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Appreciative Inquiry in the Context of Student Wellbeing

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A research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BA Masters (Organisational Psychology) in the faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. February 2024.

Keywords: Appreciative Inquiry, PERMA, Wellbeing, Positive Psychological Intervention (PPI), University Students

Declaration

I, Cheryl Bondi, declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is submitted for the Bachelor of Arts, master's in psychology degree at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.

Signed: 

Date: 15/02/2024

Word Count: 25354 (including in-text references)

Acknowledgements

Completing a Masters' research is time consuming, absorbing and requires input from multiple different parties. I want to acknowledge everyone who supported me.

Firstly, my husband, thank you for giving me the opportunity to go back to university. You are enthusiastic about life and shine at everything you do, what a role model you are to me and the children. To my children, over the four years that it took for me to complete my studies you learnt to adjust, you encouraged me when I felt overwhelmed, and applauded me when I excelled. After all the years of giving to you, you gave back to me selflessly, allowing me to grow and develop. I pray that I have demonstrated to you that it is never too late to learn new things and to change paths in life. It keeps one young!

To my sister, who is a trailblazer and a constant source of inspiration to me. Thank you for the life lessons you impart. I particularly love your advice to run towards that which you fear; that's where growth lies. To my mom, I relied on your enthusiasm to read through pages (and pages) of my writing and for your wise feedback. I love how proud you are of what I have achieved, and how much you have learned from the pages you have read.

I also want to thank my friends who were so encouraging. They understood when I wasn't available to join in every festivity, and we still managed to have many special times together.

To my research supervisor, Ian Siemers, your enthusiasm about Appreciative Inquiry and student wellbeing was abundantly evident. Thank you for availing yourself for all the participant workshops, for guiding me, and for teaching me invaluable skills. Pity you immigrated before reading the final version. To Karen Milner, thank you for taking over as supervisor at the last minute and for the wisdom you always impart.

To my fellow Masters' students, it was a pleasure getting to know you all, thank you for all your kindness and assistance. I have learnt much from you (like Korean pop culture and what OG means). And to Dane for daily check-up calls.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This research focuses on utilising and assessing the value of an Appreciative Inquiry intervention in the context of first-year psychology students' wellbeing at a higher education institution.

1.2. Rationale for the study

Appreciative Inquiry is a change management and organisational development approach with a positive agenda. It taps into people's imagination, stimulates innovative change, and encourages growth by stretching existing boundaries (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000). It is considered a strength-based approach as its key focus is to build on an organisation's positive attributes by asking leading questions about what is working well and utilising these positive stories to create a future vision. This is in juxtaposition to traditional approaches that focus on identifying potentially problematic issues and filling gaps, which this research refers to as deficit-based approaches.

Debate abounds as to what contexts and circumstances are suitable for Appreciative Inquiry interventions. On the one hand, research has indicated that Appreciative Inquiry has the potential to create sustainable change with multiple positive financial and business spinoffs (Charag and Fazili, 2018) and that it is particularly effective in finding a common vision and purpose in culturally diverse environments (Miller et al., 2005). However, concerns have been raised around the validity of the approach in environments with unexpressed, unresolved, deep-rooted issues (Bushe, 2001), and that supressing negative discussions could be considered an avoidance strategy (Charag and Fazili, 2018; Egan & Lancaster, 2005). Proponents of Appreciative Inquiry counter-argue that instead of ignoring issues, the strength-focus has more potential for co-operation and transformation (Whitney et al., 2019), and that issues are reframed and considered in light of their potential strengths (Coghlan et al., 2003). This research contributes to this debate by assessing the value of Appreciative Inquiry in a context rife with systemic issues, namely first year students at a higher education institution.

First-year university students experience a key transitional, lifestyle change (Cawood et al., 2010; Knoesen & Naudé, 2018). This transition offers abundant opportunities for personal growth and development (Cawood et al., 2010; du Plessis & Guse, 2017; Knoesen & Naudé, 2018). During this process, students have the opportunity to build their self-confidence, establish values, construct their positioning in the world and their self-concept on the way to adulthood (Du Plessis & Guse, 2017; Henrico, 2022), and establish their foundation for a successful academic career (Knoesen & Naudé, 2018).

It is critical for universities to ensure this transitional phase is a positive one that promotes student wellbeing (Orme & Dooris, 2010). A university's success depends on producing thought-leaders; who are proud products of the university, as they have the potential to shape local and global society, economies and cultures positively (Cawood et al., 2010; Dooris & Doherty, 2010; Wold et al., 2021). Students with high levels of wellbeing achieve academically, integrate socially and experience personal growth (du Plessis & Guse, 2017; Knoesen & Naudé, 2018; Wold et al., 2021). This is particularly important in South Africa where graduation rates are low (du Plessis & Guse, 2017).

Indications are that student wellbeing is substantially lower when compared to their peers who are not studying and when compared to the general population (Brown, 2018; Henrico, 2022; Stallman, 2010; Wold et al., 2021). Wellbeing concerns include risky health behaviours (such as alcohol and drugs) (Wold et al., 2021), problematic social media use, financial constraints, loneliness, lack of social support, academic stress as a result of large classrooms, relocation and adjustment issues (Brown, 2018; Knoesen & Naudé, 2018).

South African students experience compounding wellbeing issues. This was corroborated by Eloff et al. (2021) in a study conducted at a University in Gauteng on the wellbeing of undergraduate students. The research identified that the push for greater access to education has increased the number of students enrolling without adequate preparation. The deficient schooling system often leaves students with significant academic gaps upon entering university. Additionally, the contextual factors in South Africa, such as high rates of violent crimes and trauma, contribute abnormal levels of anxiety, depression, and suicidal tendencies among the students. The expansion of university student numbers, coupled with a lack of proportional focus on bolstering academic staff, has led to elevated staff-to-student ratios. These ratios fall

short in meeting students' needs. The large class sizes also impact the relationship dynamic between students and lecturers, shifting from personalised mentoring that nurtures individual growth to formal instruction. Another compounding factor is that students often experience burdensome financial constraints.

This research investigates South African first-year student's wellbeing, at this higher education institution, using an Appreciative Inquiry methodology, and in so doing, assesses the value of Appreciative Inquiry in this context. It defines wellbeing according to the PERMA model, developed by Seligman (2011) (refer to Chapter 2). The research has three methods of investigation: Firstly, students attend an Appreciative Inquiry workshop aimed at gaining meaningful insight and creative ideas related to enhancing their wellbeing; Secondly, students complete an Appreciative Inquiry Questionnaire to determine if they found the methodology positive and constructive; Thirdly, students complete an instrument measuring their positive emotions before and after attending the workshop. Results from this analyses will provide preliminary evidence as to whether an Appreciative Inquiry workshop can be considered an Positive Psychological Intervention (Moskowitz et al., 2021).

Previous studies international utilising Appreciative Inquiry at universities have not focused on student wellbeing (Byl et al., 2016; Dalli Gonzi & Camilleri, 2021; na Ayudthaya et al., 2019; Ogude et al., 2019; Rowntree et al., 2016). Henrico's (2020) South African study was an exception, however, it relied on experts instead of student input. Previous student wellbeing research has not obtained student input nor utilised a strength-based, Appreciative Inquiry approach, but rather focused on wellbeing issues (Cao et al., 2020; Stallman, 2010; Wold et al., 2021). Knoesen & Naudé's (2018) South African research gave voice to students but once again focused on deficits, not strengths, and did not investigate action steps to improve the issues. No South African studies have been found that investigate student wellbeing using the PERMA model and no research has been found that assesses whether an Appreciative Inquiry workshop can be considered a Positive Psychological Intervention.

This study therefore offers a unique investigation into the value of Appreciative Inquiry and original insight into South African, first-year students' wellbeing, at this higher education institution, through the eyes of the students. As discussed, first-year students experience significant stress which underlies the importance of enhancing their

wellbeing. A novel, strength-based approach, such as Appreciative Inquiry is worthy of investigation, considering the gap in extant research.

The aims of this research are threefold. Firstly, to understand students' positive-orientated wellbeing perspectives and the promotion of their wellbeing at university. Secondly, to explore students' experiences of an Appreciative Inquiry workshop and its utility. Thirdly, to determine if an Appreciative Inquiry workshop elicits positive emotional states.

To obtain this holistic and varied consideration of the utility of Appreciative Inquiry in this context, the study utilises a mixed-method approach. It utilises Appreciative Inquiry workshops to elicit students' practical and novel wellbeing suggestions for the university; it utilises a questionnaire to obtain feedback from students about their perceptions of the value of Appreciative Inquiry in their lives; and it utilises a scale to statistically measure improvements in student's positive emotions resulting from their participation in the workshops.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review explains the tenets of Appreciative Inquiry and elucidates on the value of this change management approach in a broad range of contexts. It provides a description of the concept of wellbeing with a specific focus on the positive psychological theory, PERMA. Further, it describes the concept of a positive psychological intervention (PPI), in this case the Appreciative Inquiry intervention, to introduce the potential link between these interventions and a positive change in emotions. It draws on existing research in these areas to expand on their value and highlights the knowledge gaps that the current research is aiming to address.

2.1. Appreciative Inquiry

In 1986 Cooperrider published a book "Appreciative Inquiry into organizational life" which initiated what was considered a revolutionary approach to organisational change management (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000). Accordingly, "appreciative" means acknowledging the positive and the value in people, experiences and situations and "inquiry" denotes being interested in exploring and investigating to uncover creative opportunities.

The Appreciative Inquiry methodology is based on a positive social constructionist epistemology, where change occurs through conversation and narration of people's positive experiences. Appreciative Inquiry also falls into the realm of socio-rationalism, inferring that social structures are unstable and that humans have control over reality via their imagination (Egan & Lancaster, 2005). It is based on the supposition that all living systems have a positive core thereby making anything possible. More so, it asserts that people have extraordinary and unique competencies which, once discovered, can be tapped into, evoking their unique contributions to organisations (Charag and Fazili, 2018). Hence, it involves collaborative exploration to uncover the best in people within an organisation (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000). In so doing, it has the capacity to engender novel ideas, frameworks, and methodologies, which is why it is considered a generative theory (Bushe & Kassam, 2005).

Appreciative Inquiry holds that within any environment there are elements that work effectively. A positive appraisal and acknowledgement of these factors is the essential

starting point. This is achieved by asking the "unconditional positive question" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000, p. 3), which has the effect of shifting people's perspectives and unleashing innovative and hitherto untapped potential within the organisation. This question needs to speak the language of, and have common applicability to, all individuals involved in the change process. Charag and Fazili (2018) argued that the value of this question is to hear and collate the collective, positive, success stories which will ignite employee imagination toward the realm of new possibilities. Cooperrider (2000) postulated that systems develop in the direction of that which is constantly investigated. In this way, he claimed that positive inquiry creates sustainable, democratised, and inspiring change. The concept of democratised change attests to the fact that Appreciative Inquiry gives voice to all people involved and affected by the change. Together, the employees build and strengthen the organisation's positive core and create an impetus for new initiatives. It is therefore a "bottom-up" approach, where the sustainable success of change is created by a groundswell of employee ideas, enthusiasm, and support. This is contrary to, what is referred to in this research as, "top-down" change management approaches, where change is conceptualised and enforced by senior management.

2.1.1. Appreciative Inquiry World Views

Appreciative Inquiry has five foundational principles, or world views, which differentiate it from traditional problem-solving, deficit-based approaches to change management. Charag and Fazili (2018) hold that these world views propel organisations away from outdated, mechanistic, ways of operating and thinking towards more contemporary, growth orientated mindsets. These include the constructionist, simultaneity, poetic, anticipatory, and positive principles.

The "constructionist principle" holds that all organisations are living systems constructed by employees and by organisational experiences - both past and present. Truthful understanding requires engaging in honest, open discussion with all employees where the status-quo is openly challenged, and subjectivity encouraged. Constructionism has the potential to generate knowledge, challenge the existing assumptions, and to metamorphosise organisations (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000).

The "principle of simultaneity" recognises that the mere process of asking an affirmative question has the potential to inspire and create positive change as it

establishes the mindset of how and what participants think about. It is therefore vital to carefully consider this question to ensure it informs the desired dialogue (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000). This concept is effectively explained in an article which expounded on the value of Appreciative Inquiry in assisting individuals, communities, and countries transition through the Covid-19 pandemic (Armstrong et al., 2020). The authors provided examples of leading questions, referred to as "inquiries toward intentional action" (p. 3), which could open creative discussion and solutions to a wide range of challenges presented by Covid-19. One example looked at the challenge of "Telecommuting: education" (p. 3) where the suggested leading question was "What does a thriving and quality distance educational program consist of?" (p. 3) and the inspired outcome would be "flourishing in satellite, remote environments" (p. 3) which creates "learning and economic well-being" (p. 3). It is evident that framing questions in this way guides the type of discussion and action steps that follow.

The "poetic principle" posits that organisational narrative is co-constructed by all employees through the past and present experiences and how they perceive the future. These play out poetically in the stories that are told and the organisational metaphors that are used. An organisations culture reflects this through its artifacts, processes, and structures. Appreciative Inquiry challenges the questions that are constantly asked, and the metaphors used within the organisation. It recognises that perpetuating the identical narrative reproduces the same outcomes, however, changing the narrative alters the co-construction of organisational reality (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000).

According to the "anticipatory principle", envisioning and talking about a fresh, exciting and, in some ways, magical future modifies current behaviour, due to the power of positive thinking (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000). The effect is similar to the psychological placebo effect, where the beneficial results are not attributed to the experiment but rather to the positive belief in the experiment (Geldenhuys, 2020). This creates a reality where the future (through a vision), the present (through complementary actions) and perceptions of positive past experiences collide to repattern behaviour and create an environment for sustainable change.

The final principle is the "positive principle" which holds that positive emotions and encouraging social relationships are factors essential for establishing and maintaining change (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000). This complements the assertion of

Fredrickson's (2001) "broaden and build theory" which contends that positive emotions enhance one's capability to handle the unknown by strengthening our internal emotional reserves. Positivity breeds positivity and creates conditions for thriving (Geldenhuys, 2020). The focus on positivity is in juxtaposition to other approaches such as Kurt Lewins', Action Research Approach (Egan & Lancaster, 2005) and the Socio Economic Approach to Management (SEAM), which focus on problem identification and resolution. In this research these are referred to as "deficit-based" approaches as they focus on correcting what is wrong (Sorensen et al., 2010).

Barret (1995) argued that deficit-based approaches to organisational change encourage single-loop learning which only allow for incremental change thereby maintaining the status quo. Deficit-based approaches are, by design, constraint focused for various reasons. Focusing on existing issues creates a problem-solving mindset that values correcting system inefficiencies or breakages instead of potential enhancements. Elements of an organisation are viewed in isolation with siloed specialists ignoring the interrelatedness of the entire system. Co-operation, creativity, and imagination are limited as employees are reduced to defensive behaviours and destructive competitiveness.

Barret (1995) further points out that the strength-based, Appreciative Inquiry, approach is more relevant to modern organisations focused on encouraging transformational idea generation. To achieve these potential benefits, organisations require a new set of competencies. An affirmative competence focuses on positive potential and strengths, while an expansive competence challenges the status-quo to imagine new realities. A generative competence rewards contribution towards improving the entire system, and a collaborative competence encourages open dialogue and idea generation (Barrett, 1995). As is evident, Appreciative inquiry is provocative in that it encourages experimentation and stretches existing boundaries (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 2013).

2.1.2. The Appreciative Inquiry Process

Appreciative Inquiry has advanced from being a philosophical world view towards a clear, practical, and systematic methodology processes (Geldenhuys, 2020; Whitney et al., 2019). The focus of the methodology is to create an environment that encourages open conversations and elicits rich, innovative insights and solutions. The methodology

follows a four phased approach, called the 4-D model, which begins by reframing inherently negative thought processes.

The first phase is the **Discovery phase**, where positive questions are presented. This encourages participants to appreciate and enhance their understanding of current experiences when the organisation is ***performing at its best***. It acknowledges that although there may be negative experiences within an organisation, the value of focusing on the organisations' positive attributes (when the organisation is functioning at its best) yields more constructive, substantial and sustainable change than focusing on where an organisation is lacking or failing. Asking the unconditional positive question encourages rich, descriptive, and personal storytelling. These stories are probed further to gain an understanding of why and how these positive experiences occurred. This phase aims at using these experiences to understand what positive learnings exist, thereby unleashing their creative potential. The Discovery phase sets the tone for open, honest, and positive discussion which align with the principles discussed in Section 2.1.1.

The second phase is the **Dream phase**, where the exceptional descriptions of past experiences and existing strengths gathered in the Discovery phase are used to construct "***a vision*** of a better world, a powerful purpose, and a compelling statement of strategic intent" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000, p. 10). This is achieved by encouraging participants to tap into their curiosity and envision what the ideal future potential could be. This phase takes on an almost magical and dreamlike quality which is not bound by the rational (Bushe & Kassam, 2005). In so doing, the process turns the strengths into aspirational potential and achieves the aims of the "anticipatory principle", discussed in Section 2.1.1.

The third phase, the **Design phase**, is a transitionary phase where participants co-construct a new proposition of "***what should be***" (Bushe & Kassam, 2005, p. 167) by identifying positive, concrete actions that can be undertaken to create this vision using the best of what already exists.

The final phase is the **Destiny phase** which focuses on creating ***sustainability*** and commitment from all involved so as to enable change to unfold. This current research will not include the final stage as a result of practical time constraints limiting ongoing positive feedback and is therefore beyond the scope of this study.

2.1.3. Transformational Power of Appreciative Inquiry: Organisational Examples

Since its inception in the late 1980's, Appreciative Inquiry has gained traction globally, within profit and community-based organisations as a transformational change management approach (Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Coghlan et al., 2003; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000; Trosten-Bloom, 2017; Whitney et al., 2019). Bushe & Kassam (2005) conducted a meta-case analysis of 20 Appreciative Inquiry implementations which found numerous positive outcomes for companies who engaged in this change methodology. However, they also discovered that there are two preconditions for it to be transformational. Firstly, it must transform the way people think, as opposed to focusing on their actions. This differentiates it from other change management approaches which typically encourage behavioural change. Secondly, the implementation process needs to be fluid, unstructured and allow room for innovation. In so doing, the organisation creates an "inspired movement" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000, p. 12) for change instead of a prescriptive methodology. The idea being that if, in the initial phases, there is shared endorsement of the vision achieved through agreed-upon action steps, it will empower motivated stakeholders to take initiative during the implementation thus yielding sustainable change. This goes against the grain of the aforementioned, deficit-based, top-down change management approaches which rely on detailed project management plans controlled by senior management.

Cooperrider & Srivasta (2013) attribute financial benefits, streamlined processes, improved employee satisfaction, and Trosten-Bloom (2017) adds reduced staff turnover, successful formal and informal leadership succession and sustainable change to organisational implementations of Appreciative Inquiry.

An article written by Trosten-Bloom (2017), based on her key learnings from implementing Appreciative Inquiry at the Hunter Douglas Window Fashion Division, provided valuable insight for this research. Firstly, the importance of being able to rely on and defer to other Appreciative Inquiry specialists. Secondly, that caution needs to be taken when constructing the positive questions, as the themes obtained at the Discovery phase determine the direction and potential of the initiative. Thirdly, the value of sharing information broadly and hearing the ideas from employees.

Another well documented and successful implementation is the Dahlia Campus for Health and Well-Being in Denver, Colorado (Whitney et al., 2019). This example is

particularly relevant to this study because it demonstrates the value of Appreciative Inquiry in a non-profit organisation that was struggling with negative sentiments. It demonstrates how these negatives perceptions can be reframed and how positive themes can emerge through open communication and drawing on the skills of all involved parties.

These organisational examples added value to this research as they demonstrated that: broad-based buy-in to Appreciative Inquiry, through engaged dialogue, has the potential to achieve sustainable bottom-line results; establishing a positive, imaginative mindset can result in innovative solutions with ripple effects to other projects and initiatives in addition to the original intent; Appreciative Inquiry is a valuable approach in all industries, in both profit and non-profit organisations, and in contexts where negative perceptions persist; Finally, they provided applicable lessons. Given that the methodology was found to add value in these contexts, the researcher contends that it is worthwhile researching its usefulness in the context of student wellbeing.

2.1.4. Appreciative Inquiry Research on Student Samples

A few international studies utilising an Appreciative Inquiry approach on student samples have been conducted. Although none of them focus on student wellbeing, and they followed a top-down research approach, they do provide credibility for applying this methodology within a university context. These studies have utilised Appreciative Inquiry to understanding the achievements of students using English as a second language (Rowntree et al., 2016); enhancing student's life skills (na Ayudthaya et al., 2019); and investigating the value of support activities to aid student social and academic integration and providing suggestions on improving peer assisted support (Byl et al., 2016).

A recent international study by Dalli Gonzi & Camilleri (2021) utilised a student-led (bottom-up) approach which focused on developing their readiness for post-graduate studies. The researchers employed Appreciative Inquiry and a thematic analysis in the first phase to develop trust, build relationships, and engage the students with the change. The research reported on the value of this bottom-up approach, which is applicable to this research. Students valued the opportunity to voice their opinions and ideas during constructive discussion with staff, they experienced reduced anxiety during these conversations, and the positive environment was effective in establishing trust.

In South Africa, an Appreciative Inquiry intervention was conducted on 8 students at the University of Pretoria to identify recommendations to bridge the gap between school and university (Ogude et al., 2019). The significance of this study was firstly the use of Appreciative Inquiry in a South African university context as well as their exclusion of the Destiny Phase of Appreciative Inquiry. Following Ogude et al.'s (2019) research, the current research took the same approach (refer to Chapter 3).

In South Africa, a study was found that incorporated Appreciative Inquiry and student wellbeing. At the University of Johannesburg, in the Faculty of Health Sciences, Henrico (2022) utilised a three phased approach to determine effective wellness programmes. The first two phases were unrelated to my research, but the final phase made interesting use of Appreciative Inquiry workshops with experts to obtain their thoughts about implementing individual wellness programmes. The research differs from my research in that it heard the voice of experts (top-down) as opposed to students (bottom-up), it was prescriptive about its intention to develop a wellness programme, and never assessed student's wellbeing.

These mentioned studies provide credibility into the positive potential of Appreciative Inquiry and its varied applicability in a university context. However, these studies did not run the workshops purely with students (bottom-up); they don't they investigate student wellbeing using the PERMA theoretical framework; and they don't assess Appreciative Inquiry in terms of its potential as a Positive Psychological Intervention (PPI) (Moskowitz et al., 2021). The current study addresses these shortcomings and therefore offers a unique perspective of the value of Appreciative Inquiry in this context. The following section (Section 2.2.) will describe wellbeing and the PERMA framework, while Section 2.3. will elucidate on the concept of a PPI.

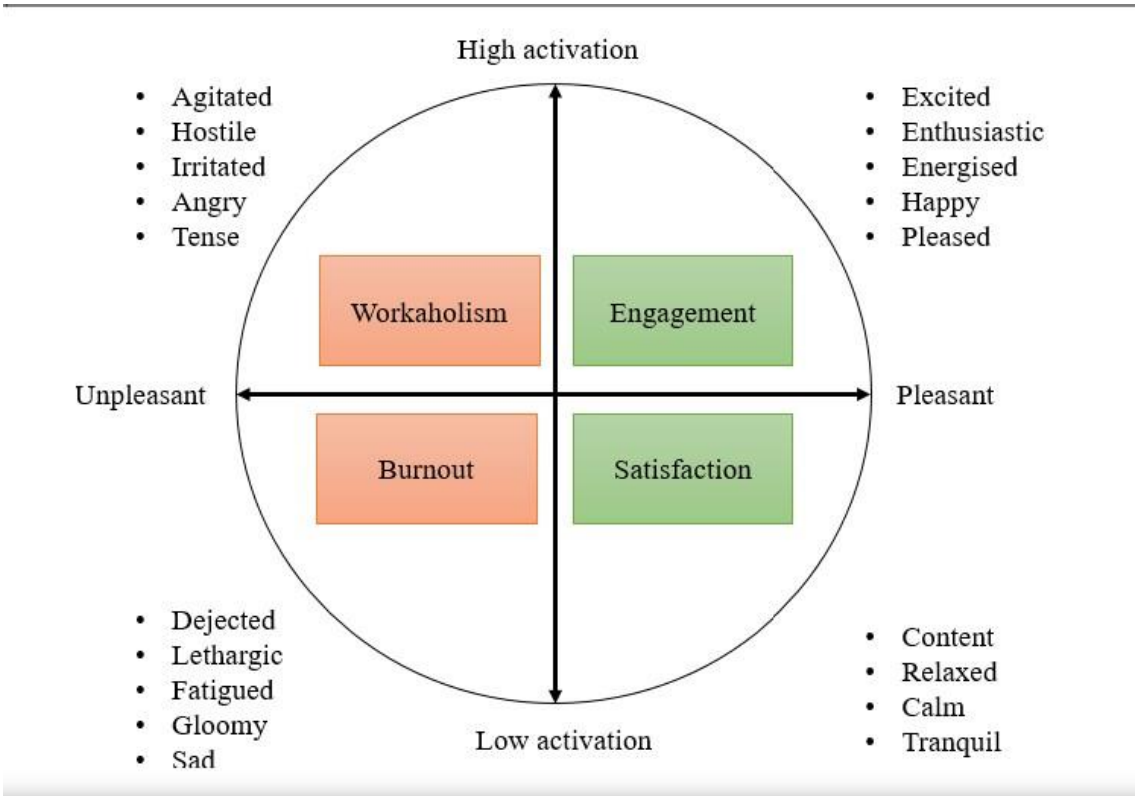
2.2. Wellbeing

The World Health Organisation's definition of health includes physical and mental health as well as one's social contribution to society. The WHO recognises the importance of wellbeing to promote overall health, reduce illness, and eliminate destructive habits such as addictions (World Health Organisation, 2022). Wellbeing has been described from two different perspectives, subjective (hedonic) wellbeing and eudaimonic wellbeing.

