, and a comprehensive school employee wellness framework. These concepts mentioned above were reviewed to determine what has been done concerning

teacher well-being, identify the remaining gaps to be explored, and situate the significance of this study within a comprehensive body of literature. The importance of conducting this study was outlined, highlighting the gaps in the existing literature regarding how SMT members ensure teacher well-being in schools. The next chapter outlines the PERMA model as the theoretical framework adopted in this study and how it relates to the topic under investigation.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed the literature on well-being, focusing on teacher well-being as a central phenomenon in this study. It offered a somewhat nuanced account of several components related to teacher well-being and illuminated some gaps that will be investigated in this study. This chapter discusses the theoretical framework that underpins the current study. A theoretical framework serves as a foundation or lens through which the study is viewed and analysed (Creswell, 2014). It provides a structure that guides the research by outlining key concepts, theories, and relationships relevant to the research problem. The theoretical framework helps guide the research questions for the study, explains the phenomenon under investigation and offers the context for interpreting the findings, explaining why the findings occur in a certain way (Creswell, 2014).

The theoretical framework that underpins this study is Seligman's (2011b) PERMA (positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment) framework. The PERMA theory provides practical strategies and tools for individuals, organisations, and communities to increase well-being by encouraging practices that foster positive emotions, engagement, meaningful relationships, purpose, and a sense of accomplishment (Seligman, 2010). The theoretical framework and these five elements of the PERMA theory, as well as their relevance to the current study, are explained in the upcoming sections. I begin this section by clarifying the PERMA framework's evolution.

3.2. The Evolution of The Perma Theory

In 2000, Seligman introduced the theory named the "Authentic Happiness Theory" (AHT) (Seligman, 2010). This theory proposed the pursuit of three types of happiness: the pleasant life, the good life, and the meaningful life (Seligman, 2002). An enjoyable life involves seeking positive emotions and pleasures, such as engaging in activities that bring joy, comfort, and pleasure and focusing on maximising positive and negative feelings (Seligman, 2002). The

good life is centred around engagement and flow, which involves identifying and using one's strengths and talents to engage deeply in activities (Seligman, 2002). On the other hand, a meaningful life encapsulates a sense of purpose and meaning in one's life where an individual uses their strengths to contribute to something greater than themselves, such as community, society, or a cause, thereby finding deeper fulfilment and meaning (Seligman, 2002).

Seligman considered these components sufficient to understand individuals' well-being, guide interventions, and promote positive psychology. However, his later works regarded these three components as not fully representing a complete picture of an individual's well-being. Building on the AHT in 2006, Seligman changed his framing of positive psychology to one that is not 'happiology' but a science of well-being and flourishing (Seligman, 2010). While the AHT laid the groundwork, Seligman later expanded his model to the PERMA framework to provide a more comprehensive and multifaceted understanding of well-being (Seligman, 2011b). The PERMA framework incorporates the elements of the AHT but adds relationships and accomplishments as critical components of understanding individual well-being. Thus, given the evolution from AHT to the PERMA as part of comprehensively understanding and explaining human well-being, I decided to adopt the PERMA framework for this study.

3.2.1. Clarifying the PERMA Framework

Heshmati et al. (2023) describes the PERMA framework as "a multidimensional framework that explains well-being through five hedonic and eudaimonic psychological elements—Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment." (p. 2441). This means that the PERMA framework explains human well-being by looking at whether individuals are feeling good, fully involved in organisational activities, have supportive social connections, find purpose in their lives within the organisation and achieve their goals.

The PERMA framework is grounded in positive psychology, which focuses on studying and promoting factors that contribute to human flourishing and well-being (Seligman, 2002, 2011b). Instead of only addressing mental illness and dysfunction, positive psychology emphasises the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and organisations to thrive in their duties and responsibilities. From this perspective, the PERMA framework aims to ensure that individuals always have a positive sense of well-being, enabling them to thrive and succeed in their duties within different organisations. Figure 3.1 summarises the five main concepts

Seligman proposed as essential for ensuring positive well-being and happiness within this workplace.

I want to acknowledge the existence of several extensions of the PERMA theory in contemporary literature. One such extension is called ‘momentary PERMA’ or *mPERMA*, which emphasises experiencing the five elements of the PERMA framework on a moment-to-moment basis. This approach highlights the importance of recognising and developing well-being in real time instead of focusing on long-term recognition and development of well-being (Heshmati et al., 2023). However, given that this study focuses on long-term well-being in teachers, *mPERMA* does not apply here, even though understanding moment-to-moment well-being in teachers would be an interesting area for future exploration.

Another extension of the PERMA framework is Donaldson and Donaldson’s (2020) PERMA+4 framework, which argues that while the PERMA framework covers five elements related to well-being, there are an additional four elements (physical health, mindset, environment, and economic security) that are not covered by the original PERMA framework by Seligman (2011b). This framework is important because it provides a nuanced and fine-grained approach to studying well-being. However, this study did not adopt it because these four additional elements are considered subsumed within the existing five components of the original PERMA framework.

Figure 2

Seligman’s PERMA Model

The PERMA Model In A Nutshell

The PERMA model was created by American psychologist and educator Martin Seligman. The PERMA model is a framework for happiness and wellbeing based on positive psychology through five elements: positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment.



FourWeekMBA

Source: <https://fourweekmba.com/perma-model/>

These elements are not independent; they interact and influence each other iteratively (Seligman, 2011b). For example, strong positive relationships can foster feelings of happiness and purpose, while positive emotions can strengthen relationships. Applying the PERMA framework within the teaching and learning context can benefit students and teachers. By focusing on these elements, SMT members can create a more positive and supportive learning environment that fosters academic achievement and personal growth for teachers (Seligman, 2011b). Furthermore, cultivating positive emotions, such as joy, contentment, and satisfaction, is critical to overall well-being (Seligman, 2011b). In the following sections, I explain each of the five elements of the PERMA framework and relate them to the current study, highlighting their significance in explaining how SMT members ensure the well-being of teachers in their schools.

3.2.1.1. Positive Emotions (P)

Positive emotions are hedonic experiences characterised by valence (negative to positive) and activation (low to high), encompassing feelings such as comfort and pleasure (Butler & Kern, 2016; Khaw & Kern, 2014b). Furthermore, these hedonic experiences include “positivity,

contentment, and pleasure” (Heshmati et al., 2023, p. 2442) and are reflected in emotions such as joy (Seligman, 2011b). Positive emotions can also be observed during the data generation and through a sense of humour (Barnard, 2018). Moreover, any signs of contentment, interest, love, laughter, pride, compassion and amusement also represent positive emotions (Seligman, 2012).

Positive emotions are essential for understanding well-being because they reflect the state of an individual’s feelings within a specific environment. For example, if learners are satisfied with their school life, they are most likely to experience positive emotions about school, which indicates good well-being (Lai et al., 2018). Thus, school interventions aimed at ensuring positive teacher well-being should aim to increase satisfaction and positive emotions to decrease negative emotions in teachers (Shoshani, 2021). Thus, in this study, when exploring how SMT members ensured the well-being of teachers, I looked at strategies they use to ensure that their teachers always have positive emotions, such as engaging them in an everyday activity that enables them to feel positive about their lives and the workplace. These elements related to positive emotions are essential for teachers' well-being because they not only make them feel good about their lives and duties in the workplace but also cultivate a culture where teachers feel good and positive.

3.2.1.2. Engagement (E)

Seligman (2011b) describes engagement as a psychological connection to organisations, for instance, feeling interested, absorbed and engaged in life. Recently, Kovich et al. (2023) argued that engagement “refers to focus, interest, or absorption in an activity” (p. 3). Hence, engagement is the deep involvement and absorption in activities that captivate teachers’ interests and fully occupy their attention. Engagement is often associated with Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) psychological state of ‘flow’, which describes being completely immersed in an activity to the extent that time seems to pass unnoticed and self-consciousness fades away. To achieve complete levels of engagement, one must be intrinsically motivated (internal locus of control), being fully engaged in a task or experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The flow state involves a combination of high challenge and skill, and a person experiences a total sense of involvement.

Furthermore, Seligman (2013) argues that to experience flow, one must have a perceived challenge that aligns with one's skill level and receive immediate feedback on progress. In other

words, flow is about using one's strengths to generate chances for flow. However, measuring flow or engagement can be challenging as no validated short measure indicates engagement (Butler & Kern, 2016). In the context of this study, fostering engagement may be particularly important in a school where teachers feel overwhelmed or burnt out. Thus, in assessing engagement, in this study, I explored how SMT members support and maintain teachers' well-being and safety by encouraging them to engage in their work such that they feel immersed and interested in performing their duties to the best of their abilities.

This focus on engagement is vital because if SMT members do not ensure that teachers are fully 'engaged' in their teaching duties, it can lead to suboptimal performance, raising questions about their overall well-being. Furthermore, in this study, I explored how SMT members support teachers in remaining engaged in their work, revealing how they address issues related to teacher well-being in their schools.

3.2.1.3. Relationships (S)

Relationships are defined as the bond between individuals and are assessed based on how much these connections provide a sense of community and enable us to share experiences (Slavin et al., 2012). A recent study defined relationships as "closeness and connection with family, friends, or colleagues" (p. 3). These relationships are significant for teachers throughout their careers because they contribute to their well-being at work in many ways. Teachers must always maintain positive relationships with their colleagues, and management feels valued and supported within the workplace (Cabrera & Donaldson, 2024). Specifically, mutual support, care, and positivity are the characteristics of meaningful relationships where teachers can bond and work together to achieve common goals within the workplace (Khaw & Kern, 2014).

For example, Barnard (2018) argued that the language used by individuals is crucial in establishing and maintaining relationships. This means that if teachers use demeaning and disrespectful language within schools, it may affect the relationships between the teachers and negatively affect their well-being within the work environment. However, when teachers feel supported, valued and loved within the workplace, it is strongly associated with positive relationships and can lead to good well-being in teachers (Heshmati et al., 2023). Furthermore, positive relationships can be enhanced by respecting colleagues' titles (salutation), such as consistently referring to someone with a doctoral degree as 'Dr.'; this can contribute to feelings of value and recognition (Kovich et al., 2023). The sociocultural theory is grounded in the idea

that social interaction is vital during learning. Thus, we can extend the same concept to conclude that social relationships are essential for ensuring the well-being of teachers. In the context of this study, I interpreted the insights shared by the SMT members regarding how they support teacher well-being through promoting good relationships among teachers. For example, suppose one teacher is allocated a heavier workload than another teaching the same subject. In that case, it might create tension and negatively affect the well-being of the overburdened teacher.

3.2.1.4. Meaning (M)

Meaning refers to the sense of purpose and significance within a particular workplace setting and involves employees understanding and feeling that their lives are valuable and worthwhile (Seligman, 2011a). This component of the PERMA framework emphasises the importance of connecting something more prominent than the employees, such as cause, community, or personal values, which provides a sense of direction and fulfilment (Cabrera & Donaldson, 2023). Furthermore, meaning is a concept that refers to the feeling that teachers have a purpose or calling to go beyond current discomfort or unhappiness to pursue something significant and impressive (Khaw & Kern, 2014). Seligman (2011a) points out that a sense of meaning is achieved by feeling that what we do is valuable and worthwhile.

For example, the SMT members can reward teachers who achieve or exceed their key performance areas (KPAs) by offering them incentives such as certificates or lunch. Furthermore, an effective reward could involve understanding teachers' perspectives on the most suitable reward for exceeding their KPAs, thereby making them feel involved in the reward process. This feeling of meaning helps teachers think that their lives are significant and have a transcendent purpose even amid arduous circumstances, leading to resilience and resolution (Kern et al., 2014a).

Furthermore, being part of something greater than the teachers themselves is an essential human quality of searching for meaning within the school environment (Seligman, 2011a). According to psychologists, having meaning in life is necessary for flourishing as it provides a quality and purposeful life (Park, 2015a). Seligman (2011a) asserts that many individuals seek meaning and purpose through their professional work. In this study, the meaning was investigated based on how the SMT members assist teachers in finding meaning and purpose in their work by connecting their roles to the broader mission and goals of the school.

3.2.1.5. Accomplishments (A)

Accomplishment is the feeling that you can efficiently achieve the goal you set out to accomplish (Seligman, 2011a). It revolves around mastery, self-discipline, attainment, and perseverance, intending to progress towards accomplishing goals (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2013). The sense of achievement and saying, ‘I did it’ and ‘I did it well’ after completing tasks contribute to our well-being (Seligman, 2012, p. 2). For teachers, the feeling that they are progressing towards accomplishing their work-related goals or KPAs indicates some sense of accomplishment (Choi et al., 2019). Accomplishment, also referred to as achievement, involves having goals and ambitions and the pursuit and attainment of these goals. It is about achieving success and mastery, contributing to an individual’s sense of competence and fulfilment.

The accomplishment was found by Wagner et al. (2020) to be related to “strengths such as perspective, persistence, and zest” (p. 307). For example, persistence despite difficulties and setbacks may lead teachers to accomplish their goals, positively affecting their well-being. In this study, this can be assessed by exploring the methods used by SMT members to ensure that teachers can achieve their goals, personal or otherwise. For example, if a teacher decides to further their studies and inform the SMT of the school, there should be support from the SMT members, which may include reducing that staff member’s workload.

3.3. The Importance of the PERMA Framework for Exploring Teacher Well-Being

The PERMA model has gained traction as a framework for developing whole-school and positive education initiatives promoting teacher well-being (Avinash et al., 2021). This framework allows school managerial members to integrate positive psychology principles into their practice to ensure school teacher well-being. Avinash et al. (2021) further emphasises the connection between employee well-being and organisational success. They argue that neglecting employee health can lead to discontent and conflict, ultimately hindering organisational goals and employee well-being. Recently, Goetz et al. (2024) tested the PERMA framework’s hypothesis that “teachers profit emotionally from positive leadership at school” (p. 3) and found that positive leadership improved teachers’ positive emotions and reduced their negative emotions. Enhancing positive emotions in teachers is critical for enhancing teacher well-being in schools.

In another study investigating character strengths and the PERMA framework, Wagner et al. (2020) found that character contributes to well-being, indicating that SMT members could build teachers' character to support teachers' well-being. Dreer (2024) further emphasises the significance of the PERMA framework in ensuring not just the well-being of teachers but also their job satisfaction. Dreer (2024) argued that "job-related well-being of teachers, especially positive emotions in the workplace, play an important role in teachers' job satisfaction and their subsequent retention" (p. 61). This means that for the SMT members to retain their teachers, they must prioritise their teachers' well-being.

Norrish et al. (2013) highlight the widespread adoption of the PERMA model in various educational settings. For example, building on the PERMA framework, Noble and McGrath (2015) proposed the PROSPER framework, which added resilience and strengths to enhance school well-being. This extension of the PERMA framework aims to create a holistic approach to well-being that can be applied in educational settings, helping teachers lead more meaningful, engaged, and resilient lives in their workplaces, contributing to their overall well-being and mental health. Given that teachers are attracted to the teaching profession because of factors such as "stability and convenience of following a teaching career, feeling valued, and being passionate about facilitating learning" (Botha et al., 2023, p. 7), it indicates that factors related to the PERMA framework are essential for job retention and well-being.

Similarly, Wessels and Wood (2019) found that after six weeks of collaborative work among six teachers, social contact, communication with colleagues, and explicitly focusing on enhancing positive emotions were closely linked to improving teachers' well-being. These findings highlight essential elements of the PERMA theory that can be useful in strengthening the well-being in teachers. These findings provide evidence that the PERMA framework is suitable for exploring teacher well-being in schools and provides empirically grounded support for using this framework for grounding interventions related to enhancing well-being.

As mentioned earlier, this study adopted the PERMA framework as its theoretical foundation because the theory focuses on the factors that contribute to human flourishing and well-being. Another reason for grounding this study in the PERMA framework is its design and recognition as a tool for exploring and enhancing well-being in human beings and its applicability in the workplace (Seligman, 2011b). In other words, PERMA works as a valuable framework when one wants to develop and enhance well-being within a particular population but does not claim to define well-being in human psychology (Donaldson, van Zyl & Donaldson, 2022).

Furthermore, the PERMA framework is a valuable model for facilitating institutional leadership; for instance, it can guide SMT members in fostering positive school culture and promoting teacher well-being in their schools (Slavin et al., 2012). In this regard, PERMA is suitable for this research study as it aims to determine leadership practices and strategies that SMT members use to promote and maintain teacher well-being. This study focuses on the five measurable elements proposed by Seligman in the PERMA framework.

