




Exploring types of anxiety disorders affecting learners' learning in a secondary school in South Africa

¹Lucrecia Nokwanda Mshwane 

¹Department of Education Foundations, University of the Free State, South Africa

Abstract—As learners progress through their educational journey, they encounter numerous challenges and changes, which undoubtedly lead to stress. This may be brought on by the demands made on them academically, the personal development adolescents go through, and the adaptations needed in unfamiliar environments, all of which are essential components of their educational experiences. Anxiety disorders are one of the primary challenges learners face in secondary schools. Despite increased awareness of mental health issues in schools, there has been little research on the various types of anxiety disorders, such as generalised anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, and test anxiety, that affect learners in South African schools and how these conditions influence their learning outcomes. This study employed a qualitative research approach, mainly focusing on existing literature and documents to explore types of anxiety disorders affecting learners' learning in a secondary school in South Africa. The following keywords were used in a systematic search of academic databases, including Google Scholar, PubMed, JSTOR, and policy documents: "anxiety disorders", "learners", "South African schools", "mental health", and "impact on learning". The study used a thematic analysis to identify themes in literature. Data were analysed to identify key findings and insights. There is a limitation: reliance on existing literature and potential bias in source selection.

Keywords: Adolescent anxiety disorders, Learners, Specific phobias, Secondary school

To cite this article (APA): Mshwane, L. N. (2026). Exploring types of anxiety disorders affecting learners' learning in a secondary school in South Africa. *International Journal of Studies in Systematic Reviews*, 1(1), 11-15. <https://doi.org/10.66434/ijssr.v1i1.461>

environment that allows all learners to achieve their full potential, regardless of their mental health status.

I. INTRODUCTION

ADOLESCENT anxiety disorders can have a substantial impact on both academic performance and general well-being. Recent research indicates that anxiety problems are very common among teenagers; estimates place the prevalence of anxiety disorders at around one in four teenagers (Ernst et al, 2023). The goal of the study is to pinpoint the precise effects of anxiety disorders on emotional reactions to academic pressure as well as cognitive abilities, including memory, focus, and decision-making. Additionally, it seeks to shed light on learners' coping strategies and the role of institutional support networks in fostering a more salubrious learning environment for all learners. Despite increased awareness of mental health issues in schools, there has been little research on the various types of anxiety disorders, such as generalised anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, and test anxiety, that affect learners in South African schools and how these conditions influence their learning outcomes. This study is important because it addresses an understudied topic in South African education, the effects of anxiety disorders on academic performance and learning experiences. Anxiety disorders are regarded as a significant obstacle to learning, concentration, involvement, and academic success. In South Africa, education research has mostly focused on structural concerns, including access, infrastructure, and curriculum change, with little attention to emotional and psychological factors that affect learning outcomes. This study contributes to understanding the impact of anxiety disorders on learners' learning, behaviour, and academic engagement. The project aims to raise awareness and reduce stigma surrounding mental health issues in schools. This article highlights the influence of anxiety disorders on education and promotes a more supportive approach to learning. The research aims to create an inclusive, equitable, and psychologically secure educational

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

It is estimated that about one in every seven young children aged between 10 and 19 years old worldwide experiences some form of mental health disorder. Adolescents struggling with mental health problems often encounter social stigma and discrimination, experience isolation from their peers, and engage in risky or harmful behaviours and physical health concerns. This could result in a violation of their basic rights and create obstacles to learning and positive academic achievement. In South African education, addressing learners' and teachers' mental health is critical, and initiatives such as the integrated school health programme and the national school safety framework provide support. However, obstacles remain, such as inadequate availability of mental health services, stigma, and a need for enhanced policies and educator training.

Generalised anxiety disorder

To effectively treat kids with generalised anxiety disorder, environmental factors both within and outside of the classroom must be taken into consideration. They frequently rest on the ideas of boosting students' sense of self-efficacy and environmental predictability. Sometimes it takes good judgment to distinguish between tactics that represent an excessive departure from standard school norms and those that represent fair adjustments to the student's worry. The latter may restrict students' academic advancement or single them out needlessly. A continuously beneficial strategy is most likely to be ensured by strong collaboration with guardians and mental health specialists involved in the student's care.