According to subjective (hedonic) wellbeing one's life satisfaction is influenced by positive and negative emotions (Diener et al., 1999). According to Zanfirescu et al. (2017), Russel (1980) proposed the subjective wellbeing circumplex which places two dimensions, valence, one's level of pleasure (cognition of feelings) and activation, one's emotional intensity and state of arousal (moods) on the horizontal and vertical axis respectively. Accordingly, at high arousal and high pleasure levels one experiences engagement (the ideal state for university students); at high arousal and low pleasure levels one experiences stress; at high pleasure and low arousal levels one experiences comfort; and finally at low arousal and low arousal levels one experiences depression.

Figure 1

Russel's Wellbeing Circumplex (Zanfirescu et al., 2017)



Izard & Buechler (1980) complement this circumplex by describing emotions as discrete factors that are culturally unbiased, subjective states of emotion (such as anger, joy), which are more stable over shorter time periods (Moskowitz et al., 2021).

Positive psychology focuses on eudaimonic wellbeing, essentially achieving a state of flourishing; having a meaningful and optimal functioning life, where one's potential is developed and growth is experienced (du Plessis & Guse, 2017). Seligman's (2011) framework describes wellbeing as incorporating Positive emotions, Relationships, Engagement, Meaning and Accomplishment, referred to as PERMA, which is the theoretical foundation of this research. The PERMA framework therefore contributes to eudaimonic wellbeing by providing a structured model that fosters a holistic approach to human flourishing and fulfilment.

Other conceptualisations of eudaimonic wellbeing are referred to in Chapter 4, however they all have clear parallels to the PERMA model. Ryan & Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory contends that wellbeing incorporates aspects of competence, relatedness, and autonomy. "Competence" refers to the need to feel effective, having a sense of mastery and achievement, which parallels with "Accomplishment" in the PERMA model. "Relatedness" involves feeling connected to others, to care and be cared for and to experience a sense of belonging and attachment. This parallels with the "Relationships" dimension of the PERMA model. Autonomy is the need to feel in control of one's actions and choices, to act in harmony with one's values and interests, which parallels with "Meaning" in the PERMA model.

Another conceptualisation of eudaimonic wellbeing is Prosocial Behaviour, giving and contributing to others. This is recognised as a fundamental human and societal need that contributes meaning to life (Klein, 2017). This concept links to both PERMA's "Meaning" and "Relationship" dimensions, as it reinforces social connections.

The final theory referred to in the research is the Demand-Control-Support model, which later became the Job-Demands Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). This theory explains the relationship between work characteristics (in this study "work" refers to the job of being a student) and employee (student) wellbeing. The theory explains that job resources buffer the negative impact of high job demands which results in increased motivation, engagement, job satisfaction and ultimately well-being. The "engagement" component in PERMA aligns with the concept of job resources in the JD-R model since increased control and support increases ones focus and absorption. The "relationship" aspect in PERMA corresponds to the social support resource. The "accomplishment" component in PERMA relates to both job demands

and job resources. An employee's accomplishment is impacted by them possessing the appropriate job resources, and their capacity to manage job demands effectively, while achieving their job objectives without excessive strain. The "meaning" aspect of PERMA aligns with personal growth and development stimulated by job resources in the JD-R model. When jobs provide opportunities for employees to grow and develop, they contribute to a sense of meaning and purpose at work.

These conceptualisations of wellbeing have specific implications for university students, which will become evident in Chapter 4. However, to provide an upfront example, research conducted by Palmieri et al. (2023), demonstrates how the JD-R theory relates to student wellbeing. He asserts that students experience high demands from demanding workloads, the necessity to work efficiently, prolonged intense focus, and conflicting demands. These factors are all stress and anxiety provoking for students which can result in burnout and physical or mental issues. On the other hand, students that are given increased control are more able to cope with these demands. Universities can increase student control by encouraging their creativity, providing autonomy on the structure of their studies, hearing students opinions about their coursework, and indicating that their input is valued. Students' ability to cope with high demands is also impacted by the level of support that they have in terms of peers, friends, and other support structures. In this way, control and support can both be seen as resources that assist students cope with high demands and contribute to achievement of study goals and personal growth.

Previous international studies have investigated important factors impeding student wellbeing. These factors include mental health, sexual health, alcohol and tobacco use, physical activity, nutrition, and sun protection (Wold et al., 2021), financial stress, psychological distress (Stallman, 2010), and the impact of Covid-19 on student anxiety (Cao et al., 2020). These studies confirm the imperative of researching and understanding student wellbeing. However, they differ from this research as none of them follow an Appreciative Inquiry approach, they are deficit-focused (specifically identifying wellbeing issues), and they are led by management, not students.

In South Africa, Knoesen & Naudé (2018) conducted research on student wellbeing, at the University of Free State, which was particularly relevant to this research. Firstly, their sample consisted of first-year students and secondly, they confirmed the value of a

bottom-up approach by involving students in constructive brainstorming sessions to generate ideas, thirdly, some of the positive insights concurred with my research. Their research, however, differed from my research in that their methodology was deficit-based (focused on exploring shortcomings and gaps). In so doing, the researchers elicited a list of issues related to languishing (e.g. accommodation and financial issues) and positive insights related to flourishing (e.g. enjoying tutorials and socialising). Additionally, the researchers never investigated creative strategies to migrate from languishing to flourishing.

This research investigates both students' subjective and eudaimonic wellbeing from a novel perspective. Eudaimonic wellbeing is studied by engaging directly with students (bottom-up), through a strength-based, Appreciative Inquiry workshop. During these workshops, questions are posed around the positive psychological PERMA model, which is the theoretical wellbeing framework adopted. This is described below (Section 2.2.1). This research also investigates students' subjective wellbeing by assessing their change in positive emotions which is analysed within the context of a Positive Psychological Intervention (PPI), discussed in Section 2.3.

My research therefore considers the value of Appreciative Inquiry in the context of student wellbeing. From a eudemonic wellbeing perspective, the workshops are anticipated to elicit rich and meaningful themes; from a subjective wellbeing perspective, the workshops should invoke positive emotions.

2.2.1. PERMA

Seligman, who developed the PERMA model, is considered the father of positive psychology (Martin, 2007). Positive psychology moved away from the traditional psychological approach which focused on mental ailments and expected norms of behaviour towards a more optimistic view of a "life worth living" (Gable & Haidt, 2005, p. 103). From a positive psychology perspective, wellbeing is not defined as the absence or presence of affect (be it depression or joy) but in the unique ideal state of flourishing (Butler & Kern, 2016). It considers healthy attributes as not merely moderators or mediators of negative psychological issues, but as independent, valuable psychological constructs to develop and assess (Gable & Haidt, 2005). According to Seligman (2011), there are five, distinct dimensions which contribute to a person's overall wellbeing. Together, these dimensions create a holistic picture of what is

defined as flourishing, an ideal state of eudemonic wellbeing (Butler & Kern, 2016) (refer to Chapter 2).

The first dimension is Positive Emotions (P), which refers to subjective wellbeing. This is the feeling of happiness and contentment that negates negative emotions and contributes to life satisfaction (as per Russel's (1980) wellbeing circumplex); Engagement (E) involves one's absorption in various areas of interest which improves flow and results in personal growth and motivation (Green, 2022); Positive Relationships (R) incorporates social connection, friendship formation, peer relationships and support structures. These all create a sense of belonging and mitigates against stress (Green, 2022); Meaning (M) involves striving for purpose in life that is greater than oneself which engenders feeling valuable and needed (Green, 2022). The fifth dimension is Accomplishment (A) which involves having goals, a sense of achievement and mastery in multiple aspects of one's life to achieve a level of self-efficacy (Green, 2022).

Numerous international research studies conducted at universities evaluate the psychometric properties of the PERMA-profiler, the most popular instrument used to measure wellbeing. These studies cover countries including Western countries, the Middle East, Africa, India and South America (Butler & Kern, 2016; Chaves et al., 2023; de Carvalho et al., 2021; Giangrasso, 2021; Idris et al., 2018; Pezirkianidis et al., 2021; Umucu et al., 2020). Since the current research does not measure PERMA, but rather uses the PERMA framework to investigate student related wellbeing issues, these studies are not specifically relevant. They do, however, provide an indication of the extent to which the PERMA framework and related constructs are noticeably important and valuable within a university context as well as the multi-cultural relevance of PERMA.

Coffey et al. (2016) conducted a cross-sectional and longitudinal, statistical study, on American students at numerous colleges. The research concluded that there is strong evidence to support PERMA's multidimensional structure and its link to flourishing and provided validity for the use of PERMA as a framework to impact student wellbeing positively.

Other studies have focused on specific PERMA interventions. At West-Midlands University in the United Kingdom, an 8-week online well-being programme was

provided to undergraduate and postgraduate students during Covid-19 (Morgan & Simmons, 2021). The programme followed the PERMA framework and shared wellbeing concepts, knowledge and resources and encouraged student connection. Initial indications were that the programme was successful. A Pakistani university conducted a longitudinal study that investigated the 24 "character strengths" which contribute to a "good life" which, according to Frederickson, underpin and strengthen all five elements of PERMA (Green, 2022). The research consisted of a 36-hour intervention identifying and developing these character strengths. These studies support the use of PERMA as a framework for understanding and enhancing student wellbeing but utilise different interventions to this current research.

No South African studies relating PERMA to student wellbeing have been identified by the researcher. This represents a significant gap when considering the broad acceptance and applicability of the PERMA framework in a multicultural context. This research aims to fill this gap.

My research extends the investigation of the value of Appreciative Inquiry in the context of student wellbeing by considering whether student involvement in an Appreciative Inquiry workshop, results in an improvement of their positive emotions. If so, then the Appreciative Inquiry workshop can be considered a Positive Psychological Intervention.

2.3. Appreciative Inquiry as a Positive Psychological Intervention (PPI)

Moskowitz et al.'s (2019) "positive pathways to health model" contends that a person's involvement in PPI's, such as Appreciative Inquiry interventions, increases their positive emotions which in turn assists an individual in developing stress-coping strategies, improving their role performance (Moskowitz et al., 2012). Reduced stress improves productivity, effectiveness, engagement and subsequently wellbeing. This compliments Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory, which asserts that engagement in a positive experience, such as a PPI, elicits positive affect which signals to a person to continue their current behaviour. During this process a person's "momentary thought-action repertoires" increase (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 219). This means the person's internal resources (physical, intellectual, social and psychological) broaden, which positively impacts their thoughts, their actions and consequently their overall wellbeing (Fredrickson, 2001).

The concept of PERMA and related PPIs have been assessed in previous studies, however none of them consider Appreciative Inquiry as the PPI. A research study, involving two American universities and a college, utilised the PERMA framework to encourage student retention (Long, 2022). They hypothesised that enhancing students hope leads to students fulfilling their university goals and therefore their retention. The interventions included online PERMA and positive psychology education and 12 happiness exercises (which they defined as PPI's). They also educated on Hope Theory, which links to PERMA's positive emotions, and is one of the 24-character strengths. Results of pre- and post-tests indicated that hope and positive emotions increased after students received targeted positive psychology education and students experienced the PPI, happiness exercise, positively. An Australian university investigated the impact of PPI's (specifically positive psychology, PERMA-based education) on first-year student wellbeing (Golab et al., 2018). They hypothesised that the PPI's would reduce anxiety and stress thereby increasing student engagement, self-efficacy, and overall wellbeing. Results indicated correlations between positive emotions and retention; engagement and social relationships; positive emotions, engagement, and goal achievement.

These previous PERMA and PPI studies were valuable as they corroborated the importance of wellbeing for university students and in some studies the unique stressors for first-year students. They provided justification for using the PERMA framework for interventions. They indicated the multi-cultural significance of PERMA and support PERMA's flexibility by demonstrating numerous creative and interesting angles to enhance student wellbeing. Finally, they provide credibility for the existence of PPIs and their impact on student wellbeing. However, none of them assess Appreciative Inquiry as a PPI on a student sample, making the current research unique.

2.4. Conclusion

From the literature review one can see that that deficit-based approaches to problem solving and change management are limited in their capacity for innovation and result in negative behavioural implications, such as defensiveness (Barrett, 1995). This leaves a void for an approach which is creative, innovative, positive, and solution orientated which is fulfilled by Appreciative Inquiry. The literature also indicates that student wellbeing is important for successful university outcomes. It is therefore warranted to

utilise a novel approach, focusing on strengths, when investigating this topic. Using the PERMA framework, during Appreciative Inquiry workshops, maintains the research focus on the positive aspects of wellbeing while at the same time allows for the exploration of conditions where students have or could develop the capacity to flourish. This is enabled since the 4-D's of the Appreciative Inquiries methodology focuses on past strengths, future dreams, and constructive action steps. This research therefore offers a novel perspective by employing the PERMA framework to guide discussions around student wellbeing, during the Appreciative Inquiry workshops. Finally, this research deepens the investigation of Appreciative Inquiry by considering it as a PPI, which enhances student's positive emotions encourage them to experience a prosperous life.

2.5. Research Questions

2.5.1. Research Question 1

2.5.1.1. Discover phase. How do students describe their experiences of positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment at university?

2.5.1.2. Dream phase. What do students perceive an ideal context would look like that elicits positive emotions, increased engagement, valuable relationships, enhanced meaning, and accomplishment at university?

2.5.1.3. Design phase. How can more positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment be encouraged at university?

2.4.2. Research Question II

Do students have a greater understanding of Appreciative Inquiry and do they find the workshop a valuable and positive experience?

2.4.3. Research Question III

Does an Appreciative Inquiry workshop increase the positive emotions experienced by participants?

Hypothesis: There will be an increase in positive emotions experienced by the students after having participated in the Appreciative Inquiry workshop.

2.6. Research Aims

The aims of this research are threefold. Firstly, to understand students' positive-orientated wellbeing perspectives and the promotion of their wellbeing at university. Secondly, to explore students' experiences of an Appreciative Inquiry workshop and its utility. Thirdly, to determine if an Appreciative Inquiry workshop elicits positive emotional states.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This section describes the research design, sampling strategy, sample size, the procedures that were followed in the study, the instruments used, the ethical considerations, and the qualitative and quantitative analyses conducted.

3.1. Research Design

A mixed methods design (Laher, 2016) was used to investigate, in a sample of first year psychology students, at a higher education institution, the value of an Appreciative Inquiry approach in eliciting rich and insightful wellbeing ideas, obtaining input on the perceptions of Appreciative Inquiry workshops, and measuring emotional change before and after workshops.

The research consisted of two qualitative components utilising Thematic Analysis. The first component involved semi-structured, open-ended Appreciative Inquiry workshops, utilising the PERMA framework as a guide. The value of qualitative data was that it allowed for subjective interpretations to gain deeper understanding of human experiences (Jackson et al., 2007). It therefore enabled the researcher to extract rich, humanistic descriptions of students' wellbeing, their focused experiences, and their suggestions of how this higher education institution can enhance their PERMA-related wellbeing. An additional qualitative component was conducted, through a written assessment after the workshop, which investigated whether an Appreciative Inquiry methodology was seen as a positive and valuable experience for the participants.

The third, quantitative component, of this research determined if there was a change in positive emotions after students participated in the workshops. It measured students' emotions utilising numerical information obtained through the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE) instrument. This quantitative component is classified as a one-group, pretest-post-test, pre-experimental design methodology (Leedy & Ormond, 2005). This is a result of the fact that there was manipulation of the independent variable (the Appreciative Inquiry intervention), the five independent workshop groups were subjected to the same workshop independently and their scores were not compared (there was therefore no control, contrast or experimental group), and finally, the survey was conducted on each group, before and after the Appreciative Inquiry intervention, so as to measure changes in their positive emotions. This type of

research design allows for only a low potential of causality to be established but has value in providing potential explanations that can be followed up with more detailed experimental research (Cahit, 2015).

From a qualitative perspective, the research elaborates on what positively orientated perspectives and insights students present during Appreciative Inquiry sessions and the quantitative data measures whether there was a change in students' positive emotions before and after the intervention.

3.2. Sample and Sampling Strategy

3.2.1. Sample

The sample consisted of first year psychology students at a university in Johannesburg. Demographic information including gender and race were collected, as summarised in the table below.

Table 1. *Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Descriptor		Frequency n	Percentage %
Race			
	Black	28	60.8
	White	8	17.4
	Indian	6	13.0
	Coloured	4	8.69
Gender			
	Male	13	28.3
	Female	33	71.7

The total sample size was 46 (N = 46). This sample size was greater than the originally anticipated minimum sample of 30 students. This falls in the larger limit of Braun & Clarke's (2006) sample size guidelines for Masters research projects ranging from 12 – 48, depending on the number of workshops and number of participants per group (Terry et al., 2017). This study had 5 workshops averaging between 8-10 participants per group. For the qualitative study, two students (a black male and black female) were removed from the SPANE statistical analysis as they only completed one survey rendering it impossible to run a pre- and post-test analysis (N = 44). This sample size meets the Central Limit Theory for applying parametric assumptions (Field, 2018).

A large majority (60.8%) of the sample were black. This is a fair representation of the demographics of the country and of the university (Skinner & Louw, 2009). Females consisted of 71.7% of the study, which is representative of the psychology course since females are over-represented the field of psychology (Skinner & Louw, 2009). Although the students were first year psychology students, they came from a cross-section of degrees, faculties, and departments, not only humanities. This allowed for valuable insight from a broad range of students with different experiences and insights into the university.

3.2.2. Sampling Strategy

A non-probability, convenience, voluntary sampling strategy was employed. The researcher obtained approval from the first-year psychology lecturer to present this research, to the students, during a lecture. During the presentation, the students were informed what the aim and purpose of the study was, what student participation entailed, and what benefits would accrue to students (specifically, a learning experience of the research process and 1% psychology course credit). Students subsequently volunteered to participate.

This type of strategy is convenient, economical, practical and easy to access and identify (Laher & Botha, 2012). As mentioned in the sample description, the voluntary nature of the sampling strategy did not impede appropriate representation according to race and gender.

3.3. Procedure

Once ethical approval was obtained (Section 3.5.) the researcher contacted the Organisational Psychology honours co-ordinator to obtain permission to approach honours students for volunteers for the pilot study. As a result of the number of volunteers and their availability, two pilot studies were conducted. The pilot studies were valuable as they enabled the researcher to test and adapt the self-developed intervention guide; to develop skills in running Appreciative Inquiry workshops; to assess the required workshop timeframe required and to streamline the workshop process.

The first pilot study consisted of 6 honours and the second, 5 honours students. Both ran for approximately 2 hrs 30 minutes. The researcher took the lead in the workshops

(provided the introduction, ran the workshops, and concluded them), while the research supervisor facilitated by consolidating, summarising, and confirming participant comments and highlighting key themes. Obtaining student acknowledgement, that their points were understood, was important from an Appreciative Inquiry methodology perspective, as students felt heard and understood. It also ensured the research approach was trustworthy, specifically ensuring confirmability and authenticity. Since the first-year groups were larger than the pilot groups, it was communicated to them that their involvement would be 3 – 3.5 hours.

Before the session began, students were requested to complete the SPANE scale and the ethics documentation namely, the student information sheet, consent form, and recording consent form (Section 3.5.). This was done to obtain a baseline of their positive and negative emotions, which were then used as a comparison to their scores after participating in the workshop.

At the beginning of the pilot sessions, an icebreaker was conducted. Students were requested to ponder and discuss who they would invite for a meal; they could choose anyone who inspired and motivated them to grow and develop. The icebreaker was valuable in creating a relaxed, talkative environment and was continued for the first-year students. After the icebreaker, an introduction of positive psychology, PERMA and Appreciative Inquiry was provided. This was lengthened and improved after the first pilot group.

Students were then split into groups to discuss and brainstorm their ideas in the Discover phase. This splitting was effective as it encouraged everyone to participate and create free-flowing discussion. When assessing how the Discover phase ran in the pilot groups, it was agreed that the Appreciative Inquiry methodology places great emphasis on this phase and the positive insights gained as building blocks for the other two phases. Steps were therefore implemented to enhance discussion in this phase and to utilise the findings more effectively in the Dream and Design phases. Firstly, more time was spent explaining the Discover phase; Secondly, students were handed discussion guides to enrich their brainstorming and provide more direction; Thirdly, the researcher focused more on identifying the root causes of positive stories: and lastly, identified themes were summarised, written down, discussed, debated, and finally agreed on.

It was decided to swap groups around for the Dream phase to allow students to interact with different participants and to encourage more open discussion. There were no break-out groups for the design phase, as it is a more practical phase and based off the discussion in the prior two phases. In the analysis of the pilot sessions, it was agreed that the dream and design phases were quite intermingled. Since they are closely linked, this was bound to happen. However, steps were taken to encourage students to think more "magically" and out-of-the-box for the Dream phase and more practically in the Design phase. Additionally, the facilitator questioned suggestions in terms of whether they are long-term dreams or potential short-term solutions.

A general challenge, which was identified from the pilot studies, was that students found it difficult to relate their ideas to the PERMA dimensions which was important to keep the focus on student wellbeing. For the student sessions, the researcher kept the discussion focused by asking how the suggestion aids students' wellbeing. Their insight was then retrofitted into the PERMA model by the researcher. Additionally, the Appreciative Inquiry question sheets (Section 3.4.1), used in the break-out groups, focused students on each PERMA-related dimension.

Another challenge was steering students away from the negative. Humans have a natural tendency towards the negative and we tend to critique. At one point, the conversation became critical about the role of the Centre for Counselling and Development Unit (CCDU), a counselling unit at the university, which required skill to turn into a positive conversation. The technique to reframe from the negative to the positive is known as *Flipping* (Armstrong et al., 2020). The technique takes a three-step process, firstly, *naming it*, where the complaint along with the negative consequence is acknowledged. The second step is to *flip* the problem, where it is transformed towards its positive counterpart. The final step is *framing it*, which involves providing perspective by highlighting the beneficial outcomes of this transformation or the intended positive results. This approach was adopted during the first-year students' workshops as well as refocusing the students on the positive strengths identified during the Discover phase.

After the three phases were conducted, students completed another SPANE scale as well as an assessment of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop. This process remained unaltered.

Following the pilot sessions, the first-year students' psychology course coordinator approved the introduction of the research to the students to elicit volunteers. A manual sign-up form was distributed amongst the students (Appendix A) during the lecture and interested students provided their name, email address, and student number. In addition, a Google form was distributed to all first-year psychology students where those interested selected one or more date and time options. All students who indicated interest were sent emails confirming the date, time, and venue of the workshop. This email included the ethics documents, and a Google form where students had to confirm their attendance and accept that they had read and agreed with the contents of the ethics documents. A confirmation email was sent to all participants prior to attending the intervention confirming the date, time, and venue of the workshop. The research originally proposed to run three workshops, however, due to the positive response, five workshops were conducted.

The workshops followed the improved procedure as agreed after the pilot studies. All workshops were video recorded to facilitate thematic analysis. Students were welcomed and thanked for participation. They completed the pre-test SPANE scale which included their student number (to ensure they received course credit), and their demographics, which were later removed for anonymity. The icebreaker was conducted, and an introduction was presented providing students with an understanding of positive psychology, PERMA, and Appreciative Inquiry. The Discover, Dream and Design phases were then conducted, with snacks and refreshments in-between. On completion, the students filled out the post-test SPANE scale and an Appreciative Inquiry assessment form. At the end of the intervention students were thanked for their participation, asked if they have any further questions, and told they could have access to the final report if requested.

The workshops were transcribed, and the quantitative data from the SPANE scale was captured into excel, using participant numbers (not student ID's) and then uploaded into IBM SPSS Statistics 28.0 and analysed.