3.4. Critiques and Refinement of Perma

In exploring School Management Team (SMT) leadership strategies for promoting teacher well-being in the Madadeni circuit, I grounded my work in Seligman's (2011b) PERMA model. However, as a researcher committed to critical inquiry, I must acknowledge and grapple with the critiques this model has faced. These critiques challenge me to justify my theoretical foundation and offer valuable opportunities to enrich my understanding of teacher well-being in my unique South African context.

As I delve into the complexities of teacher well-being in Madadeni schools, I find myself confronted by Wong and Roy's (2018) assertion that PERMA is merely a list of well-being correlates rather than a comprehensive theory. This critique resonates with my experiences in the field, where we have observed that the multifaceted nature of teacher well-being often defies simple categorisation. The dynamic interplay of factors affecting my teachers' well-being – from resource constraints to socio-economic pressures – prompts me to question whether PERMA's elements fully capture the nuanced reality of our educational landscape.

Moreover, Donaldson et al.'s (2022) observation regarding the lack of a theoretical foundation for the inclusion and interaction of PERMA factors strikes a chord with my research aims. As I examine the strategies employed by SMT members, I find myself continually questioning how these different well-being elements interact within our schools' complex ecosystem. This critique pushes me to adopt a more holistic approach in my analysis, considering isolated aspects of well-being and the intricate web of relationships between them.

The redundancy of PERMA, as suggested by Goodman et al. (2018), initially gave me pause. I questioned whether this framework offers unique insights into teacher well-being that other models might not capture. However, as I have immersed myself in the Madadeni context, I

have come to appreciate PERMA's flexibility and potential to serve as a starting point for understanding our teachers' specific well-being challenges.

Seligman's (2018) response to these critiques has been instrumental in shaping my approach. His emphasis on PERMA as a set of critical elements for promoting well-being, rather than a definitive framework, aligns well with the exploratory nature of this study. This perspective has allowed me to use PERMA as a springboard for my investigations while remaining open to other factors that may emerge as significant in my unique context.

The six criteria Seligman (2018) proposed for expanding the PERMA framework have provided me with valuable guidance. As I examine SMT strategies, I am committed to demonstrating how they tangibly enhance teacher well-being in our schools. I am exploring whether SMT members promote each PERMA element for its own sake or to other ends. Our findings aim to inform practical, cost-effective interventions that SMTs can implement, considering the resource constraints many of our schools' face. I am maintaining flexibility in my use of PERMA, allowing for refinement based on the unique aspects of teacher well-being I uncover in the Madadeni circuit. Throughout this study, I strive to ensure clear definitions and reliable measures of well-being factors in my context.

In addressing these criteria, I believe this study can contribute to practical leadership strategies for SMTs and the ongoing refinement of well-being theories in educational settings. I am excited by the possibility of uncovering additional elements or interactions crucial to understanding and promoting teacher well-being in our unique South African context.

While I acknowledge the critiques of PERMA, I find it a valuable starting point for examining teacher well-being in our study. However, I remain open to discovering new dimensions that may be crucial to understanding the well-being of our teachers. This approach allowed me to contribute to practical leadership strategies for SMTs and the theoretical understanding of teacher well-being in diverse educational settings. As I navigate this complex terrain, I am driven by a deep commitment to enhancing the well-being of our teachers and, by extension, the quality of education in the Madadeni circuit and beyond.

3.5. Relevance of the theoretical framework in this study

The PERMA framework (Seligman, 2011) is a suitable and adequate model for this study as it provides a structured approach to understanding and promoting teachers' well-being in the workplace. By focusing on Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment, PERMA aligns with the leadership responsibilities of School Management Team (SMT) members in fostering a supportive school environment. This framework enables SMTs to implement strategies that enhance teacher motivation, reduce stress, and improve job satisfaction, ultimately contributing to a more resilient and effective teaching workforce. Given the challenges faced by teachers in the Madadeni Circuit, PERMA offers a research-based and contextually relevant lens to examine how leadership practices influence well-being in South African schools.

3.6. Conclusion

This chapter provides a nuanced discussion of the theoretical framework for this study, which is the PERMA framework. It argues that the original model is still suitable for this study despite extensions and other versions of the PERMA framework because it subsumes all the additional elements in the different versions. I presented an extensive argumentation based on empirical evidence of the significance of the PERMA framework for studying and enhancing well-being in various organisational settings, specifically among teachers. These discussions allowed me to lay out valid reasons why the PERMA framework is suitable for the current study and how the five elements of the PERMA framework and the overarching tenets of the framework were studied in this research using evidence from SMT members. In the next chapter, I discuss the methodology I followed in this research study.

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the theoretical framework of the research project. This chapter provides a detailed description of the process I followed to generate data from the participants to answer the study's research questions and achieve the main objective. It begins by explaining the interpretive research paradigm underpinning this study and then proceeds to delineate the research approach followed in the current study. Furthermore, it describes the phenomenological research design adopted in the study, the population and the sample of the study, and the data generation methods. The chapter concludes by discussing issues related to the study's trustworthiness and the ethical considerations involved.

4.2. Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is a critical component of the study because it impacts how scholars interpret and construct the meaning of reality (Poni, 2014). Paradigms also impact what should be studied, how it should be examined, and how the results of the study should be interpreted (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In addition, a paradigm is a set of beliefs about imperative aspects of reality that gives rise to a specific worldview (Alise & Teddlie, 2010). This study was located within the interpretive paradigm. The interpretivist researcher uses the qualitative approach to understand humans' behaviour within their context, making sense of the world from the participants' perspective (Pulla & Carter, 2018).

This study used the interpretivist paradigm as the philosophical foundation for interpreting the findings. It focuses on the meaning individuals assign to experiences related to the phenomenon under investigation (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). The interpretivist paradigm is based on observing significant differences between the natural and social worlds (Croft et al., 2011). This type of paradigm pays attention to the specific contexts where people live and work to understand the cultural and historical settings of the participants involved (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). To this end, interpretivism views knowledge as being constructed, similar to

how people make meaning in their lives (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). Nieuwenhuis (2016) explains interpretivism as a worldview that assumes that different people interpret social reality differently.

To understand how people construct meaning, their world must be entered and observed from the inside through their direct experiences. According to Cohen et al. (2007), the researcher's role is to understand, explain, and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants. This paradigm is vital in this study because it clarifies how participants constructed meaning regarding the natural and social world. Since I gathered data based on SMT members' experiences promoting the well-being of teachers in a specific school, the study interpretation is limited to only the context of the school where the study occurred. Hence, this interpretation of the data only applies to the cultural and historical settings of the school. In this sense, the interpretivist paradigm enabled me to understand how SMT members as participants use their leadership practices and strategies to promote and maintain teacher well-being. Hence, I could observe and interpret their direct experiences to create meaning that enabled me to answer the research questions posed.

4.3. Research Approach

Creswell (2012) defines a research approach as a plan and process comprising stages from overarching assumptions to detailed data generation and analysis methods. According to Grover (2015), a research approach is categorised into three essential components: philosophical worldview, research methods, and research design. The philosophical worldview represents the underlying beliefs and assumptions about reality and knowledge that guide the researcher's inquiry, shaping how they interpret and interact with the research context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Research methods refer to the specific strategies and tools used for data generation and analysis. Finally, research design encompasses the plan or structure of the research, outlining the procedures for conducting the study coherently and systematically, ensuring that the research questions are effectively answered, and the findings are trustworthy (Grover, 2015). These components are interconnected; the philosophical worldview influences the research methods and the study's design, serving as a blueprint for integrating these methods to answer the research questions.

A qualitative phenomenological strategy of inquiry guided this research study. Qualitative research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Neubauer et al., 2019), which, in this instance, is the role of SMT members in supporting and maintaining good teacher well-being. A systematic review by Aspers and Corte (2019) defines “qualitative research as an iterative process in which improved understanding to the scientific community is achieved by making new significant distinctions resulting from getting closer to the phenomenon studied” (p. 139). This phenomenological qualitative study aims to explore the lived experiences of SMT members in ensuring good well-being in a specific school. Understanding these lived experiences can provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities related to promoting well-being in teachers.

Furthermore, the qualitative nature of the study allowed me to understand how SMT members support teacher well-being within their natural settings, recognising that context influences how people think, feel and behave. Lastly, this qualitative approach allowed me to provide a rich and detailed explanation of how SMT members support good teacher well-being, capturing the depth and complexity of their efforts in this area.

4.4. Research Design

Research design is a procedure for conducting a research project. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a research design demonstrates the general plan of how the research will be set up. This study adopts a single case study design, focusing on the leadership responsibilities of School Management Team (SMT) members in promoting teachers' well-being within the Madadeni Circuit. According to Rule and John (2011), a case study approach is appropriate for providing an in-depth exploration of a bounded system, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of complex social phenomena within their real-life context. The “case” in this study is defined as the collective experiences and practices of SMT members across selected schools in the Madadeni Circuit. A case study design was chosen for its strength in capturing the richness and complexity of real-life situations, particularly in educational settings. This design facilitates an exploration of how SMT members navigate their leadership roles to foster teacher well-being, aligning with the study’s focus on practical application rather than theoretical generalization. A single case study approach with a qualitative research technique, emphasising the quality and depth of the data generation and analysis processes (Neuman, 2011). A case study with a qualitative research technique was chosen because it

relies on descriptive information to construct a comprehensive understanding of a specific experience (Creswell, 2012).

A research design refers to the overall strategy that I chose to integrate the different components of my study in a coherent and logical way, thereby ensuring I effectively addressed the research problem; it constitutes the blueprint for collecting and analysing data. Furthermore, the research problem determines the type of design to be used (De Vaus, 2006). Additionally, a systematic review by Fox, Walter and Ballet al. (2023) and a scoping review by Zhang et al. (2024) indicated that quantitative methods had been used predominantly in research about teacher well-being in previous studies. Thus, there is a more numerical explanation of teacher well-being in education, whereas this study used qualitative methods in its investigations. Hence, it provides a qualitative explanation for its findings as a methodological contribution towards understanding teacher well-being in one South African region.

Since the study set out to explore the leadership role that SMT members play in supporting and maintaining teachers' well-being, descriptive data collected from the participants' written and spoken words provided a rich context for exploring the investigated phenomena. This descriptive information allowed me to construct a rich and comprehensive understanding of how SMT members supported good teacher well-being in their specific schools. Thus, the design of this study includes considerations of the population and sample, as well as the methods of data generation and analysis.

4.5. Location of the Study

The study was conducted in the Amajuba District in the Madadeni circuit. Madadeni is a township located approximately 16 kilometres from the central business district of Newcastle in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The Madadeni circuit is part of the Amajuba District in KwaZulu-Natal, consisting of primary and secondary schools that serve a predominantly Black African population. Like many circuits in South Africa, it faces challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, limited resources, and varying levels of teacher qualifications. However, its proximity to Majuba TVET College and other institutions offers potential opportunities for teacher development and student progression into technical and vocational education. Many schools in the circuit experience high student-to-teacher ratios, which can affect the quality of instruction. Some schools may struggle with a lack of technological tools,

textbooks, and infrastructure, impacting teaching effectiveness. Amajuba District is one of the urban districts in KwaZulu-Natal that has been performing well for the last several years. This circuit is situated in an urban city and comprises 33 schools, and only one school was conveniently selected within a radius of twenty kilometres around Newcastle town. The school has an enrolment of 1,757 learners with 61 permanent teachers, including eight SMT members. The targeted school is classified as a quintile four school. The recruitment process for this study involved a convenience sampling approach, targeting one school in the Madadeni Circuit due to its accessibility and the principal's willingness to participate. Permission to conduct the study was first obtained from the principal through an initial email and a follow-up meeting where the research aims and ethical considerations were discussed. Written consent from the principal was secured before proceeding. The Department of Education also granted permission. SMT members were recruited purposively, with the principal's assistance in identifying appropriate candidates based on their leadership roles. Each SMT member was contacted and given an information sheet, and informed consent was obtained before participation.

4.6. Population and Sampling

A population is a group of individuals with specific demographic characteristics where the researcher wants to conduct a study (Casteel & Bridier, 2021). The population represents the pool of individuals from which a researcher can draw a sample for their research. The general population for the current study consisted of SMT members of schools within the Majuba District, where the study took place. However, due to time and logistical constraints, the sample was restricted to one school in the Madadeni circuit in Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal, comprising eight SMT members (Plowright, 2013). Also, there is limited information on the role of SMTs on teacher well-being in South Africa.

Sampling, on the other hand, is the process of choosing a group of participants from a population for a specific purpose in a research study (Casteel & Bridier, 2021). The logistical issues forced me to use convenience sampling to select the research site for the study, primarily because of the site's accessibility and proximity to me (Simkus, 2023). Additionally, the school was relevant for this study as it is within the Madadeni Circuit and contains SMT members among its stakeholders, making data generation feasible.

However, since the study was based on a particular phenomenon, only members with certain characteristics were selected to participate. Thus, purposive sampling was the primary method used to select the participants. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique that involves the researcher deliberately selecting participants based on specific characteristics or criteria that are relevant to the research questions of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Patton (2015), purposive sampling involves selecting information-rich cases for study, which means that the researcher needs to choose participants that can provide significant insights into the research problem due to their particular experiences or characteristics. I used this sampling method to gain deep insights from SMT members on the strategies and processes they use to support and maintain well-being in teachers at the selected school. The findings derived from this sampling method are not generalisable to a larger population, but they explore a specific phenomenon in detail.

These participants were selected because they form part of the school's SMT, which is the focus population of this study, so they would have the relevant experience of ensuring teacher well-being in the school. These participants were selected as the study aimed to explore the leadership roles, practices and strategies (encapsulating experiences) that SMT members use to promote and maintain teacher well-being. This aligns with both the interpretivist research paradigm and the qualitative research approach, as these approaches focus on interpreting participants' lived experiences. One inclusion criterion was that all participants must be members of the SMT within the selected school. The exclusion criterion excluded participants with less than two years of holding an SMT position because they may not have had sufficient experience within their management roles. While this small sample size allowed for an in-depth exploration of SMT members' perceptions, it limits the generalisability of the findings to broader educational contexts. Since the study focused on a single school, the findings may not be fully representative of other schools, districts, or educational settings where SMT dynamics, leadership styles, and well-being support structures may differ. Additionally, perspectives from teachers, district officials, or external stakeholders were not included, which may have provided a more comprehensive understanding of teacher well-being promotion. However, the qualitative nature of the study emphasises context-specific insights rather than statistical generalisation. The small sample size enabled a rich, detailed exploration of SMT members' lived experiences, aligning with the phenomenological and case study approach. A summary of the participants' biographical information along with their pseudonyms is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Participants biographical information

Pseudonym	Gender	Role	No. of years in SMT
P1	Male	Deputy Principal	16
P2	Female	HOD	11
P3	Female	HOD	10
P4	Male	HOD	12
P5	Male	HOD	16

4.7. Data Generating Techniques and Procedures

Data generation is "the systematic approach to gathering information from various sources to get a complete and accurate picture of an area of interest" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 102). I employed two data generation methods in this study: survey questionnaires and semi-structured individual interviews. Survey questionnaire

A survey questionnaire is regarded as a technique for gathering statistical information about the attitudes, attributes and actions of a population by using a structured set of questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). McMillan and Schumacher (2001) define a survey questionnaire as a list of questions that measure a participant's views or beliefs about a subject. The first part of the study involved generating numerical data through a survey questionnaire, distributed to all five SMT members. These survey questionnaires were printed and given to SMT members to complete separately to ensure they did not reproduce each other's answers. Although the survey questionnaires mainly consisted of close-ended questions, a space was provided for participants to note any additional information if they wanted to (Addendum F). A survey questionnaire was conducted to understand the behaviour and opinions of SMT members concerning teachers' well-being within the school context. This is particularly fitting as the study's aim was to obtain a numerical measure representative of the participants' views. The questionnaire used in this study was self-developed and consisted of 10 items designed to measure teachers' perceptions of their well-being, specifically focusing on aspects like job satisfaction, stress, and work-life balance. These items were created based on the literature on workplace well-being and teacher well-being, but they were not directly taken from existing validated scales. The rationale for developing the items was to capture the specific experiences

and challenges faced by teachers in the Madadeni Circuit, aligning with the objectives of the study. The responses

The survey questionnaire responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale: 1 = *never*, 2 = *rarely*, 3 = *sometimes*, 4 = *often* and 5 = *very often*. The Likert-type scale responses were not analysed statistically but rather used to supplement and triangulate the qualitative findings. This 5-point Likert scale applied to questions 1, 5, 6 and 10 in the survey questionnaire. However, some of the survey questions used the other five Likert scales. For example, in Questions 2 and 9, the following 5-point Likert scale was used: 1 = *not at all important*, 2 = *slightly important*, 3 = *moderately important*, 4 = *very important*, and 5 = *extremely important*. In Question 3, the following 5-point Likert scale was used: 1 = *very dissatisfied*, 2 = *somewhat dissatisfied*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *somewhat satisfied* and 5 = *very satisfied* due to the nature of the question. In Questions 4, 7 and 8, the following 5-point Likert scale was used: 1 = *not at all*, 2 = *slightly*, 3 = *moderately*, 4 = *very much*, and 5 = *completely*. This was particularly fitting as the study aimed to obtain a numerical measure representative of the participants' views based on the questions asked in the survey questionnaire, and these different 5-point Likert scales were used to match the type of the question asked; they do not change the methods of measuring participants' responses to the ten questions asked in the survey. The questionnaire was utilised as a preliminary tool to gauge participants' perceptions of teacher well-being and SMT leadership practices before engaging in deeper discussions during the interviews. Also, to support qualitative insights rather than generate numerical data for statistical analysis.

