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Experiences of grade 10-12 learners on their psychosocial challenges: the case of two government schools in Johannesburg South, Gauteng.

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is an overwhelming developmental period for many learners characterised by numerous developmental challenges that affect their psychosocial wellbeing. These challenges impact their interactions with the world around them, as well as their school participation and performance, and often act as barriers to their learning. While great research has been done on adolescents' development and the psychosocial challenges they face, not much research has been conducted with the focus on the context of adolescents attending school in government schools of South Africa. The research study endeavoured to explore the psychosocial challenges experienced by grade 10-12 learners in two government schools in the south of Johannesburg. The research study aims to explore the psychosocial challenges experiences by grade 10-12 learners and to explore the perceptions of teachers and social workers on how psychosocial challenges and support services can influence learners' performance and wellbeing. This research study made use of an exploratory qualitative research design. Data was collected from a population of learners in grades 10-12, school HOD teachers of grades 10-12 and school social workers through various methods, including an open-ended survey structured as written interview and telephonic interviews. Purposive sampling was used as a sampling technique to select 22 learners in grades 10-12, three Heads of Departments teachers in the grades 10 to 12, and three Department of Social Development school social workers rendering services to schools in the south of Johannesburg. Data was analysed through thematic analysis from the written interviews and the in-depth interviews. The findings of this research study showed that learners experience various psychosocial challenges not only in the school setting but extend to the home environment. It was revealed that some of the challenges that they face were social challenges (poverty, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, violence/ crime at school, gambling), academic challenges (poor studying, and time management skills), emotional and psychological challenges (feelings of loneliness, depressions). These challenges can't be viewed as separate from one another, thus have a negative impact on how learners academically perform and have an impact on their overall development.

Keywords: Psychosocial, Learners, Adolescence, Government Secondary School, Barriers to Learning, School Social Workers, Teachers