Considering this is a mixed-methods research, the results and discussion section were combined into a "Findings section" (Chapter 4). This allowed the argument to flow better and provided richer insight and analysis.

3.4. Instruments

The research made use of three instruments: the Appreciative Inquiry question sheets (used by the students in their discussion groups); the Appreciative Inquiry assessment questionnaire; and the SPANE scale (which included a section requesting basic demographic information).

3.4.1. Appreciative Inquiry Question Sheets

The self-developed Appreciative Inquiry question sheets were used to guide students' discussions during the breakout groups. The intention was to create an informal, conversational tone utilising open-ended, affirmative questions that encouraged the students to engage honestly and without hindrance so as to elicit rich and innovative insights and solutions. Each phase had a separate question sheet which followed the theoretical underpinnings of Appreciative Inquiry's 4-D model; an explanation of which was provided in the literature review. The questions in each sheet were broken down according to the PERMA dimensions to ensure discussions were focused specifically on student wellbeing. A consolidated table of these questions, by phase and PERMA dimension, is provided in Appendix B. These questions sheets were intended to be provide a general guide to elicit valuable insights and ensure the process maintains methodological integrity. The free-flowing nature of the workshops resulted in an overlap in discussion between the different PERMA dimensions, which was realistic and encouraged.

The Discover question sheet (Appendix C) presented positive questions to encourage participants to appreciate and enhance their understanding of current experiences at this higher education institution and unleash their creativity. Five leading questions were asked (according to each PERMA dimension) and follow-up questions were provided to probe student thinking even further. For example, to encourage discussion around "Engagement", the leading question was: "Describe situations at university that absorb your attention and make you feel excited about what you are doing", and a follow up question was: "What contributes to this feeling of engagement? (Is it the context, content, social interaction, interests)"

The Dream phase question sheet (Appendix D) was focused on obtaining a purpose and vision for this higher education institution in encouraging student wellbeing. The intent was to tap into students' curiosity in envisioning an ideal situation. For example, to encourage discussion around "Engagement", the leading question was: "What would

university look like at its best for healthy, engaged students?", and a follow up question was: "In this picture, what role are you playing to make this happen?"

The Design phase (Appendix E) allowed participants to co-construct a new proposition identifying positive actions that can be undertaken to create this vision. For example, to encourage discussion around "Engagement", the leading question was: "How can positive experiences of engagement be created (by students, by the university, by others)?", and a follow up question was: "What is required to ensure sustained engagement?"

As previously mentioned, the current phase does not incorporate the 4th D – Destiny phase, due to practical constraints.

The aim of this Appreciative Inquiry workshop was to obtain insights into students' perspectives of this higher education institution's wellbeing offerings and their recommendations of what it can do to enhance student wellbeing in the future. These question sheets proved valuable in triggering students' thought processes, encouraging meaningful and engaging discussions, and ensuring discussions focused on student wellbeing.

The success of the workshops also depended on student's honesty, engagement, and interest. Another success factor was the researchers' skill in following the Appreciative Inquiry approach and creating an environment conducive to open discussion and idea generation. The Appreciative Inquiry assessment questionnaire (Section 3.4.2.) provides insight about students' perceptions of the value of the workshops and the skill of the researcher in facilitating the workshops.

3.4.2. Appreciative Inquiry Assessment

The self-developed Appreciative Inquiry assessment questionnaire (Appendix F) obtained feedback from the students on how they experienced the Appreciative Inquiry intervention. This provided an assessment of the value of Appreciative Inquiry interventions in this context. It also supplemented the qualitative information by giving voice to student's perceptions of the value of this process. Additionally, it was used in conjunction with quantitative results to provide insight when interpreting results.

The form requested student IDs to ensure all students' assessments were collected and to match these assessments to the students' SPANE scale. On reporting only pseudonyms (for example, P1 - Participant 1) were used.

The assessment was broken down into three focus areas. The first area assessed students' perceptions of the facilitator. Two questions were asked: "Did the facilitator style encourage open discussion?" and "Did the facilitator style encourage positive discussion?". The second area assessed students' general views of Appreciative Inquiry. Two questions were asked: "How engaged did you feel in this exercise" and "Would you consider an Appreciative Inquiry approach valuable to aspects of your life?" For both these sections participants could select: "Not at all", "Moderately" or "Very".

The third area consisted of seven, open-ended questions which aimed at probing students' perceptions more deeply around four topics. The first topic was around students' reflections on the Appreciative Inquiry approach, an example question was: "How does the Appreciative Inquiry approach differ from how you currently deal with life events?". The second topic concerned students' reflections on the value of positivity. An example question was: "How do you believe that focusing on the positive can change how you deal with life situations?". The third topic questioned related to students' inspirational ideas following the workshop, an example question was: "Are you feeling inspired after this exercise? If so, describe that feeling and if you intend taking any positive steps in this regard". The fourth topic described the contexts students would consider using Appreciative inquiry in the future an example question was: "The Discover, Dream, Design approach is a constructive methodology to interpreting life situations and coming up with creative solutions. In what contexts can you see yourself following these steps in the future?"

The research hypothesised that if students had positive perceptions of the workshops, they would experience positive affect. If this was the case, Appreciative Inquiry workshops could be considered positive psychological interventions (PPI) that promotes emotional wellbeing (Moskowitz et al., 2021). The research assessed this using the SPANE emotion scale.

3.4.3. Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE)

The research used the SPANE scale (Appendix G) to assess whether the Appreciative Inquiry intervention can be considered a Positive Psychological Interventions (PPI).

The SPANE scale measures positive emotions and negative emotions, with six items per scale, totalling 12 items. For both the positive and negative subscale, general emotion items (e.g. positive and negative) are included as well as more specific items (e.g. joyful and sad). The inclusion of general emotion items allowed participants to reflect their generalised mood, instead of delving into the exact detail and description of that emotion. This inclusive, broad approach to describing emotions ensures that no specific item, or culturally biased perspective of emotion is included (or excluded) and weighted unfairly (Diener et al., 1999). Additionally, the inclusion of general items allowed participants to "reflect on other states such as interest, flow, positive engagement, and physical pleasure" (Diener et al., 1999, p. 146). The SPANE captures pertinent emotions described in happiness theories without detailed description. It assesses the participants perception of that emotion in terms of pleasantness and desirability. This is more culturally acceptable for the current study which is based on a South African sample, compared to instruments that describe emotions from a Western perspective. For example, the PANAS scale, which is extremely popular, uses descriptions such as "strong", which is describes a state of heightened arousal instead of an emotion (Diener et al., 2010). The SPANE interprets all levels of arousal, not only high levels created by the feeling, as described by Russel's (1980) subjective wellbeing circumplex referred to in the Section 1.2., the rationale (Zanfirescu et al., 2017).

Each of the 12 items was measured on a close-ended, Likert-type scale ranging from 1 ("very rarely or never") to 5 ("very often or always"). These scales can be scored independently to sum the positive (items 1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 12) and negative (items 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11) feelings. Scores for the positive emotions scale (SPANE-P) and the negative emotion scale (SPANE-N) range from 6 to 30. The total scores (SPANE-B) can be combined by subtracting SPANE-N from SPANE-P, the range for the total score is -24 to 24. A positive SPANE-B score indicates positive emotional states.

Reliability analyses, for this research, was conducted on the pre- and post- SPANE-P scale, and the pre- and post- SPANE-N scales, as illustrated in Table 2 below. Statistical reliability refers to the consistency, stability, and dependability of the results from a scale over repeated administrations or measurements (Cronbach, 1951).

Cronbach alpha assesses the consistency of results across different items within the same scale. High internal consistency indicates that all the items in a scale are measuring the same underlying construct (Cronbach, 1951). In this study, all correlations were sufficiently reliable as they are above .7 (Cronbach, 1951). The original reliability analyses conducted on the SPANE scale indicated higher Cronbach Alpha scores for the SPANE-P scale (r = .87 compared to .76 and .80) and lower scores for the SPANE-N scale (r =.81 compared to .83 and .86) (Diener et al., 1999). A study conducted on 992 South African university students to determine the psychometric properties of SPANE (du Plessis & Guse, 2017) confirmed that the SPANE scale is appropriate for this sample population, with reliability scores ranging from .79 to .85.

Table 2. *Reliability Analysis*

	Cronbach Alpha
Pre-SPANE-P	.76
Post-SPANE-P	.80
Pre-SPANE-N	.83
Post-SPANE-N	.86

Diener et al., (1999) also conducted a convergent validity test which assesses the degree to which scores on a particular scale are correlated with scores on other measures that are theoretically expected to relate (Carlson & Herdman, 2012). They concluded that all SPANE scales indicated significant correlations with the other measures of happiness and emotions (PANAS, Fordyce's Satisfaction with Life Scale, Single item measure of happiness) (Diener et al., 1999).

3.5. Ethical Considerations

The researcher was responsible for obtaining ethical clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee which consisted of numerous steps. The first step taken was to obtain the Statement of Principle for Postgraduate Supervisions (Appendix H). On completion of the research proposal, FORM A was completed and sent to a faculty reader, (Appendix I - Request to conduct research at the

University of Witwatersrand). The reader completed a Narrative Report (Appendix J) and a Proposal Submission Form (Appendix K), which suggested minor changes, accepted that the research was low risk, and approved sending the proposal for ethical consideration. Conditional ethical clearance was obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand Human Resources Ethics Committee (Appendix L), dependent on obtaining approval from the Office of the Deputy Registrar to make use of a first-year student sample, which was subsequently obtained (Appendix M). Unconditional approval was then obtained (MAORG/23/02), (Appendix N).

As mentioned in Section 3.3 (Procedure), informed consent was obtained from participants electronically (Appendix O). Most importantly, this document confirmed that participation in the research was voluntary, that students could withdraw at any time, and that their information and discussions would be kept confidential. Students also had to sign an information sheet (Appendix P) which confirmed the nature of the study, time, date, venue of the workshop, the anticipated duration of the workshop, that they would receive a 1% course credit, and that confidentiality was ensured. Participants were also informed that if required, they can contact the researcher after the workshop and CCDU for any psychological wellbeing assistance. Students also signed a recording consent form (Appendix Q) which obtained agreement from the students that the workshop would be recorded for analysis purposes. Students were also informed that feedback will be provided to them on request.

To ensure confidentiality, the researcher replaced student IDs with pseudonyms (for example, P1). The presentation of the quantitative data did not include any identifying information and only the researcher and the supervisor have access to the spreadsheet data which was password protected. Pseudonyms were also used when quoting extracts from qualitative data. In addition to receiving recording consent, no-one other than the researcher and the supervisor had access to the recordings. The data was stored in a password protected computer for secondary analysis and potential future use. This research is considered low risk.

3.6. Data Analysis of the Quantitative Component

For this study descriptive and inferential statistics were analysed. The data was created in Microsoft Excel, from the SPANE surveys the students completed manually before

and after the workshops. The excel spreadsheet was subsequently uploaded to IBM SPSS Statistics 28.0 and analysed.

3.6.1. Descriptive Statistics

Frequencies and percentages of categorical, demographic information (specifically race and gender) were analysed, refer to Section 3.2.1. (Sample). In addition, since the SPANE instrument is a standard psychometric test utilising Likert-type scales, it can be considered interval (Field, 2018). Therefore, the mean, mode, median, range, and standard deviation were analysed, refer to Section 4.3.1. (Descriptive Statistics).

3.6.2. Inferential Statistics

To measure the changes in the pretest-posttest mean scores a Matched / Paired Sample t-test was conducted. This test is used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the means of two related groups. To utilise this test, the following assumptions needed to be met: The dependent variable (student wellbeing) must be at least interval; observations must be independent; the dependent variable (student wellbeing) must be normally distributed; there should be no outliers. These assumptions were assessed before conducting the analyses, refer to 4.1.2.1 (Descriptive Statistics).

3.7. Thematic Analysis

The qualitative data obtained during the Appreciative Inquiry interventions were analysed utilising thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Recorded interventions were transcribed into a Word document. Recurring themes were obtained through careful analysis of the data using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step process which includes: familiarising oneself with the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing potential themes; defining and naming themes, and lastly, producing the report. The research established trustworthiness through each of these six steps of the thematic content analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). Trustworthiness attests to what extent the research is *credible, transferable, dependable, confirmable* and *authentic* (Nowell et al., 2017). In step 1, the transcriptions were stored in a systematic archive, ensuring the transcripts are traceable and can be audited, and a lengthy period of time was spent systematically analysing this data, this step ensured *credibility* and *dependability* (Nowell et al., 2017). In step 2, the researcher used a manual coding

method which involved reading the transcripts repeatedly and grouping answers that related to a category into themes. Different colours were used to distinguish each theme. This step aided *dependability* and enhanced *credibility* of the research (Nowell et al., 2017). For step 3, theme analysis began during the workshops when the supervisor, acting as facilitator, took notes and summarised the discussions after each workshop phase. Participants discussed, added, and acknowledged these summarised conclusions which assisted in establishing *confirmability*. A conscious effort was made to ensure reflexivity, that the researcher's biases, values, and beliefs did not influence the interpretations of the study. This was achieved by validating interpretations with the participants (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022). In step 4, the researcher made sense of the themes using a diagrammatic thematic map consisting of main themes and subthemes while maintaining detailed notes which assisted in establishing *confirmability*, making it clear to infer from the data how interpretations and conclusions were reached. These themes were reviewed with the supervisor to affirm that they flowed logically from the data and provided a fair representation of the participant's perspectives. This further aided in establishing *credibility*, *dependability* and *confirmability* (Nowell et al., 2017). In Step 5, agreement between the researcher and the supervisor was reached and theme names were documented. In step 6, a detailed description of the process was provided to ensure transparency and the themes were contrasted with existing literature (Nowell et al., 2017).

The outcome of the thematic analysis resulted provided six broad themes which were slightly adjusted for each Appreciative Inquiry phase, to account for the nature of the phase and to incorporate all the students' assertions. These six themes relate to dimensions of PERMA as depicted in the Appreciative Inquiry-PERMA matrix (Appendix R). The identified themes in the Discover phase were, high quality lecturers, small learning environments to consolidate education, multiple layers of support, special identity and sense of belonging, aesthetically pleasing environment, and opportunities for personal growth. The themes identified in the Dream phase were, enriched learning, small learning environments fostering enhanced learning encounters, advanced support structures, strengthened identity and belonging, modernised infrastructure and enhanced aesthetics, and prioritised personal growth. The themes identified in the design phase were, develop lecturers' skills, utilise small learning environments to support language barriers, improve critical support, build special

identity and belonging, upgrade facilities and aesthetics, and contribute to students' personal growth.

This thematic analysis was used to consolidate the rich insights provided by the students related to their wellbeing at this higher education institution.

3.8. Conclusion

This methodology section provided detailed explanations and descriptions of all essential elements of the research namely the research design, sampling size and strategy, procedural considerations, research instruments employed, steps taken to ensure ethical compliance and the quantitative and qualitative analyses conducted. The final analyses of each research question are presented in the Findings Chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter discusses each of the research questions separately. For each question it details the identified results, adds interpretative discussions, and includes previous research supporting the analyses. The chapter then holistically, considers the theoretical and practical research implications of the research, research limitations, and suggestions for future research.

4.1. Research Question I

The Appreciative Inquiry workshops were divided into the three phases of the methodology, Discover, Dream, Design. Each phase had its own research question which is detailed below. The results identified six overarching themes, namely: lecturers; small learning environments; support; identity and belonging; aesthetics; and personal growth. Example participant quotes have been included in the appendix to substantiate the findings. The table below depicts what aspect of student wellbeing each theme contributes to.

Table 3. *Appreciative Inquiry – PERMA Matrix*

Theme	Positive Emotions	Engagement	Relationships	Meaning	Accomplishment
Lecturers	X	X		X	X
Small Learning Environment			X		X
Support	X		X		X
Identity & Belonging	X		X	X	X
Aesthetics	X	X			X
Personal Growth	X	X		X	X

4.1.1. Discover Phase. How do students describe their experiences of positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment at university?

In the Discovery phase students identified and described when this higher education institution is at its best in enhancing student's PERMA-related wellbeing. As mentioned, six overarching themes were identified, however, these themes were slightly modified for each phase to account for the specific nature and insights pertinent to that phase. The Discovery phase set the positive tone and focused on this higher education institution's existing strengths. The thematic analysis identified the following specific themes for this phase: high quality lecturers; small learning environments to consolidate education; multiple layers of support; sense of belonging and special identity; aesthetically pleasing environment; and opportunities for personal growth.

4.1.1.1. High Quality Lecturers. When analysing the student's discussion, course-related content and lecturer style, are the two identified areas where lecturers currently contribute to their wellbeing. From a PERMA perspective, course-related content impacts students' engagement, accomplishment, and meaning. Lecturer style impacts predominantly students' engagement but also contributes to their positive emotions and accomplishment. Each of these aspects of student wellbeing are further elucidated.

In terms of course content, students engage with lecturers that they believed possess in-depth knowledge and relevant industry experience. Effective lecturers create engagement at the beginning of the semester by providing a broader context of the relevance and importance of the course. This engagement is furthered when lecturers, throughout the course, extend theoretical concepts to practical examples and implications relatable to students' everyday lives, which also makes it easier for them to retain the information. Engagement is experienced when course content not only focuses on what was examinable but encourages students to think deeper, question their opinions, and hear the diverse views of others. Engagement is consolidated when lecturers provide diverse and novel ways of assessing students. (Refer to Appendix R-1, for examples of participant quotes)

Students feel a sense of accomplishment when they learn new skills which they can apply to other courses and realms of life (such as, how to analyse information, how to

read and interpret academic documents). (Refer to Appendix R-2, for examples of participant quotes)

The Sign Language course was specifically highlighted for providing students with greater meaning as students feel that communicating with disabled people is thoughtful and caring. (Refer to Appendix R-3, for examples of participant quotes)

Course content is not purely attributed to lecturer quality but also to the interesting and diverse courses offered by this higher education institution. Sign Language, Italian and International Relations courses were three mentioned courses that students were particularly animated about. This point is valuable to raise as interesting courses contributed to students' positive emotions (expressed as excitement), engagement and meaning (specifically Sign Language). (Refer to Appendix R-4, for examples of participant quotes)

Lecturer style predominantly impacts students' wellbeing in terms of their level of engagement. The lecturers' passion for the course, for the students, and for teaching is visible in their high energy levels which makes lectures absorbing. Students appreciated lectures with a sense of humour or who told interesting, personal stories. Engaging lecturers encourage interaction by asking pertinent questions which draw students into discussions. They also create non-judgemental spaces, so students feel able to express diverse opinions, they feel heard and can gain deeper understanding of other's perspectives. Certain lecturers require students to practice skills in class (Italian and Sign Language) which ensures that students are highly attentive. Students appreciated lecturers who communicate confidently and effectively so that course content is easily understandable. (Refer to Appendix R-5, for examples of participant quotes)

Lecturer style also impacts students' positive emotions. Enjoyable lectures make learning fun, make students passionate about the subject, and make them enthusiastic to continue learning and attending. Respectful lecturers also make students feel comfortable to talk honestly. Valuable feedback communicated effectively by lecturers makes students feel encouraged and inspired to improve. (Refer to Appendix R-6, for examples of participant quotes)

Finally, lecturer style aids students' accomplishment. In lectures where students are required to practice specific skills students feel proud when they can demonstrate

proficiency. When lecturers encourage students to participate by asking them to apply their knowledge, students feel a sense of achievement as their thoughts are valued. Lecturers who offer constructive feedback on assignments develop students' future capabilities. (Refer to Appendix R-7, for examples of participant quotes)

The results identified in this study corroborate with Eloff et al. (2021) who investigated the different roles of lecturers in enhancing student wellbeing at the University of Pretoria. Accordingly, students' wellbeing is enhanced by lecturer benevolence, which includes, treating students with respect, kindness, and friendliness. An aspect of benevolence, which was not mentioned in this current study, is lecturers' open-door policies. The study also raised lecture competence which included both instrumental knowledge and ability to convey the course content. Lecturers style of interactive communication and establishing contact with students was their third theme. The final theme raised was lecturer's attitude to work which involved their enthusiasm and amount of effort exerted. It is evident that students sampled from both universities, that is the University of Pretoria and this higher education institution, agreed on the importance of lecturers in enhancing student wellbeing and the key roles they play in this regard.

A Canadian study (Stanton et al., 2016) echoes the findings from this research on the value of continuous lecturer feedback and their openness to hearing students views. The study posited that these factors enhance students' positive emotions (happiness and contentment) towards the university. This research concurred that student engagement and desire to continue learning is encouraged when lecturers have open-ended, non-judgemental discussions with students.

This research provided more support to a South African study (Botha et al., 2019) which asserted that students' positive emotion, satisfaction, is enhanced by lecturers who provide quality and useful content. Botha's (2019) research added another point about lecturers meeting agreed deadlines, which was not mentioned in the current research.

The current research, which concurs with other studies, indicates that lecturers have a profound impact on students' wellbeing, specifically in the areas of engagement, accomplishment, meaning, and their positive emotions. The lecturers at this higher

education institution, when at their best, have demonstrated their capacity to impact student wellbeing positively in this regard.

4.1.1.2. Small Learning Environments To Consolidate Education.

According to the students, this higher education institution creates smaller learning environments which, when working at their best, enhance students' relationships and accomplishment. These environments include tutors, labs, and some small courses (for example, Italian has 9 students).

First-year psychology lectures take place in a large auditorium holding around 400 students. This context makes it difficult for both lecturers and students to create any meaningful interpersonal relationships. This was mentioned in the rationale as one of the stressors for South African students impacting their wellbeing (Eloff et al., 2021). According to the students smaller learning environments allow them to establish close connections with the tutor, lab assistant or lecturer (faculty). These relationships encourage students to engage with their academic material, in a positive environment, as students feel they are cared for and supported. These relationships also allow for deeper connection making it easier for students to have honest, valuable, and more informal discussions. The depth of relationship makes students feel like their achievements are important to faculty members. Importantly, in these smaller environments, students can establish meaningful friendships with peers as they can establish common ground in an intimate context. (Refer to Appendix R-8, for examples of participant quotes)

Small learning environments are focused on encouraging student accomplishment. Students use these forums to clarify information, reinforce knowledge and learn how to tackle difficult tasks. They become more engaged and interested in the material and practice examples makes content more understandable and relatable. It also places the onus on each student to stand up and be present. (Refer to Appendix R-9, for examples of participant quotes)

These findings are supported by a study done at the University of England where they asserted that small learning environments create a sense of safety (Volstad et al., 2020). The study referred to the value of *social learning* where a sense of belonging is established as students develop peer friendships through the process of experiencing

similar learning challenges. Friendships create more meaningful environments, with reduced stress, where people can flourish and attain their goals (enhanced learning).

Another supportive study was conducted with first-year Canadian students (Volstad et al., 2020). Accordingly, the value of small study environments enabled students to create a social network and to get closer to faculty members which enhanced their sense of belonging. These environments were also important as they provided an opportunity to bridge the gap between high school and university. Students initially found interacting with peers from different backgrounds with different skills and personalities challenging, but this provided an opportunity for personal growth.

This higher education institution, at its best, creates constructive, small learning spaces for students to enhance their feelings of belonging as they establish relationships with faculty, new friends, and peers. Students feel a sense of accomplishment as learning is enhanced and their academic goals achieved. These environments positively impact all aspects of students' PERMA-related wellbeing.

4.1.1.3. Multiple Layers of Support. This higher education institution, at its best, offers comprehensive support through targeted activities, supportive frameworks, and an ecosystem conducive to fostering multiple valuable connections which make students feel that they have places to turn to. This aid from this higher education institution encompasses tangible support through targeted events, the CCDU, mentors, tutors, lecturers, and resident academic advisors. Broader interpersonal connections and support with peers and friends are established during orientation week, lectures, small learning environments, societies, and other extra-curricular activities. The multi-faceted layers of support provided by these structures, complement each other and offer a blend of emotional, instrumental, and relational support aligning to PERMA's dimensions of positive emotions, accomplishment, and relationship.