4.7.1. Semi-structured Individual Interviews

An interview is a conversation between the researcher and the participant (Sibiya, 2018). Also, Cooper and Schindler (2003, p. 323) define an interview as a “two-way conversation initiated by an interviewer to obtain information from a participant”. This conversation is structured because the researcher wants particular information from the participants to address the designed research questions (Appendix 3). To understand and gain insight into the leadership role of the SMT members in promoting teacher well-being, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with the deputy principal and HODs from the selected school. This was done to explain, elaborate and validate the results from the survey questionnaires. At the beginning of each interview, the purpose of the research project was presented to each SMT

member to make them feel relaxed and well-informed about the context of the interview questions. Thus, in this study, the interviews assisted me in understanding the meaning that the SMT members attach to teacher well-being. The audio-recorded data and notes made during the interviews were transcribed. The interviews were conducted following the survey questionnaire.

4.8. Methods of Data Analysis

Data analysis is a procedure of breaking down the collected data into detailed themes and subthemes to obtain answers to the research question (Mthethwa, 2015). Moreover, data analysis is regarded as cleaning, modelling, and transporting data to discover helpful information (Mthethwa, 2015). I used, a general inductive thematic analysis was used to analyse data from the survey questionnaire and the one-on-one semi-structured interviews (Clarke & Braun, 2017; Creswell, 2012). This approach was employed to identify patterns and themes that emerged from the interviewees' responses, allowing for a deep understanding of the leadership practices of School Management Team (SMT) members in promoting teachers' well-being. An inductive approach was specifically chosen to allow the themes to emerge from the data itself, rather than imposing pre-existing categories or frameworks. While Likert scale responses provide structured numerical data, the qualitative aspect comes from the explanations participants provide. For example: After rating a statement, participants were asked open-ended questions to elaborate on their choices. This allows for deeper insights into their reasoning and experiences. The thematic analysis aims to identify and interpret critical concepts of the data guided by the posed research questions of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2023). This method of analysis allowed for an accessible and systematic procedure to generate codes and themes from the collected qualitative data. The generation of codes, the most minor units of analysis that are potentially related to the research question (Clarke & Braun, 2017), enabled deep engagement with the data, continuously working through the data to get a deeper understanding of commonalities and differences in the participants' responses and to identify themes and categories relevant to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2023). These generated themes provided a structured approach to organising and reporting analytic observations and interpretations of the findings.

Following the steps of the theoretical framework, the process began with familiarisation with the data through iterative reading of the transcribed interviews and the survey questionnaires.

This ensured familiarity with the data from the different transcripts of the participating SMT members, allowing the identification of commonalities and differences. After that, the transcripts were reviewed again, this time generating initial codes from the data that indicated how participants ensured good teacher well-being in their school, with the five elements of the PERMA framework in mind. However, the PERMA framework was not used as a coding tool but was kept in mind during the coding process. The generated codes were then closely examined to identify commonalities, allowing them to be grouped and categorised as themes and subthemes based on shared meanings.

These potential themes were reviewed to ensure they accurately represented the data, and names were assigned to the final themes. Lastly, these well-defined themes were used to produce the final report of the findings presented in Chapter 5. This thematic analysis identified three themes and seven subthemes from the interview transcriptions during the data analysis process. These themes and sub-themes were used with the PERMA framework concepts to determine leadership practices and strategies SMT members use to promote and maintain teacher well-being.

4.9. Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness refers to establishing confidence in the data generation, analysis and findings of the research project (Korstjens & Moser, 2017; Shenton, 2004). It comprises four aspects: credibility, confirmability, transferability and dependability (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). In qualitative research, trustworthiness, defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), refers to the rigor and credibility of the research findings. It ensures that the study is conducted and presented in a way that is accurate, reliable, and reflective of the participants' experiences. To ensure trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that researchers must address the aspects of credibility, confirmability, transferability and dependability in their studies.

4.9.1. Credibility

Credibility is the level of confidence in the truth of the research findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2017) and whether the research findings are accurately related to the data and research questions. Furthermore, credibility establishes if the interpretation of the data is correctly reflected in the analysis and conclusions. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility is

the first and most important criterion for establishing the trustworthiness of a qualitative research study because it directly relates to how well the findings capture the reality of the participants. To ensure credibility in this study, member checking was conducted, allowing participants to review and confirm the accuracy of the data and the interpretation. Furthermore, data triangulation was employed using multiple data sources to cross-check and validate the findings from different perspectives. Triangulation involves using multiple methods, data sources, researchers, or theories to corroborate findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 2002).

By combining survey questionnaires and semi-structured individual interviews, I aimed to obtain a complete picture of SMT leadership strategies for promoting teacher well-being, compensate for the limitations of each method, and enhance the credibility of my findings, and gain deeper insights through the convergence (or divergence) of data from different sources. By using both methods, the study sought to balance depth and breadth, enhancing overall credibility and ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Lastly, prolonged engagement was also used, where sufficient time was spent at the research site to gain a deep understanding of the context of the participants and build trust. The researcher spent 5 hours per day engaging with participants over the course of the data collection period, which allowed for a deeper understanding of the context and fostered rapport with the participants. Combined, these elements were used to ensure the study's credibility, providing trustworthiness in the findings.

4.9.2. Confirmability

Confirmability is determined by the degree to which the research findings are confirmed by other researchers (Korstjens & Mosers, 2017) and is based on the data rather than the researcher's imagination. In qualitative research, credibility is the correspondence of internal validity, emphasising truth value (Zuma, 2019). Confirmability in qualitative research refers to the degree to which the findings of a study are shaped by the participants and the data rather than being influenced by the researcher's biases, motivations, or perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To achieve confirmability in this study, an audit trail was used to demonstrate that the data and interpretations of the findings were derived from the participants' responses, not the researcher's subjective viewpoints. This trail includes detailed notes on how the data were gathered, how themes were developed, and the reasoning behind the final interpretations. It

serves to ensure that the findings are traceable and transparent, allowing others to follow the research process and verify the conclusions drawn from the data. The supervisor's involvement in the study as a more experienced outsider also helped minimise researcher bias, further enhancing confirmability.

4.9.3. Transferability

Korstjens and Mosers (2017) define transferability as the degree to which the qualitative research findings can be transferred to contexts with respondents other than those used in a research study. To ensure the transferability of the findings of the study, Korstjens and Moser (2017) argue that the researcher “facilitates the transferability judgment by a potential user through thick descriptions” (p. 3). The study had no intention of generalising its findings to other contexts, but to ensure transferability, a comprehensive description of the research sites, participants, and data generation processes was given to enable future research in similar contexts. Furthermore, thick descriptions were offered by providing a detailed and nuanced account of the school context and the interactions between the researcher and the participants.

4.9.4. Dependability

According to Korstjens and Moser (2017), dependability conveys the level of stability of the research findings over time. Dependability refers to the strength, consistency, and reliability of the research findings over time, and it ensures that the research process is systematic, well-documented, and logical so that if the study were to be repeated in the same context, using the same methods and participants, it would produce similar findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability is therefore determined by asking the research participants to evaluate the findings, interpretation, and recommendations based on their interview input. It also includes the aspect of consistency (Korstjens & Mosers, 2017).

To ensure dependability in this study, data generation and interpretation were articulated explicitly by citing the participants' *verbatim* quotes from the interviews. A thorough record of all interview transcripts and survey questionnaires was maintained, along with a detailed record of coding decisions and the process used to analyse the data. Furthermore, data triangulation was used by comparing the data from the survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to ensure consistency in the findings.

4.10. Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration involves ensuring that the rights of participants are protected and respected and that no harm is done to them (Creswell, 2012). Any research project must comply with ethical guidelines set by the institution (UKZN), which establish standards to prevent harm to participants. Creswell (2012) states that ethical considerations in all research are non-negotiable, mainly when human participants are involved, as it means some form of interaction between the researcher and participants will occur. The principles of ethical considerations discussed below include goodwill permission, confidentiality and anonymity, protection from harm and wellness considerations, informed consent and voluntary participation and withdrawal.

4.10.1. Confidentiality and anonymity

Anonymity is an ethical safeguard that ensures that participants are not identified by name, and their identities are not revealed thus they remain unknown (Neuman, 2014). This safeguard enables participants to express their feelings freely. Privacy and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research project. Participants were given pseudonyms during the survey questionnaires and semi-structured individual interviews to ensure confidentiality.

4.10.2. Protection from harm and wellness considerations

It is reasonable to argue that this caution is the cornerstone of ethical behaviour among all the research ethics standards, according to the literature (Lichtman, 2012). This means that the researcher must take responsibility for ensuring that participants are not exposed to any danger. Although emergencies were unexpected, the standard procedure of calling an ambulance if a participant fell ill during research sessions was followed.

4.10.3. Informed consent

Informed consent is a written statement explaining the details of a study to participants and allowing them to voluntarily decide to participate before the study commences (Neuman, 2014). Before participating in the study, participants were informed about the aim of the study and the intended use of the findings through informed consent forms and individual

discussions. They were also assured that their participation would remain confidential, and their responses would be used only to complete the study, as explained in the consent form.

4.10.4. Voluntary participation and withdrawal

The ethical concept of voluntary participation emphasises that individuals should not be forced to participate in research studies if they are uncomfortable doing so. Participants are free to choose to participate if they like but should not feel obligated to do so (Neuman & Robson, 2014). In this regard, participants were made aware that participation was voluntary and that they could opt out of the research without giving reasons or explanations.

4.11. Conclusion

This chapter presented the research methodology that was employed in this study. Clear explanations were given regarding the research design, method, analysis, and instruments used. Additionally, issues related to trustworthiness and ethical considerations were discussed. The next chapter will outline the data analysis and interpretation of the study.

Chapter 5

Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the research design and methodology adopted in this study. This chapter presents the data analysis, interpretation and discussion of the research findings based on the leadership responsibilities of SMT members in promoting teachers' well-being. A case study using a qualitative research technique was used. The qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis. The results of the survey questionnaires are presented first, followed by findings from the individual interviews. In this chapter, qualitative findings that were observed through thematic analysis are explained. Data triangulation was achieved by integrating the themes generated from the survey questionnaires and interview analyses to ensure the trustworthiness of this study. The data analysis was conducted to answer the following research question, which also guided the discussion of the findings: How do School Management Team (SMT) members perceive and enact their leadership responsibilities in promoting teacher well-being, and what factors influence these efforts? To answer this primary research question, the following objectives were developed:

1. To explore the perceptions and understandings of School Management Team members regarding their leadership responsibilities in promoting teacher well-being.
2. To analyse the leadership strategies and practices used by School Management Team members to support teacher well-being within their school context.
3. To examine the key enabling factors and constraints that influence the effectiveness of School Management Team members in fostering teacher well-being.

The findings from this study are presented and discussed according to the three main themes and eight sub-themes that address the research questions posed. Verbatim quotations were utilised to corroborate the discussion of the themes during data analysis. For instance, pseudonyms (such as P1, P2, etc.) were used during the data presentation and analysis to refer to Participant 1, 2, etc.

5.2. Presentation of Data

The data for this study is presented in two parts, beginning with data from the survey questionnaire and then integration with the themes generated from the semi-structured interviews. The data from the survey questionnaires is analysed statistically, using percentages to indicate participants' responses to each question. After that, the themes from the semi-structured interviews—focusing on organisational culture and climate, capacity building and adaptation, and SMT leadership and supportive practices—are analysed to answer the research questions posed in the study. This nuanced and detailed description and interpretation of the data was helpful in uncovering the strategies and processes used by SMT members to ensure teacher well-being in the selected school. Even though the findings are drawn from one school, the prolonged engagement with the SMT members and the in-depth analysis provide a rich context for understanding the investigated phenomena.

In this study, the survey questionnaire responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale: 1 = *never*, 2 = *rarely*, 3 = *sometimes*, 4 = *often* and 5 = *very often*. This 5-point Likert scale applied to questions 1, 5, 6 and 10 in the survey questionnaire. The results from the survey questionnaire are represented in Table 2 below as percentages per question and calculated as follows: five participants represent 100% of responses. For question 1, 3 participants selected 'sometimes', thus, ($\frac{3}{5} \times 100 = 60\%$). This was done to easily analyse data from the questionnaires using percentages instead of complex statistical analyses because the aim was to determine how many SMT members used a particular strategy in ensuring teacher well-being in the school.

However, for some of the survey questions, different five Likert scales were used. Questions 2 and 9 used the following 5-point Likert scale: 1 = *not at all important*, 2 = *slightly important*, 3 = *moderately important*, 4 = *very important*, and 5 = *extremely important*. Question 3 used: 1 = *very dissatisfied*, 2 = *somewhat dissatisfied*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *somewhat satisfied* and 5 = *very satisfied* due to the nature of the question. Questions 4, 7 and 8, used: 1 = *not at all*, 2 = *slightly*, 3 = *moderately*, 4 = *very much*, and 5 = *completely*. This was particularly fitting as the aim was to obtain a numerical measure representative of the participants' views based on the questions asked in the survey questionnaire, and these different

5-point Likert scales were used to match the type of the question asked; they do not change the methods of measuring participants' responses to the ten questions asked in the survey.

A survey questionnaire was distributed to all five SMT members in the sampled school to determine their perceptions and understandings of their role in supporting teacher well-being. While the survey instrument primarily comprised closed-ended questions, it also included an optional open-ended section for participants to provide additional comments. The data presented in Table 2 proved instrumental in addressing the first research question concerning the role of SMT members in supporting teacher well-being. Similarly, the findings in Table 2 effectively contributed to answering the second research question since the data from the individual semi-structured interviews corroborated it. While Table 2 presents the raw data in percentages, a more in-depth interpretation and analysis is provided in the subsequent section, integrating it with findings from the semi-structured interviews.

Table 2

SMT members' responses from a survey questionnaire

	Participants	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
How often do you feel stressed or overwhelmed in your role as an SMT member?						
Question 1	P1	x				
	P2		x			
	P3			x		
	P4			x		
	P5			x		
Total		1 (20%)	1 (20%)	3 (60%)	0%	0%
		Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
In your opinion, how important is it for SMT members to prioritise teacher well-being in their leadership practices?						
Question 2	P1					x
	P2					x
	P3	x				
	P4					x
	P5	x				
Total		2 (40%)	0%	0%	0%	3 (60%)
		Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	neutral	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied
How satisfied are you with the support and collaboration among SMT members in promoting and maintaining well-being within the team?						
	P1					x
	P2					x

Question 3	P3					x
	P4				x	
	P5					x
Total		0%	0%	0%	1 (20%)	4 (80%)
		Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very much	Compl etely
To what extent do you feel that as an SMT members you understand teachers' specific needs and challenges in promoting and maintaining their well-being?						
Question 4	P1				x	
	P2			x		
	P3				x	
	P4			x		
	P5				x	
Total		0%	0%	2 (40%)	3 (60%)	0%
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
How often do you encourage and model self-care practices (e.g., stress management techniques, work-life balance) to support both your own and teachers' well-being?						
Question 5	P1		x			
	P2					x
	P3		x			
	P4				x	
	P5				x	
Total		0%	2 (40%)	0%	2 (40%)	1 (20%)
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
How often do you feel that the workload assigned to teachers in your school is manageable and sustainable?						
Question 6	P1					x
	P2				x	
	P3			x		
	P4				x	
	P5				x	
Total		0%	0%	1 (20%)	3 (60%)	1 (20%)
		Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very much	Compl etely
How much do you feel SMT members collectively value and acknowledge teachers' contributions to the school?						
Question 7	P1					x
	P2				x	
	P3					x
	P4					x
	P5					x
Total		0%	0%	0%	1 (20%)	4 (80%)
		Note at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very much	Compl etely
To what extent do you feel the SMT promotes a culture of openness and communication around teacher well-being and stress management?						
	P1					x
	P2			x		

Question 8	P3			x		
	P4				x	
	P5				x	
Total		0%	0%	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)
		Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
How important is it for schools to provide access to structured resources (e.g., counselling services, wellness programs) to support teacher well-being?						
Question 9	P1				x	
	P2					x
	P3					x
	P4					x
	P5				x	
Total		0%	0%	0%	2 (40%)	3 (60%)
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
How often do you as an SMT member actively seek teacher feedback regarding their well-being and support needs, and implement strategies based on that feedback?						
Question 10	P1				x	
	P2			x		
	P3			x		
	P4					x
	P5			x		
Total		0%	0%	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)

After conducting the survey questionnaire with the five SMT members from the sampled school, only two (P1 & P2) indicated their availability to participate in these semi-structured interviews. To address the reduced number of participants, the interviews with these two participants were extended with additional questions to ensure that rich data was obtained. Furthermore, noting that qualitative research does not require a specific number of participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), the decision was made to proceed with the two participants who ultimately provided rich insights to answer the research questions.