Separation anxiety disorder

Kids who have been removed from their homes are likely to face psychosocial difficulties because they may be adapting to their new

surroundings and coping with trauma from the past. To support psychosocial well-being, effective psychosocial interventions are required. According to the literature, middle childhood, spanning ages 6 to 12, is crucial for psychosocial development. Adolescents have been the focus of systematic reviews that have identified successful psychosocial therapies for children thus far. Psychosocial therapies with middle-aged children from all income nations who have been forcibly moved owing to conflict or fear of persecution were identified by the systematic examination and exploratory meta-analysis.

Panic disorder

An individual with panic disorder, an anxiety disorder, experiences frequent episodes of fear or panic. Panic disorder is one of many pathological and psychological anxieties that fall under the umbrella of anxiety (Frank-Briggs & Alikor, 2020). The conclusions of this investigation mirror those of earlier empirical research, including Oguzie et al. (2018). They discovered that although this distinction was not statistically significant by gender, cognitive restructuring approaches were more effective at reducing fear propensity in female participants than in male participants. According to the study's findings, secondary school kids' panic disorder can be considerably reduced by using cognitive restructuring approaches.

Specific phobias

Although anxiety-related disorders are among the most common mental illnesses, little research has been done on the subgroup of specific phobias. Phobias include both avoidance and fear. Avoidance can lessen the frequency and intensity of anxiety and limitations experienced by those who suffer from specific phobias. However, because of their early onset and long-term persistence, these phobias are significant. The lifetime incidence of certain phobias ranges from 3% to 15% worldwide, with the most prevalent fears and phobias being those of heights and animals, according to studies. More high-quality studies evaluating longer-term outcomes in patients treated with various forms of exposure therapy, including massed single-session vs. more gradual multiple-session exposure, or single-context vs. multiple-context exposure, are required, as is future research that examines more closely the obstacles to treatment for phobias. Additional research is needed to fully understand the potential benefits of augmenting pharmaceutical exposure. Research on how initial exposure to feared items or circumstances, along with the exposure's context (e.g., stress or social support) and severity, influences the development of subsequent phobias is lacking.

Similarly, Mkhize et al. (2024) found that, in addition to highlighting the necessity of focused mental health interventions, the high prevalence of anxiety and depression among South African adolescents between the ages of ten and fourteen also emphasises the significance of taking contextual factors into account when developing prevention and intervention plans. Furthermore, Craig et al. (2022) found that a higher probability of anxiety and depression was linked to a higher adverse childhood experience score as well as several socio-demographic factors.

Dowker et al. (2016) reviewed the effects of math anxiety on students' mathematical comprehension over the past 60 years of math education and identified areas that warrant further study. Their studies consistently show that pupils' mathematical proficiency is affected by their fear of mathematics. Math anxiety has been shown to have a detrimental impact on learners' learning outcomes. On the other hand, self-regulated learning raises learners' mathematical literacy. Even kids who perform exceptionally well in mathematics may struggle with the topic because they are worried about it. Yarkwah et al. (2024) found that understanding the causes of test anxiety among senior high school learners significantly enhances our understanding of how educational, social, and psychological factors interact to shape learners' test-taking experiences. Examining elements including readiness, instruction quality, peer pressure, and prior trauma, the study sheds light on the complicated nature of test anxiety.

Social relationship-supporting interventions are frequently used to

promote mental health and increasingly incorporate digital technology. For interventions to have the desired results and prevent unforeseen effects, a strong theoretical foundation is essential. Several theories in the literature relate social ties to mental health; selecting the best theory is made more difficult by overlapping and plural features. The key to distinguishing healthy relationships from unhealthy ones lies in their quality and content. The results show that social relationship-based interventions have the potential to enhance mental health. Still, they also emphasise the necessity to consider situations in which relationships may be more detrimental than beneficial. Digital interventions have the potential to increase people's chances of forming new relationships or strengthening those they already have, but to fully realise this potential, particular attention must be paid to the quality and content of interactions.