Events organised by this higher education institution enhances students' positive emotions and relationships. Students described destress zones as environments where this higher education institution set up jumping castles on the library lawns which supported them during exam period to cope with pressure and anxiety. Organised events on campus and in the various residences allow for fun, socialisation opportunities and connection. This higher education institution also provides

informational content to support students. (Refer to Appendix R-10, for examples of participant quotes)

The CCDU provides emotional and mental health support through therapy. At its best, students find it accessible, and effective in assisting them with a wide variety of challenges. (Refer to Appendix R-11, for examples of participant quotes)

Previously the theme of lecturer quality was discussed. At university the dynamic between students and lecturers is often characterised as an adult relationship, expecting independent and mature behaviour from students. However, studies specifically demonstrate the pivotal role and interactions and relationships with lecturers play (Eloff et al., 2021). The influence of these student-lecturer connections effects student academic performance as they provide instrumental support. Lecturer approachability and the consequent rapport and lecturer-student relationship established impacts the level of emotional support they provide. Students also appreciate lecturer flexibility, a trait supported in another study (Stanton et al., 2016), specifically in challenging times when lecturer adaptability helps alleviate stress, enabling them to engage more deeply and meaningfully with their work. One student commented that cohesive departments provide an additional level of support. (Refer to Appendix R-12, for examples of participant quotes)

According to students, mentors were assigned during orientation week. Mentors provide a level of handholding and support for both academic purposes (accomplishment) and emotional support (positive emotions) through informal channels such as WhatsApp and video calls. Mentors are second year students who are assigned between 5 to 7 mentees. The closer the relationship, the more open the communication channels, and the more students rely on them for support. Students also value tutor relationships for instrumental support to assist their accomplishment with challenging work content and workload. There are roughly 18 students in a small group. Students appreciate tutors who provide constructive feedback which aids their academic growth. At residences students also have resident academic advisors who stay on campus and they meet with them weekly. (Refer to Appendix R-13, for examples of participant quotes)

Social connections are established through the numerous events organised by this higher education institution, societies, clubs, and small learning environments. These

contexts provide comradery for the students and an opportunity to meet and get to understand people from diverse spheres. These relationships provide students with emotional support (positive emotions) by socialising, having fun together, and by sharing similar anxieties and challenges. Students feel that academic support from peers is crucial to their academic success. One study concurred that positive relationships contribute to students' academic outcomes by building their confidence (Stanton et al., 2016). Friendships are established during these societies and make students feel comfortable and affirm them. (Refer to Appendix R-14, for examples of participant quotes)

These results corroborate with existent research on the positive value that support contributes to student wellbeing. A study on pharmacy students at North-West University in South Africa students utilised self-determination theory (SDT - discussed in Chapter 2) as the basis to understand the role of peers, family, lecturers and workload in student satisfaction (Basson & Rothmann, 2018). SDT explains how individual functioning and wellbeing (their autonomy, competence, and relatedness) is enhanced by support structures in an environment. Results indicated that different support structures have different impacts on students' wellbeing. The most important being peer and family support. Additionally, the research recognised that lecturers' active engagement enhances student wellbeing and increases their academic performance. The research suggested that learning environments need to take cognisance of the importance of family and peers and provide appropriate support to satisfy students' wellbeing needs. This research did not identify family support as a key factor for students (an interesting omission worthy of future research), but it concurred with the high value that students place on peer support and lecturer support.

A study conducted on first-year students at McGill University, Montreal, Canada, concurred with the current research that the friends, faculty, and the institutions provide critical support to students with positive impacts on their wellbeing (Maymon et al., 2019). It also raised family support which, as mentioned, wasn't explored in the current study. The study investigated wellbeing from the perspectives of student stress, burnout, loneliness, belonging, intentions to quit, and life satisfaction (unlike the current studies PERMA focus). The findings emphasised the pivotal role of faculty and staff as significant contributors to student wellbeing. Although the current study does

not quantify the value of the different support structures it concurs with the general nature of support provided.

The current research provides evidence that student feel that, when this higher education institution is at its best, there are multiple, complementary, and supportive layers of support (ranging from more formal to less formal) that enhance their accomplishment, relationships, and positive emotions.

4.1.1.4. Special Identity and Sense of Belonging. Students expressed the importance of this higher education institution's identity which contributes to their feelings of belongingness.

From a wellbeing perspective, students reflected on the special identity they feel belonging to this higher education institution, which creates the positive emotion of a strong sense of pride. Part of this pride is the sense of achievement being accepted to this higher education institution which they consider a prestigious, high-quality university. These feelings are reinforced when they possess and can show-off this higher education institution's kit and when they have opportunities to support this higher education institution's teams. (Refer to Appendix R-15, for examples of participant quotes)

A sense of identity and belonging provides a foundation upon which students can build a sense of purpose and meaning in life. Feeling connected to this higher education institution's identity allows students to share common values, beliefs, or interests which can offer them a sense of purpose and direction. This higher education institution, at its best, is a welcoming environment which opens many doors to varied social opportunities. Students' unique identity and feeling of belonging is enhanced when they join societies, clubs, and sports teams. Belonging to this higher education institution means being part of a diverse, accepting culture. This belongingness can facilitate the exploration and pursuit of activities, causes, or goals that align with the identity, leading to a more fulfilling and meaningful existence. Student sense of belongingness has also been identified as a contributor to student academic success. Belongingness is engendered when students have authentic and varied relationships. Being accepted and valued within a community fosters feelings of happiness, contentment, and security. (Refer to Appendix R-16, for examples of participant quotes)

Findings from three studies corroborate with this higher education institution's students' assertions. A South African study on university students (Botha et al., 2019) asserted that social wellbeing is created by exposure to multi-culturalism, to accepting others irrespective of innate differences, and the importance of a sense of belonging and integration with the university community.

A study at the University in the South of England on first-year Business Management theory applied the social theory of learning, while utilising an Appreciative Inquiry approach, to investigate students' insights (Masika & Jones, 2016). A sense of belonging and learner identities were identified as two of the key ingredients to ensuring student retention and success. They also stressed these factors as important to managing a culturally diverse student body.

A study at the University of Tasmania investigated the challenging transition of rural students to urban universities to examine how they establish a sense of belonging and identity (Castle & Grant, 2023). One of the key themes identified by students was the importance of social connection and friendships in establishing belonging. Students recognised the need to get actively involved in sports, societies, and clubs to establish supportive relationships. Merely participating, however, was insufficient, students required deep emotional connections with others to create a real sense of belonging.

This theme expands on the value of belongingness and identity to enhance student wellbeing through relationships, meaning, and positive emotions. Students feel pride belonging to this higher education institution's brand and aligning with its identity. Their feelings of belonging are enhanced by the myriad of extracurricular activities that they partake in, where they feel accepted and appreciated. Within these contexts, students develop friendships which further affirm their sense of belonging and identity.

4.1.1.5. Aesthetically Pleasing Environment. Students recognise the positive affect of the gardens on this higher education institution's campus which not only reduces their stress but makes them feel safe and relaxed. This concurs with the concept of biophilia, peoples innate tendency to seek connections with nature and humans inherent affinity to nature (Sachs, 2022). Students also spoke about the value of the general surroundings and some of the buildings to their wellbeing. Students utilise these aesthetically pleasing environments to hide out in, to escape, and find balance. Some students commented on the impact that beautiful environments have on

their levels of engagement and accomplishment. (Refer to Appendix R-17, for examples of participant quotes)

This theme, raised by the students in the current study, has been previously investigated (Seresinhe et al., 2019; van den Bogerd et al., 2020). Seresinhe et al. (2019) argued that people (not specifically students) are happier in more scenic environments, both natural and urban built-up ones. Research in this area appears to still be in its infancy and this current research adds credibility to it since this higher education institution's students commented how they appreciate the university grounds which they feel adds to their overall wellbeing predominantly in terms of their positive emotions, but also their engagement and accomplishment.

4.1.1.6. Opportunities For Personal Growth. University students' personal growth is profoundly impacted by an holistic approach that extends beyond conventional academic endeavours and achievement. This higher education institution, at its best, provides multiple opportunities for student involvement.

Academic growth, being exposed to new ideas and thoughts, adds to students' sense of accomplishment. Additionally, involvement in extracurricular activities fosters students multifaceted development, it nurtures their social skills, leadership abilities, and provides a broader perspective beyond the confines of academics. These lend themselves to student overall accomplishment. (Refer to Appendix R-18, for examples of participant quotes)

Volunteering not only instils a sense of altruism but also enhances empathy and cultivates a deeper understanding of societal issues. Students' prosocial behaviour – focusing on others above themselves – (referred to in Chapter 2), enhances their sense of self-worth. It provides them with a greater sense of purpose, contributing to the meaning that they obtain at university. (Refer to Appendix R-19, for examples of participant quotes)

Granting students control over their work enables them to exercise responsibility and autonomy, fostering a sense of ownership and independence crucial for their personal development. Being treated like an adult within the academic realm empowers students, provides them with agency to make decisions, thereby promoting their confidence and self-reliance and their levels of engagement. This point raised by the students links to the Demand-Control-Support model described in the literature review

(Palmieri et al., 2023). The model links workplace demands, in this instance university workload, to stress. Providing students with an element of control over aspects of their studies and multiple supporting structures, is a validated method for reducing stress and enhancing their wellbeing. (Refer to Appendix R-20, for examples of participant quotes)

As evident by the above quotes, students' personal growth influences their experience of positive emotions. As they undergo personal growth they will experience a heightened sense of self-awareness, resilience, and a more optimistic outlook. The transformation fosters positive emotions such as happiness, contentment, and fulfilment. When students engage in challenging activities that expand their skills, perspectives, and capabilities they can experience positive emotions of joy and satisfaction.

Students, in the previously referenced, Canadian study (Stanton et al., 2016), concur that making genuine and valued contributions at University enhances their self-worth and overall wellbeing. They asserted that "real-life learning", engaging in real life and practical experiences, provided them the most valuable opportunities for personal growth. These experiences had more purpose and meaning which enhanced their sense of fulfilment, their long-lasting learning achievements, and overall satisfaction at university.

Autonomy, independence, and having control over one's work were raised by students, in the previously referenced, South African study (Botha et al., 2019), as important factors contributing to their personal growth and wellbeing. These contribute to students experiencing a sense of mastery and accomplishment which they link to increased meaning and purpose. The study refers to self-determination theory (refer to Chapter 2) by explaining that personal growth is an intrinsic value which has positive individual and societal consequences.

Engaging in additional societies and clubs, participating in volunteering initiatives, and having autonomy over their work are pivotal factors contributing to students' personal growth. These factors enhance students' accomplishment, engagement, and positive emotions, therefore contributing to their overall wellbeing.

4.1.1.7. Conclusion. In the workshops, students were encouraged to pinpoint those positive experiences and situations where this higher education institution

contributes to their PERMA-related wellbeing. By responding to leading, positive questions students identified the following six themes: high quality lecturers; small learning environments to consolidate education; multiple layers of support; sense of belonging and special identity; aesthetically pleasing environment; and opportunities for personal growth. Each of these themes were expanded on in terms of how they contribute to student wellbeing and corroborating research was provided. These themes provide rich and valuable insight into how students view this higher education institution's existing strengths, which can be harnessed to enrich students' lives.

4.1.2. Dream Phase. What do students perceive an ideal context would look like that elicits positive emotions, increased engagement, valuable relationships, enhanced meaning, and accomplishment at university?

The Dream phase follows on from the Discover phase. Students were required to use their creativity and imagination to envision how this higher education institution can take the strengths, identified in the Discover phase, and create an ideal university environment where students can flourish. A non-judgemental approach was taken to encourage open communication, allowing students voices and suggestions to be heard and tabled. The Dream phase is not intended to be practical, but rather to stimulate students to think positively, to think out of the box, and to be inspired about endless possibilities. In the students' assessments of the Appreciative Inquiry workshop (refer to Research Question 3), students reflected that they understood that Dream phase was not based on reality but was beneficial in encouraging creative brainstorming which made them feel positive, innovative, and hopeful.

The six themes identified in the Discover phase are expanded on and slightly adapted to create this new vision. The identified themes for the Dream phase are: enriched learning; small learning environments fostering enhanced learning encounters; advanced support structures; strengthened identity and belonging; modernised infrastructure and enhanced aesthetics; and prioritised personal growth.

4.1.2.1. Enriched Learning. In the Discover phase students confirmed this higher education institution's strengths with regards to high quality lecturers. Specific strengths identified by students related to course content and lecturer style which they felt were important factors affecting their engagement, accomplishment, meaning, and

positive emotions. In the Dream phase the students came up with ideas that would enhance these PERMA-related dimensions.

Students wish that more lecturers emulate the ideal lecturer-style identified in the Discovery phase, while still allowing for an element of diversity. This is typified by passionate, approachable, inspirational, and encouraging lecturers that have a deep interest in not just teaching their content but in being a lecturer. Ideal lecturers elicit student engagement by making the lectures interesting and understandable. Students wish for this higher education institution to provide real opportunities to perform including fair assessments that were more scattered throughout the year. Students wish for this higher education institution to offer a more diverse range of courses that cater for varied student interests. This will motivate students to increase levels of engagement and accomplishment as they will be more interested on the content covered. Students also wish that lecturer expertise is shared across courses and campuses. They love the idea of tapping into different lecturers' areas of specialities as they won't have access to their courses. (Refer to Appendix S-1, for examples of participant quotes)

The idea of a varied and personalised learning environment was raised which incorporates different mechanisms for students to engage uniquely with learning material, to cater for individual developmental needs, and that consider their different learning styles. This idea was corroborated in a discussion paper on personalised learning (Bartle, 2015) which asserted that personalised learning must meet the needs of each student, be feasible to scale up and produce beneficial individual, institutional, and societal outcomes. To implement this, they require a cultural shift where the locus of control shifts towards learner ownership. Students increase their engagement and meaning as they focus on education that gives them purpose and motivation. Positive emotions are also enhanced as students feel more excited and inspired since they are coping better. The key benefit of this type of environment is learner accomplishment. (Refer to Appendix S-2, for examples of participant quotes)

Students had ideas around allowing audiobooks for the auditory learners, and outdoor lessons for those who hate being confined. To manage language barriers, students suggested having multimedia lectures incorporating cartoons, 3D visual learning, and AI translation tools to help students understand the content easier. A study conducted

in a Turkish university indicated that students who study in English as a foreign language (EFL) experience increased levels of anxiety which affects their academic achievement (Karatas et al., 2016). A Korean study identified effective EFL lecturer attributes that allay students' anxiety (Barnes & Lock, 2010). Some of these attributes include establishing respectful and sensitive rapport with students, being sensitive to student self-esteem when correcting their language errors, fairness, taking special care with students who have low confidence, using varied delivery methods and group work. The current research did not delve into this issue extensively but did acknowledge the pervasiveness of this problem and provided some creative ideas for varied delivery methods. (Refer to Appendix S-3, for examples of participant quotes)

An additional point was tabled where students dreamed of seamless coordination between the different faculties and departments to avoid clashes and overloading students. This would aid their accomplishment and reduce their stress and anxiety levels (positive emotions). (Refer to Appendix S-4, for examples of participant quotes)

4.1.2.2. Small Learning Environments Fostering Enhanced Learning Encounters.

In the Discover phase, students acknowledged this higher education institution's strength in encouraging numerous smaller learning environments to aid their wellbeing specifically in terms of relationships and accomplishment.

In the Dream phase students expressed their wish for even smaller tutorial groups. The tutor's role will be expanded to provide more than content information, they will broaden students' areas of interest, enable students to engage more meaningfully with others, facilitate student progress, be proactive and aware of individual students' needs and struggles, and provide more personalised support along their university journey. They had the idea of learning groups, which were less formal than tutorials. These would cover content and develop at the pace requested by students. Students also wished that the "resident academic advisors" were not only provided to students living in this higher education institution residence, but inclusively to all students. Finally, students believe they will benefit from a small, mixed faculty, group of students who provide support with each general skills (not specifically related to course content). They feel that students from different faculties have so much to contribute and teach each other. (Refer to Appendix S-5, for examples of participant quotes)

4.1.2.3. Advanced Support Structures. In the Discover phase the students acknowledged this higher education institution's strength in offering multifaceted layers of support including targeted support strategies, setting up environments for interpersonal connections which align to PERMA's positive emotions, accomplishment, and relationship dimensions. Students had a number of dreams to enhance this support and thereby their wellbeing.

Students recognise their need to ensure a study-life balance. In line with this, they appreciated this higher education institution's destress zones established during exam time. They dream to enhance this idea by creating additional spaces for play, recuperation, and relaxation on campus that exist all year round to enhance students' sense of study-life balance and calm. Ideas like destress rooms, games rooms, music rooms, meditation and yoga zones, access to the swimming pool, hide and seek rooms, sleeping pods, bean bags, reading rooms, art studios, and rage rooms were all raised by them. They would also love more healthy food options on campus. Linked to the issue of stress reduction, students requested more holidays, or a longer mid-year break, and no work to be given to students during breaks to ensure study-life balance. Additionally, to relieve stress, students wish for the library to be open 24 hours a day so they can study at suitable and flexible times in a safe and quiet place. They would also like support for reading, not only academic textbooks but also novels, through the library or a free book exchange programme. A study on study-life balance at the University of Malaysia concurred with the current study of the importance of this balance for student mental health, specifically in reducing anxiety and depression (Badri, 2021). They concluded that providing students with opportunities to socialise, the potential value of positive emotional experiences, and assisting students' academic achievement reduces these negative symptoms. (Refer to Appendix S-6, for examples of participant extracts)

In terms of student physical and mental health, students dream of a comprehensive health care system, at minimal cost, which provides active care, monitoring, and treatment. In line with this vision, CCDU and the health centre would be integrated and view students from a holistic perspective. This will include regular physical and mental check-ups and not only deal with crisis situations but are more preventative. They also dream that CCDU is staffed with qualified psychologists and psychiatrists. They suggest initiatives to enhance student overall health such as wearing a watch that tracks

your steps so you can get something like Discovery Vitality points, or some kind of course credit for fitness or the gamification of health. Finally, they wish that documentation of students' physical or mental health concerns are recognised and respected by faculties when submitted for late assignment and exam deferment requests. (Refer to Appendix S-7, for examples of participant extracts)

In the Discover phase, students acknowledge that this higher education institution arranges numerous events to establish supportive social connections. Students dream that these events don't only take place during orientation week but maybe every quarter. They also dream that events are not only focused on sports, but on a variety of areas incorporating international and local specialists which caters for diverse student interests. (Refer to Appendix S-8, for examples of participant extracts). Finally, students raised the dream of free education. (Refer to Appendix S-9, for examples of participant extracts)

4.1.2.4. Strengthened Identity and Belonging. Students' feelings of identity and belongingness towards this higher education institution were strengths raised by students in the Discover phase. These were linked to positive emotions (pride), meaning, and relationship dimensions of PERMA. In the Dream phase Students had several ideas how to strengthen identity and belonging. Students felt strongly about receiving this higher education institution's kit and regalia during orientation week to affirm their achievement of being accepted into this higher education institution. This would include free access to this higher education institution's merchandise, department specific kit and a merchandise store. They would feel proud wearing and showing off the kit. (Refer to Appendix S-10, for examples of participant extracts)

Students had ideas regarding making new social connections and friendships for all students. Students stressed the need for a fully immersive campus life for those who don't stay at one of the residences. One creative idea was to have a dedicated higher education institution LinkedIn site where students could connect with other students and alumni who have similar interests and hobbies. The idea of a "speed dating" event (for friend, not romantic reasons), to allow interaction with many new people. There were suggestions about events, like outdoor movie nights and talent shows. Students suggested different clubs that cater for a broader range of diverse interests, like learning to play a musical instrument and a visual arts society. Students dream of sports clubs

that are less competitive and focused on having fun, getting fit and connecting. Students dream of more events to celebrate achievements, not one final year graduation event. (Refer to Appendix S-11, for examples of participant extracts)

Students would feel a greater sense of identity and belonging if there was accommodation provided for everyone that needs it, not only for the few that are privileged enough to be accepted into a residence. (Refer to Appendix S-12, for examples of participant extracts)

4.1.2.5. Modernised Infrastructure and Enhanced Aesthetics. In the Discover phase, this higher education institution's students appreciated the aesthetically beautiful university grounds which they mentioned added to their overall wellbeing predominantly in terms of their positive emotions, but also their engagement and accomplishment. In the Dream phase the students imagined new ways of enhancing this higher education institution's aesthetics, while adding dreams related to the general infrastructure and surroundings.

Students dream of comfortable, modern classrooms and buildings with functioning facilities. Examples included new chairs, projectors, working lifts, and central heating to replace the antiquated loud air conditioners, and enhanced technology to support learning. They would also dream of freshwater stalls situated around campus. The dream includes beautiful aesthetics. They would love to have big windows or skylights with ability to see blue sky and allow in natural light. They would love art on the walls and suggested that the art faculty could decorate the rooms. They suggested having themes in the buildings that related to the faculty housed in the building to enhance connection to the faculty. They would love plants in the classroom to make them less sterile. The importance of learning environments to student wellbeing and accomplishment has been studied at a University in Spain (Castilla et al., 2017). According to the study, six factors impact students' positive emotions to classroom environments, "functionality and layout, cosy and pleasant, concentration, modern design, good daylight, good artificial lighting" (p. 77). These factors reflect the same wishes mentioned by students in the current study. Another study conducted at a Texan University investigated the value of indoor plants in classrooms and their impact on course performance, and students perceptions of the course and lecturers (Doxey et al., 2009). They concluded that the largest benefits from interior plants are experienced in

environments where there is no natural light or windows. This reinforces the assertions made by the students in this study, since many of the lecture halls are devoid of windows. (Refer to Appendix S-13, for examples of participant extracts)

Students dream of finding it easier to navigate around the campus and within buildings. Linked to the aesthetic comments above, students would love buildings to be colour coded, with big and bold signage identifying the building. Part of this dream is having touch-screen maps and phone apps that you can use to navigate around the campus and buildings. (Refer to Appendix S-14, for examples of participant extracts)

Students dream of integrated campus transport, which would assist them moving between lectures and from the distant parking areas to the lecture halls. Students would also appreciate first year parking being more accessible. Creative transport ideas included segways (motorised two-wheel vehicle), bicycle rentals, scooters, golf carts, a small railway with train stations. (Refer to Appendix S-15, for examples of participant extracts)

Students had ideas how this higher education institution could communicate what facilities and clubs exist. An idea tabled was for there to be big TV screen on campus that advertises events and newsworthy information, so students are constantly informed about what is going on. These ideas support theme 3 (advanced support structures) and theme 4 (strengthening identity and belonging). (Refer to Appendix S-16, for examples of participant extracts)

Students also dreamed of an interactive web page, an artificial intelligence BOT, or a self-service portal that is seamlessly integrated with all faculties and their administration. It will contain frequently asked questions, provides useful administrative advice, more information about different courses, and information about faculties and faculty members. The system guides you and helps you know what is going on around campus as first year students tend to feel lost. It would incorporate online training to guide one how to use it effectively so that nobody is left in the dark.

Finally, this world-class campus envisioned by students would exist within a world-class, healthy functioning city. Students dream about Braamfontein being cleaned up and becoming and extensions of this higher education institution campus to create a student town similar to Stellenbosch.

4.1.2.6. Prioritised Personal Growth. In the Discover phase students acknowledged that this higher education institution provides more than course related education but also multiple opportunities for students to extend themselves and grow to achieve higher levels of accomplishment, engagement, positive emotions, and meaning.

In this Discover phase the topic of increased student control was raised. Students dream of increased control and flexibility over their learning experiences allowing for adaptive timetables, greater voice in the pace of learning, and their course content. Students suggested a blended (online and in-person) learning environment. A study at a Chinese University investigated the value and adoption of blended learning (Yu et al., 2023). They stressed the importance of balancing both face-to-face and technology-aided tuition. They proposed that blended learning is valuable in environments with large number of students, scarce resources, and tight budget. Blended learning requires independent learners who prioritise their studies. Its effectiveness is dependent on how user-friendly the online educational platform is, how proactive lecturers are to motivate, inspire and encourage interaction, and the support of university management. Students who value blended learning feel that it improves their course achievements (accomplishment), enhances their access to educational resources, allows for greater control and flexibility and increases their level of engagement. It is therefore understandable why students in the current research dream stated this as one of their dreams.

To enhance their personal growth further, students dream of more practical, not purely theoretical, components to courses. Some ideas in this regard included incorporating regular excursions and work experience into courses. They would also love hearing from alumni, honours, and master's students during their lectures so that they can appreciate where they are moving towards and what it takes to get there and be inspired by role models. Students would love the opportunity to get involved in additional learning opportunities for additional credits or other incentives, like the one offered by this study, to enhance their knowledge and expose them to new possibilities. Students dream about their potential to contribute to course content for new courses that they find interesting and have specific knowledge in. Students would love this higher education institution to establish relationships with overseas universities so that they can take part in international exchange programmes which would inspire them and motivate them to work harder. A study conducted at the University of Porto, Portugal

investigated whether incorporating international travel within one's studies was transformational. The study researched university alumni to determine the long-lasting, learning effects of their international programmes. They concluded that these experiences enriched students' personal growth, it impacted career decisions and helped them appreciate cultural diversity. This concurs with the arguments presented by students in the current study. (Refer to Appendix S-17, for examples of participant extracts)

Students dream about advanced career support on campus. They dream of exposure to businesses and to professionals' career journeys so they can start establishing a vision of their future. They had the idea of offering undergraduates job opportunities on campus. This has a double benefit; it allows the students to get work experience and earn some money and provides an inexpensive service for this higher education institution. (Refer to Appendix S-18, for examples of participant extracts)

Finally, the students would love more opportunities to volunteer and contribute to others. One idea they had that would contribute to enhancing the aesthetics of this higher education institution is to get students to volunteer to build and tend to a vegetable patch on campus. The vegetables can then be donated to students or other people in need and become a self-sustaining food drive. (Refer to Appendix S-19, for examples of participant extracts)

4.1.2.7. Conclusion. The Dream phase built on this higher education institution's strengths that the students identified during the Discover phase. The themes were based on those strengths, with some minor adaptations to incorporate fully their idealised long-term vision for this higher education institution. They included enriched learning; small learning environments fostering enhanced learning encounters; advanced support structures; strengthened identity and belonging; modernised infrastructure and enhanced aesthetics; and prioritised personal growth. These themes have the potential to ensure flourishing students as they fulfil all the PERMA requirements for wellbeing.