These interviews aimed to examine how SMT members, based on their experiences and practices, promote teacher well-being within their school context. After thematically analysing the transcripts from the two participants' interviews, several themes and sub-themes emerged, represented in Table 3. These themes are discussed below in conjunction with the data from the survey questionnaire.

Table 3

Summary of themes and subthemes and survey questionnaire alignment

Themes	Subthemes
Organisational culture and climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Promoting a culture of openness and communication ○ Strategies for prioritising teacher well-being ○ Using self-care practices to promote teachers' well-being
Capacity building and adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supporting the personal needs and well-being of teachers ○ Distribution of workload among staff members
SMT leadership and supportive practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SMT roles and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interpersonal skills ○ Understanding teachers' needs and challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Technological adaptation

5.2.1. Analysis of data from survey questionnaires and interviews using emergent themes

The themes presented in Table 3 emerged as crucial elements in understanding how SMT members in the sampled school played a role in ensuring teacher well-being. These themes and their subthemes are discussed, providing evidence from SMT members of how they actively work to promote teacher well-being and highlight the challenges they experience during this process.

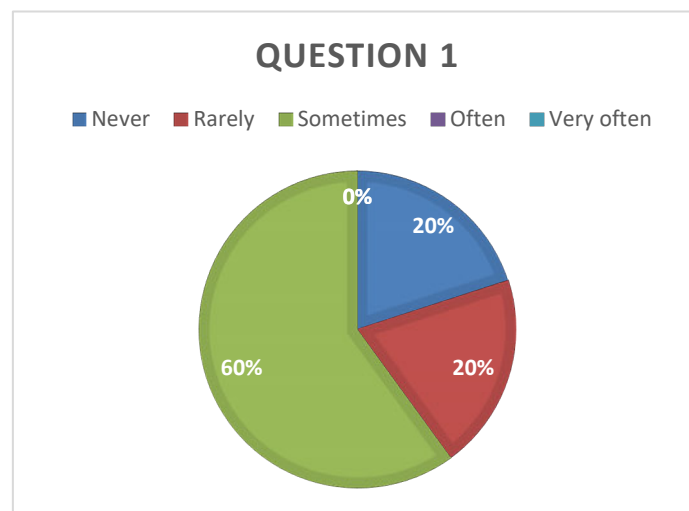
Theme one: Organisational Culture and School Climate

The 'organisational culture and school climate' theme seemed to combine elements of school values, beliefs, norms and behaviours that shaped the school environment. This theme is crucial for understanding how the internal dynamics and strategies of the SMT members influence teacher satisfaction and overall teacher well-being. Analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed that SMT members thought teachers experienced stress in their roles. The reasons for this stress, indicated by the SMT members, were integrated and thematised as 'organisational culture and school climate'. The SMT members identified different reasons contributing to teachers' stress, categorised into two sub-themes: (1) promoting a culture of openness and communication and (2) school climate. The following subsections discuss these subthemes, with thick descriptions from SMT members' responses provided to enhance the study's trustworthiness.

Before discussing these two subthemes, it is critical to indicate that as much as SMT members are tasked with promoting teacher well-being, it is equally important to acknowledge that SMT members' well-being must also be prioritised to ensure they effectively support and promote positive well-being among teachers. From the survey questionnaire findings in Figure 3, SMT members were asked, 'How often do you feel stressed or overwhelmed in your role as an SMT member?' 60% answered 'sometimes', indicating that many SMT members sometimes experience stress in their roles. These findings are an essential indicator that even though SMT members are tasked with ensuring teacher well-being, their well-being must also be taken care of.

Figure 3

Question 1 participants' responses



This problem of SMT members failing to regulate their well-being and often getting stressed in their roles could negatively impact their ability to support teacher well-being, which might, in turn, negatively impact overall school success. This finding aligns with Sieberhagen et al. (2009), who argued that the negative effect of stress on employees' health and well-being could negatively influence the organisation. This implies that for SMT members to promote teacher well-being, they need to be able to manage their well-being first. This recommendation aligns with research by Wadesango et al. (2015), who highlighted the importance of stress management for SMT members.

Wadesango and colleagues' findings suggest that effective stress management practices contribute to SMT members' own well-being and enable them to support their staff better

(Wadesango et al., 2015). Furthermore, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 mandates the provision of stress-free work environments for employees, as workplace stress can negatively impact job performance and overall health (South African Department of Labour, 1997). Thus, the main argument relating to SMT members' well-being in this study is that they cannot promote positive well-being among teachers unless their well-being is nurtured and prioritised within the school.

Promoting a culture of openness and communication

From the evidence in Figure 3, it can be deduced that SMT members had different feelings about their role as school leaders in managing their health while performing their duties as SMT members. 60% of the SMT members (P3, P4 and P5) indicated that they sometimes feel stressed or overwhelmed in their role as school leaders. Even though these participants decided not to participate in the one-on-one semi-structured interviews due to other commitments, their responses from the questionnaire are worth noting because they highlight that SMT leaders face challenges in promoting positive well-being for teachers.

This is evident from the two members who indicated that they never feel stressed and the one who said she rarely feel stressed in their roles. For example, even though P1 mentioned in the questionnaire that she never feels stressed or overwhelmed in her role as an SMT member, her response in the interview could be interpreted differently. Responding to the interview, P1 mentioned that:

Challenges that the SMT face when dealing with issues that affect teachers is time. Sometimes, our responsibilities of responding to both teachers and the department overlap, and we end up missing some of the things we need to cover. Even though we plan things, there are always time constraints. A lot is expected from us, and time ends up being against us. (P1)

P1's response suggests a potential discrepancy between her reported experience of stress in the questionnaire and the nature of her work as described in the interviews. P1 claims to 'never feel stressed' as an SMT member, yet she describes challenges that are well-known stressors faced by SMT members, such as time constraints due to overlapping responsibilities, difficulty meeting expectations due to limited time, and feeling pressure to manage both teacher needs and departmental demands. Time management has been consistently cited as a crucial factor in the well-being of educational professionals. Macan et al. (1990) suggest that perceived

control of time is a crucial predictor of reduced stress levels and enhanced job performance. This finding shows that overlapping responsibilities and time constraints are prevalent stressors for SMT members, corroborating Macan et al.'s (1990) suggestion. Furthermore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Bhattacharya and Tandon (2023) also found that time management was a challenge that SMT members faced in ensuring teacher well-being.

There are several possible explanations for the discrepancy in P1's response, such as reluctance to admit to stress, wanting to appear competent and unburdened, or P1 might have developed effective coping mechanisms that help her manage stress without feeling overwhelmed. Hence, it is necessary to dig deeper into understanding SMT member's well-being because they may be concealing underlying issues.

Unlike P1, P2 indicated that he rarely feels stressed as an SMT member. However, most of his responses to the questions related to SMT workplace stressors indicated several stress elements being common in his role. One of the examples that P2 mentioned was that:

I think as a society in South Africa as a whole, we have a problem of our learners taking drugs, and we cannot run away from that problem, so in class, teachers, they do face the problem that learners are unruly and uncontrollable after taking such substance abuse. (P2)

This finding also highlights a potential inconsistency between the participants' perception of their stress level and the reality of the challenges SMT members face within the school. This SMT member (P2) stated that he "rarely" experiences stress and did not acknowledge it as a significant issue for him in the workplace. However, he admitted a severe problem with student drug use that disrupts classroom environments and creates challenges for teachers, which can negatively impact teachers' well-being. This situation indirectly exerts stress on him as an SMT member, as he must address incidents stemming from the problem of learner drug use to ensure teachers' well-being. Walton et al. (2016) found that drug use can affect the well-being of teachers. Thus, this SMT member's acknowledgement of this issue indicates an awareness of its potential impact.

This may suggest several interpretations. Firstly, he might be focusing on solutions rather than dwelling on the stress caused by student drug use, Secondly, he might not experience the same level of stress as teachers who directly face these classroom disruptions, and lastly, he might have a leadership style that shields him from the daily challenges faced by teachers. Each of

these three interpretations carries different implications for P2. The first one could indicate a potential blind spot regarding the impact of student drug use on teacher stress and well-being. The second suggests the importance of fostering open communication within the school to better understand the challenges teachers face at all levels face. The third interpretation may mean that P2's acknowledgement of the problem suggests a willingness to address student drug use, though further action might be needed.

Overall, this finding suggests a need for the SMT member to consider the potential disconnect between his perception and the reality of teacher stress caused by student drug use to support teacher well-being better. This finding touches on several interrelated challenges educators face in South Africa, reflecting broader societal issues that penetrate the educational environment. In this regard, it can be argued that the issue of learner drug abuse is particularly troubling as it not only affects the learners' health and potential but also disrupts the learning environment, contributing to unruly and uncontrollable behaviour. This presents significant hurdles for classroom management and learning processes, demanding additional skills and resources from teachers to address these challenges. Hence, the SMT must demonstrate their leadership skills to resolve the matter by assisting teachers to solve the problem.

Findings on coping mechanisms for dealing with stressful situations to improve one's well-being, such as focusing on the solutions rather than the problem, were evident in a systematic review by Hascher and Waber (2021). SMT members' leadership style and goals were found to be predictors of how one might react to challenges that do not directly involve them (Parker et al., 2012).

Another finding was that there are personal challenges that teachers face, such as divorce or dealing with family members who struggle with substance abuse, which further compound teachers' ability to maintain professional efficacy while under emotional distress. This interplay of personal and professional challenges can diminish a teacher's capacity to perform at their best, potentially affecting student outcomes. In the interview, one participant mentioned that 'Also, teachers, as a human being's face challenges where you find out that a teacher is going through a divorce; hence, it impacts their work. (P2)'.

Teachers' financial instability was another factor that stressed SMT members.

The other one is usually a problem is a finance. You will find out that a teacher maybe has a child who is in the university and needs to take care of that child and also supports the family financially. (P2)

The general findings from this subtheme were that even though P1 and P2 indicated they ‘never’ and ‘rarely’ face stress as SMT members in the questionnaire, their semi-structured interview responses indicated that they do get stress over either teachers’ problems or learners’ misbehaviour. Weiland (2021) found that issues related to teachers’ personal lives influenced teacher well-being in schools. Thus, the desire for SMT members to show interest in their teachers’ personal lives is essential and may forge a good relationship between SMT members and teachers (Weiland, 2021).

Furthermore, this finding recognises that teachers have multiple personalities, live and work within multiple and dynamic contexts, and that their personal lives can affect what they do in the workplace (Hascher & Waber, 2021). This means that SMT members need to show interest in teachers’ lives to be aware of teachers’ problems and be able to support them in any way they can. The utterances above highlight the significance of ensuring a culture of openness and communication between teachers and SMT members to ensure the well-being of both teachers and SMT members. Within the PERMA framework, the need to promote positive relationships by building and maintaining strong and supportive connections with others, such as the teacher and the SMT members, is an essential element that can boost teachers’ well-being.

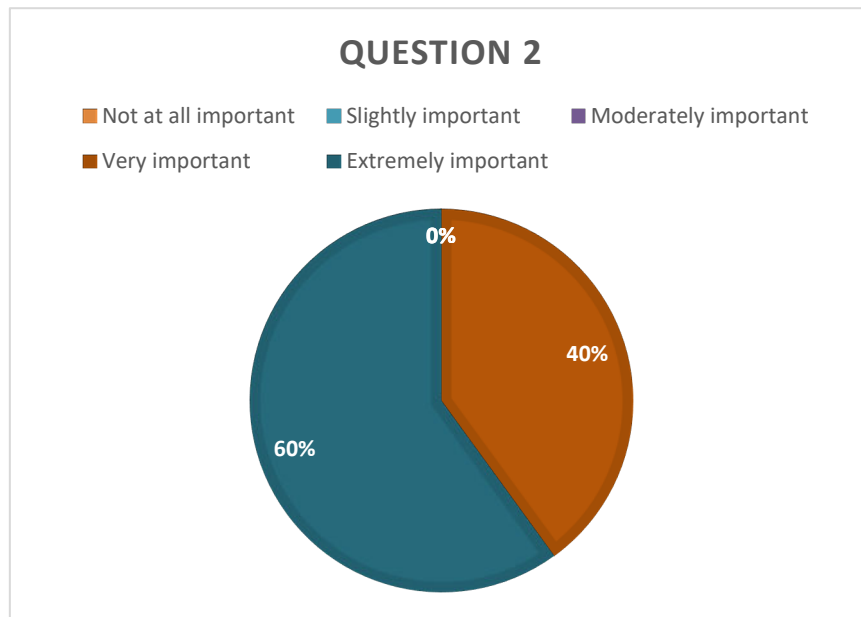
Strategies for prioritising teacher well-being

The second questionnaire question asked SMT members to reflect on their opinions about the importance of prioritising teacher well-being—this question aimed to gauge how SMT members rated the significance of prioritising teacher well-being in their school. The findings from the five teachers who completed the questionnaire are summarised in Figure 4. Because they are polarised, with 60% of the SMT members indicating that it is extremely important. In contrast, 40% stated that it is not important at all, it paints a blurry picture about the significance of ensuring teacher well-being among these SMT members. The study also found that SMT members recognise the importance of teacher well-being in creating a positive school culture. 60% of the SMT members indicated that it is crucial to prioritise teacher well-being in the workplace. In line with PERMA theory, SMT members must build a positive school culture and well-being for teachers (Slavin et al., 2012). This indicates that the majority of SMT

members, to a large extent, felt that it is vital to prioritise teacher well-being in their leadership practices. Unfortunately, interview feedback was collected from only two SMT members who considered keeping SMT well-being as a critical practice.

Figure 4

Question 2 participants' responses



The SMT members who believed that teacher well-being is important had various initiatives to support it, such as organising fun walks. These events serve a dual purpose: they create opportunities for teachers to engage in physical exercise while also giving teachers time to relax and communicate with one another. This shows an understanding that teachers' well-being extends beyond the classroom and includes their physical and mental health. Strategies used to prioritise teacher well-being from P1's utterances included:

We tend to have initiatives like fun walks, whereby we use that time to exercise and relax because we are always busy, and we tend to have limited time for ourselves as we always rush home to assist our children with their schoolwork after having a long day at school. (P1)

According to the PERMA framework, relationships are a crucial element of well-being (Seligman, 2011b). Recent literature (McCallum et al., 2022) supports the significance of group activities in enhancing social bonds and well-being. For instance, McCallum et al. (2022) found that collaborative physical activities improve educators' social cohesion and overall mental

health. Teachers engaging in group activities experience increased social support, leading to enhanced job satisfaction and reduced stress levels. This sense of camaraderie and mutual support aligns with the ‘relationships’ component of the PERMA framework, highlighting its importance in promoting a positive and resilient teaching community. Thus, initiatives encouraging group activities and collaboration among teachers are pivotal in fostering a positive work environment and enhancing teacher well-being. By integrating these practices, educational institutions can support teachers in building meaningful relationships and achieving a balanced, fulfilling professional life. A systematic review by Von der Embse et al. (2019) also supports the notion that fun group activities are an important element of teacher well-being and can be used as interventions or strategies to enhance school well-being.

Furthermore, another strategy for prioritising teacher well-being, as indicated by P1, is the establishment of a School Based Support Team (SBST) that emphasises the importance of teachers’ well-being within the school leadership and operation. This SBST supports both learners and teachers. P1 mentioned that the team checks teachers’ needs and equips them with financial skills training from relevant financial specialists. P1 mentioned the following in this regard.