This study is guided by a conceptual framework that explains how different types of anxiety disorders influence learners' learning and how they affect their academic performance in South African schools. The framework is based on research showing that anxiety affects how learners perform at school and psychologically. It suggests that many forms of anxiety, such as test anxiety, generalised anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, and panic disorder, can have a detrimental impact on learning by resulting in struggling to focus, excessive performance anxiety, and social anxiety. These anxiety disorders can cause learners to lose their self-esteem and self-confidence, and can further cause them not to concentrate in class and lack academic motivation. In this framework, we also recognise that anxiety disorders and learning can be affected by the type of environment learners are exposed to, such as support from teachers and family dynamics. To summarise, the conceptual framework explains how anxiety disorders affect learners' learning performance results. It links mental challenges and environmental conditions to shape learners' academic success. However, there is a lack of research on the specific effects of different types of anxiety disorders in secondary schools in South Africa. This literature identifies a gap that underscores the need for further study in this field. While there is a study that addresses test anxiety, there is a gap in studies of other learning subjects, as most learners are affected by different types of anxiety in their learning environments.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study explores the types of anxiety disorders and how they affect learners' learning in South African schools.

IV. METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research paradigm and case study design. A qualitative research design was applied to fully understand the prevalence, effect, and coping processes connected with anxiety disorders across secondary schools. By exploring individuals' life experiences, perceptions, and the significance they attribute to occurrences or circumstances.

Data sources and selection criteria

This study will gather data from existing sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles, books, academic theses, policy documents (CAPS and SIAS policy), the World Health Organisation (WHO), and case studies related to learners' mental health in South Africa, as well as statistics from national databases (Statistics South Africa, 2022). The following keywords were used in a systematic search of academic databases, including Google Scholar, PubMed, JSTOR, and policy documents: "anxiety disorders", "learners", "South African schools", "mental health", and "impact on learning". To ensure the inclusion of current, contextually relevant findings, the selection process will focus on peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, NGO publications, and academic dissertations published between 2015 and 2025.

Data collection procedures

This study's inclusion criteria include studies focusing on Secondary

school learners in South Africa. Literature on types of anxiety disorders, such as test anxiety, social anxiety, certain phobias, panic disorder, etc. Publications that investigate the effects of anxiety on academic achievement, focus, school attendance, and mental health. From 2015 – 2025, research should be published in English. Studies excluded focused solely on adults or university/college populations. Literature unrelated to anxiety or mental health. Non-English sources and articles that lack proper academic or scientific legitimacy, for instance, blogs and unverified internet information.