4.1.3. Design Phase. How can more positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment be encouraged at university?

The design phase is the third step in the Appreciative Inquiry process. In the Discover phase students were encouraged to identify and acknowledge this higher education

institution's strengths. In the Dream phase, the students built on these strengths by conjuring creative and innovative ideas for a futuristic vision of the ideal university setting for student wellbeing. In the Design phase, students were asked to consider practical steps that can be implemented in the short-term that can start moving the university in the direction of the future vision. The six themes, that were identified in the Discover phase, were slightly modified to convey their focus on practical actions. They are: develop lecturers' skills; utilise small learning environments to support language barriers; improve critical support; build special identity and belonging; upgrade facilities and aesthetics; contribute to students' personal growth. Within each theme, a limited number of focused activities have been identified by the students.

4.1.3.1. Develop Lecturers' Skills. Students identified three actionable areas to develop lecturer skills and thereby enhance students' engagement, accomplishment, relationships with their lecturers, and positive emotions as lectures become more enjoyable, interesting, and understandable.

Students want a meet and greet session with their different lecturers. They want to get to know a bit about their lecturers, to establish some level of connection and appreciation for each other. They would like this to reduce the barriers in the student-lecturer relationship and encourage the lecturers to be more approachable. (Refer to Appendix T-1, for examples of participant extracts)

Students want the lecturers to attend training in some critical areas. Firstly, they need to be trained in relation to student wellbeing and general mental health awareness. Secondly, they require training on their delivery style to encourage more interactive discussion and engagement, improve their communication skills, use more varied modes of instruction, and make lecture content more practical and relevant. Finally, they need to be trained and encouraged to use ULWAZI, this higher education institution's learning management system, regularly and correctly so that all relevant and necessary information is accessible to students. (Refer to Appendix T-2, for examples of participant extracts)

The third action step involved interim evaluations of lecturers to ensure continuous feedback and improvement of lecturing quality. This would allow students to provide feedback on how the content is being received, whether students feel they are grasping key concepts, if they would prefer the lecturer to modify their style, and if there are

areas that students specifically need assistance with. (Refer to Appendix T-3, for examples of participant extracts)

4.1.3.2. Utilise Small Learning Environments to Support Language Barriers. Students had only one design suggestion in this regard which related specifically to bridging the language barrier for EFL students. They feel there is an important role for tutors to assist students with language barriers. They want to establish small tutor groups in the students' home language, making the content more accessible and understandable aiding these students' engagement with the material, accomplishment in their studies, and relationships with tutors and others in the group. (Refer to Appendix T-4, for examples of participant extracts)

4.1.3.3. Improve Critical Support. Students consistently requested accessible, consistent, and relevant communication from the time of registration until their degree is complete.

Effective communication around this higher education institution's support structures promotes positive emotions and engagement. Positive emotions are fostered through clear and transparent communication about university policies, resources, and support services as they create a positive and supportive environment for students. Engagement is encouraged by providing platforms for discussions and extracurricular activities so that students can participate actively. Specifically, they want improved communication around events, important dates, club and society news, support facilities like CCDU, and role clarity (who at the university is responsible for what functions). They would like this communication channel to promote and advertise societies and clubs actively. They were unsure of the best method of delivery, but suggestions included newspapers, emails, WhatsApp groups, ULWAZI chat forums, and Microsoft Teams. (Refer to Appendix T-5, for examples of participant extracts)

Students also want improved service delivery to enhance their wellbeing. They specifically mentioned the service provided by administrative staff. Another design suggestion was lecturers and tutors' consistent usage of ULWAZI. All departmental announcements must be communicated through ULWAZI and all lecture and test information must be updated. (Refer to Appendix T-6, for examples of participant extracts)

Effective usage of ULWAZI by all departments will ensure inter-departmental co-ordination to minimise scheduling conflicts. Finally, students discussed improved health provision, however they did not expand on the details of this. Supportive and responsive services such as counselling centres, and health services contribute to students' positive emotions by offering resources to manage stress, anxiety, and mental health issues. Similarly, inter-departmental coordination reduces student work overload, anxiety and stress which can aid their accomplishment. (Refer to Appendix T-7, for examples of participant extracts)

4.1.3.4. Build Special Identity and Belonging. An important suggestion was raised in all the workshops to ensure that this higher education institution is more inclusive and creates a common identity for all students, including those who don't live on campus. (Refer to Appendix T-8, for examples of participant extracts)

Students want an event every semester that includes arts, other cultural activities, and sports to reflect the diverse interests of the student population. These events will also showcase this higher education institution's societies and clubs and encourage student involvement and sign-up (currently students can only sign up at the beginning of the year). These events will enhance positive emotions and pride in this higher education institution, relationships with other students, engagement in extracurricular activities on campus, and meaning as student can partake in something that has value to them. (Refer to Appendix T-9, for examples of participant extracts)

Once again referring to the Canadian study by Stanton et al. (2016), they asserted the value of positive relationships and social connections on students' confidence, wellbeing, contentment, and accomplishment. Students emphasised the significance of unity, bonding and assistance in their educational journeys. They highlighted the value of peer support, interaction, and camaraderie, along with establishing a solid and supportive relationship with the course lecturers and tutors. This study further affirms the recommendations made by the students in this study.

4.1.3.5. Upgrade Facilities and Aesthetics. Students want to design a campus that is safe, functional, and facilitates their work. They referred to very basic essentials like working plugs, plugs in the library (so they can work for extended hours), and functioning Wi-Fi throughout the campus. They also want an upgrade of facilities, such

as clean chairs, water fountains and moderated temperatures in lecture theatres, for greater health and comfort.

Students want to improve the aesthetics of the buildings by getting all students, including specifically art students, to decorate lecture rooms and getting involved in gardening to beautify the grounds. This will enhance their positive emotions and engagement.

4.1.1.6. Contribute to Students' Personal Growth. Students want their university experience to be more well-rounded and not just focused on their academic studies. They want improved study-life balance by taking part in activities mentioned under theme 4 (building identity and belonging). They also want more opportunities to have their voices heard, like in this current study or similar forums where they can engage in an open dialogue with this higher education institution. Students want more opportunities to volunteer and contribute back to this higher education institution, such as decorating classrooms (as mentioned), contributing to this higher education institution's research studies and student-led initiatives. Finally, they would like to be given recognition by this higher education institution for even small achievements, be they academic or involvement in other campus initiatives.

Bachelor of Arts students want career support provided to them by this higher education institution. They want career fairs which cater specifically to their needs, like other faculties have. (Refer to Appendix T-10, for examples of participant extracts)

Finally, an idea was raised to have a small wellbeing group where students are assigned when they register at this higher education institution. The idea is that students connect closely with others in this group throughout their degree and that it provides a forum to share general concerns and to establish close friendships and a support base. (Refer to Appendix T-11, for examples of participant extracts)

4.1.1.7. Conclusion. The design phase identified some practical actions steps in each theme that this higher education institution can undertake in the short term. These will have an immediate positive impact on student wellbeing and will start moving the university in the right direction for a greater vision of student wellbeing. Unfortunately, without the fourth Destiny phase none of these ideas will be implemented and come to fruition. However, if one considers the aim of the research – to determine whether an Appreciative Inquiry intervention elicits rich insights from students – each phase

achieved this objective. The suggestions provided in the Design phase indicated how, going through the Appreciative Inquiries 3D's, elicits constructive, valuable, and positive action steps.

4.2. Research Question II. Do students have a greater understanding of Appreciative Inquiry, and do they find an Appreciative Inquiry workshop a valuable and positive experience?

Students completed a self-developed Appreciative Inquiry intervention assessment after attending the workshops. These surveys provided enriching insights into students' understanding of Appreciative Inquiry, their perceptions of its value and their view of the potential of positivity to enhance their lives.

4.2.1. Students' Reflections of Appreciative Inquiry

The vast majority of students found Appreciative Inquiry an extremely novel approach to problem solving and dealing with life situations as they typically follow a deficit-based approach when faced with challenges. Students described how their deficit approach results in a negative frame of mind and that they lack constructive ways of dealing with life challenges.

> P19: Focusing on the negative makes me sad and demotivated. (FG2)
>
> P21: (Described negativity as) going down a rabbit hole of all the things that can go wrong making change seem impossible. (FG3)
>
> P31: I tend to avoid discomfort and conflict. (FG4)

A few students felt that Appreciative Inquiry aligns with their general life approach.

> P25: (the approach) breeds positivity … effects everyone around you. (FG3)
>
> P35: provides windows of joy and happiness. (FG4)

After participating in the workshops, students expressed that they gained an understanding of Appreciative Inquiry and valued that it provided a structure for managing change. Students acknowledged the value of the Discover phase and its focus on what strengths currently exist. Numerous students commented that even though the Dream phase was unrealistic; they found it positive, creative, and valuable.

> P25: It provides me with a more concrete framework. (FG3)

> P33: (The Discover phase) helped me identify what I am good at, what makes me feel good and what I enjoy which helps me to find places to amplify these experiences. (FG4)

> P21: Being able to dream made me more positive. It encouraged constructive brainstorm strategies to actualise the dream. This made me feel hopeful that with the right guidance and support, anything is possible. (FG3)

> P34: Appreciative Inquiry incorporates the views of multiple parties in a positive, structured manner. It is a useful framework to share with others when dealing with different issues. (FG4)

> P12: In the discovery phase, I can find things that cause stress and anxiety in my life, by dreaming I can envision a better life excluding those aspects that cause me anxiety and in design I would come up with action steps. (FG2)

In general, students found the approach to be solution-focused. They commented on the fact that negative issues did arise in the workshop but were constructively reframed. Majority of the students found the Appreciative Inquiry experience rewarding.

> P23: It helped to find practical solutions to counteract the situation or deal with it better. (FG3)

> P38: I never thought I could think so positively and imaginatively. (FG4).

> P15: When considering situations the negatives did surface, however, the facilitator shifting the focus from expressing the problem to imaging how it should be if it was changed. This created a positive expectation. (FG2)

> P43: I was introduced to an entirely new experience which involved people sharing creative, useful, and positive ideas. This was a great change to the usual complaints. It serves as a step-by-step counselling guide. (FG5)

Not all students were equally enthusiastic about the Appreciative Inquiry approach. Six students were sceptical about the value of this positive approach.

> P5: (Focusing too much on the positive can) blur the lines a bit and create a false sense of reality…. However, there were some benefits (FG1)

> P6: Sounds too good to be true … but I benefited from the workshop because it opened my eyes to life outside academics. Focusing on the positive gave me a smile, joy, happiness. (FG1)
>
> P13: More like a dream, giving a sense of how we wish life was, but we know that real life events are not that easy or simple. (FG2)
>
> P29: I still prefer my realistic, negative outlook. I would rather focus on understanding the negative and finding solutions to that. (FG4)
>
> P16: Although there was a warm, positive, and engaging atmosphere in the workshop, I found the focus on positivity annoying. I prefer a problem-solving, analytical approach. (FG2)

These sceptical students represented a small percentage (13%) of the sample. It is reasonable that this approach would not appeal to everyone as some may view it as having rose tinted glasses. It is also possible that the exclusion of the Destiny phase meant that students did not have the chance to see their input coming to fruition. Cross-checking these cynical participants against their overall SPANE emotion scores (subtracting their emotions score prior to the workshop from their score after the workshop) only Participant 27 had a small negative emotional score (-1) after the workshop, all the other participants had an improvement in emotional scores.

A consistent theme that emerged was that the students valued to opportunity to engage and connect with their peers allowing them to hear varied perspectives. Students explained that this social interaction aided their feelings of positivity. Hearing from other students, that they had no previous interaction with, and sharing similar experiences helped participants feel more able to deal with university challenges.

> P4: It allowed me to connect with others, to express myself. (FG1)
>
> P7: It helped me look at life through a different lens. (FG1)
>
> P15: I feel positive as I know we share and face issues together. (FG2)
>
> P17: I got to know new people, hear their stories, and felt positive understanding people from different backgrounds. (FG2)

Students found the workshops encouraged them to talk freely, engage constructively and creatively which allowed them to enhance their understanding of others. This point

is reflected in the fact that 96% of students felt the facilitators encouraged “very” open discussion (two students responded that it was “moderate”) and 100% felt the facilitators encouraged positive discussion. This also concurs with the fact that 87% of participants felt they were “very” engaged and 13% (6 students) were moderately engaged.

> P34: It was inclusive and open. (FG4)
>
> P20: I feel my opinion was heard, was taken into consideration and will help in coming up with solutions. (FG2)
>
> P30: It made me feel like my contribution mattered (FG4).
>
> P2: I got so immersed in the conversation that I forgot about submissions for later in the week. (FG1)

Another prevalent theme related to mental health, anxiety, and well-being. A number of students expressed suffering from performance anxiety and also feeling anxious at the start of the workshop. According to them these feelings were allayed by three factors. Firstly, how the facilitators handled the session, secondly, the topic of well-being raised students understanding about positive psychology, and thirdly, the positive Appreciative Inquiry approach.

> P26: At the outset of the workshop I felt anxious, but the facilitator created a reassuring environment. (FG3)
>
> P23: When I arrived, I was stressed due to academic pressure. But talking about wellbeing and ways to improve wellbeing helped me be more at ease. (FG3)
>
> P21: I deal with stress, change and adversity from a state of panic, adopting doubt and pessimism. I don’t have the tools to think positively, yet the PERMA model and Appreciative Inquiry really helped me. I took down notes about PERMA to do more research. I hope that it benefits me and my peers not involved in this study. (FG3)
>
> P26: It helped me realise there are actual solutions to my problems. Sometimes one feels like one is drowning in negative thoughts, this approach will counteract that. (FG3)

The final theme that was raised related to students' feelings about this higher education institution. They expressed that engaging in open, positive discussion about the university made them feel driven and excited about life and university challenges which translated into general optimistic feelings towards this higher education institution. Students expressed excitement at learning more about psychology and their input in helping this higher education institution further their understanding of student well-being. They felt this study indicated that this higher education institution cares about its students' opinions. They valued viewing this higher education institution from a positive perspective which gave them a greater appreciation for the richness of life beyond academics.

> P22: I was able to reflect on positive events at university, there were more than I previously thought. They care about the students and consider our views seriously. The workshop allowed us to voice constructive suggestions for this (higher education institution) to improve. (FG3)
>
> P8: The workshop highlighted all the good in university life. (FG1)
>
> P13: I feel more positive as I told myself there is more to university life than just work. (FG2)

4.2.2. Students' Reflections of the Value of Positivity

Having engaged with Appreciative Inquiry, the students reflected on the value of positivity that was elicited during the workshops.

A couple of participants found that focusing on the smallest positives had the potential to change their overall outlook and raise morale. Students described how they felt more open-minded and optimistic as they were encouraged to contemplate what could go right instead of wrong. Numerous students mentioned feeling more hopeful and that their mood improved which allowed them to experience increased gratitude, feelings of abundance, and appreciation that life is to be lived and enjoyed. Three students said that positivity reduces stress and anxiety allowing more thought-clarity and ability to brainstorm fresh ideas. A couple of students described suffering from performance anxiety and that this positivity helped them relax. Social connection and healthy relationships were other identified benefits which increased feelings of happiness. Participants commented that positivity leads to personal growth and resilience. Finally, students asserted that positivity reduces defensive, blaming behaviour.

P34: Positivity contributed to their wellbeing and feeling of accomplishment. (FG4)

P28: Positivity has the potential to be good for character development. (FG3)

P6: Positive thinking reduces mental issues and allowed me to focus on fun activities in between work stress. (Fg1)

P21: Positivity allowed me to re-establish emotional equilibrium. (FG3)

4.2.3. Students' Inspirational Ideas

Students' inspiration reflects their level of engagement, understanding, excitement and perceived value elicited from the workshops.

Students left the workshops with a number of inspirational ideas about how they want to incorporate Appreciative Inquiry into their everyday lives. They expressed the desire to maintain a positive outlook to life and proactively look for the positives in situations.

P25: My goal is to be positive and promote more laughter. (FG3)

P32: They create more positive and inspired movements. (FG4)

Students were enthusiastic to share Appreciative Inquiry with others as they wanted others to gain the same benefits they experienced.

P2: I want to encourage people to think out of the confines of the box (FG1)

P10: I want to encourage others to create their own spaces. (FG1)

P23: I will use it to help others who suffer from anxiety and need advice. (FG3)

Students felt inspired to enhance social relationships by getting involved in more discussions.

P35: Being less afraid to voice opinions and being more proactive in personal relationships. (FG4)

P5: Engaging in open conversation. (FG1)

P33: Having a more active social life. (FG4)

Closely linked to increased social interaction, is their desire to get involved in more activities on campus,

P12: I want to join new societies and engage in different events. (FG2)

P30: I want to join a music or sports society that is not competitive, just for fun. (FG4)

P43: I'm considering becoming a mentor. (FG5)

P45: I want to look for volunteering opportunities. (FG5)

Students want to use an Appreciative Inquiry approach when setting their future goals this included their desire to achieve academically but also extended to other extramural activities. Students were also inspired to use the methodology in problem-solving situations.

P39: Exercising regularly. (FG5)

P40: Adding more play to my life. (FG5)

P45: Attending mental health programmes to improve my well-being. (FG5)

P33: How I approach challenges in the future. (FG4)

4.2.4. In What Contexts Would Students Consider Using Appreciative Inquiry in Future?

It was interesting to have explored, whether the students felt Appreciative Inquiry would be valuable in different life contexts. Accordingly, 76% felt that an Appreciative Inquiry approach would be "very" valuable to aspects of their lives, while 24% (11 participants) felt that it would have "moderate" value in aspects of their lives.

Thirty-one students commented on the contexts where they would find Appreciative Inquiry valuable. Of these students, 42% cited university in general and academic challenges including tackling assignments, exam stress and general workload. 35% listed dealing with interpersonal relationships with friends, peers, and family. 32% said that the approach would be valuable in future work environments. 30% cited setting and achieving goals. 23% mentioned problem solving, including conflict resolution, and choosing future life and career directions. 16% felt it would be valuable in assisting with emotional and mental health issues. A couple of students mentioned they would use the approach when planning events and trying to improve programmes.

P4: University offers many new environments to discover and opportunities to dream big. (FG1)

P45: it encourages greater connection and a sense of belonging. (FG5)

Only Participant 13 provided insight why they wouldn't utilise this approach in real life contexts, namely their lack of confidence in the steps that need to be followed.

4.2.5. Conclusion

These intervention assessments were analysed according to four key topics: students' reflections of Appreciative Inquiry; students' reflections of the value of positivity; whether and how Appreciative Inquiry inspired them; whether students would consider using the Appreciative Inquiry methodology in the future and in what context. They provide rich insights, from different angles, into the value students experienced from participating in these workshops. They paint a picture of an extremely positive experience, one which has inspired students and gave them tools to engage constructively with future life challenges. Understandably these assessments were conducted immediately after the workshop, therefore may be inflated, and do not indicate the longevity of these positive appraisals. A longitudinal study would need to be conducted to understand how sustainable these results are.

4.3. Research Question III. Does an Appreciative Inquiry workshop increase the positive emotions experienced by participants?

The SPANE survey results are analysed by investigating the descriptive statistics and normality tests for the dependent variables, the total pre- and post-emotion scores. These results are provided in Table 4 including the median, mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis and Shapiro-Wilks results.

The inferential statistics in this chapter test the hypothesis that students experienced an increase in positive emotions after attending an Appreciative Inquiry workshop. If this is proven, there will be an initial indication that the workshop could be considered a Positive Psychological Intervention (PPI).

4.3.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 4 outlines the descriptive statistics and normality distribution of the two dependent variables, the Pre-SPANE-B and Post-SPANE-B scores as described in Section 3.4.2. Positive SPANE-B scores indicated positive emotional states.

Table 4. *Descriptive statistics and normality indicators of all variables*

	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Shapiro-Wilks
PRE-SPANE-B	12.00	11.02	6.69	-.51	.52	.47
POST-SPANE-B	17.00	16.20	6.18	-1.28	2.09	.00

Note: Pre-SPANE-B = Total score before intervention, Post-SPANE-B = Total score after intervention

Normality tests are required to determine whether parametric assumptions have been met. Firstly, the scale of measure for the dependent variable needs to be at least interval (Field, 2018). This assumption has been met since a Likert-type scale and can therefore be assumed to be interval (Field, 2018). Additional normality tests include analysing the skewness coefficients, kurtosis coefficients, Shapiro-Wilks tests, and histograms. Skewness coefficients need to fall between -1 and +1 to be considered normal (Field, 2018). Kurtosis coefficients can fall between +3 and -3 for normality to apply (Field, 2018). For the pre-emotion test, both skewness and kurtosis fall within the normal range. For the post-emotion test, skewness falls slightly outside the normal range and kurtosis falls within the normal range (Table 4). The Shapiro-Wilks test assesses whether a given sample comes from a normally distributed population (Field, 2018). A significant result ($p>0.05$) indicates normality (Field, 2018). For the pre-emotion test, the result is significant ($p=.47$) and therefore normal. For the post-emotion test, the result is non-significant ($p=.01$) and therefore not normal. Visual inspection of the pre-SPANE-B histogram (Appendix U) indicates a roughly normal curve, other than two extreme scores on either side. Visual inspection of the post-SPANE-B histogram (Appendix V) indicates that it is skewed to the right. This indicates that emotion scores tended to be on average higher after the workshop, which provides an indication that the hypothesis may be correct and that scores after the workshop were higher than scores before the workshop and that most participants had an increase in positive emotions.

Table 4 indicates that for the pre-SPANE-B scores (mean = 11.02; high score 24, low score -9; mid = 16.5) the average sample scores were lower than the midpoint indicating that respondents experienced lower than average positive emotions. The relatively high standard deviation (6.69) suggests the data points vary quite a bit from the mean value. This indicates that there is a significant amount of variability in the data, the values are spread out over a wide range and there may be data points that are quite far from the average. This means that initially students attending the workshop had large differences in their emotional scores.

For the post-SPANE-B scores (mean 16.2; high score 24; low score = -4; mid = 14), the average sample scores were higher than the midpoint, indicating respondents experienced above average positive emotions after attending the workshops. Comparing these scores to the pre-emotions scores, provided an initial indication that there was an increase in positive emotions after attending the workshop, which needed to be verified by the paired sample t-test. The standard deviation (6.18) suggests a moderate level of dispersion around the average, indicating that there was not a very large of variability of scores in the data - meaning it was more concentrated. This implies that after the students attended the workshop there was a smaller difference in their emotional scores.

4.3.2. Hypothesis Testing

The qualitative element of this research aims to provide evidence towards the arguments that an Appreciative Inquiry workshop can be considered a Positive Psychological Intervention (PPI). This would imply that students felt an increase in positive emotions after attending the workshop. To assess this a paired sample t-test was conducted, the results are represented in Table 5.

Table 5. *Results of Paired Sample T-Test*

	statistic	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Cohen's d
PRE-SPANE-B - POST-SPANE-B	-6.38	43	<.001	-.96

Note: Pre-SPANE-B = Total score before intervention, Post-SPANE-B = Total score after intervention

A paired-samples t-test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant mean difference between the positive emotions scores before and after the

Appreciative Inquiry intervention. SPANE-B scores of participants after attending the workshop were higher (M = 16.2, SD = 6.18) compared to their scores before attending the workshop (M = 11.02, SD = 6.69), a statistically significant mean increase of 5.18, t(43) = -6.38, p < .001, d= -.96. The effect size (d) indicates a large difference between the mean scores. If one considers the hypothesis, the null hypotheses (H_0) states that means of the pre- and post-emotion scores are equal. However, the mean difference was statistically different from zero. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, therefore the means of the two groups are different.

4.3.3. Conclusion

All normality statistics for the positive pre-emotion scores indicated they were normal and met parametric assumptions. Only the kurtosis coefficient for the positive post-emotion scale were normal. The skewness coefficient fell slightly outside the normal range and the Shapiro-Wilks test was non-significant and therefore not normal. However, considering the t-test is a robust test, that the central limit theory was met and that the Shapiro-Wilks is considered a more stringent test (Field, 2018), a decision was made to run the parametric paired sample t-test.