We have a School Based Support Team that deals not only with learner components but also with teacher components in terms of checking teachers’ needs, such as equipping them with financial skills training from relevant personnel. (P1)

This indicates that the sampled school is trying very hard to ensure that teacher well-being is not compromised in the workplace. The provision of financial skills training indicates a recognition of the multifaceted nature of teacher well-being, acknowledging that financial stress can impact overall job satisfaction and performance. This reflects P2’s earlier mention that teachers may struggle with their well-being because of economic issues. The school provides financial skills training from trained financial officers to mitigate this factor. This indicates that the school cares about teacher well-being and has measures in place to support it.

This strategy of prioritising teacher well-being by forming the SBST, which supports both learners and teachers to maintain their well-being, aligns with Seligman’s (2012) framework, which emphasises the importance of fostering positive emotions such as contentment, interest, love, laughter, pride, compassion and amusement amongst teachers which encourages positive

emotions. Literature on using SBST to ensure is limited, but some studies indicate other roles played by the SBST, such as responding to issues of sexual diversity and homophobic bullying (Brown & Buthelezi, 2020). Furthermore, Gaving et al. (2022) revealed that personal problems, such as not being able to see family members because of work duties may also affect teacher well-being. Thus, the SBST's support for teachers is a good practice by SMT members that promotes several PERMA framework practices and supports teachers in their roles.

P2 also mentioned that they use other strategies that are more hands-on and direct to ensure teacher well-being. For instance, teachers must write monthly reports detailing any issues in their subjects. This platform gives fewer vocal teachers a chance to express concerns within their subjects or departments that may affect their well-being. Further, P2 mentioned that there are also delegates sent to the schools by teacher unions to investigate teacher well-being and collaborate with the SMT to identify any issues that need to be addressed. This sentiment is shared by:

There are a lot of platforms. In this school, we usually write a monthly report where departmental heads will ask individual teachers or subject teachers to write down or to say what the problems are in their subjects, not just problems to report on their subjects. Also, there is a platform where unions they do send delegates to the principal or SMT to report about the well-being of their members. (P2)

Based on P2's sentiment, it can be concluded that this structured feedback loop enables teachers to voice their concerns and ensures a record of these discussions. Another finding that is not thoroughly researched in the literature is the role of teacher unions in ensuring teacher well-being in schools. However, the utterances highlight the significance of teacher unions in ensuring teacher well-being. While both SMT members acknowledged that teacher well-being is important, P2 recognised that mitigating one teacher's well-being issues could also affect other teachers. In this regard, another participant mention that:

Like before as I said that there is a teacher who has special parking because of her well-being, and to other teachers, it seems as if that teacher is being favoured. However, we know that her eye side is not okay, so she can not to park in any other parking. (P2)

P2 gave an example that doing a favour for one teacher because of their physical condition might make other teachers feel like they are not as crucial as that teacher, which is a serious

matter that may affect their well-being. However, this is also a severe challenge for SMT members because they need to address one teacher's well-being while being mindful of its potential impact on the well-being of other teachers. This serious challenge for the SMT may require them to escalate such cases to the appropriate body for resolution. A search in the literature indicates a gap in research exploring how the well-being of one teacher affects the well-being of other teachers. P2 also mentioned the importance of petitions from learners that may help SMT members identify teachers who may require assistance with their well-being. In this regard, P2 made the following statement in the interview.

The other thing is sometimes learners they do write things we usually call petitions where they will say maybe to the school management team, we would like to maybe we are having a problem with such a teacher can be relieved. They will cite, maybe they will give their justifications to say why and to protect that teacher maybe as a management team we will give that teacher another subject and to him will end up not understanding why but in the way you are trying to protect him, we do get such cases.
(P2)

This study investigated teacher well-being practices within a school's leadership structure. While interview data was limited to two SMT members, both emphasised the importance of teacher well-being. The findings highlight the school's efforts to address the multifaceted nature of teacher well-being, acknowledging the impact of financial stress and offering relevant training. However, a potential challenge identified is ensuring fairness in addressing individual needs. An example involved a teacher receiving a designated parking spot due to a disability, which some other teachers perceived as favouritism. This underscores the delicate balance between addressing individual needs and maintaining a sense of fairness among the teaching staff. The study also mentions the role of student petitions in identifying teachers who might need assistance. The limited data suggests that the SMT members are committed to teacher well-being, implementing various initiatives and acknowledging the complexity of addressing individual needs.

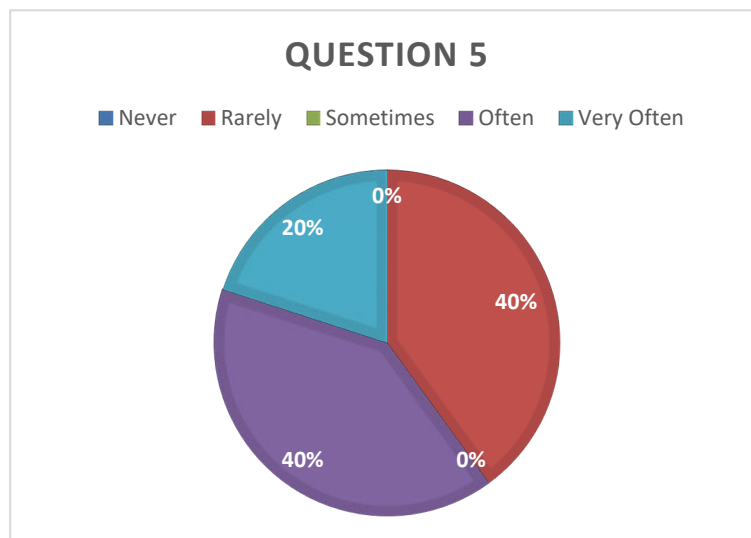
Using Self-care Practices to Promote Teachers' Well-being

Self-care practices have a powerful impact on mental, physical and emotional health. Hence, in any workplace, self-care practices must be prioritised and exercised. In addition, workers, including SMT members, should be encouraged to participate in any self-care model

introduced in the workplace. Figure 5.3 shows the extent to which the five SMT members rated the question “*How often do you encourage and model self-care practices (e.g., stress management techniques, work-life balance) to support both your own and teachers’ well-being?*” in the five-point Likert scale questionnaire. The findings in Figure 5 indicate that 40% of the SMT members often used self-care practices to promote their well-being, while another 40% indicated that they rarely use such practices. The remaining 20% of the SMT members indicated they use self-care practices very often for teacher well-being. Hence, a majority (60%) of the SMT members indicated using self-care practices to promote teachers’ well-being.

Figure 5

Question 2 participants’ responses



In agreement with some of the data from the questionnaire, the interview findings regarding the use of self-care practices to promote well-being indicate that the two interviewed SMT members concluded that they organise health campaigns to promote teacher well-being. One participant elaborated on the question of organising health campaigns:

There was also a health truck outside where the community, learners, and teachers were allowed to go and do a general checkup. (P1)

Another participant supported this, stating,

“..... during COVID, there were teachers with commodities, and those teachers were quarantined, where a room was prepared for them specifically and at the moment, we

also have a teacher whose well-being is not okay, and she is having a special parking to help with her well-being.”

Thus, this proves that the SMT members of the school consider the self-care model a crucial aspect of teacher well-being that needs to be exercised in the school. Self-care needs to occur in a safe and supportive environment to avoid the stigma, violence and adverse health outcomes that can often arise when seeking care in isolation. Practising teacher self-care among teachers and supporting it through SMT initiatives is important not only for teacher well-being but also for their pedagogical effectiveness (Soini, Pyhältö & Pietarinen 2010). Additionally, teachers’ self-care is at the intersection of their interactions with students and colleagues and in making evaluations and planning lessons (Murphy et al., 2020). Thus, self-care is an essential element of ensuring well-being.

The use of social media platforms to foster a sense of community and support amongst teachers, as described by P2, is another dimension of self-care that acknowledges the importance of social support in improving well-being. As P2 indicated in the extract below, they use the social media application WhatsApp to congratulate teachers on their birthdays.

In our case, obviously, we have to make sure that teachers are happy. We have created a group where if a person is having a birthday, then that will be shared on the WhatsApp group, and teachers will congratulate that person and write some messages telling them happy birthday wishes. (P2)

This exercise of using social media platforms to wish teachers happy birthdays indicates the vital role technology plays in supporting the well-being of teachers in schools. A systematic review by Best and Manktelow (2014) revealed that communication using social media is an important element in enhancing teacher well-being and positive relationships. Thus, in this study, SMT members promoted positive emotions in the school environment—such as gratitude, joy, and hope—by recognising and celebrating teachers’ accomplishments and contributions to school achievements to enhance teacher well-being (Seligman, 2012). When SMT members celebrate teachers’ achievements and birthdays, they help develop teachers’ sense of accomplishment and purpose within the school environment (Seligman, 2012). Furthermore, using WhatsApp to maintain privacy allows teachers to share opinions, voice concerns, and give feedback on specific programmes. P2 also indicated a proactive approach

where teachers can approach the principal or SMT to report anything threatening their well-being in the school. A participant mentioned that:

As I mentioned, the issue of an initiative of birthday, by the number of messages that are being written on the WhatsApp group, also gives us feedback that the teachers are happy with the programme and also indicates to us that there is harmony among the teachers, we do have a platform where educators if they feel to write something is either to congratulate or not to say that to critics but to give their opinion they do write on the group, sometimes they even go to the principal's office if something is pressing that they want to say to the principal or the school management team. (P2)

Using social media platforms to ensure teacher well-being may foster good relationships, contributing to social well-being by encouraging positive interactions and the development and sharing of empathy and sympathy. This study found that while only 60% of SMT members reported frequently using self-care practices themselves, the school implements initiatives to support teacher well-being. These include health campaigns with general check-ups, offering support during challenging times (e.g., dedicated rooms for quarantining teachers during COVID-19), and designated parking for a member with health limitations. The SMT members also mentioned utilising social media platforms like WhatsApp to congratulate teachers on birthdays and facilitate communication to address concerns. These findings align with research highlighting the importance of self-care for managing stress and maintaining well-being and the role of accessible healthcare and social support in creating a safe environment for self-care practices.

In conclusion, prioritising self-care is essential because it aligns with all the PERMA framework's five components. It links to positive emotion as self-care practices, such as relaxation, hobbies, or mindfulness, can help individuals cultivate positive emotions like joy, contentment, and gratitude. These activities contribute to overall well-being by enhancing mood and reducing stress. Regarding engagement, self-care often involves activities that require full attention and focus, such as exercise, creative projects, or meditation. These activities can lead to a flow state, where individuals are deeply engaged in what they are doing, contributing to a sense of fulfilment. On the other hand, self-care can improve relationships by ensuring individuals are mentally and emotionally balanced. Taking care of oneself allows for better interactions with others, as it helps maintain the energy and patience needed to foster healthy, supportive connections. Self-care can also be linked to a sense of meaning or purpose.

By prioritising self-care, individuals acknowledge their worth and the importance of their well-being, aligning with their broader life goals and values. Lastly, self-care can lead to a sense of achievement, especially when it involves setting and meeting personal goals, such as improving health, learning new skills, or maintaining a balanced lifestyle.

Theme Two: Capacity Building and Adaptation

The Department of Education plays a pivotal role in ensuring that learners get quality outcomes. This can be done by ensuring that teachers have equal access to available resources that promote their well-being. Therefore, the DoE's duty should not end with the provision of resources because it remains its responsibility to ensure that teachers use all resources made available to schools for ensuring their well-being.

Supporting personal needs and well-being of teachers

There is a fine line between balancing private and professional life, but the reality is that private life affects professional life. When employees struggle at home, they find it difficult to focus at work, which may lead to low productivity. However, fostering a culture of openness and communication can encourage employees to talk about their problems. When they feel heard and understood, it gives them hope, creating a happier and more productive workforce. A question was asked regarding how often SMT members solicit teacher feedback regarding their well-being and support needs. Figure 6 indicates how the five SMT members who responded to the questionnaire rated this question.

Figure 6

Question 5 participants' responses

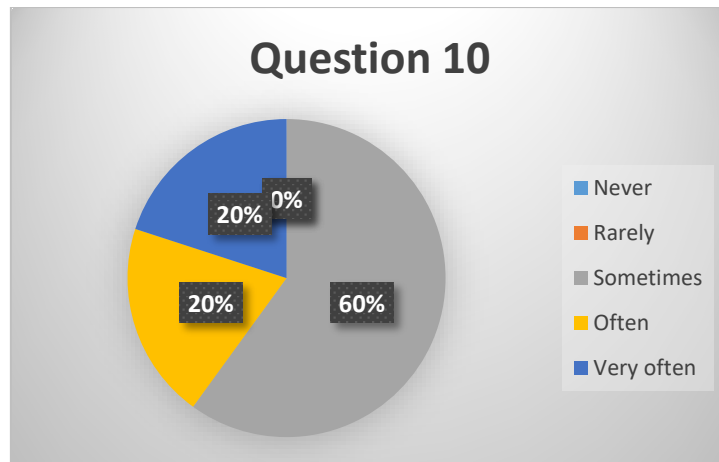


Figure 6 gives an overall view of how the five SMT members rated question 10 in the questionnaire. In summary, 60% of the SMT members generally seek feedback from teachers regarding their well-being and the support they need. An additional 20% mentioned that they often ask for feedback, while another 20% indicated that they very often solicit teacher feedback. This indicates that most SMT members from this sampled school largely seek input from teachers. This finding indicates that most of this school's SMT members acknowledge the importance of soliciting teacher feedback about their well-being, although the frequency varies.

In promoting the culture of openness and communication, P1 mentioned that they plan school activities according to teachers' needs and provide opportunities for open communication with teachers where they share their needs to ensure they are comfortable in performing their duties effectively. This is evident from one statement in the interviews, as seen in the quotation below.

What works for us at this school is that everything we plan we plan according to teachers' needs or by seeing what is needed. Also, we have open communication with teachers whereby they share with us what they need to ensure that they are comfortable in school to ensure effective working environment before formulating any programme.
(P1)

In conclusion, the findings of this study, corroborated by existing literature, suggest that fostering a culture of openness and proactive communication is instrumental in building a robust educational environment. This underscores the critical role of SMT members in consistently soliciting and actively responding to teacher feedback, not merely on an ad-hoc basis. Furthermore, it highlights the necessity of integrating teacher well-being into policy formulation and school climate development processes. While cultivating such a culture

requires sustained effort, the potential benefits for teacher morale, resilience, and, ultimately, student achievement solidify its significance.

This is in line with the findings from Morris et al. (2013), who affirmed that school employee wellness programmes can promote teachers' health and reduce their health risks. Furthermore, Morris et al. (2013) added that wellness programmes can reduce stress levels in adults. Within the PERMA framework, teacher engagement is encouraged by providing opportunities for professional development, collaboration, and autonomy. Concerning the PERMA framework, the integration of employee wellness programmes makes teachers feel appreciated and shows that their well-being is a priority in the workplace. However, the SMT members in this study mentioned that most teachers do not attend the wellness programmes, making it difficult for the SMT to fulfil their role in promoting teachers' well-being in the school.

This finding aligns with Taute (2008), who reported that SMT members must remind teachers about EAPs that offer access to counselling, referrals and resources. Additionally, SMT members must provide or encourage teachers to engage in professional development on social-emotional skills, resilience and understanding the impact of trauma on the individual (McPeck et al., 2009). These professional development programmes aim to assist teachers in dealing with challenges that can impact their teaching (Lever et al., 2017). In addition, EAPs are also designed to help teachers in balancing family life and work so that they can feel a sense of accomplishment in both their personal lives and the workplace. In line with Seligman (2012), providing opportunities for teachers to achieve their goals and accomplish their tasks enhances their sense of competence and accomplishment, ensuring positive teacher well-being in schools.

Distribution of workload among staff members

The research findings regarding workload distribution among staff members highlight the underlying complexity of academic workload management within educational institutions. An effective workload allocation process is crucial and requires the involvement of academic staff in its development and implementation to ensure credibility and fairness. A standardised school-wide approach to workload management can enhance the effectiveness of distribution and align the increasing pressure on academics with realistic expectations.

This study found that the SMT members distributed workloads fairly among teachers. The school also makes use of a Math Core room rotation system, which aligns with current academic literature and emphasises the effectiveness of a team-based approach. An extract from one participant supports this.