Data analysis

This used a thematic analysis, which requires repeatedly reading the entire data set and identifying relevant patterns. Step 1 involves becoming familiar with the study data. The analyst must familiarise themselves with information from various and mixed types of qualitative data, including focus groups, interviews, observation notes, texts, and multimedia, at this first stage (Nowell et al., 2017). Care should be taken when translating data, especially when working with quotes and excerpts that are not in English (see, for instance, Zhu et al. 2019). Naturally, as a researcher, the researcher was more familiar with the primary data if the researcher gathered it herself. Nevertheless, the researcher immerses themselves in all qualitatively derived information to become familiar with the data and its breadth. To do this, reading must be "active" and "repeated" to find patterns and meanings, especially when dealing with different types of anxiety disorders. Step 2 consists of creating preliminary coding. When the analyst begins grouping the data into relevant categories, coding starts. Codes provide data properties that the analyst could find interesting. Above all, it is the most fundamental component that the analyst can use to meaningfully evaluate raw data. "Coding allows the researcher to make it easier and emphasise the particular elements of the data," as Nowell et al. (2017) precisely state. Themes, or units of analysis, are typically more general than coded data. The data were grouped into themes, and stage 3 found and evaluated topics. There are two primary steps in this third stage of the thematic analysis method. Finding topics is the first step, and going over these ideas is the second. The researcher's coding and collation of the data should be the first stage. It focuses on topics at a higher level, which basically means combining codes to create overarching themes. To help arrange the many codes into themes, analysts used visually (or cognitive) maps during this stage. This can be accomplished manually or with software. Combining the different kinds of anxiety created many themes from the codes. Step 4 defines and names the theme. The analyst's task at this step of thematic analysis is to determine each theme's "essence" (Prokosi, 2023). This phase includes identifying the narrative each theme conveys and how each story fits into the larger narrative, going beyond simply "labelling" each theme of anxiety. This requires the analyst to consider each theme separately and in connection with other themes. The researcher noted that the analyst failed to look beyond the data's specific content to understand it and convey its potential meaning to the reader, while outlining the primary thematic analysis errors to avoid. Stage 5 involves composing the report. The goal of this last stage of thematic analysis is to communicate a complex narrative in a way that persuades other researchers of the analysis's validity. The data and information conveyed across the identified themes must thus be presented by the analyst and report writer in a logical, cohesive, and succinct manner. The themes must be sufficiently supported by the data for this to happen. The substance of each theme and the narrative can also be illustrated with vivid, pertinent examples from the extracts (for example, verbatim quotes from interviewees).

Reviewing the dataset to familiarise oneself with the main ideas, concepts, or experiences that study participants have described, that have been noted in observation notes, or that have been cited in artifacts is the first step I took in thematic analysis (Lochmiller, 2021). In the sample dataset, I found a prominent theme across all three focus group transcripts. This theme, which I describe as "anxiety disorder," refers to how the participants each described their own perspectives about how each disorder affected their learning.

Ethical considerations

All the sources used were correctly cited using the Harvard referencing style. Even though direct human participants are absent, it is important to ensure that data is used appropriately, maintained in integrity, protected from unauthorised access, avoided in plagiarism, and considered for its potential impact. Furthermore, this study referenced and avoided plagiarism. This study used credible research that followed proper ethical clearances. This study acknowledged all authors and institutions whose work it used and submitted the research protocol for review and approval through the online application platform RIMS to the General/Human Research Ethics Committee (GHREC). Trustworthiness is the primary determinant of the rigor of qualitative research studies (Amankwaa, 2016; Eryilmaz, 2022). Making sure that the research design, procedure, and action are credible by relying on the peer-reviewed resources, transferable through detailed description & analysis, reliable by referencing correctly, and credible by being unbiased and objective in reporting the findings, can help assess how trustworthy qualitative research is (Zia Ul Haq et al. 2023). This study highlighted four key ideas to improve the study's credibility: conformability, credibility, transferability, and dependability (Ghafouri & Ofoghi, 2016; Earnest, 2020; Eryilmaz, 2022; Enworo, 2023; Riazi et al., 2023). Conformability was greatly enhanced by gathering diverse viewpoints, employing multiple data collection techniques, and comparing the outcomes of the triangulation process (Eryilmaz, 2022).

V. FINDINGS

This desktop study evaluated current literature, reports, and policy papers to investigate the many types of anxiety disorders that affect learners' academic performance in South African schools. Secondary data from academic journals, Department of Basic Education reports, and UNICEF publications were analysed thematically to uncover recurring patterns and ideas about anxiety and learning issues. Three major themes emerged: academic pressure and test anxiety, social and environmental stressors, and lack of school support.