The results of the paired sample t-test indicated a significant, large improvement in the students emotional scores after attending the Appreciative Inquiry workshop. This would seem to indicate that the workshops can be considered a PPI. However, caution must be used when interpreting these results.

4.4. Research Limitations

The first limitation of the current research was the decision to make use of first-year students as the chosen sample. This sample had limited exposure to the functioning of the university, and are endowed with their own unique backgrounds, history, and knowledge. These characteristics influenced their insights and suggestions and may have curtailed content that was elicited in the design phase. This cohort was, however, selected as a result of the unique challenges facing them, as mentioned in the rationale (Section 1.2), which provided valuable analysis as to whether Appreciative Inquiry is an appropriate methodology in contexts of high levels of stress and anxiety.

The second limitation relates to the generalisability of the research due to the non-probability, convenience, voluntary sampling strategy. Volunteer bias and geographic representation are specific concerns (Laher, 2016).

The third limitation was the involvement of a lecturer (research supervisor) in facilitating the Appreciative Inquiry workshops. This may have presented power dynamics in the workshops which potentially limited students' expression, freedom to challenge the lecturer's biases, and shaped the themes that were identified. In mitigation, his role in the workshops was secondary, he listened, observed, took notes, constructively summarised the students' comments, and obtained participant consent on potential themes. This ensured trustworthiness was established through confirmability (Nowell et al., 2017), as discussed in Section 3.7., (Thematic Analysis). Additionally, his experience in running Appreciative Inquiry workshops counteracted the researchers inexperience and was valuable when the skill of *Flipping* (Armstrong et al., 2020), as described in the procedure (Section 3.3), was required. This concurred with the learnings from Trosten-Bloom (2017) (Literature Review, Section 2.1) of the importance of relying on other Appreciative Inquiry specialists.

The fourth limitation was the researcher's inexperience in running Appreciative Inquiry workshops which could have impacted the quality of the findings and increased the students' levels of anxiety instead of reducing them. To counteract this limitation, two pilot workshops were conducted with honours students which allowed the researcher to develop the required skills and obtain feedback from students. This limitation was assessed during Research Question II (Section 4.2) using the Appreciative Inquiry Assessment Questionnaire (Appendix F), where the facilitator received high ratings from the students in terms of encouraging open and positive discussion.

The fifth limitation relates to the pre-experimental design of the qualitative component. Without a control group, causal inferences were limited as there was no control over confounding variables. It is also possible that the strong positive results were as a result of the Hawthorne effect, specifically, students feeling validated and excited that this higher education institution had shown interest in their opinions, more than about the specific intervention. Since the pre- and post-test were run on the same day, it wasn't possible to make claims about the longevity of the results and how long it took for the positive sentiments and enthusiasm to wear off. Additionally, the scores could be inflated considering they were taken immediately after the workshop concluded.

Finally, the study excluded the Destiny phase, where the actions determined in the Design phase are implemented. Without implementation of these actions, it is

impossible to know how the actions would have fared, and how the students would have responded to these implemented changes.

4.5. Research Implications and Recommendations

From a theoretical perspective, this research added support for the identified core themes which were to enhance student wellbeing that have been documented in volumes of other studies, as described in Chapter 4. It provided support for the use of PERMA in examining student wellbeing as well as the link with other wellbeing frameworks including: Self-determination theory; Pro-social behaviour; and Demand-Control-Support (and Job-Demands Resources) models, as described in the literature review (Section 2.2). The researcher found no other South African studies that applied the PERMA model and investigated student wellbeing in this manner. This study indicates the value of utilising the PERMA framework when researching student wellbeing. The research also provided preliminary evidence to support the idea that Appreciative Inquiry can be considered a positive psychological intervention, which appears to be a novel investigation.

From a practical implication perspective, the research demonstrates ways that this higher education institution can influence student wellbeing. In the Design Phase, Section 4.1.3., the research identified focal points and practical short-term, action steps that this higher education institution can take to enhance student wellbeing according to each element of PERMA (refer to Appendix R, Appreciative Inquiry-PERMA matrix). This higher education institution should take cognisance of these recommendations, given by students, and establish targets for achieving them. The second practical implication is the value of appreciation. Students felt valued, acknowledged, and respected by being given the opportunity to express themselves, to give voice to their ideas and to appreciate the value that this higher education institution contributes to their wellbeing. This positivity occurred as a result of to the nature of the forum and the use of the Appreciative Inquiry methodology, even without any changes being implemented. This higher education institution should establish similar forums throughout the university for sharing positive stories and eliciting positive ideas for enhancing student wellbeing. Lastly, this study demonstrated that Appreciative Inquiry has a practical and positive impact even in contexts, and with samples, experiencing persistent stress.

A future study recommendation involves incorporating the Destiny phase in the research design. This would entail identifying projects that enhance student wellbeing which would be (taken from the students' suggestions), developing project plans, including timelines, required resources, the roles of multiple stakeholders, leadership involvement and buy-in. This insight would contribute to providing a process analysis of the organisational impact of implementing various initiatives. A second future recommendation would be to run Appreciative Inquiry workshops with different student samples to validate the themes and test whether they are consistent across second- and third-year students and faculties. This would assess how generalisable the findings of the study are, an important factor in determining the quality of the research (Polit & Beck, 2010), and whether the findings can be applied to other universities in South Africa. A third recommendation would be for students to complete the Appreciative Inquiry intervention questionnaire (Appendix F) a couple of months after attending the workshop to determine if the workshop elicited any long-term behavioural change, whether students were applying these skills in different contexts, and whether they still find Appreciative Inquiry a valuable methodology. Another recommendation relates to the qualitative component of the research, assessing whether Appreciative Inquiry workshops can be considered PPI's. To enhance the causal claim of the research question, future research should include a control group - who receive a different type of intervention - to compare the change of positive emotions between the control and experimental groups. A full-experimental design with rule out extraneous factors and the impact of the Hawthorne effect. The final recommendation relates to the discrepancy with the findings in the Discover phase with regards to student support provision. Two referenced studies, one South African and one Canadian, stressed the importance of family support to enhance student wellbeing (Basson & Rothmann, 2018; Maymon et al., 2019), which was not raised by the students of this higher education institution. It would be interesting to investigate why family support did not feature, in what circumstances the students would find it valuable, and how it could be encouraged.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The current research assessed the value of Appreciative Inquiry workshops in enhancing first-year psychology students' wellbeing from this higher education institution. To achieve this the research had three aims, firstly, to gain an understanding of students' wellbeing perspectives and their suggestions as to how this higher education institution can promote their wellbeing. Secondly, to analyse how students experienced Appreciative Inquiry. Thirdly, to determine if Appreciative Inquiry can be considered a positive psychology intervention that elicits positive emotions for the students. Assessing Appreciative Inquiry on this sample was particularly interesting as first-year students are exposed to sustained levels of stress.

Previous Appreciative Inquiry studies conducted in South Africa provided credibility for the use of this methodology within a university context (Henrico, 2022; Ogude et al., 2019). However, their intentions and approaches differed from the current study, engendering the insights from this research unique. From a wellbeing perspective, one study by Knoesen & Naudé (2018) conducted at the University of Free State investigated issues contributing to students languishing and flourishing while no research was identified investigating students' wellbeing using the PERMA framework. Although the concept of a PPI has previously been researched internationally, no research was found assessing Appreciative Inquiry as a PPI on student samples. By linking Appreciative Inquiry, the PERMA framework, and measuring the impact on students' emotions (through PPIs), this research adopted a distinctive and strong, positive psychological stance.

During the Appreciative Inquiry workshops, students engaged in rich and meaningful discussion which resulted in the identification of six overarching themes, namely: lecturers; small learning environments; support; identity and belonging; aesthetics; and personal growth. These themes were slightly modified in the Discover, Dream, Design phases to reflect the uniqueness of each phase. These themes mirrored previous research results which indicates consistency and generalisability across settings and provides sound direction that this higher education institution can take to enhance student wellbeing.

The second set of findings related to whether students, having attended the Appreciative Inquiry workshop, obtained an understanding of the methodology and whether they found it a valuable and positive process. This research question was analysed, from the questionnaires completed by students after the workshops (Appendix F), by means four key topics. Firstly, students' reflections of Appreciative Inquiry. Students' responses indicated that they found the approach novel in managing change, they appreciated the focus on positivity and this higher education institution's strengths, which generated creative ideas. They particularly valued the social interaction the workshops engendered with other students. Students also reflected that the process increased their feelings of optimism towards this higher education institution. The second topic concerned students' reflections of the value of positivity. Students reported that it enhanced their overall wellbeing by increasing feelings of hope, gratitude, and abundance while reducing stress and anxiety. The third topic reflected on how inspired the students felt after the workshops. Students felt inspired to incorporate the Appreciative Inquiry methodology in aspects of their everyday lives and to share the approach with others. They also felt inspired to start engaging in more open discussion with different people and to get involved in more varied opportunities on campus. The fourth topic reflected on whether students would consider using the methodology in the future. 76% of students felt that the approach would be very valuable, specifically when faced with academic challenges, interpersonal interactions, future work situations, problem solving, and emotional and mental health issues.

The third aim of this study was to determine whether Appreciative Inquiry can be considered a PPI. This was analysed by comparing the change in students' emotion scores by administering pre- and post-SPANE assessments (Appendix G) and running a paired sample t-test. Results of the test indicated a significant, large, improvement in students' positive emotions. However, due to research design limitations, as mentioned in Section 4.3.3., no causality can be inferred, and the results must be interpreted with caution. These results do however lend credibility to the supposition that Appreciative Inquiry interventions could be considered a PPI, which should be tested in a more rigorous manner in future research.

Overall, this research indicated the value of Appreciative Inquiry in enhancing first-year, psychology students' wellbeing at this higher education institution. This validates the use of Appreciative Inquiry within contexts of high and sustained levels of stress

and anxiety. The research emphasised that following an established wellbeing framework, such as PERMA, provided an effective tool to comprehensively analysing factors impacting student wellbeing. Finally, it elicited valuable action steps that this higher education institution can take to enhance student wellbeing.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Manual Participant Sign-up Form

Name and Surname	Student Number	Email address	Monday 28th 1pm	Wednesday 30th 1pm	Thursday 31st 1pm

Appendix B - Consolidated Appreciative Inquiry Question Sheet

Discovery Phase

Positive Emotions	Engagement	Relationships	Meaning	Accomplishment
Leading Question				
Describe an event at university that gave you a sense of pleasure / joy	Describe situations at university that absorb your attention and make you feel excited about what you are doing	Describe a relationship that positively contributes to your sense of belonging at university	When do you feel that you are fulfilling a greater purpose at university?	Describe how you are experiencing a sense of striving towards a goal
Follow-up / probing questions				
Described the circumstances around this event	What contributes to this feeling of engagement? (is it the context, content, social interaction, interest)	What relationships offer you support and how do you develop these	What makes you feel valued, useful and inspired at university	When do you feel you are mastering valued skills or knowledge
What contributed to these positive feelings?	What interests you / makes you excited, at university and what about these experiences makes them fulfilling?	In the situations discussed what relationships added to the positive experience and how did they contribute to make these situations more fulfilling		What achievements have you had so far at university and what are you most proud of

Dream Phase

Positive Emotions	Engagement	Relationships	Meaning	Accomplishment
If you can imagine a scenario providing you with a sense of pleasure at university, what would it be	What would university look like at its best for healthy, engaged students?	Imagine your ideal relationships at university: Who are they? How do they support you?	Imagine making a positive contribution at university that provides you with	If you can dream of life turning out positively, what do you see yourself

			greater meaning and purpose. Describe it	achieving in the next 1 year, 3 years, 5 years?
What role is this higher education institution playing in this scenario?	In this picture, what role are you playing to make this happen?	In which contexts would these relationships be valuable and aid to improve your university experience		How does this make you feel?
What role are you playing in this scenario?	In this picture, what role is the university playing to make this happen?	Who would you love to establish relationships with?		
How does this experience make you feel				

Design Phase

Positive Emotions	Engagement	Relationships	Meaning	Accomplishment
What can this higher education institution do to encourage more positive experiences for students? How can you imagine these experiences playing out	How can positive experiences of engagement be created (by students, by the university, by others)?	How can ideal relationships be created, developed, enhanced, sustained?	Describe what contribution you can make, in what context, and how this would make you feel like you are making a difference	How can you contribute to achieving your goals
What role can you play in making these circumstances happen	What is required to ensure sustained engagement	How would you like to interact with these people? (How often? what format, the nature of the interaction)	What role do you play in making this happen?	How can this higher education institution contribute to achieving your goals
What role can this higher education institution play in making these circumstances happen		What would your role be in developing these relationships	What role does the university play in making this happen	In what areas do you need to grow and develop to achieve your goals? What

				plans can be put in place to ensure that happens
		What would the university's role be in developing these relationships		

Appendix C - Discover Question Sheet

Describe an event at university that gave you a sense of pleasure / joy (positive emotion)

- Described the circumstances around this event
- What contributed to these positive feelings?

_____
_____

Describe situations at university that absorb your attention and make you feel excited about what you are doing (engagement)

- What contributes to this feeling of engagement? (is it the context, content, social interaction, interest)
- What interests you / makes you excited, at university and what about these experiences makes them fulfilling?

_____
_____

Describe a relationship that positively contributes to your sense of belonging at university (relationships)

- What relationships offer you support and how do you develop these?
- In the situations discussed what relationships added to the positive experience and how did they contribute to make these situations more fulfilling

_____
_____

When do you feel that you are fulfilling a greater purpose at university? (meaning)

- What makes you feel valued, useful, and inspired at university?

_____
_____

Describe how you are experiencing a sense of striving towards a goal (accomplishment)

- When do you feel you are mastering valued skills or knowledge?
- What achievements have you had so far at university and what are you most proud of?

_____
_____

Appendix D - Dream Question Sheet

If you can imagine a scenario providing you with a sense of pleasure at university, what would it be (positive emotion)

- What role is this higher education institution playing in this scenario?
- What role are you playing in this scenario?
- How does this experience make you feel?

_____
_____
_____

What would university look like at its best for healthy, engaged students? (engagement)

- In this picture, what role are you playing to make this happen?
- In this picture, what role is the university playing to make this happen?

_____
_____
_____

Imagine your ideal relationships at university: Who are they? How do they support you? (relationships)

- In which contexts would these relationships be valuable and aid to improve your university experience
- Who would you love to establish relationships with?

_____
_____
_____

Imagine making a positive contribution at university that provides you with greater meaning and purpose. Describe it (meaning)

_____
_____
_____

If you can dream of life turning out positively, what do you see yourself achieving in the next 1 year, 3 years, 5 years? (accomplishment)

- How does this make you feel?

_____
_____
_____

Appendix E - Design Question Sheet

What can this higher education institution do to encourage more positive experiences for students? How can you imagine these experiences playing out (positive emotion)

- What role can this higher education institution play in making this happen?
- What role can you playing in making this happen?

_____
_____
_____

How can positive experiences of engagement be created (by students, by the university, by others)? (engagement)

- What is required to ensure sustained engagement?

_____
_____
_____

How can ideal relationships be created, developed, enhanced, sustained? (relationships)

- How would you like to interact with these people? (How often? what format, the nature of the interaction)
- What would your role be in developing these relationships?
- What would the university's role be in developing these relationships?

_____
_____
_____

Describe what contribution you can make, in what context, and how this would make you feel like you are making a difference (meaning)

- What role do you play in making this happen?
- What role does the university play in making this happen?

_____
_____
_____

How can you and this higher education institution contribute to achieving your goals (accomplishment)

- In what areas do you need to grow and develop to achieve your goals? What plans can be put in place to ensure that happens?

_____
_____
_____

Appendix F - Appreciative Inquiry Assessment Questionnaire

Psychology

School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050

Tel: 011 717 4503 Fax: 011 717 4559

Student ID: _____

Facilitator Assessment

	Not at all	Moderately	Very
Did the facilitator style encourage open discussion?			
Did the facilitator style encourage positive discussion?			

Appreciative Inquiry Assessment

	Not at all	Moderately	Very
How engaged did you feel in this exercise?			
Would you consider an Appreciative Inquiry approach valuable to aspects of your life?			

Questions:

1) How does the Appreciative Inquiry approach differ from how you currently deal with life events?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2) How do you believe that focusing on the positive can change how you deal with life situations?

3) The Discover, Dream, Design approach is a constructive methodology to interpreting life situations and coming up with creative solutions. In what contexts can you see yourself following these steps in the future?

4) Would you explain this approach to others when providing them with guidance?

5) How did this exercise contribute to you feeling more positive?

6) Did this exercise create any negative feelings? If so, describe how it did, what your concerns are, how the facilitator dealt with them.

7) Are you feeling inspired after this exercise? If so, describe that feeling and if you intend taking any positive steps in this regard.

Appendix G – Demographics and SPANE Scale

Psychology

School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050

Tel: 011 717 4503 Fax: 011 717 4559

Student ID: _____

Race: _____

Gender: _____

Please think about what you have been doing and experiencing over the past 3 hours. Then report how much you have experienced each of the following feelings, using the scale below. For each item, select a number from 1 to 5, and indicate that number on your response sheet.

1. Very rarely or never
2. Rarely
3. Sometimes
4. Often
5. Very often or always

No.	Item	1	2	3	4	5
1	Positive					
2	Negative					
3	Good					
4	Bad					
5	Pleasant					
6	Unpleasant					
7	Happy					
8	Sad					
9	Afraid					
10	Joyful					
11	Angry					
12	Contented					

Appendix H – Statement of Principle for Postgraduate Supervision

Psychology

School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050

Tel: 011 717 4503 Fax: 011 717 4559

16. STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES FOR POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

IN A CONTEXT OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND WITHIN A FRAMEWORK OF INDIVIDUAL AUTONOMY AND THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE THIS AGREEMENT IS WRITTEN IN THE BELIEF THAT THERE IS A RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP AND MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY BETWEEN SUPERVISOR AND STUDENT.

THE SUPERVISOR AND THE STUDENT:

1. Will establish agreed roles and clear processes to be maintained by both parties. In the case of joint supervision everyone's role needs to be clarified.
2. Will meet regularly and as frequently as is reasonable to ensure steady progress towards the completion of the proposal, research report, or dissertation or thesis. This time varies but the normal minimum requirement for face-to- face contact, spread across each year of registration is: 10 contact hours for an Honours project, 15 contact hours for a Masters by research report and 24 contact hours for a Masters by dissertation and a PhD.
3. Will keep appointments, be punctual and respond timeously to messages.
4. Will keep one another informed of any planned vacations or absences as well as changes in his or her personal circumstances that might impact on the work schedule. Unplanned absences or delays should be discussed as soon as possible and arrangements should be made to catch up lost time.
5. Will ensure that research on animal or human subjects is conducted according to the procedures and the requirements of the relevant University Ethics committee.
6. Will together complete progress reports on the research project, as requested by each Faculty Graduate Studies Committee.

THE SUPERVISOR:

1. Undertakes to provide guidance for the student's research project in relation to the design and scope of the project, the relevant literature and information sources, research methods and techniques and methods of data analysis.
2. Has a responsibility to be accessible to the student.
3. Will be prepared for meetings with the student. This includes being up-to-date on the latest work in his/her area of expertise.
4. Will expect written work as jointly agreed, and will return that work with constructive criticism within a timeframe (a suggestion of 2-4 weeks) jointly agreed at the outset of the research.
5. Will provide advice that can help the student to improve his/her writing. This may include referrals for language training and academic writing. The supervisor will provide guidance on technical aspects of writing such as referencing as well as on discipline specific requirements. Detailed correction of drafts and instruction in aspects of language and style are not the responsibility of the supervisor.
6. Will support the student in the production of a research report, dissertation or thesis. Provision should be allowed for adequate, mutually respectful, discussion around recommendations made.
7. Will assist with the construction of a written time schedule which outlines the expected completion dates of successive stages of the work.
8. Will ensure the student has the opportunity to present work at postgraduate/ staff seminars/national/international conferences as appropriate.
9. Will assist with the publication of research articles as appropriate.
10. Will discuss the ownership of research conducted by the student in accordance with the University guidelines and rules on intellectual property, co-authorship and copyright.
11. Will ensure that the research is conducted in accordance with the University's policy on plagiarism.
12. Will ensure that the student is made aware in writing of the inadequacy of progress and/or of any work where the standard is below par. Acceptability will be according to criteria previously supplied to the student.
13. Has a duty to refuse to allow the submission of sub-standard work for examination, regardless of the circumstances. If the student chooses to submit without the consent of the supervisor, then this should be clearly recorded and the appropriate procedures followed.

THE STUDENT:

1. Undertakes to work independently under the guidance of the supervisor. This includes reading widely to ensure that the literature pertinent to his/her chosen topic has been identified and consulted.
2. Is obliged to make appointments to see the supervisor and will arrange meeting times well in advance.
3. Will think carefully about how to derive maximum benefit from these contact sessions by planning what he/she wants in these sessions.
4. Should submit written work for discussion with the supervisor well in advance of a scheduled meeting. The kind and frequency of written work should be agreed with the supervisor at the outset of the research.
5. Undertakes to submit written work that is relatively free of basic spelling mistakes, incorrect punctuation and grammatical errors. Responsibility for the accuracy of language, the overall structure and coherence of the final research report, dissertation or thesis rests with the student.
6. Undertakes to heed the advice given by the supervisor and to engage in discussion around suggestions made. Ultimately the student has to take responsibility for the quality and presentation of the work.
7. Should strive, within reasonable bounds, to maintain a focus on his/her research area and to work within the agreed time schedule.
8. Will prepare material for presentations at seminars and conferences.
9. Undertakes to submit papers for publication.
10. Agrees to honour agreements about ownership of the research and in accordance with the University's guidelines and rules in relation to co-authorship, copyright and intellectual property.
11. Will ensure that the work contains no instances of plagiarism and that all citations are properly referenced and that the list of references is accurate, complete and consistent.
12. Agrees to work in accordance with the criteria of acceptability as supplied by the supervisor.
13. Undertakes not to place the supervisor under undue pressure to submit work for examination until the supervisor is satisfied that it has reached an acceptable level of quality.

I confirm that I have read and understood this statement and agree to be guided by its principles

Name of Student: Cheryl Bondi

Student's signature: CHERYL BONDI

Name of Supervisor: Ian Siemers

Supervisor's Signature: IAN SIEMERS

Name of Co-Supervisor:

Co-Supervisor's Signature:

Broad area of study: Student Well-Being and Appreciative Inquiry

Provisional submission date: 14-Jun-2023

Degree: Masters Organisational Psychology

School: University of Witwatersrand

Faculty: Humanities

Date: 14-Jun-2023

Specific agreements pertaining to: ownership and joint publication, funding, etc. may be attached and signed.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES. It should be acknowledged that during the course of the research, both students and supervisors can feel aggrieved. In this event, matters should be dealt with as swiftly as possible by the parties involved and, if necessary, the appropriate Postgraduate Coordinators and Committees. There is, in addition, a University Grievance Policy to help guide deliberations. It is available on www.wits.ac.za/prospectivepostgraduate.

Appendix I - Research Proposal Form A

FORM A - Request to conduct Research at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

This form is to be completed by registered Honours/Master by Research/ PhD students and staff at Wits wishing to conduct research by using Wits student/staff data. Please email this form with your supporting documents to Research.Deputy-Registrar@wits.ac.za

First Name	Surname:
Cheryl	Bondi

Staff/Student number:
8702893D

Degree currently registered:	School:
Masters in Organisational Psychology	Humanities

Research title: Enriching insights on student well-being through an Appreciative Inquiry Intervention

Has ethics clearance been obtained from the University Ethics Committee/School Ethics Committee?

YES X	NO

(If yes, please include a copy of the ethics clearance certificate and protocol number below)

Protocol number:
MAORG/23/02

PLEASE NOTE: *If an unconditionally approved ethics clearance certificate has not been obtained, you will not be granted permission to conduct your research.*

Has your Head of Department/Supervisor granted permission for the research to be conducted?

YES X	NO

(If yes please include a copy of the letter of approval)

What is the expected duration of your research and on which date do you intend submitting the research?
Between December 2023 and March 2024

Whom is the research and/or questionnaire being conducted on?

Students	X
Staff	

(Please tick the appropriate box)

If the research will be conducted on student data please specify year of study /Faculty or degree data will be required for:

First Year Students	X
Second Year Students	
Third Year Students	
Final Year Students	
Postgraduate Students	X (Pilot)
Faculty	Humanities
Degree	Organisational Psychology

Section A:

How will the research be conducted?