I think I can also mention the issue of maths. We have a room that is called Maths Core, where all maths teachers stay together in that room as maths teachers so that they can able to plan and also work as a team. (P2)

Thus, as an SMT member, indicated that the school leadership believes that when teachers engage in collaborative planning, they can better distribute workloads and enhance the quality of their teaching. With this perspective, the study found that teachers across subjects, not just mathematics, emphasised that working as a team is essential. P2 provided an example with IsiZulu teachers who plan together and rotate their teaching as a team. This is highlighted in the utterance below.

Also, IsiZulu they are a perfect example in the school. They plan as a team, even if when they are teaching, they rotate, so if a person was teaching grade 8, will move with those learners to grade 9, then take grade 10 and go back to GET again. (P2)

By working together in their respective subject groups, teachers enhance their professional skills and cultivate positive relationships, contributing to a supportive work environment. Positive relationships among teachers are essential for positive well-being. Diener, Oishi and Tay (2020) emphasise that social support and interpersonal connections are fundamental to psychological well-being. In light of these findings, it is clear that the SMT members believe that allowing teachers to collaborate in planning and teaching their lessons may reduce teachers' workloads, which could benefit their well-being. The study found that the school used different approaches to distribute the workload fairly among teachers. For instance, they use a Math Core room rotation system, which aligns with current literature emphasising the effectiveness of a team-based approach.

The study also found that SMT members understand that if the workload is not distributed fairly, this might cause high stress levels for teachers, which may affect how they perform their duties. These findings were also confirmed by Ortan et al. (2021), who argued that teachers can develop higher stress levels, leading to demotivation, if the workload is a constant strain. In the same vein, Rothmann (2005), Lever et al (2017), and Sieberhagen et al. (2009)

highlighted several factors contributing to the high-stress rates in the education field, such as workload, large class size, inadequate resources, and learners' behavioural challenges. These issues were also observed in this study's SMT members' responses.

Hence, to reduce the level of stress among teachers, the workload must be distributed fairly, as emphasised by the *Personnel Administrative Measures* (PAM), which state that workloads should be "equitable" to ensure that no teacher is overloaded with work (ELRC, 2015). When workloads are equitably distributed, teachers are likely to feel like equal team members. This will foster positive emotions where they feel happy and appreciated in their jobs, as emphasised by the PERMA framework (Seligman, 2011a). These positive feelings may result in teachers feeling good about themselves, which can maximise their focus on their work and produce positive outcomes for learners and a positive image for the school.

Theme Three: SMT Leadership and Supportive Practices

SMT roles and responsibilities

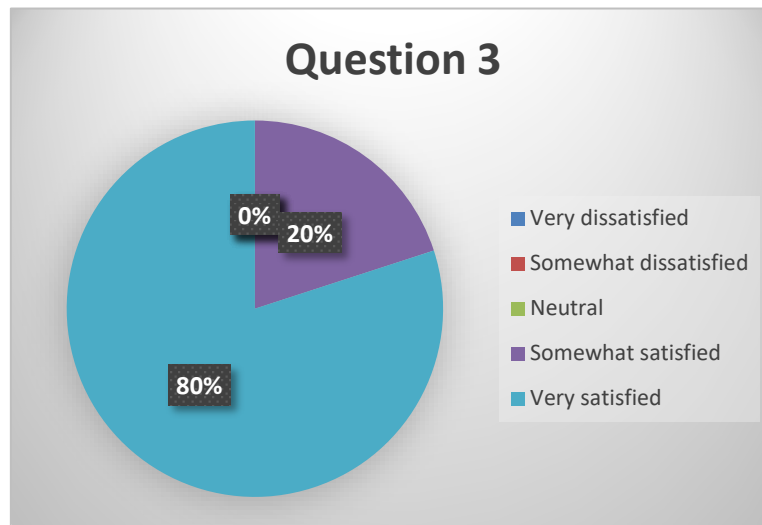
The SMT members have specific functions and responsibilities. It is important to note that their roles differ according to their positions. For instance, there are different roles for the principal, the deputy principal, and the HODs. However, the principal must be clear on what role each SMT member plays so that each SMT member understands their accountabilities. If the SMT members do not understand their roles and responsibilities, they are unlikely to support teachers effectively.

Regarding the well-being of SMT members, the findings indicated varied responses about their roles and the associated challenges. See Figure 7 for the participants' responses. Regarding Question 3 in the questionnaire, most SMT members were satisfied with the support and advice they give each other in ensuring positive teacher well-being in the school. This is evident in the 80% who indicated they were very satisfied with the support, and the 20% who indicated that they were somewhat satisfied.

While this indicates a positive environment of support among SMT members, Figure 7 illustrates that most of them feel varying stressors in their roles. Thus, one may infer that although SMT members generally feel satisfied with the support they give each other, they also contend with stress and feelings of being overwhelmed by their responsibilities related to ensuring teachers' well-being was also present.

Figure 7

Question 3 participants' responses



Interpersonal skills

In the interviews, one SMT member (P1) stressed the significance of interpersonal skills for working with others. This may include developing your way of dealing with situations and addressing challenges without blaming others. P1 mentioned that *'As a leader, you must possess interpersonal skills that will allow you you to work with people'*. (P1)

The above comment may further underscore the need for interpersonal skills for leaders, emphasising empathy and active listening in addressing teachers' concerns. P1 supported the above statement by stating that:

Leaders need to be sympathetic and empathetic; you must be able to listen to teachers' cries and also need to be able to listen to other people's views depending on different situations and leadership styles. (P1)

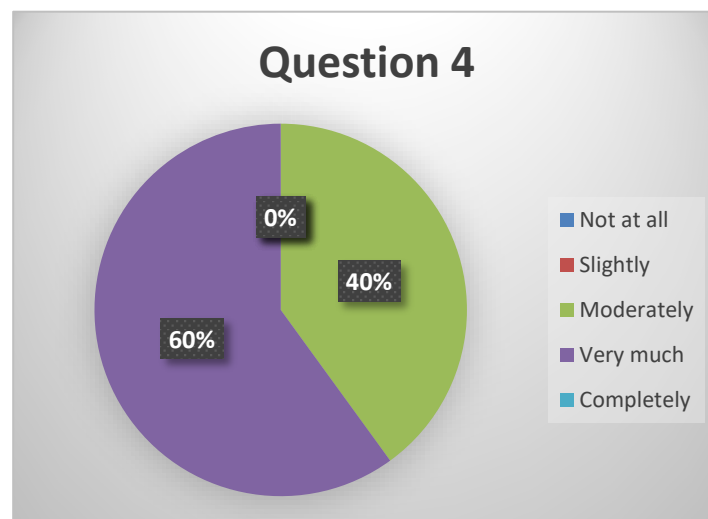
In conclusion, these research findings suggest that SMT members, particularly in the context of schools, benefit from a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, which can potentially decrease stress levels. Moreover, the emphasis on the need for empathy, sympathy, and interpersonal skills aligns with the literature that views these traits as essential for effective leadership, particularly in supporting the well-being of employees—or, in the school context, teachers.

Understanding teachers' needs and challenges

A question was asked to explore the SMT's feelings and understanding regarding teachers' specific needs and challenges in promoting and maintaining teachers' well-being. Figure 8 gives an overall summary of the extent to which the SMT members expressed their understanding of these needs and challenges. The study found that SMT members from this school have a significant grasp of the challenges teachers face, as evidenced by the 60% who mentioned that they very much understand teachers' needs. The 40% who indicated that they moderately understand these needs (See Figure. 8). This understanding is crucial for teacher well-being because it enables these SMT members to address these issues proactively so that they do not affect teacher well-being. This means that teachers' needs and challenges are not neglected by the SMT, who actively organises supportive structures to assist teachers in resolving their challenges while also maintaining their well-being in the workplace.

Figure 8

Question 4 participants' responses



Based on the findings mentioned above, it is clear that the SMT understands teachers' specific needs and challenges in promoting and maintaining their well-being. The following quote from one participant is the evidence.

In our case, as a full-service high school, we have a structure called School Support Teams (SBST), which has four components, one of which is a teacher component. If a teacher has a problem, they are supported by that structure. Also, as a school, if we find out that a teacher is struggling, we can organise help, such as booking psychologist sessions and social workers. (P2)

Based on the findings from this study, it is interesting to note that the well-being of learners is also prioritised. The SBST structure is also meant to help learners experience life challenges. This sentiment is supported as follows:

In our case, as I said, we have an SBST. In that SBST structure, a learner supports a lady named Thobeka, so she organises awareness campaigns on drugs and crime prevention. By doing obviously, the rate will decrease, and the teachers won't experience so many problems in classes. (P2)

The above extract is consistent with a study by Nwoko et al. (2023), which emphasises the importance of social support in schools and its positive effects on teacher well-being. This aligns with the idea that the SBST can be a vital component of this support system. The presence of an SBST that organises awareness campaigns on drug and crime prevention plays a crucial role in fostering a supportive school environment. As Participant 2 noted, these campaigns contribute to reducing negative learner behaviors, which in turn minimises classroom disruptions. Research by Jennings and Greenberg (2009) highlights that a well-managed classroom environment, supported by proactive interventions, can reduce teacher stress and improve their overall well-being. This aligns with the PERMA framework, particularly in the domains of Positive Emotion (by reducing stressors) and Relationships (by fostering a safer, more cooperative school culture). Consequently, by addressing student challenges proactively, the SBST indirectly supports teachers' emotional and professional well-being, allowing them to focus more effectively on teaching rather than disciplinary issues.

Technological adaptation

Interestingly, the SMT members raised concerns about additional challenges senior teachers face, such as the use of technology, which can hinder their overall well-being. Below is a response to support the above statement.

Some challenges are brought by technology usage in classrooms, and this proves to be a challenge, mostly to senior teachers who are not used to using technology to teach. They have difficulties adapting to these new teaching methods and using technological products like projectors and whiteboards. (P1)

The concern about technology adoption, especially among senior teachers, is consistent with challenges highlighted in the existing literature. Advanced strategies are required for technology training and support across all age groups to ensure that teacher well-being is not compromised due to the stress of adapting to new methods (Miyauchi, 2020).

5.3. Summary

In conclusion, this study underscored the pivotal role of School Management Teams in fostering teacher well-being and creating a nurturing work environment. The findings highlighted that when SMT effectively engaged in supportive practices, such as providing meaningful professional development opportunities, sharing workload equitably, and recognising the personal and professional challenges teachers face, there was a marked improvement in teacher morale and job satisfaction.

The study identified best practices, including regular in-service training, fostering a value-driven school culture, and ensuring clear communication between management and staff. These measures not only aided in the professional growth of teachers but also contributed to a more collaborative and positive school climate. By implementing these strategies, SMTs can significantly enhance teacher well-being, which, in turn, positively impacts student learning outcomes and the overall quality of education. The next chapter presents the recommendations of the study, suggestions for further research, contributions of the study, and its limitations.

Chapter 6

Discussion of Findings, Recommendations and Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings from this study, focusing on aspects stemming from the data interpretation and relating these interpretations to relevant literature and the theoretical framework concerning the leadership responsibilities of SMT members in promoting teachers' well-being. This chapter aims to assess whether the goals of the research questions were met as intended in the current study by utilising the findings from the empirical research presented in Chapter 5. These questions are:

1. What are the perceptions and understandings of School Management Team members regarding their leadership role in supporting teacher well-being?
2. What leadership strategies and practices do School Management Team members implement to promote teacher well-being?
3. What are the key enabling factors and constraints that impact School Management Team members in fostering teacher well-being?

The study's main findings, along with recommendations for practice and future research, are also presented in this chapter. Additionally, the contributions and limitations of the study are discussed. The conclusion of the study follows this.

6.2. Summary of Research Findings

This study explored the role of SMT members in supporting teacher well-being and identifying best practices that can contribute to a healthy and conducive work environment for teachers. The study asked three research questions based on the abovementioned research objectives to achieve this aim. The discussion of the findings in this chapter is structured as a response to these three research questions.

6.2.1. Research Question 1:

What are the perceptions and understandings of School Management Team members regarding their leadership role in supporting teacher well-being?

The present study explored SMT members' perceptions of their role in promoting teacher well-being. The findings showed that SMT members understood that teacher well-being comprises physical, emotional and mental health, influenced by numerous factors such as stress, workload and work-life balance. However, while SMT members identified workplace stress as a challenge, the study did not directly measure teachers' stress levels but rather focused on SMT members' perceptions of teacher well-being. Additionally, Figure 3, which shows that 60% of SMT members reported that they sometimes feel stressed or overwhelmed, refers specifically to SMT members' own experiences of stress, rather than a direct assessment of teachers' stress or burnout. In this regard, the engagement concept of the PERMA framework must be implemented (Seligman, 2012) as an essential measure in a school where teachers feel overwhelmed or burnt out. This concept of engagement utilises the strengths of other teachers to ensure that there is flow in teachers' work duties, alleviating the stress of being overloaded with work and improving their overall well-being at work.

The problem of SMT members failing to regulate their well-being and frequently experiencing stress in their roles could negatively impact their ability to support the well-being of other teachers, ultimately impacting the school's success. This finding aligns with Sieberhagen et al. (2009), who argued that the negative effect of stress on employees' health and well-being could negatively influence the organisation. This implies that for SMT members to promote teacher well-being effectively, they need to be able to manage their well-being first. This recommendation aligns with research by Wadesango et al. (2015), who highlighted the importance of stress management for SMT members. Their findings suggest that effective stress management practices contribute to SMT members' well-being and enable them to support their staff better (Wadesango et al., 2015). Furthermore, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 mandates the provision of stress-free work environments for employees, as workplace stress can negatively impact job performance and overall health (South African Department of Labour, 1997).

This study found that the school used different approaches to distribute the workload fairly among teachers. For instance, they use a Math Core room rotation system, which aligns with current literature emphasising the effectiveness of a team-based approach. The study also found

that SMT members understand that if the workload is not distributed fairly, this might cause high-stress levels for the teachers, negatively affecting their performance. These findings are confirmed by Ortan et al. (2021), who argue that teachers can develop higher stress levels, leading to demotivation, if the workload is a constant strain. In the same vein, Rothmann (2005), Lever et al. (2017), and Sieberhagen et al. (2009) highlight several factors contributing to the high stress rate in the education field, such as workload, large class size, inadequate resources, and learners' behavioural challenges.

These findings were also observed in the SMT members' responses to this study. Hence, to reduce teachers' stress levels, the workload must be distributed fairly, as suggested by the *Personnel Administrative Measures* (PAM); the workload should be "equitable" to ensure that no teacher is overloaded with work (ELRC, 2005). If the workload is equitably distributed, the teachers will feel like equal team members, fostering positive emotions where they feel happy and appreciated in their jobs, as the PERMA framework emphasises (Seligman, 2011b). These positive feelings may result in teachers feeling good about themselves, which can maximise their focus on their work and produce positive outcomes for learners and a positive image for the school.

The study also found that SMT members recognise the importance of teacher well-being in creating a positive school culture. 60% of the SMT members indicated that it is imperative to prioritise teacher well-being in the workplace. In line with PERMA theory, SMT members must build a positive school culture and well-being for teachers (Slavin et al., 2012). In prioritising teacher well-being, a school organises a SBST that supports both learners and teachers in maintaining their well-being. In line with Seligman (2012), signs of contentment, interest, love, laughter, pride, compassion and amusement represent positive emotions.

Thus, this study revealed that the SMT members promoted positive emotions in the school environment, such as gratitude, joy, and hope, by recognising and celebrating teachers' accomplishments and contributions to school achievements to enhance their well-being (Seligman, 2012). Furthermore, when SMT members celebrate teachers' achievements and birthdays, they help develop their sense of accomplishment and purpose within the school environment (Seligman, 2012). Thus, the SMT teams supporting teachers is a good practice that fosters teacher well-being by promoting several PERMA framework practices enhancing their teaching effectiveness. This indicates that the school is committed to ensuring that teacher well-being is not compromised in the workplace, as no school can succeed without healthy and

dedicated teachers (Madikologa, 2014). Consistent with Sisask et al. (2014), the findings of this study indicate the significance of ensuring that teachers are always happy to support their learners in academic and personal issues successfully. Furthermore, teachers who feel a sense of accomplishment and have positive feelings are better poised to be committed to their jobs and may instil a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction in their learners.

The findings of this study emphasise the complexities that SMT members face in their educational leadership roles, where they are continually challenged to balance multiple responsibilities within limited time frames. The SMT members have identified this juggling of tasks as a significant contributor to their stress. Addressing these challenges is imperative for the well-being of SMT members, which is, in turn, essential for creating supportive environments for teacher well-being and positive learner outcomes in schools.