Academic pressure and test anxiety

The learners in South African schools experience high levels of test anxiety due to so many assessments, fear of poor performance, and unhealthy competition in the classroom. This kind of pressure affects their motivation, concentration, and academic performance. According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2023), draw attention to the fact that learners frequently suffer from anxiety brought on by high academic standards, frequent tests, and failure-related fears. Adolescent depression has emerged as a major public health issue worldwide (Ye et al., 2024). Approximately 10-20% of adolescents globally suffer from depression symptoms, and this number has been increasing in recent years (Luo et al 2021). Persistent academic stress can have numerous detrimental effects, impairing a child's overall well-being. One of the main concerns is lower academic performance; learners under a lot of stress have much more difficulty focusing, remembering, and thinking critically. When learners struggle with a challenging subject, they may feel inadequate, which often results in a decline in performance and self-esteem. Furthermore, the psychological effects of ongoing stress can exacerbate major mental health conditions like despair and anxiety. The academic pressure is caused by performance/test anxiety.

Social and environmental stressors

Most learners experience bullying, peer pressure, and social comparison in South African schools. Such exposure results in learners losing their self-esteem and self-confidence, becoming isolated, and exhibiting low participation in the classroom. As learners advance through their educational journey, they face a variety of challenges and transitions and will undoubtedly experience stress along the way (Li & Lee, 2025). This could be due to the academic demands placed on learners, the personal development they go through, and the changes required in new environments, all of which are crucial to their educational experiences. Academic stress is a major issue worldwide, affecting every aspect of learners' lives. As a result, it is critical to have

a thorough understanding of academic stress, including its causes, symptoms, and consequences, to offer effective therapeutic measures. Learners with poor time management skills may struggle to submit assignments and fulfill deadlines, while others may find it hard to travel for classes. Learners who lack confidence in themselves may question their abilities and worry excessively about failing tests, which can lead to tension and anxiety. Several factors, such as social media, family connections, and social ties, primarily affect learners' performance in today's fiercely competitive educational environment (Likisia, 2018).

According to a recent study, learners' anxiety is mostly caused by the material they are studying. 27% of learners reported regularly struggling to understand the subject matter. According to 18% of learners, the second factor is the apparent overabundance of homework. Approximately 17% of learners said that difficult test questions and their interactions with dull, irate, and impatient professors caused them stress. According to 15% of learners, their homework is the fourth most common cause of stress (Fathiyah, 2022).

Limited schools and mental support

Rural and low-resourced South African schools are mostly disadvantaged and experience inequalities in mental health care access. The lack of funding and misuse of funds leave our education system short of adequate resources. The lack of sufficient psychiatric and counseling services in schools was a recurring theme in the analysed materials. Several teachers are not prepared to recognise or treat symptoms of anxiety (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2022). Many learners lack access to professional assistance because school-based support teams are frequently understaffed, especially in rural areas. This disparity exacerbates the impact of anxiety disorders on learning and general well-being.

The thematic analysis highlighted that anxiety disorders among South African learners are the result of academic pressure, environmental stressors, and the lack of school support. Addressing these issues requires the government to offer better teacher training in mental health, expand access to school counselors or social workers, and create a healthy, supportive learning environment. Policymakers and teachers can create interventions that support academic achievement and emotional resilience by identifying these patterns.

VI. DISCUSSIONS

According to Dladla (2024), he found that the Department of Basic Education Diagnosis Report Book 2 for the 2023 Grade 12 results was compared to the department's report with language anxiety literature to examine the intersectionality of language anxiety, writing tests in English, and results for non-English mother tongue learners in South Africa. It was discovered that obstacles related to knowledge construction, as well as language hurdles, make it difficult for learners to access the knowledge they have accumulated over the years in preparation for their final exam. These difficulties arise when learners lack the linguistic proficiency to comprehend more complex questions and align their learning with the test requirements. We can conclude from his research that test anxiety affects how learners perform.

In many nations, including South Africa, it has been demonstrated that teenagers with mental illnesses do worse academically. According to earlier research by Myer et al. (2009), having any anxiety illness (OR 1.1) and depression (OR 1.7) increases the likelihood of not finishing secondary school. These conditions can have significant effects on both individual and national educational outcomes if left untreated. Schools and education departments must quickly identify and support students who are at risk. Given that most students cite the amount of homework and plans as their main sources of stress, one might wonder whether certain elements of the curriculum should be closely examined or whether teaching students stress management techniques is necessary.