E-Mail (please indicate if school administrators will be assisting in circulating the emails)	
Interviews (please attach a copy of the interview questions)	
Other data collection (please specify lists or statistics)	
Focus Groups	**X**
Venues (If using a venue for your research, please indicate venue name and ensure arrangements have been made with the venue manager)	

Section B:

This section only needs to be completed for the circulation of questionnaires, surveys etc. by the University Registrar's Office:

Please provide the link for your questionnaire and attach a copy of the questionnaire (the link will be emailed to students in order for them to complete the questionnaire)	
Please provide us with a brief message that will accompany your questionnaire. This message will be sent as an e-mail to students requesting them to complete the questionnaire.	

NOTE: If using REDCAP, circulation may take place with departmental administrators within your school. You need to make the necessary arrangements with the administrator.
However, if your department/school does not use REDCAP, then complete the section above.

Student signature: ..... **Date** 02/08/2023

Appendix J – Research Proposal: Methods and Ethics Narrative Report

Research Proposal:
Methods and Ethics Reader Narrative Report 2023

Student:	**CHERYL BONDI**
Student number:	**8702893D**
Degree:	**MASTER OF ARTS IN ORGANISATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY BY COURSEWORK AND RESEARCH REPORT**
Supervisor:	**IAN SIEMERS**
Proposal reader:	**COLLEEN BERNSTEIN**
Title of research:	**Enriching insights on student well-being through Appreciative Inquiry interventions**
Date of presentation:	**14TH June 2023√**

SECTION A: METHODS NARRATIVE REPORT

COMMENTS:

Generally, this is a well written proposal. I have my doubts about the focus only on flourishing and not on languishing and wonder about the fit in terms of the current context and climate within South African universities. I felt this was almost setting up a limitation before you started. Nevertheless, the AI looks like an excellent instrument that will derive some very useful information that will enrich our knowledge of students' experiences. I advise of very carefully managing the interviews/interventions so that they don't become derailed by negativity but again once I looked at the AI questions, I felt more positive (pardon my use of this word). A few minor amendments to the PIS and consent form. See my comments within re the rest of the proposal. They are to be taken under consideration at the supervisor and student's discretion. Is it possible you use something other than the SPANE. I don't like it. I know you want something neutral but its almost too bland and the items seem almost the same…whats the inter items consistency….isnt there anything better that its not too emotionally loaded… but its really a great novel study I just see a few holes that I wonder if you could stopper…..

Outcome:

If the proposal is acceptable as is, or with changes to supervisor's satisfaction, please complete this section below and indicate the same on the Faculty proposal submission form.

Decision	Tick	Reader signature
(i)Accepted.	√	CBernstein
ii) Accepted, but candidate should take note of warnings/ recommendations.		
iii) Concerns to be addressed - to the satisfaction of the supervisor	√	CBernstein

SECTION B: ETHICS

Comments for the applicant to address on the Ethics Application Form:
See my comments on the form to be addressed

Comments for the applicant to address on the Participant Information Sheet:
See my comments on the sheet to be addressed

Comments for the applicant to address on the Consent Form:
See my comments on the form to be addressed

Methodological comments for the applicant to consider: See my comments within to be addressed

Reviewer's overall comments:

SECTION C

Summary of overall risk category of this study. Refer to risk category definitions for what these risks specifically refer to. Please TICK the appropriate boxes.

Risk category	Category identified by applicant	Category identified by reviewer
No risk		
Minimal risk		
Low risk	√	
Medium risk		
High risk		

Does the reviewer believe that the applicant has adequately dealt with all the potential risks of this project? (YES / NO) Ethics changes seen and approved by reader CBernstein

If **NO**, describe which specific risks need to be addressed and how

SECTION D

Recommendation (please indicate):

Accept as is	
Minor revisions	√
Moderate revisions	
Major revisions	
Resubmit	

CBernstein

NOTE: If revisions to the content of the application are required, reviewers must see the revised version and approve the changes before an application can be approved.

Appendix K - Proposal Submission Form

UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
PROPOSAL SUMBISSION FORM

ALL STUDENTS MUST ENSURE THEY ARE REGISTERED FOR THE CURRENT ACADEMIC YEAR.

This page is to be completed by the student.

PROPOSAL INFORMATION (Please tick the relevant box below)			
Research only			
MA 6 000-7 000 words	(tick) ☐	**PhD** 8 000-10 000 words	(tick) ☐
MA by Coursework and Research 3 000-4 000 words		(tick) ☐	

Person Number	8 7 0 2 8 9 3 D
Full Name of Student	CHERYL BONDI
Name of Programme/Discipline	MASTERS ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
Proposal title	**Enriching insights on student well-being through an Appreciative Inquiry intervention**
Date	**Year** 2 0 2 3 — **Month** 0 6 — **Day** 1 4

SYNOPSIS OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

(Submit a typed proposal in English. You are welcome to cut and paste).

Faculty of Humanities
University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg

ADVISORY REPORT BY SUPERVISOR AND SCHOOL GRADUATE COORDINATOR ON PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

This page must be completed by the School Graduate Coordinator and Supervisor.

As School Graduate Coordinator/Supervisor of the above-mentioned candidate and in relation to the advice given in the booklet entitled, 'Writing a Proposal,' are you reassured that:

1. the candidate has provided adequate arguments to be tested, or the problem/topic to be explored?
   Yes

2. the candidate has provided adequate arguments (either empirical or theoretical) to justify undertaking the project?
   Yes

3. the title is sufficiently brief and concise? YES ☐ NO ☐

4. that the candidate has:
   i. Provided a careful review of the pertinent existing research and adequately shown how the project will:
   a) relate to existing literature (Masters)
   b) contribute to existing literature (PhD)

   Yes

   ii. (**for PhD candidates only**) indicate how the project itself will attempt to extend the existing thinking or research

5. the proposal develops a logical discussion of the theories used, while at the same time indicates an awareness of their methodological implication?
   Yes

6. there is an appropriate discussion of the methodology to be used?
   Yes

7. the scope is manageable for a research report (MA by coursework), dissertation (MA, or thesis (PhD), whichever applies), and is not overambitious or too expansive?
   YES [X] NO [ ]

8. adequate bibliography has been provided? YES [ ] NO [ ]

9. in the case of an MA(FA) proposal, where there is an equivalent practical requirement: N/A
   i. does the candidate's proposal accord with specifications laid down in the discipline brochure? YES [ ] NO [ ]
   ii. has the candidate articulated relation between the practical and the theoretical adequately? YES [ ] NO [ ]

10. if human subjects are being used, the proposal conforms to the presented ethical standards? YES [ ] NO [ ]

11. there will be no problems with sources or access to sources?
    No Problems

12. the proposal has been properly referenced and proofread? If not, please elaborate.
    YES [ ] NO [ ]
    _____

Name of Supervisor: _____Ian Siemers_____ Ext. ____74586_____

Signature of Supervisor: ____ IAN SIEMERS _____ Ext. _____

Signature of School Graduate Coordinator: _____ Ext. _____

This page must be completed by the School Graduate Coordinator and Supervisor.

Reader's Name: _____ **Discipline** SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND

COLLEEN BERNSTEIN			COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Date sent by:	Year Month Day	**Date received by:**	Year Month Day
Date to be returned to Faculty:	Year Month Day	**Telephone ext.**	
Signature of Reader	*CBernstein* 15th June 2023		Year Month Day
Signature of Chairperson			Year Month Day

Note: Readers, Supervisors and School Graduate Coordinators are welcome to discuss the proposal directly with each other.

Reader's decision on proposal: (please circle)

Category	i. Accepted.		
	ii. Accepted, but candidate should take note of recommendations (to be addressed to supervisor satisfaction).		
	iii. Concerns to be addressed:		
	a) *queries to be answered in a brief document.	b) *clarification to be given in a brief document.	c) *further information needed in a brief document.
	iv. Not acceptable as it stands. Must be revised in terms of criticism raised by readers and seminar members. The revised proposal will be submitted to the reader for further comment.		
	v. Revised proposal accepted.		

NB: If readers are **not approved** the proposal will not be processed.

SUPERVISORS MUST ENSURE THAT THE SUGGESTED READERS HAVE AGREED TO READ THE PROPOSAL

Please suggest names of two/three readers who fall outside of your discipline, when using the external proposal reading process. (PhD's are automatically sent to two readers).

*Email addresses are required only in the case of readers outside Wits.

1. Reader:	
email:	
2. Reader:	
email:	
3. Reader:	
email:	

Are you using the internal (Departmental) proposal reading process that has been approved by Faculty? YES ☐ NO ☐

Is the reader's report attached? YES ☐ NO ☐

Appendix L - Conditional Ethics Approval

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY REGISTRAR

08 August 2023

Cheryl Bondi
Student Number (8702893d)
Master of Arts by Coursework and Research Report
School of Human and Community Development

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

"Enriching insights on student wellbeing through Appreciative Inquiry interventions."

This letter serves to confirm that the above project has received conditional permission.

No research can commence until an unconditional clearance is obtained.

Please send a copy of the full clearance certificate once obtained and an unconditional permission letter will be issued.

Conditional ethical clearance obtained. (Protocol number: MAORG/23/02)

Research Expiration: (Valid for 1 year from date of approval)

Nicoleen Potgieter
University Deputy Registrar

Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050, South Africa | T +27 11 717 1204/8 | E nicoleen.potgieter@wits.ac.za | www.wits.ac.za
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Appendix M - Office of the Deputy Registrar Approval

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY REGISTRAR

11 August 2023

Cheryl Bondi
Student Number (8702893d)
Master of Arts by Coursework and Research Report
School of Human and Community Development

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

"Enriching insights on student wellbeing through Appreciative Inquiry interventions."

This letter serves to confirm that the above project has received permission to be conducted on University premises, and/or involving staff and/or students of the University as research participants. In undertaking this research, you agree to abide by all University regulations for conducting research on campus and to respect participants' rights to withdraw from participation at any time.

If you are conducting research on certain student cohorts, year groups or courses within specific Schools and within the teaching term, permission must be sought from Heads of School or individual academics.

Ethical clearance has been obtained. (Protocol number: MAORG/23/02)

Research Expiration: (31 December 2022)

Potgieter

Nicoleen Potgieter
University Deputy Registrar

Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050, South Africa | T +27 11 717 1204/8 | E nicoleen.potgieter@wits.ac.za | www.wits.ac.za

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1922 2022

Appendix N - Unconditional Ethics Approval

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: MAORG/23/02**
PROJECT TITLE:	Enriching insights on student wellbeing through Appreciative Inquiry interventions.
INVESTIGATOR	Bondi Cheryl (8702893D)
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	SHCD/Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	14 June 2023
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
RISK LEVEL	Low Risk
EXPIRY DATE	31 December 2025

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 05 July 2023 **CHAIRPERSON** Aline Ferreira Correia
(Dr Aline Ferreira Correia)

cc: Mr Ian Siemers (Supervisor)

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I/we fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, I/we undertake to submit an amendment of the protocol to the Committee.

_____ _____/_____/_____
Signature **Date**

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix O - Participant Informed Consent

Consent Form

Psychology

School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050

Tel: 011 717 4503 Fax: 011 717 4559

I _____(*name and surname*)_____ (*student number*) consent to participate in the research study assessing student wellbeing, conducted by Cheryl Bondi and supervised by Ian Siemers.

I am aware that:

- Participation in this study is voluntary
- I may withdraw from participating in this study at any time
- Participation will have no negative effect on my academic results
- My details will be kept confidential
- My assessment results will be kept confidential
- I shall not be harmed or injured during the assessment
- There are no risks or benefits associated with the study
- None of my identifiable information will be included in the research report and no results can be traced back to me
- I am aware that the results of the study will be reported in the form of a research report for the partial completion of the degree, Masters in Psychology
- I may request general feedback from the study
- By consenting to participate in this study, I declare that I have not suffered a previous head injury or concussion, are not currently taking drugs or alcohol, have not been formally diagnosed with a psychological disorder and/or are taking prescribed medication, have not been diagnosed with a learning or language disorder and have had no previous exposure to the assessments involved in this study

	Participant	**Researcher/Supervisor**
Signature:	_____	_____
Date:	_____	_____

Appendix P - Participant Information Sheet

Appendix

Information Sheet: Psychology First Year Students

Psychology

School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050

Tel: 011 717 4503 Fax: 011 717 4559

Dear Student

As part of a partial fulfilment of a postgraduate Masters degree in Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, I am currently conducting research examining student wellbeing. I understand that taking part in such research requires an investment of your time, but your participation will be greatly appreciated. I would therefore like to invite you to participate in this research. Participation is entirely voluntary and choosing to participate will not advantage or disadvantage you in any way. There are no foreseeable risks involved in your participation. In terms of benefits, you will earn 1% course credit for participation in this project. Please note that you have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time and this will not be held against you in any way.

The assessment procedure will be conducted in group workshops, you are required to attend one workshop. This will take place on **Monday 28th August at 1pm, Venue: To be confirmed**

Participation in the study will involve signing consent forms, completing psychometric assessments, a questionnaire, having the workshops audio and video-recorded, and engaging in discussion. This will take approximately 3 hours in total, and you would be required to stay for the duration of the workshop. After the completion of the workshop, you will be free to leave. By consenting to participate in this study, it will be declared that are not currently taking drugs or alcohol, and have had no previous exposure to the assessments involved in this study.

Due to the face-to-face nature of this study, complete anonymity is not guaranteed. Furthermore, because 1% course credit is awarded on completion of participation, your student number and course codes will need to be provided. However, this information will not be linked to any results or traceable to any individual. Anonymity will be guaranteed in resulting reports, theses and/or publications. Complete confidentiality will be guaranteed since only the researcher and supervisor have access to the questionnaires and corresponding data, and anonymous participant codes will be used to identify both. The results of this research will not be used to examine individual

performance, but rather group trends. Any references to quotes made in the workshops will utilise pseudonyms (e.g. Participant A). In addition, once your student number has been given to the course coordinator so that you can receive your 1% course credit, your student number will be immediately removed from the data set.

If you choose to participate, you will be consenting to the abovementioned information, and you will be giving permission for all data collected throughout the study to be used for analysis, reporting, and possible publication or conference presentation. You may receive general feedback on the outcomes of the study if requested, but given the confidential nature of the study, individual feedback is not possible.

Please see the contact details provided below if you have any further questions, concerns or you require feedback on the progress of the research. Thank you again for considering being part of this study. Please detach and keep this sheet for future reference.

If you have any concerns or feel any level of discomfort after the intervention and wish to speak to a counsellor we will refer you to a counsellor at CCDU.

Student contact details: _____

Ian Siemers (Supervisor)

ian.siemers@wits.ac.za

011 717 4586

Appendix Q - Participant Recording Consent Form

Recording Consent Form

Psychology

School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050

Tel: 011 717 4503 Fax: 011 717 4559

I _____ (insert name), consent to attend a workshop conducted by Cheryl Bondi for the study: Enriching insights on student wellbeing through an Appreciative Inquiry intervention in first-year, Psychology students, at this higher education institution.

- I understand that this workshop will be recorded and that this recording will be confidential where only Cheryl Bondi and Mr Ian Siemers will have access to the recorded data.
- I understand that the write up of my responses will make use of pseudonyms, for example Participant A or B, and no identifying characteristics will be discussed.
- I understand that the transcripts and recordings of the workshop will be stored on a password protected computer.
- I understand that the raw recordings will be destroyed when the study is complete.

Researcher Name: Cheryl Bondi Signature: _____

Participants Name: _____ Signature: _____

Participants Student ID: _____

Date: _____

Ian Siemers (Supervisor)

ian.siemers@wits.ac.za

011 717 4586

Appendix R: Participant Extracts for the Discover Phase

Theme 1: High Quality Lecturers

Ref	Sub-Theme	PERMA	Participant Extracts	Page
R1	Course Content	Engagement	P2: Her [*the lecturer's*]examples in terms of her experience, her being in the industry, she has been doing it for 40 years. Then she relates to current issues affecting us right now. (FG1) P44: It started off on my first day, my first lecture was English. He said thank you for choosing BA despite what your parents say. And he really went on to explain why he teaches English and its relevance…. Then I went on to psychology and again they went on to explain, why psychology? And they did the same in Sign Language….. They know why they doing what they are doing…. So I am pleasantly surprised, I was quite motivated by that. (FG5) P39: They [*the lecturers*] find things in our modern-day culture and provide examples that make it relatable (FG5) P8: Preparing for exams feels like learning parrot fashion and the focus is on doing what I need to do to pass. But when I get an interesting assignment and now I have to go and write an essay, now I have to go and do a discussion board and can give my opinion. In Humanities the assignments are varied. I then don't feel like a robot. I feel like I am a person that is adding into my own career and my own future……Bringing a new perspective to the subject matter. Taking something that I knew I liked, like English, and studying it in this way…. Makes us look deeper into the book we reading and then apply to our lives. (FG1)	44

R2	Course Content	Accomplishment	P25: I found Sign Language a very rewarding subject. You are learning a language so you can have a conversation with a deaf person. I'm getting to learn a whole new community. (FG4) P30: He gave us tips, like when to read something, a title, an author. We were able to use those tips even when not in his lecture. (FG4) P10: She delivers the content as if it has more meaning to it than just learning. I want to pursue this, I want to get interested in this, I want to take this further. (FG1)	45
R3	Course Content	Meaning	P25: I personally found Sign Language add so much meaning to me. (FG3) P28: I had a full conversation with someone in Sign Language this weekend. It was so rewarding to see how happy he was that someone could communicate with him. (FG3)	45
R4	Diverse Courses	Positive Emotions Engagement Meaning	P25: International Relations, you are doing current politics. It is so interesting because you see it playing out in the real world. It is so helpful, very beneficial. (FG3)	45
R5	Lecture Style	Engagement	P16: It is really important to have lectures that are passionate. They stand out because they give you space to also be passionate. When someone is passionate about something they approach it differently. This increases our interest. (FG2) P44: She [*the lecturer*] shares stories, some of them are entertaining. I think a lot of them are incredibly vulnerable …. personal experiences. (FG5) P12: Very interactive. She actually sparked a question in my head that I would like to use as a research topic. There are no boundaries with discussions. Very open conversation. It	45

			makes you want to study up more about the subject and prompts us to keep going to lectures. (FG2) P14: We discussed a lot about everything. Compared each other's perspectives. I just love the feeling of gaining insights into someone else's mind. Looking into my own beliefs. Engagement is very nice. (FG2) P25: It is the least judgement space [$sign\ language\ lectures$] …. They call us up to the front to do sign for the whole class. They don't make it scary. They will be like, "ok don't do it like this, you can sign better if you do it like this" (FG3)	
R6	Lecturer Style	Positive Emotions	P5: It is really fun and engaging. Makes me satisfied when I can get content quickly and I come away feeling I have absorbed all the information. (FG1) P21: She is always walking around in heels, she jumps, and climbs tables. Literally everything. (FG3) P39: In Italian classes, we get to play games. Makes learning so much fun and helped us learn our colours... Makes me feel productive. It is something I can remember. (FG5) P21: Helps us to relax, help us be able to feel like we can speak, we can ask questions. (FG3)	45
R7	Lecturer Style	Accomplishment	P30: It forces you to think and to apply your knowledge (FG4) P31: Feedback on quizzes or just on your answers or tests. It really helps when it is directly from the lecturer. (FG4)	46

Theme 2: Small Learning Environments to Consolidate Education

Ref	Sub-Theme	PERMA	Participant Extracts	Page
R8		Relationships	P21: It [*small lessons*] facilitates your overall wellbeing, it is intimate and engaging. I feel like intimate settings allow you to open up a bit more because there are less people, so 16 people versus 100, which isn't intimate at all. (FG3) P1: I got an email directly from my tutor … He was like, I saw you did well. I am really proud of you. (FG4) P36: I have a chemistry and physics lab. I have demonstrators. He created a bond with the group, with all of us. To the point that when we changed groups we could still go ask him to explain to us. (FG4) P37: These small lectures have made my most positive relationships, it's all group work, and we rely on each other….. We get to interact, we get to talk to each other. I made friends from my group…. We work on a project, we exchange numbers because we have work to do after and we talk about it… We get to know people. (FG4)	47
R9		Accomplishment	P5: My philosophy tutor is really cool. She is super engaged with the content. I even see her at some of my lectures asking questions to my lecturer… Her tutorials are very conversational …. We actually talk about the content and solidify my own understanding. (FG1) P10: A tutor even read over my essay and she said correct this or that. (FG1)	47

			P39: When someone is struggling, our lecturer is able to pinpoint exactly where they are struggling and then can give one-on-one support. Learning is easy. (FG5) P44: Especially when going into a smaller group where we have time to discuss, sometimes I leave thinking wow I really learned something here. (FG5)	

Theme 3: Multiple Layers of Support

Ref	Sub-Theme	PERMA	Participant Extracts	Page
R10	Events	Positive Emotions Relationships	P2: At our residence, we had an orientation in week 2. We also have engagements with other residences. We had talks with SRC members and house com where they basically told us how to survive university. (FG1) P23: During exams last semester, they had destress zones on the library lawns. It was really great, even just being energetic, was such a great de-stressor. (FG3) P28: Last week, we had Coke and Vodacom come and give our stuff and you play games and watched these artists performing. It was an opportunity to destress, make new friends, have different social interactions because it is just so fun. (FG3) P38: Before we wrote exams, [*my university*] sent something about how to prepare for exams, how to write essay, referencing and all that. (FG5)	49
R11	CCDU	Positive Emotions	P36: CCDU helped me understand what my problem was. I didn't know why I was struggling in the first place and then I spoke to a psychologist. He pointed out my problems and told	49

			me how to fix each thing. You don't establish personal relationships with CCDU but I am comfortable to talk to them. (FG4) P40: I went to CCDU on the first day because I wasn't used to the environment. I explained to them the emotions I was feeling, that I was unsure that I wanted to do this, and that I am capable of doing this. So just having the support system with people that are encouraging you. (FG5) P46: There are career advisors at CCDU. They advise you. (FG5)	
R12	Lecturer Support	Accomplishment Relationships	P21: Another thing for me is the relationship I have with my lecturers. I've fostered them throughout. I am prone to getting sick physically, mentally, emotionally. So just being honest about when I cannot meet a deadline. They are understanding and support me to make a plan. My lecturer is very accommodating. (FG3) P22: In one week, I had one assignment for three modules, and they were all due on the same day. When we told our lecturers about that they were very accommodating. It allowed me to space out my work instead of rushing it. (FG3) P31: I think lecturers appreciate people who are interested. And so they give you the time of day and they really want you to do well and then show you stuff which is really helpful. (FG4) P46: There is integration between our tutor, lecturer, and the rest of the department. Together they support us and the lecturer and tutor get support from the whole department. (FG5)	49

R13	Mentors, Tutors, Student Resident Advisors	Accomplishment Positive Emotions Relationships	P10: For me, I get support from my tutorials and my first-year mentor. I have a close relationship with my mentor. She suggests that I try different things out which really help me. She checks on me every week or month. We can call her if we need her. You can share anything with her. She helps every time. Even for directions around campus when I am lost. My first essay, my plagiarism was like 58%. She was like, ok you are going to get penalised, and you are going to go for a hearing. She said we will figure this out together. (FG1) P31: It helps when there is a passionate tutor. Because I feel like the energy is very much reciprocated within the classroom. It encourages participation. I want to participate so much when it is an interesting topic and I can see the actual tutor is interested about it and doesn't just want to get their point across. I feel like I then have a purpose, I have clearer goals and am more interested in the work. I feel less stress, less anxious, less bored. (FG4) P33: Being assigned mentors during first week is so helpful, you don't know anything and you don't know anyone. It is nice to have someone who knows what is going on. It's like someone who is older that you can ask questions that is not in a place of authority. They are the same level as you and they know what you are going through, and they can offer guidance. The change from high school to varsity is a big one so I think (their role is) getting you situated within and getting your balance right. Our mentor helped us to lay out study plans (FG4)	49

			P36: Resident academic advisors take us out, sometimes we play games so that we can destress. Then sometimes they talk to us about our work, help us with our timetables. They tell us where to go and who to consult. (FG4) P42: I turn to tutors as they have less on their hands than lecturers. They are closer to us in age, you can talk to them and they can help. You have a relationship with them, you know them and they know you. (FG5)	
R14	Societies, Clubs	Positive Emotions Accomplishment Relationships	P8: I wanted to add onto relationships with peers, classmates, and friends I have made. It comes from the element of diversity. Provided me something to connect over. I had a psych tutorial on Friday afternoon when nobody wanted to be there. As I was leaving another student, who I didn't know, approached me. We chatted about what I had said in the tut, we connected over an academic discussion…..Even bonding through stress and anxiety, you have comfort that at least you are going through this together. (FG1) P16: I am a maths major, so it is very difficult to pass maths without people helping you. I basically met some people in my tutorials and we made a study group. We have been like friends now. It is nice to have people, we study together, we pass together, we fail together. In our study group we agree what we need to study, we see who is good at it and that person teaches us. We also see who is not good at something and we give them help. Because at the end of it, we all want to pass. (FG2) P22: At res [*campus residence*], there are always activities for first years and you bond through those and make friends. We are like family now. Because that's how close we	50

			got, having gone through all of the experiences even if we are in different courses. We just supporting each other and being there for each other, helping each other. (FG3) P24: Friends are very helpful. If I am failing and meeting new friends and you say dude it is so hard and they say it is hard. At least I am not going through this alone and we together in this thing. I am not here crying and they are "oh its so easy". We are crying together and that makes it easier. (FG3) P39: Your friends are a support because there are occasions where there is something that you don't understand but your friend understands very well. And because you know them on a personal level they are able to explain it to you in a way they know you will understand. (FG5).	