6.2.2. Research Question 2:

What leadership strategies and practices do School Management Team members implement to promote teacher well-being?

The general findings indicated that SMT members ensure positive school teacher well-being. The SMT members in the study stated that they used different methods to ensure teacher well-being in their schools. One of these methods involved effectively implementing wellness programmes designed to reduce health care costs for teachers by promoting and maintaining their overall health. This aligns with the findings of Morris et al. (2013), who affirmed that school employee wellness programmes can promote teachers' health and reduce their health risks. Morris et al. (2013) argued that wellness programmes can lower adult stress levels. Within the PERMA framework, encouraging teacher engagement in their work by providing opportunities for professional development, collaboration, and autonomy is essential. Integrating employee wellness programmes reinforces that teachers' well-being is critical to their work environment. However, the SMT members mentioned that most teachers do not attend the wellness programmes, which complicates the SMT's ability to fulfil their role as school managers to ensure teachers' well-being.

The study also found that the SMT members encouraged teachers to attend professional development programmes such as EAPs. This finding agrees with Taute (2008), who reported that SMT members must remind teachers about EAPs with access to counselling, referrals and resources. Similarly, the SMT members must provide or encourage teachers to attend

professional development focused on social-emotional skills, resilience and understanding the impact of trauma on individuals (McPeck et al., 2009). These professional development programmes aim to assist teachers in addressing challenges that can impact their teaching (Lever et al., 2017). In addition, they are designed to help teachers balance family life and work, fostering a sense of accomplishment in their personal and professional lives. In line with Seligman (2012), providing opportunities for teachers to achieve their goals and accomplish their tasks—thereby increasing their sense of competence and accomplishment—is essential to ensuring positive teacher well-being in schools.

The SMT members highlighted initiatives promoting teacher well-being, such as engaging in group walks, exercise sessions, and relaxation activities, as vital strategies in this study. These initiatives are particularly effective when conducted in groups, as they foster a sense of belonging and help teachers build realistic and authentic relationships among themselves. According to the PERMA framework, relationships are a crucial element of well-being (Seligman, 2011b). Recent literature (McCallum et al., 2022) supports the significance of group activities in enhancing social bonds and well-being. For instance, McCallum et al. (2022) found that collaborative physical activities improve educators' social cohesion and overall mental health. By working together in their respective subject groups, teachers enhance their professional skills and cultivate positive relationships, contributing to a supportive work environment.

Positive relationships among teachers are essential for positive well-being. Diener et al. (2020) emphasise that social support and interpersonal connections are fundamental to psychological well-being. Teachers engaging in group activities experience increased social support, leading to enhanced job satisfaction and reduced stress levels. This sense of camaraderie and mutual support aligns with the "Relationships" component of the PERMA framework, highlighting its importance in promoting a positive and resilient teaching community. Thus, initiatives encouraging group activities and teacher collaboration are pivotal in fostering a positive work environment and enhancing teacher well-being. By integrating these practices, educational institutions can support teachers in building meaningful relationships and achieving a balanced, fulfilling professional life.

The findings of this study also indicated that SMT members used practices such as self-care and fostering a culture of openness and communication to promote teacher well-being within the school. School Management Team members who frequently engaged in self-care practices

appeared to understand and prioritise the importance of self-care in managing stress and maintaining mental health. This recognition aligns with the PERMA framework, particularly the components of positive emotion and meaning (Seligman, 2011b). Self-care practices are crucial for managing stress, reducing the risk of illness, and increasing energy levels, ultimately enhancing physical and mental health. This, in turn, improves the ability of SMT members to perform their roles effectively. These findings are consistent with the recommendations of the American Psychiatric Association (1995), which emphasises the importance of self-care in maintaining overall well-being.

Furthermore, the practice of fostering open communication within the school environment contributes significantly to the relationship's component of the PERMA framework. Open communication helps build trust and mutual respect among teachers, creating a supportive and collaborative work atmosphere. Recent literature supports this view, highlighting that open communication and a supportive work environment are critical for psychological well-being and job satisfaction (Diener et al., 2020). Park (2015b) emphasises that having meaning in life is essential for flourishing, providing a sense of purpose and quality of life. This perspective is reflected in the findings of this study, where SMT members who engaged in self-care practices and promoted open communication contributed to a meaningful and purposeful work environment. Such practices enhance individual well-being and foster a positive school culture, benefiting the entire educational community.

Another finding from this study indicated that SMT members promote a culture of openness and communication, encouraging teachers to discuss their problems. When teachers have listeners who understand them, it instils hope and fosters a happier, more productive workforce. This approach aligns with the PERMA framework, particularly the components of Relationships and Positive Emotion (Seligman, 2011b). The sentiment that open communication creates a positive school climate, and an environment of trust is consistent with the findings of Mafa (2019), who reported that effective communication fosters a secure and confident atmosphere where teachers feel safe to express their ideas without fear of victimisation. This open environment enhances teacher well-being and contributes to a cohesive and supportive school community. Mandouit (2018b) similarly argues that collaborative feedback models enhance teacher well-being.

However, it is crucial to note that inconsistent feedback practices can lead to a fragmented understanding of teacher needs, potentially undermining the benefits of such models. Hasani

and Agaj (2014b) highlight that teachers often have a low level of awareness regarding their motivational role, suggesting a need for growth in using feedback to address well-being and enhance motivation and engagement in the learning process. By fostering open communication and providing consistent, collaborative feedback, SMT members can create a supportive environment that aligns with the PERMA framework's emphasis on Relationships and Positive Emotion. This supportive environment helps teachers feel valued and understood, contributing to their well-being and professional satisfaction. Therefore, promoting teacher well-being through self-care practices and open communication aligns with the PERMA framework, emphasising positive emotion, relationships, and meaning. These strategies are supported by recent literature and highlight the importance of holistic approaches to well-being in educational settings. Thus, promoting a culture of openness and effective school communication is essential for enhancing teacher well-being. This practice, supported by recent literature, aligns with the PERMA framework and underscores the importance of fostering positive relationships and emotions in educational settings.

6.2.3. Research Question 3:

What are the key enabling factors and constraints that impact School Management Team members in fostering teacher well-being?

This study identified several significant factors such as heavy workload, limited resources, funding, high levels of teacher stress, lack of well-being awareness and training facilitating. SMT members' efforts to promote teacher well-being, explicitly focusing on resources, training, development, budget, and supportive leadership. These factors suggest that SMT members are more likely to prioritise teacher well-being when they receive the necessary support and resources. The impact of a supportive SMT is crucial, playing a significant role in teacher retention, efficacy, and overall school success (Hughes, 2012). The findings align with the PERMA framework, particularly the elements of accomplishment and engagement (Seligman, 2011b). School Management Team members can support and maintain teachers' well-being and safety by encouraging teacher engagement through professional development opportunities, fostering collaboration, and granting autonomy. Neglecting employee health can lead to dissatisfaction and conflict, ultimately hindering the schools' goals to ensure a smooth and successful educational experience for learners (Avinash, Kumar & Mishra, 2021). These findings are consistent with existing literature on teacher well-being, underscoring the

importance of organisational support and school leadership in promoting teacher well-being (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).

According to Kern et al. (2014b), a sense of meaning helps individuals feel that their lives are meaningful and have a transcendent purpose, even under challenging circumstances, fostering resilience and resolution. However, the study also found that time pressures significantly impact SMT members in promoting teacher well-being. Time management has been consistently cited as a crucial factor in the well-being of educational professionals. Macan et al. (1990) suggest that perceived control of time is a key predictor of reduced stress levels and enhanced job performance. This finding shows that overlapping responsibilities and time constraints are prevalent stressors for SMT members, corroborating Macan et al.'s (1990) suggestion. The findings of this study have important implications for policy and practice. Schools and educational authorities should prioritise resource allocation, provide training and development opportunities, and foster a collaborative culture that supports teacher well-being.

By addressing the constraints and leveraging the enabling factors, SMT members can be critical in promoting teacher well-being and improving educational outcomes. In conclusion, the study highlights that the enabling factors for SMT members in promoting teacher well-being include sufficient resources, training, development, budgetary support, and supportive leadership. Conversely, time pressures and overlapping responsibilities serve as significant constraints. Addressing these issues can help SMT members effectively promote teacher well-being, contributing to a positive school environment and enhanced educational outcomes. This conclusion is supported by the PERMA framework's emphasis on Engagement, Relationships, and Accomplishment, underscoring the importance of comprehensive support systems for teacher well-being.

6.3. Recommendations of the Study

Given the findings of the study, several recommendations are made. The study recommends that SMT members familiarise themselves with the National School Safety Framework (NSSF) to contribute to positive emotions and engagement among teachers through clarity and control. Suppose SMT members can understand their roles and responsibilities within the framework. In that case, they can be empowered to implement safety protocols effectively, allowing them to foster a secure and predictable school environment that can positively

influence teacher well-being. This, in turn, can reduce teacher anxiety and promote a sense of accomplishment in maintaining a safe learning space among teachers. Another recommendation involves SMT members implementing the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) 1993 to foster positive relationships between teachers and the SMT. By prioritising a safe work environment mandated by the OHSA, the SMT members will demonstrate that they care about teacher well-being. This can strengthen trust and foster a sense of belonging within the school community for teachers and positively boost their well-being.

Another recommendation for SMT members is to promote a stress-free school environment that can minimise stress among teachers and SMT members and promote well-being, which can contribute to a sense of meaning and achievement for teachers. This calming and organised school working environment means that SMT members acknowledge the impact of the environment on teacher well-being and are responsible for creating this type of working environment. This positive work environment allows teachers to focus on their core responsibilities, teaching and student development, with greater purpose and a sense of accomplishment.

The study also recommends that SMT members participate in wellness programmes fostering positive relationships and a sense of community between teachers and SMT members. Continually and consistently planning these wellness programmes means that SMT members are committed to teacher well-being and to strengthening a positive relationship between SMT members and teachers. This is because teachers who feel continually supported in ensuring they have positive well-being are more likely to feel valued and engaged within the school community, resulting in better performance in their job responsibilities. Lastly, regularly scheduling wellness workshops where teachers are provided with practical tools and strategies for managing stress, promoting self-care, and fostering resilience are also recommended to enhance positive teacher well-being. These workshops provide teachers with opportunities to gain valuable knowledge and develop a sense of control over their well-being, leading to increased engagement and job satisfaction.

6.4. Recommendation for Further Study

This study has shed light on factors influencing teacher well-being within a specific school context. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of this critical issue, given the limitations of the study, the following recommendations for future research are proposed:

- Conducting similar research studies in schools across diverse contexts, including township and ex-model C schools, would offer valuable insights. These future studies examining teacher well-being from different contexts would enable other researchers to identify potential similarities and differences regarding how SMT members may support and enhance teacher well-being. This comparative analysis of findings from these different contexts could inform the development of context-specific strategies to promote teacher well-being in education. Unlike the current study, these studies should use a larger sample size to ensure that the findings are more comprehensive and representative of SMT members across different educational contexts.
- Focusing on the role of the SGB in ensuring teacher well-being would be highly beneficial. The SGB members also play a crucial role in school management as they represent the parents of the school learners and the community. A search in the literature showed that research is still lacking in exploring how ensuring the well-being of one teacher affects the well-being of other teachers. This gap highlights the need for further research to understand how supporting one teacher could lead to a broader positive impact across the teaching staff.
- Exploring the use of SBSTs would be valuable. The study also found that school-based support teams (SBSTs) were used to support teacher well-being in the school where the study was conducted. However, the literature on using SBST to ensure teacher well-being is limited and unclear. The current study recommends further research on using SBSTs to support teacher well-being.
- Using teacher unions to ensure teacher well-being might be a strategy worth researching, as well as finding out how unions collaborate with SMT members to ensure good teacher well-being. This area has not been thoroughly examined in the literature.
- Future research should expand this investigation in two key directions: incorporating teacher perspectives through direct participation in the study, and conducting

longitudinal analyses to empirically validate the hypothesized impact of SMTs on teacher well-being. These approaches would provide more comprehensive insights into the relationship between SMTs and educational outcomes.

6.5. Contributions of the Study

This master's thesis offers a valuable contribution to the field of education, particularly within the area of teacher well-being in the South African context. The research provides crucial insights into the leadership practices that SMT members can implement to promote teacher well-being. The study identifies critical leadership responsibilities and equips SMT members with a practical framework for prioritising teacher well-being within their schools. This actionable knowledge empowers them to create a supportive environment that fosters positive emotions, strong relationships, a sense of meaning and achievement, all crucial factors contributing to teacher well-being as outlined by the PERMA framework (Seligman, 2011a). In the South African context, where teacher burnout and attrition rates are a pressing concern (Spaull, 2013), this practical guidance can be instrumental in retaining skilled and motivated educators within the South African education system.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates the positive impact that effective leadership practices have on teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and retention. This reinforces the critical role of leadership in creating a school environment that prioritises educator well-being. In the South African context, where school leadership is recognised as a vital lever for educational improvement (Department of Basic Education, 2011), this finding underscores the need for leadership development programmes that equip school leaders with the skills and knowledge necessary to support the well-being of their teachers. By contributing to the existing body of knowledge on teacher well-being and leadership, this research lays a foundation for future studies and informs educational practice.

The findings offer a springboard for further research exploring the leadership practices most effective in promoting teacher well-being within diverse South African school contexts (e.g., township schools, rural schools, model C schools). Additionally, the research informs the development and implementation of targeted interventions and support structures within schools, fostering a culture that prioritises teacher well-being and ultimately benefits educators and student learning outcomes.

6.6. Limitations of the Study

This study acknowledges a fundamental limitation: the small sample size of only five participants in the questionnaire survey and only two participants in the semi-structured one-on-one interviews, as well as the fact that the research was conducted in only one school. A small sample size can restrict the generalisability of the findings. The findings may not apply to a broader population of SMT members or across diverse school contexts within South Africa. This means that the findings are only viewed from my interpretations of the data.

6.7. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of how SMT members promoted teacher well-being in one school, which was considered a rich context for the study. Among the key findings, it is evident that SMT members play a crucial role in fostering teacher well-being. Furthermore, SMT members' efforts to promote positive teacher well-being are influenced by enabling factors such as supportive leadership, collaborative culture, and resources, as well as constraints like high workload, limited resources, and lack of support. By understanding these factors through the lens of the PERMA theory, it is clear that SMT members must prioritise a holistic approach to teacher well-being that addresses multiple dimensions. Therefore, it is argued that schools and educational authorities must provide SMT members with the necessary resources, training and support to effectively promote teacher well-being, ultimately leading to improved teacher retention, job satisfaction, and improvements in the learners' outcomes and performances within schools.

Furthermore, SMT members should familiarise themselves with the legal frameworks and policies offered by the government and DBE to ensure teacher well-being. Planning and implementing wellness programmes were considered among the best practices to assist the SMT members in supporting and maintaining teachers' well-being. The findings of this study also suggest that if department officials do not support the SMT members, it significantly limits the ability of school leaders to support teachers effectively. It was also found that communication is a crucial factor in success. Thus, circulars regarding upcoming EAPs must be shared on time and implemented effectively by SMT members to improve communication. Despite the limitations discussed above, the study mitigated these weaknesses by providing a

nuanced and extensive data analysis supported by thick descriptions of SMT members' perspectives and responses.

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**ADDENDUM A: GOODWILL PERMISSION: KWAZULU NATAL DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION**

**Application for Permission to Conduct Research in
KwaZulu Natal Department of Education Institutions**

1. Applicants Details

Title: Prof / Dr / Rev / Mr / Mrs ✓ / Miss / Ms Surname: Sibiya

Name(s) Of Applicant(s): Nonhlanhla Sphesihle Peacefull Email: spheh.sn@gmail.com

Tel No: _____ Fax: _____ 

Postal Address: 5382 Section 4, Madadeni, 2951

**2. Proposed Research Title: Exploring the Leadership Responsibilities of School
Management Team Members in Promoting Teachers' Well-being in the Madadeni Circuit**

3. Have you applied for permission to conduct this research or any other research within the KZNDoE institutions?	Yes	No ✓
	If “yes”, please state reference Number: _____	

4. Is the proposed research part of a tertiary qualification? If “yes”	Yes	No
	✓	

Name of tertiary institution: University of KwaZulu-Natal

Faculty and or School: Education

Qualification: Masters in Education

Name of Supervisor: Dr LL Mbatha

Supervisors Signature



If “no”, state purpose of research:

5. Briefly state the Research Background

There is growing evidence revealing that the teaching occupation is stressful (Maphalala, 2014; Nkosi, 2020). For instance, there is a scarcity of 3,000 teachers in the Israeli education system due to too much strain and burnout (Detal, 2019). This obstacle of the scarcity of teachers is not only an Israeli problem but also exists in other places. For instance, in the United Kingdom, a study by Kyriacou (1987) revealed that teachers have high-stress levels and job satisfaction. Austin et al. (2005)'s study pinpointed work overload as a root cause of stress. These findings were also confirmed by Ortan et al. (2021, p. 20); they argue that teachers can develop higher stress levels, leading to demotivation, if the workload is a constant strain. This proves that employees such as teachers are not treated well and feel stressed in the workplace and decide to leave rather than continue working in such bad conditions (Shibiti, 2020).