According to the article by Skinner et al. (2019), the teachers primarily discussed how mental health issues affect students' education, with kids finding it increasingly difficult to sustain their development. Children who are nervous or sad struggle to focus, fall behind, and feel irritated,

which leads to anger and aggression. Many of the kids who exhibit these issues miss a lot of school, are unable to focus on class, participate in class activities, and ultimately receive poor marks. Some students have been promoted to higher classes due to their age, even though they have not mastered fundamental skills like writing and reading, which aggravates the situation. As impacted learners grew increasingly isolated, educators were also worried about the social effects of mental health issues. Teachers emphasised that while evaluating the effects on the kids, mental health issues need to be considered with contextual and societal issues, including poverty. Early school dropout, chronic substance misuse, increased violence that is ingrained in their psyche as a coping mechanism, moving to the streets or joining gangs, and pregnancy in girls were some of the specific consequences that were found.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study explored the effects of anxiety disorders in South African schools. It was explored through a thematic analysis of existing literature, reports, and policy documents. The study highlighted three major themes: academic pressure, social and environmental stressors, and gaps in school support. The study's findings highlighted the need for schools and policymakers to prioritise learners' mental health and well-being. In South African secondary schools, anxiety has a major effect on learners through poor academic performance, increased substance use, and possible long-term problems like suicidal thoughts. It also affects teachers by reducing productivity and causing burnout due to the difficult psychosocial issues they face. To establish a healthier learning environment, this requires teacher support as well as learner-focused interventions such as counseling and stress-management training. This study suggests that they start by establishing safe spaces, teaching staff to recognise and support troubled youths, incorporating mental health education into the curriculum, and putting integrated psychosocial support into practice. Addressing stigma, delivering psychoeducation, facilitating learner transitions, and providing peer and professional support networks are important areas for intervention.

VIII. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest in this study.

REFERENCES

- Amankwaa, L. (2016). Creating protocols for trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, 23(3), 121-127. <http://www.tuckerpublish.com/jcd.htm>
- Ernst, J., Ollmann, T. M., König, E., Pieper, L., Voss, C., Hoyer, J., ... & Beesdo-Baum, K. (2023). Social anxiety in adolescents and young adults from the general population: an epidemiological characterization of fear and avoidance in different social situations. *Current Psychology*, 42(32), 28130-28145. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03755-y>
- Craig, A., Rochat, T., Naicker, S. N., Mapanga, W., Mtintsilana, A., Dlamini, S. N., ..., & Norris, S. A. (2022). The prevalence of probable depression and probable anxiety, and associations with adverse childhood experiences and socio-demographics: A national survey in South Africa. *Frontiers. Public Health*, 10, 986531. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.986531>
- Li, J., & Lee, V. W. Y. (2025). Thriving through transitioning: Unravelling the interplay of transitional challenges and adjustments into university. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 44(2), 465-479. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2024.2401016>
- Department of Basic Education (DBE). (2023). *School Health and Mental Well-being Report*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Dladla, C. (2024). Assessing the intersectionality of Language Anxiety and outcomes for African Learners writing Examinations in English. *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, 5(12), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20245121>