Theme 4: Special Identity and Sense of Belonging

Ref	Sub-Theme	PERMA	Participant Extracts	Page
R15		Positive Emotions	P13: Belonging to something makes me less homesick. I attend rugby games and I interact with people at the games. Visiting other universities gave me a sense of pleasure and pride in supporting [$my\ university$]. It gave me a sense of identity being part of [$my\ university$]. I have made it and I have made my parents so proud specially because they are an academic family. (FG2) P16: When other people from other universities highlight how hard it is to get into [$my\ university$]. Both my parents came to this [$university$], so I grew up with the	51

			sense of [$my\ university$], the prestige didn't really register with me and then I actually got here and people were like oh you go to [$my\ university$]. It's kind of like a legacy. (FG2) P19: We are constantly reminded that we are privileged as there are so few students in our audiology class. We are the few that were chosen. I am made to feel special. (FG2) P37: When you say you go to [$my\ university$], I feel proud of it and a lot of people go "oh she goes to this [$university$]". It is cool that [$my\ university$] has a name like that and that it is recognised. [$My\ university$]has an academic reputation. And whenever I say [$my\ university$], I am not scared to say I go to this [$university$]. I am proud of that. I get excited with this [$university's$]kit. (FG5)	
R16		Meaning Relationship Accomplishment	P1: It really helps to join a club or society that you can relate to. For example, I am Xhosa and I am in a Xhosa cultural society. It helps to have people around you who can understand you and your background and your life-style, like-minded people. (FG1) P5: At the beginning of the year there was a big focus on diversity and acceptance of all kinds of people. And we see on campus that everyone is different. There are so many different ways for people to express themselves. It makes the environment incredibly welcoming. We can embrace who we are (FG1). P9: Something that drew me to [$my\ university$] specifically is the level of acceptance. I came onto this [$university$]and am able to enhance my religious beliefs. I felt so accepted and belonging. (FG1)	51

			P32: I play squash. It gives me a lot of positive emotions. We challenge each other, push each other and grow stronger in the sport. It's a club belonging to this [*my university*], it's competitive but we play more socially….. we have fun and laugh and connect with each other. We feel we belong to something that grows us. A student life is too stressful if it is only about work. (FG5) P35: I joined the YPG society. It is just like a social club, meeting people, we play games. You unwind and destress. We meet every Friday, we get into different groups and interact with everyone. It gives a sense of belonging, especially if you don't belong in class or with friends, that connection. (FG5)	

Theme 5: Aesthetically Pleasing Environment

Ref	Sub-Theme	PERMA	Participant Extracts	Page
R17		Positive Emotions Engagement Accomplishment	P16: It helps with anxiety and feeling better about myself and grounded. I take walks by the campus and sit by that pond. (FG2) P19: Can I add about the physical environment…. Just walking around through little alleys, through the gardens and by the ponds…. By the lower lawns and koi fishpond … Under the trees. (FG2) P26: It gives me pleasure and joy to go to the library on campus. It is so quiet. I feel motivated when I see other work. I can focus there which I can't in the noise at home. (FG3)	53

			P35: There is also one building's architecture that I love. The architecture and planning next to the multipurpose hall, it is so beautiful. There are these comfortable chairs and I think yellow walls. And nice shutters and the sun comes in. It is relaxing. I go there sometimes…. And sometimes the choir practices in the room next to it and you hear singing. It's good to be there. (FG4)	

Theme 6: Opportunities For Personal Growth

Ref	Sub-Theme	PERMA	Participant Extracts	Page
R18	Broad-based Campus Involvement	Accomplishment	P6: When we talk about a sense of accomplishment, I live at Barnato res. I am on the media sub-com at [$my\ university's$] office and I am in charge of soccer. I feel accomplished when I get to learn to manage the sport. Even if it is tiring, I look forward to it. (FG1) P15: I got to participate and create a poem and then also perform the poem. And I also got to perform at the academic dinner for my residents. This was an opportunity to use my gifts. (FG2) P17: Getting involved in these Appreciative Inquiry workshops made me feel like I am contributing to something, giving my input, having a voice. (FG2) P28: I have a feeling of accomplishment when I finish an academic reading. We had 3 readings, they were like 450 pages each and when I got to the last one I was like, yes I did it. They are huge words and you say, I can do this. I am growing myself and my academic literature and understanding is very rewarding. (FG3)	53

			P41: I play tennis competitively for [$my\ university$]. It gives me a sense of purpose and just feeling grounded. (FG5) P44: [$My\ university$] has a high academic standard. To know that you are in a place with a high standard, like this degree is something I know I will work hard for and means something when I get it.	
R19	Pro-social Behaviour	Meaning	P1: It gives me a great sense of meaning being involved in the Wellness Centre Committee (something like that). It is an organisation that basically helps students who are in need in different aspects. Being a volunteer there gives me a sense of meaning. When I see these people and they receiving help and things they need like food parcels. (FG1) P28: [$After\ being\ able\ to\ communicate\ with\ a\ deaf\ person$], he [$the\ deaf\ person$] was so proud and it was such a proud moment for me. I literally called my mom and was like gosh, I am so excited this happened. It was so nice to see how the deaf community felt so appreciated. Gave me such meaning. (FG3) P44: Being in a place that has purpose. It has never been about the academics, it is about something more. (FG5) P46: In terms of meaningful experiences, I talked about volunteering. It's a way of balancing your student life. It makes me feel better about myself…. We help students with food parcels….. My experience is that [$my\ university$] has given me a sense of community, a sense of connection to people. To feel more, to feel better and to decrease stress levels….	53

			I feel better because I know that I'm doing something not just for myself but for people that support humanity. (FG5)	
R20	Control	Engagement Positive Emotions	P24: With having control what I have realised is that I am not forced to cram anymore, I can study and understand my work properly…. I don't feel forced, I am just doing what I have to do and I know and my marks prove it, that I am enjoying this. I am willing to do my work and I am pacing it to my schedule. (FG3) P25: On the point of assessments, I find it so beneficial when I am able to control my studies and when assessments take place. The best example is psychology, when the lecturer puts out the quizzes on Saturday. You can plan when to do it. You still have control of your time which is not always possible. Allows some flexibility….. Allows me to be more sound in my head. Like I have organised it, so I remember it…. When I have some control over when I do to and I have time to do it, it helps me remember my work because I am choosing to work. (FG3) P28: I wanted to add onto having control, it really does better your wellbeing and your mental health. You can work things out and everything is given equal time and attention. You are able to understand your course work and grasp the knowledge instead of just … I am doing this to pass and by the time you graduate you don't even know what you are doing. (FG3) P34: I appreciate in Maths and Finance, they give us all our work at the beginning of the block. We learn to pace ourselves. Which is great. (FG4)	54

Appendix S: Participant Extracts for the Dream Phase

Theme 1: Enriched Learning

Ref	Sub-Theme	PERMA	Participant Extracts	Page
S1	Lecturer Style	Engagement Accomplishment	P8: Like testing. It is better that we have assignments and essays rather than tests that place too much pressure. Introduce testing that is more practical. (FG1) P21: I saw something that you can learn emotional intelligence in a short course. I would love those kind of courses offered on campus. There are some online courses that I would love to be offered on campus as learning in a group is helpful, you are given prompts, and you are able to share prompts. (FG3) P44: I am sure a lot of people who don't take psychology could benefit from our lecturer. And I am sure there are a lot of subjects even on West campus. There are a bunch of experts in this place. Create a space to tap into, almost like a TED-talk on campus. You don't get credit for it, you just pick you 15-minute talk in you break and get inspired by the experts in this place. I should get my inspiration on the campus. (FG5)	56
S2	Personalised Learning	Engagement Accomplishment Positive Emotions	P6: There are visual learners. So, when lecturers try to describe something it is hard to understand. So have a projector that automatically turns on and shows the example. Like a cartoon or something to help see it. (FG1)	56

			P39: It would be so cool, when sitting in a classroom, let's say you learning about this neuron stud. Like this giant hologram, you are now traveling through the spinal cord, and you are going through the neurons. (FG5)	
S3	Varied Delivery Methods	Accomplishment	P32: I would love audiobooks. Especially for philosophy where there are a lot of reading packs. Some people can't sit, like me, I can't sit and read a hundred pages diligently. I could listen and take notes diligently. It would help me engage in the content better. (FG4)	57
S4	Faculty Coordination	Positive Emotions	P43: The dream university has all the different faculties and schools communicating with each other in terms of planning everything. So, there are no conflicts with submissions, tests, exams. This will avoid work being overwhelming. (FG5)	57

Theme 2: Small Learning Environments Fostering Enhanced Learning Encounters

Ref	Sub-Theme	PERMA	Participant Extracts	Page
S5	Tutors, Learning Groups, Resident Academic Advisors	Relationships Accomplishment	P20: There should be someone available for you for one-on-one support if you are struggling. Someone who can see if the issue is academic or because of other reasons, like your procrastination. (FG2)	57

Theme 3: Advanced Support Structures

Ref	Sub-Theme	PERMA	Participant Extracts	Page
S6	Study-Life Balance	Positive Emotions Relationships	P8: We want opportunities to let our inner child out and to destress. (FG1) P23: For me the biggest thing is having access to novels. I know a lot of people can't afford to go to a bookstore and buy a book. So having a space. I know there are a lot of bookworms like my friends. (FG3) P33: I would love access to some sort of music room with instruments so that we have a booking system. Where you can say ok, I am going to book the piano for an hour. I think music is important in relaxing, it gives a form of expression. Maybe we need a recreational hall. (FG4) P39: The campus would be great if they had rooms to take naps in or insulated rooms where you can just go in and scream and then come out and go about the rest of your day. (FG5)	58
S7	Comprehensive Health Care	Positive Emotions	P9: The clinics should help people who are struggling with learning due to mental health issues. Have an evaluation service and capacity to prescribe medication and provide a comprehensive treatment plan. (FG1) P16: I would want a facility that has clinical psychologists and psychiatrists who can diagnose and prescribe medication. And actually review and checkup regularly. For a whole range of mental health. Not just problems, but actual disorders. If [$my\ university$] can't have these on campus, they could be connected with doctors who help students for free. CCDU needs to provide actual support, not just awareness. (FG2)	59

			P44: Get points for just walking through the campus. One morning you see yoga or you join a 6am running club that runs through campus. Just different things that are active and you feel a sense of life and energy. (FG5) P46: There should be programmes that benefit our health. Exercising, maybe running. Because your body starts to move maybe you feel better and your stress levels will decrease. (FG5)	
S8	Events	Positive Emotions Relationships	P18: I would love an event where writers and poets from around the world and South Africa attend. (FG2) P34: Freshers party was so much fun during orientation. I would like a sports and arts event, where everyone can engage in different sports and activities that interest them. I didn't know [$my\ university$] had fencing; we could include all these clubs in this day. Give everyone exposure to all these different things. (FG4) P40: I think for me it is more about interaction between people from different faculties. I want to learn new stuff and learn why someone from a different faculty enjoys what they are doing. The different course makes us all think so differently, we can learn from each other. (FG5)	59
S9	Free Education	Positive Emotions Accomplishment	P10: Free education. I see a world where people can have access to education and not pay hundreds of thousands for it. (FG1)	59

Theme 4: Special Identity and Sense of Belonging

Ref	Sub-Theme	PERMA	Participant Extracts	Page
S10	Universities Merchandise	Positive Emotions	P9: There is this joke in America that at overseas universities, it is the experience of the degree. But here, it is very much focused on the academic and there is a little merch[$andise$]. But for me, I want a sense of pride. To be able to say I am at [$my\ university$] and then I am able to communicate with other people. Also, to bridge the gap between the at home to res [$residence$] students because I come here then I go home and I work. I feel so disconnected as opposed to the ones that live on campus. I feel like we should be unified whole. (FG1) P21: I dream of free things like hoodies, regalia. It can make you feel like, yeah I am a psych student. We need hoodies for our faculties. It would make you feel connected … this is my school I can do this. If [$my\ university$]is your first choice for example, compared to another university, there is a sense of pride you feel and that I belong here. I have a hoodie belonging to [$my\ university$] that says psychology. Because I think when you are faced with challenges, I think university is not an easy journey, you get the reassurance that you belong. (FG3) P36: The idea is to show I am from [$my\ university$], there is this blue t-shirt that you got at sports. People wear those jerseys, the first week you see everyone walking around with them. It says I'm proud to be here. (FG4)	59

S11	Immersive Campus Life	Positive Emotions Relationships	P1: We need to create places to meet people. For people who are shy, to help them come out of their shells. Speaking and networking with others. (FG1) P22: I really like events to celebrate making it this far and how well you are doing. Even if it is a pizza party or some dance. Or a night full of music and DJ's. Just to celebrate achievements. (FG3) P23: I would love a support group for BA kids. Because it's hard having a BA general degree. (FG3) P37: I really like drama a lot but I didn't end up studying it and I feel like I wish I would know a way that I could join is or do some workshops. (FG4) P42: Create like an LinkedIn site for [$my\ university$]. I can interact with other students, you have your profile and put in your hobbies and what you are doing. You can go through people's pages and see oh wow this person has similar hobbies to me. And you text them and say can we meet up.	60
S12	Accommodation	Positive Emotions Accomplishment	P1: The dream is that [$my\ university$] knows how many students need accommodation and they provide everyone with a place to stay. (FG1)	60

Theme 5: Modernised Infrastructure and Enhanced Aesthetics

Ref	Sub-Theme	PERMA	Participant Extracts	Page
S13	Modern Classrooms	Positive Emotions Engagement Accomplishment	P19: When you go inside the digital arts building, students hang up their own stuff, it makes the whole environment much nicer to be in. (FG2) P20: I think it would be a good idea if you entered a science building and you are surrounded by science. Art by art. You can feel that this is the career that I've been dreaming about. There should be a theme for each one. They would motivate you and remind you why you are here. (FG2) P39: Decorations brighten up a building. With the OLS, they have designs on the round windows, and you feel like you are in a submarine. It's very cute. We need to bring this to the other buildings and make them interesting. (FG5)	61
S14	Campus Navigation	Positive Emotions	P41: So having robots in a sense to guide you in your day to day. So, for example, this room today. It's like different buildings, we don't know where all the rooms are. It would be helpful to have something, an interactive technology, to help you find where different things are. (FG5)	61
S15	Campus Transport	Positive Emotions	P21: Having bicycles around campus would keep us fit and would be so cool. Bikes don't take up a lot of space. There can be bike stations and bikes that belong on campus that you sign out. (FG3) P37: We were thinking a golf cart and shuttle station. Where you give R5 and then it takes you to your next class. We wouldn't arrive in class breathless or late. (FG4)	61

S16	Communication	Positive Emotions	P21: The dream is to have knowledge about what is going on around campus, I think there is a lot happening but none of us know about it. (FG3)	61

Theme 6: Prioritised Personal Growth

Ref	Sub-Theme	PERMA	Participant Extracts	Page
S17	Practical Learning	Accomplishment Meaning	P16: As a maths student you don't get opportunities like this workshop. So when our psychology lecturer mentioned this opportunity to get involved, I was like, great. If we could have these across all faculties that would be really nice. And I love the opportunity for an extra course credit. You get to engage with the subject in a different manner. You also get to practice. We get to engage with people who are more accomplished in their field. It motivates me to keep going with my career. We are not isolated behind books, but actually engaging. (FG2) P16: Maybe bring in [$my\ university's$] alumni who are related to a specific module. They could teach that lecture and after the class provide us with an opportunity to ask them what they do. And what we are doing currently relates to that. This would be more practical and increase our engagement. It also helps us see what we can do when we graduate. It would be so interesting to see the transition from graduation to someone who is working. (FG2) P21: Excursions would give us more meaning. Excursions would take us out of our classrooms, it is practical and connects you to your work and makes you feel engaged. I	63

			would love to be taken by my lecturer to the Humanitarian museum at the health science campus so that I can actually see brain tumours and understand what we are learning. It brings you closer to your goal and feeling of accomplishment. It makes you feel like you can finish this degree. It gives me a sense of purpose. (FG3) P36: We discussed [$my\ university$] giving us opportunities to study overseas, maybe for 3 months. This would motivate me to study harder. To feel I have achieved something. I would have a sense of progress, I want to do this or I want to be accepted for this. (FG4) P44: Maybe you could get course credits for taking part in sports or cultural activities. We could incentivise your involvement with course credits. (FG5)	
S18	Career Support	Accomplishment Meaning	P21: Giving students jobs on campus. It's a two-way thing, it means validating your contribution, the purpose you are adding, the contribution you are adding to the university community but also for students that don't have the means or are not afforded things. Instead of outsourcing and for students there are limited internships available in our economy. (FG3) P44: I would love internships and work experience organised by [$my\ university$]. I don't have to wait until I have my honours or masters to work. So, like I come to [$my\ university$], and getting into this university opens doors that will help me find internships and work. Like in December they can send me to a company to work. There is a network of employers from this higher education institution. So you obtain work	63

			experience throughout your degree. Its about learning, meeting new people, networking, gaining experience. (FG5) P39: Getting internships during your degree reduces the stress when you graduate as you have experience. (FG5)	
S19	Volunteering	Meaning	P25: In the gardening club we can make a vegetable garden. Like we did at my boarding school. I felt I was giving back to the school and also learning about growing vegetables. Can be part of the food drives on campus. (FG3) P44: Spaces to volunteer, for doing good, for giving back. (FG5) P41: It is nice to be on the frontline to actually hand out care packages and distribute food. To impact others. (FG5)	63

Appendix T: Participant Extracts for the Design Phase

Theme 1: Develop Lecturers' Skills

Ref	Sub-Theme	PERMA	Participant Extracts	Page
T1	Connect with Lecturers	Engagement Accomplishment Relationships	P21: Getting to know the lecturer. Try understand them better, having honesty and transparency. There is sometimes a huge barrier between students and lecturers. (FG3)	64
T2	Lecturer Training	Engagement Accomplishment Positive Emotions	P19: Lecturers trained to be compassionate or have awareness of mental problems. So, they can avoid it. (FG2) P30: Training as in how to deal with different students in the sense of how to approach students, how to better interact with students. Some type of training to learn to be more patient and kinder to students in a sense. (FG4) P34: We would like to have a 5 star or a 4 star review system and provide lecturers with actual comments to help them understand where we are struggling most and where they need to focus. (FG4)	64
T3	Lecturer Evaluations	Accomplishment	P28: Evaluations currently take place at the end of the block, but it holds no value for the current students. We need an anonymous form to just give feedback to the lecturer. (FG3) P35: We should grade the lecturers in the middle of the term. So, you don't have to wait until the end and like, oh he was so bad. He can fix it now and he can continue lecturing. (FG4)	65

Theme 2: Small Learning Environments to Support Language Barriers

Ref	Sub-Theme	PERMA	Participant Extracts	Page
T4	Tutors	Relationships Accomplishment	P5: Tutors can help cross the language barrier and simplify content in their home language. (FG1) P23: It will reduce anxiety for students who don't understand course content. Will also make them feel more included. (FG3) P21: We need to level the playing field for these students as the university journey is so much harder for them. Give them a fair chance to achieve goals and accomplishments. (FG3)	65

Theme 3: Improve Critical Support

Ref	Sub-Theme	PERMA	Participant Extracts	Page
T5	Communication	Positive Emotions	P3: [$My\ university$]needs to help advertise events. It's really hard to get the word out there. (FG1) P5: You only know about events through social media or through other people. If you are not following the page you don't know. [$My\ university$] needs to communicate events so we don't have to hunt information down. (FG1) P9: I think that [$my\ university$] should advertise the broader part of its pride. I would say that it gives students meaning to be here. They should sell why students want to be here, that there are things students can look forward to and places they can contribute to, be it at an event or in a broader society. (FG1)	65

			P25: What I'm thinking is that a lot of stuff boils back down to clear communication with students. (FG3)	
T6	Service Delivery	Positive Emotions Accomplishment	P8: So on delivery service, when you first ask someone for help, they see how they can do their best to actually answer your question to find your solution. Without just forwarding it onto another person who keeps it going in circles. (FG1)	65
T7	ULWAZI	Positive Emotions Accomplishment	P14: Departmental communication because there are too many times where I will have assignments for two different modules on the same day. We change the date of one and it doesn't reflect on the system, and then we get confused what the actual date is. So we need the systems to be used correctly and for there to be interdepartmental communication and co-ordination. (FG2)	66

Theme 4: Build Special Identity and Belonging

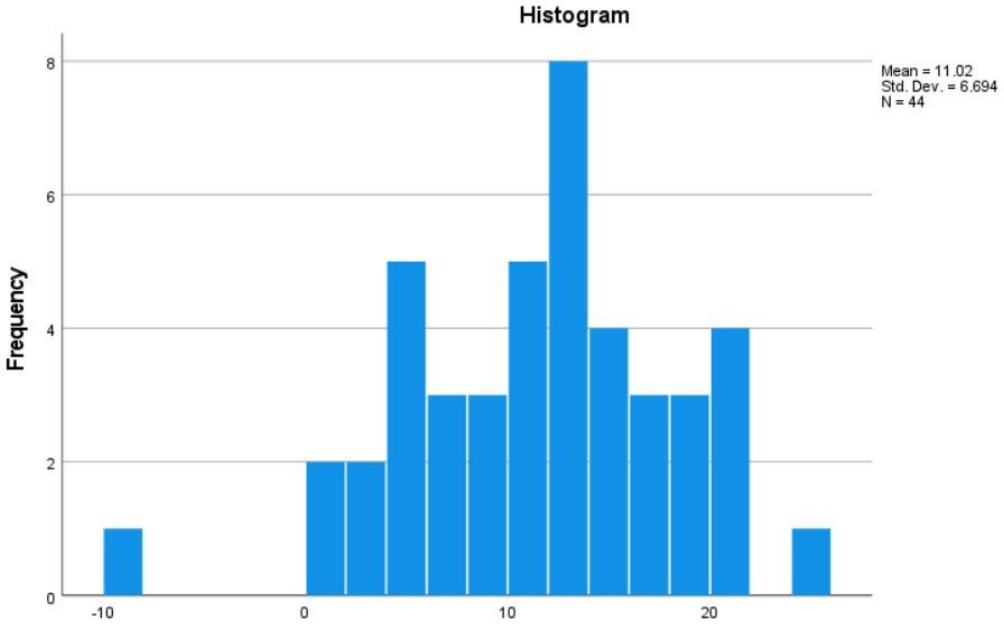
Ref	Sub-Theme	PERMA	Participant Extracts	Page
T8	Inclusiveness	Positive Emotions	P8: There is a sense of disparity in terms of people connecting with each other. The friends that I have live at home and drive into [$my\ university$]. I think that can be put together, and a sense of pride. And have events for everyone that we can all look forward to coming to campus for. Give students who live off campus a reason to want to come here other than lectures. (FG1)	66
T9	Diverse Events	Positive Emotions Relationships	P3: On the issue of clubs and societies. [$My\ university$] can help get them out there more, make them more accessible. Make them easier to join during the year. (FG1)	66

		Meaning	P6: For me societies become a form of therapy. (FG1) P10: Academic work is too much already. But stepping out of that box and just having fun and destressing and also connecting with other people. (FG1)	

Theme 6: Contribute to Students Personal Growth

Ref	Sub-Theme	PERMA	Participant Extracts	Page
T10	Career Fairs	Accomplishment Meaning	P9: We want focused career activities so you can see what you want to be in the future because people doing a BA degree don't always know what to do with their lives. (FG1)	67
T11	Wellbeing Group	Accomplishment Meaning	P44: What I think would be great is if you had a group, say 20 people, that throughout your degree they are your people, your team, that you go through the academic journey with. When you register, you get assigned to this wellbeing group. They don't have to be in the same faculty or doing the same courses. You share your experiences; you grow and learn from each other. It makes you feel like you are doing this together. It becomes formalised as part of your timetable. Have informal discussions where you speak about mental health, your goals, dreams, and you get to learn about the people around you. It fosters belonging. (FG5)	67

Appendix U - Pre-SPANE-B Histogram



Appendix V - Post-SPANE-B Histogram