According to SACE (2000), SMT members' roles and responsibilities are to implement systems and guide, inspire and mentor staff. Thus, their responsibilities include effectively implementing policies and processes, and actions must be effectively communicated to staff, learners, parents and the broader community. Furthermore, the SMT members must develop, support, implement and reflect their own school-level well-being plans, policies and guidelines, all of which must address general well-being matters. Teachers' Empowerment and development must occur through awareness about well-being deterrence training. SMT members are further responsible for developing and implementing school well-being plans and the effectiveness and management thereof. In promoting a harmonious environment for all teachers, reporting mechanisms must be in place to provide easy access to all teachers, and where necessary, appropriate responses and actions are followed through should these actions be needed. During the development of a school improvement plan, attention must also be paid to how to address concerns about the well-being of teachers.

The SMT members must ensure an ethic of collaboration and support from all teachers, who must all exhibit appropriate leadership strategies for teachers' well-being by ensuring proper supervision of teachers. All criminal acts must be reported as provided for by relevant legislation. In so doing, it is important that the SMT members must cooperate with their local law enforcement bodies and human services agencies to promote an environment of safety, care, and non-violent and child-friendly schools.

Therefore, the School Management Team (SMT) members must provide leadership with regard to mental health and try to create a stress-free and healthy workplace. According to the World Health Organisation (2010), a healthy workplace is where people work collectively to obtain the same vision for the health and well-being of employees and the surrounding community. The achievement of a healthy workplace creates a safe space for the physical, mental and well-being of employees.

In this regard, it can be mentioned that teacher well-being is a crucial issue for schools. Other studies revealed that teacher well-being is beneficial to the whole education system, not to individual teachers (Lauermann & König, 2016). However, this does not happen in other countries, including South Africa. There are a number of studies, such as Ross, Romer and Horner (2012); Zee and Koomen (2016) that have been conducted about teacher well-being, but little research has been conducted on the role of SMT members in promoting teachers' well-being in particular in Madadeni circuit. In addition, there is also very little research on how the behaviour of SMT members affects the emotional processes of teachers (Cliffe, 2011).

Despite the efforts made by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) through legislative provisions, incidents of killing and abuse of teachers are signs that a lack of teacher well-being prevails in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) schools (Sibisi, 2021). According to Sieberhagen *et al.* (2009), the Health and Safety Act of 1993 explains that employers must create and maintain a place of work and environment that is safe and does not harm and endanger the health of employees. Employees tend to be not productive when their health is compromised. Therefore, it is vital for SMT members to invest time and money in ensuring teachers' well-being. Many teachers decided to leave their jobs because they felt unsafe at school. Also, those in the system are afraid to discipline learners because they fear for their lives. In this regard, there is a need to look at alternative ways to ensure all employees feel unthreatened and safe at school. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the leadership strategies and practices that are most effective in supporting teacher well-being.

6. What is the main research question(s):

1. To establish the perceptions and understandings of School Management Team members regarding their role in promoting teacher well-being.
2. To examine how School Management Team members promote teacher well-being within their school context.
3. To determine enabling factors and constraints that impact School Management Team members in promoting teacher well-being.

7. Methodology including sampling procedures and the people to be included in the sample:

This study will adopt a case study with a qualitative research technique. The purpose of the study is to determine what the leadership role of the SMT members is to support and maintain teacher well-being. Thus, the data will be collected descriptively from participants' written and spoken words. Hence this will be achieved through:

1. survey questionnaires to teachers and
2. individual semi-structured interviews with the SMT members.

There will be eight participants that will be purposefully selected, i.e., all SMT members.

Inclusion criteria, all participants must be in the School Management Team at the selected schools.

Exclusion criteria participants with less than 2 years of holding an SMT position.

8. What contribution will the proposed study make to the education, health, safety, welfare of the learners and to the education system as a whole?: _____

The contribution of the study are as follows:

- SMT members will gain the leadership strategies and practices that are most effective in supporting teacher well-being.
- Is to gain an understanding of SMT members leadership role to support and maintain teachers' wellness and safety.

KZN Department of Education Schools or Institutions from which sample will be drawn – If the list is long please attach at the end of the form

Phendukani Full Service High School		

9. Research data generation instruments: *(Note: a list and only a brief description is required here*

- the actual instruments must be attached):

I will generate my research data through survey questionnaire to eight SMT members and semi-structured individual interviews with three SMT members which include school principal, deputy principal and Head of Department (HOD).

A survey questionnaire will be conducted first to understand the behaviour and opinions of SMT members concerning teachers' well-being within the school context, which will be followed by an interview schedule to explore further into unclear sections of the survey questionnaires.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) define a survey questionnaire as a list of questions that measure a participant's views or beliefs about a subject. In this study, responses will be measured on a five-point scale; 1= never, 2= rarely, 3= sometimes, 4=often and 5= very often. This will be particularly fitting as my aim is to obtain a numerical measure representative of the participants' views.

10. Procedure for obtaining consent of participants and where appropriate parents or guardians:

Firstly, the application for ethical clearance was sent to the University's Ethics Review Committee.

Secondly, an application will be sent to KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education for permission and the reference number is

Thirdly, the application will be sent to Amajuba District for their permission.

Fourthly, the application will be also sent to the school where the study is to be conducted for permission.

Lastly, the informed consent and assent forms will be sent to all participants.

The researcher clearly explained the issues of anonymity, confidentiality, voluntary participation, time and benefits to all participants before taking part in the study. Since SMT members are not under the guidance of parents, no parents' permission will be requested.

11. Procedure to maintain confidentiality (if applicable): _____

All information will be treated as confidentially and data will be kept confidential, participants details and that of the selected school will be kept anonymous, only my supervisor will have access to the raw data. The relevant data will be destroyed, should a participant choose to withdraw.

12. Questions or issues with the potential to be intrusive, upsetting or incriminating to participants (if applicable):

N/A

13. Additional support available to participants in the event of disturbance resulting from intrusive questions or issues (if applicable): _____

N/A

14. Research Timelines: _____

From March 2023 to June 2024

15. Declaration

I hereby agree to comply with the relevant ethical conduct to ensure that participants' privacy and the confidentiality of records and other critical information.

I Nonhlanhla Sphesihle Peacefull Sibiyi declare that the above information is true and correct



11/07/2023

Signature of Applicant

Date

16. Agreement to provide and to grant the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education the right to publish a summary of the report.

I/We agree to provide the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education with a copy of any report or dissertation written on the basis of information gained through the research activities described in this application.

I/We grant the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education the right to publish an edited summary of this report or dissertation using the print or electronic media.



11/07/2023

Signature of Applicant(s)

Date

Return a completed form to:

Sibusiso Alwar
The Research Unit; Resource Planning; KwaZulu Natal Department of
Education

Hand Delivered:

Office G25; 188 Pietermaritz Street; Pietermaritzburg; 3201

Or

Ordinary Mail

Private Bag X9137; Pietermaritzburg; 3200

Or

Email

sibusiso.alwar@kzndoe.gov.za

**ADDENDUM B: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND INFORMED CONSENT
FOR PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH**

Title Of The Study: Exploring the Leadership Responsibilities of School Management Team Members in Promoting Teachers' Well-being in the Madadeni Circuit

Researcher: Nonhlanhla Sphesihle Peacefull Sibiya - University of
KwaZulu
Landline: [REDACTED], email: spheh.sn@gmail.com

You are cordially invited to participate in an academic research study due to your experience and knowledge in the research area, namely the leadership responsibilities of School Management Team members in promoting teachers' well-being

Each participant must receive, read, understand and sign this document before the start of the study.

Purpose of the study: To determine leadership practices and strategies School Management Team members use to promote and maintain teacher well-being.

The results of the study may be published in an academic journal. You will be provided with a summary of our findings on request. No participants names will be used in the final publication.

Duration of the study: The study will be conducted over a period of 2 years and its projected date of completion is February 2024.

Research procedures: The study is based on the leadership responsibilities of School Management Team members in promoting teachers' well-being

Your rights: Your participation in this study is very important. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without stating any reasons and without any negative consequences. You, as participant, may contact the researcher at any time in order to clarify

any issues pertaining to this research. The respondent as well as the researcher must each keep a copy of this signed document.

Confidentiality: All information will be treated as confidentially and data will be kept confidential, your details and that of your organisations will be kept anonymous, only my supervisor will have access to the raw data. The relevant data will be destroyed, should you choose to withdraw. For further Information on this research, please feel free to contact my supervisor: Dr LL Mbatha (033 260 5339, mbathaL5@ukzn.ac.za).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may also contact the: UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT

TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY: Exploring the Leadership Responsibilities of School Management Team Members in Promoting Teachers' Well-being in the Madadeni Circuit

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies

- | | YES | NO |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study within the time limits outlined in the Information Sheet, without giving a reason for my withdrawal or to decline to answer any questions in the study without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Information Sheet. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study, once anonymised (so that I cannot be identified), to be used for any other research purposes. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I consent to audio-visual recording and photographs of any part of or all research activities (if applicable) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I consent to publication of results from this study on the condition that my identify will not be revealed. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I consent that I am free to withdraw at any time. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Participant name: _____ (please print)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher name: Nonhlanhla Sphesihle Peacefull Sibiya _____ (please print)

Signature:  _____ Date: 17/04/2023 _____

ADDENDUM C: SCHOOL PERMISSION LETTER



CONFIRMATION LETTER

I Mr V.I.P Msimanga, principal of Phendukani Full Service High School, hereby confirms that I have granted permission to **Mrs Nonhlanhla Siphesihle Peaceful Sibiya** to conduct her Masters research at the above-mentioned school.

I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participate in the research project. I also understand that I am at liberty to withdraw at any time in the project should I so desire.

Signature: _____

Date: 26 July 2023

ADDENDUM D: KZN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PERMISSION LETTER



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Tel: 033 392 1051

Email: Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Mrs B.T. Ntuli

Ref.:2/4/8/7530

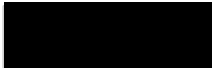
Mrs Nonhlanhla Siphesihle Peaceful Sibiyi
5382 Section 4
MADADENI
2951

Dear Mrs Sibiyi

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: "EXPLORING THE LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM MEMBERS IN PROMOTING TEACHERS' WELL-BEING IN THE MADADENI CIRCUIT.", in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 14 July 2023 to 31st March 2025.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.


Mr GN Ngcobo
Head of Department: Education
Date: 14th July 2023

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

ADDENDUM E: ETHICAL CLEARANCE UKZN



11 November 2023

Nonhlanhla Sphehile Peacefull Sibiya (223152193)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear NSP Sibiya,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00005971/2023

Project title: Exploring the leadership responsibilities of school management team members in promoting teachers' well-being in the Madadeni Circuit

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 14 August 2023 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 11 November 2024.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

ADDENDUM F: LIKERT-TYPE SCALE QUESTIONNAIRE



Questionnaire for Teachers

Exploring the leadership responsibilities of school principals and management teams in promoting teachers' wellbeing: A case study of two schools at Amajuba district

Dear Teachers

I am currently busy with a master's degree in education at University of KwaZulu-Natal. My research focuses on exploring the leadership practices and strategies principals and school management teams use to promote and maintain teacher well-being. I will appreciate it if you can complete the questionnaire below. The questionnaire is completed anonymously, and all information will be handled with the utmost confidentiality. Your time and cooperation is sincerely appreciated.

Thank you for taking part in this study. The following questions aim to assess various aspects of well-being within your role as a School Management Team (SMT) member. As you respond, please consider both your leadership responsibilities and any teaching experience you may have, as SMT members often balance these two roles.

For questions related to stress, workload, and well-being, please answer based on your dual role as a leader and educator (if applicable). For example, if you are involved in teaching, consider how teaching responsibilities may contribute to your overall experience. If your role is primarily focused on leadership, reflect on the challenges associated with managing staff, decision-making, and supporting the school community.

Where questions involve perceptions of support or satisfaction within the SMT, please focus on your experience of team dynamics and the support provided by your fellow SMT members. This is not an assessment of your personal well-being, but rather how you perceive the level of support and collaboration within the SMT in promoting the well-being of both staff and students.

If any question does not seem directly relevant to your role, please answer based on your most relevant experience and understanding of the situation.

Thank you for your thoughtful responses, and please don't hesitate to ask if you need further clarification on any question.

Please complete all the items

Indicate the choice that best characterises your perceptions about the leadership role of the principal and SMT to support and maintain teachers' well-being. Indicate your choice on the five-point scale by marking with an X in the appropriate option.

1. How often do you feel stressed or overwhelmed in your role as an SMT member?
 - Never
 - Rarely
 - Sometimes
 - Often
 - Very often

2. In your opinion, how important is it for SMT members to prioritise teacher well-being in their leadership practices?
 - Not at all important
 - Slightly important
 - Moderately important
 - Very important
 - Extremely important

3. How satisfied are you with the support and collaboration among SMT members in promoting and maintaining well-being within the team?
 - Very dissatisfied

- Somewhat dissatisfied
 - Neutral
 - Somewhat satisfied
 - Very satisfied
4. To what extent do you feel that as an SMT members you understand teachers' specific needs and challenges in promoting and maintaining their well-being?
- Not at all
 - Slightly
 - Moderately
 - Very much
 - Completely
5. How often do you encourage and model self-care practices (e.g., stress management techniques, work-life balance) to support both your own and teachers' well-being?
- Never
 - Rarely
 - Sometimes
 - Often
 - Very often
6. How often do you feel that the workload assigned to teachers in your school is manageable and sustainable?
- Never
 - Rarely
 - Sometimes

- Often
 - Very often
7. How much do you feel SMT members collectively value and acknowledge teachers' contributions to the school?
- Not at all
 - Slightly
 - Moderately
 - Very much
 - Completely
8. To what extent do you feel the SMT promotes a culture of openness and communication around teacher well-being and stress management?
- Not at all
 - Slightly
 - Moderately
 - Very much
 - Completely
9. How important is it for schools to provide access to structured resources (e.g., counselling services, wellness programs) to support teacher well-being?
- Not at all important
 - Slightly important
 - Moderately important
 - Very important
 - Extremely important

10. How often do you as an SMT member actively seek teacher feedback regarding their well-being and support needs, and implement strategies based on that feedback?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often

ADDENDUM G: SEMI-STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

Introduction

I would like to thank you for participating in this research study. The study explores the leadership practices and strategies principals and school management teams use to promote and maintain teacher well-being. The interview will last for approximately 45 to 60 minutes. I want to remind you that participating in this research is voluntary, and you are allowed to refrain from answering those questions that you feel uncomfortable answering. Do you have any questions before we start with the interview?

Interview Questions

1. In your opinion, what are some of the most pressing challenges that teachers face that affect their well-being?
2. How do you believe School Management Team members can support teachers in addressing these challenges?
3. Can you provide an example of a School Management Team member who has effectively addressed teacher well-being concerns in your experience? What did they do, and how did it impact teachers?
4. What resources or support would be helpful for teachers to promote and maintain their well-being in the school environment?
5. How can School Management Team members create a school culture that prioritises teacher well-being and support?
6. What specific leadership practices or strategies do you believe are most effective for promoting and maintaining teacher well-being in schools?
7. What role should teacher feedback play in School Management Team members' decisions related to teacher well-being?
8. Can you share specific examples of school-based initiatives or policies that effectively address teacher well-being? What were the outcomes?

9. What challenges do School Management Team members face in prioritising teacher well-being, and how can they be overcome?

10. How can School Management Team members work with teachers to create a shared understanding of the importance of teacher well-being in creating a successful learning environment?

ADDENDUM H: EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

Themes	Subthemes
Organisational culture and climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Promoting a culture of openness and communication ○ Prioritising teacher well-being ○ Using self-care practices to promote teachers' well-being
Capacity building and adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supporting personal needs and well-being of teachers ○ Distribution of workload among staff members
SMT leadership and supportive practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SMT roles and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interpersonal skills ○ Understanding teachers' needs and challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Technological adaptation