- Dowker, A., Sarkar, A. & Looi, C.Y. (2016). Mathematics anxiety: what have we learned in 60 years? *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 508. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00508>
- Earnest, D. (2020). Quality in qualitative research: An overview. *Indian Journal of Continuing Nursing Education*, 21(1), 76–80. <https://doi.org/10.4103/IJCN.IJCN.48.20>
- Enworo, O. C. (2023). Application of Guba and Lincoln's parallel criteria to assess trustworthiness of qualitative research on indigenous social protection systems. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 23(4), 372-384. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-08-2022-0116>
- Eryilmaz, Ö. (2022). Are dissertations trustworthy enough? The case of Turkish Ph.D. dissertations on social studies education. *Participatory Educational Research*, 9(3), 344–361. <https://doi.org/10.17275/per.22.70.9.3>
- Fathiyah, K. N. (2022). Academic stress and its sources among junior high school students: In *Proceedings of the International Seminar on Innovative and Creative Guidance and Counseling Service* (pp. 129–141). Atlantis Press, <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.220405.023>
- Frank-Briggs, A. I., & Alikor, E. A. (2020). Anxiety disorder amongst secondary school children in an urban city in Nigeria. *Journal of Biomedical Science*, 6(3), 246–251.
- Ghafouri, R., & Ofoghi, S. (2016). Trustworthy and rigorous in qualitative research. *International journal of advanced biotechnology and research*, 7(4), 1914-1922.
- Likisia, K. D. (2018). Challenges and prospects of competency-based education: the case of Adama Science and Technology University alum students and Hawas TVET College, Adama, Ethiopia. *The Journal of Competency-Based Education*, 3(2), e01163. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cbe2.1163>
- Lochmiller, C. R. (2021). Conducting Thematic Analysis with Qualitative Data. *The Qualitative Report*, 26(6), 2029-2044. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.5008>
- Luo, W., Zhong, B. L., & Chiu, H. F. K. (2021). Prevalence of depressive symptoms among Chinese students amid the COVID-19 pandemic: *Epidemiol Psych.*, 30, e31. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S204579602/000202>
- Mkhize, M., Westhuizen, C., & Sorsdahl, K. (2024). Prevalence and factors associated with depression and anxiety among young school-going adolescents in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 131, 152469. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.comppsy.2024.152469>
- Myer, L., Stein, D. J., Jackson, P. B., Herman, A. A., Seedat, S., & Williams, D. R. (2009). Impact of common mental Disorders during childhood and adolescence on secondary school completion. *South African Medical Journal*, 99(5), 354–356.
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria, in: *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1609406917733847. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Oguzie, A. E., Ani, N., Obi, B. A., & Onyegirim, B. O. (2018). Effect of a cognitive restructuring technique on fear tendency among secondary school students in Owerri Municipal Council, Imo State. *International Journal of Advanced Research and Publications*, 2(1), 34–38.
- Prokosi, A. C. (2023). How to use thematic analysis in qualitative research. *Journal of Qualitative Research in Tourism*. Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus. <https://doi.org/10.4337/jqrt.2023.0006>
- Riazi, A. M., Rezvani, R., & Ghanbar, H. (2023). Trustworthiness in L2 writing research: A review and analysis of qualitative articles in the Journal of Second Language Writing. *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*, 2(3), 100065. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rmal.2023.100065>
- Skinner, D., Sharp, C., Marais, L., Serekoane, M. & Lenka, M. (2019). A qualitative study on teachers' perceptions of their learners' mental health problems in a disadvantaged community in South Africa. *Curationis*, 42(1), a1903. <https://doi.org/10.4102/curationis.v42i1.1903>
- United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF]. (2022). *Mental Health in South African Schools: Situation Analysis*. Johannesburg: UNICEF South Africa.
- Statistics South Africa. (2022). *Profiling health challenges faced by adolescents (10–19 years) in South Africa*. (Report no. 03-09-15). Stats SA. Retrieved from <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/03-09-15/03-09-152022.pdf>
- Yarkwah, C., Kpotosu, C. K., & Gbormittah, D. (2024). Effects of test anxiety on students' academic performance in Mathematics at the senior high school level. *Discover Education*, 3(1), 245. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-024-00343-z>
- Ye, Z. Y., Han, Z. Y. & Zhong, B. L. (2024). Secure base and mental health in children: a narrative review. *Translational pediatrics*, 13(9), 1608–1616. <https://doi.org/10.21037/tp-24-191>
- Zhu, H., Duncan, T., & Tucker, H. (2019). The issue of translation during thematic analysis in a tourism research context. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 22(4), 415–419. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2017.1411892>

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions, and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of GAERPSY and/or the editor(s). GAERPSY and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions, or products referred to in the content.