EXPLORING THE PSYCHOSOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES FACED BY 11–15-YEAR-OLD MUSLIM ADOLESCENTS STUDYING AT *HIFTH* SCHOOLS IN CAPE TOWN

By Faiza Toefy

A thesis in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master's in Psychology in the Department of Psychology at the University of the Western Cape

Supervisor:

Dr Athena Pedro

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DECLARATION

I, Faiza Toefy hereby declare that this study, titled:

'***Exploring the psychosocial and emotional challenges faced by 11–15-year-old Muslim adolescents studying at* Hifth** *schools in Cape Town'*

is my own work, that all the sources used have been completely cited and referenced in accordance with the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th edition).

F. Toefy

Faiza Toefy

Date: August 2020

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Adolescence – the period between childhood and adulthood, from 11 years to 21 years

Ajaza (pl.) Juz (s.) – part/s of the Qur'an

Allah – God, the Unique One, the Creator

Alhamdulillah – All praise is to God

Asr – one of the obligatory prayers, performed in the early afternoon

Ayah – line or verse of the Qur'an

Bacha – to recite the Qur'an

Coping strategies – strategies that people employ to deal with stress, pain, and natural changes that they experience in life; seen as central to the process of pressure management

Dhor – revision of the Qur'anic text already memorized

Emotional challenges – challenges stem from some sort of stress or loss, including loss of health, loved ones or loved things

Erikson's theory of psychosocial development – this theory discusses the psychosocial challenges experienced by an individual at eight developmental stages during their lifespan; it considers the impact of external factors, parents, and society on personality development from childhood to adulthood

Eshai – one of the five obligatory daily prayers, performed in the evening

Haafith (s.) Hufaath (pl.) – a title given to someone who has memorized the entire Qur'an

Haram – prohibited

Hifth – the memorization of the Qur'an

Hifth schools – are classified as regular, full-time academic Islamic schools, but with a specialized *hifth* programme

Inshaa-Allah – God willing

Jannah – Islamic concept of paradise

Madrassa – religious school (institution or place of learning); religious instruction classes or a school offering after-school religious instruction

Maghrieb – one of the five obligatory daily prayers, performed just after sunset

Maqaamaat – modes of recitation of the Qur'an

Mualimah – a female teacher

Mualim – a male teacher

Mudhirah – female teacher

Muslim schools – faith-based schools based on the Islamic religious teachings

Nasheed – Islamic song

Psychosocial – a combination of the word "psyche", referring to an individual psychological behaviour, and the word "social", which relates to a social setting or community in which the individual lives and interacts with others

Ramadaan – the Muslim month of compulsory fasting

Shariah – Islamic law

Sabaq – new lesson

Sabaq Dhor – everything from the beginning of the current juz to the new lesson

Sheikh (s.) Shuyoogh (pl.) – the title given to the head of any group or religious institution, as it connotates authority and prestige; male teacher/s in a *Hifth* school

Surah (s.) Suwar (pl.) – a section or chapters of the Qur'an

Sunnah – life experiences and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad

Support mechanisms – any formal system or method of providing support or assistance

Ta'dib – goodness

Talim – learning

Tajweed – the set of rules determining the exact pronunciation of the Qur'an, including the pronunciation of the sounds of the language, intonation, and pausing during recitation

Tarbiyyah – nurturing
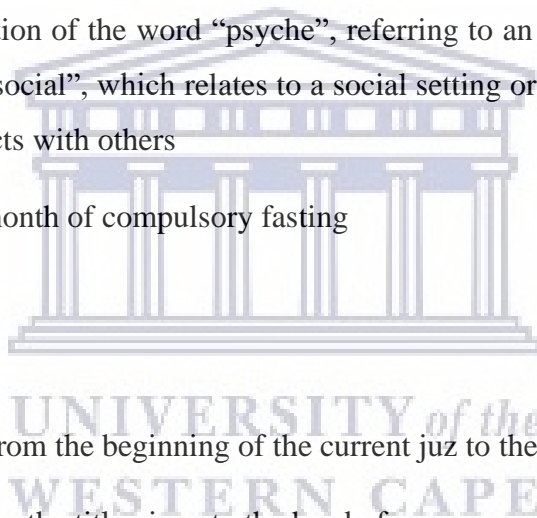
Tamat – graduation of a *hifth* learner; on this day, a panel of judges traditionally test the learner on random locations in the Qur'an

Qiyaamah – Judgement Day

Qira'ah – melodious recitation of the Qur'an

Qur'anic schooling – schools where children learn to memorize the Qur'an

Quraa (pl.) Qari (s.) – a person who recites the Qur'an according to the rules of recitation; a person of a professional class of reciters

Qur'an – the central religious text of Islam

ABSTRACT

In compliance with the Constitution, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 requires that every child attend school from age 7 (or grade 1) to age 15 (or grade 9, whichever occurs first). The Western Cape Education Department (WCED), the constitutional custodian of education in the Western Cape Province, requires that all informal institutions accommodating learners of school-going age register their learners for an educational curriculum. It is an essential requirement that all learning institutions (religious or otherwise) provide the necessary academic support for their learners. A growing number of *Hifth* schools are introducing secular academic studies into their curriculum, with programmes consisting of *hifth* studies, English, and Mathematics. The implementation of these programmes varies, however, and they are offered to the learners in conjunction with the *hifth* programme. In South Africa, there is a dearth of research associated with *hifth* schooling, and absolutely no documented research could be located regarding the integrated *hifth* programme and its impact and effects on learners.

This study explored the psychosocial and emotional challenges that learners undergo when studying *hifth*. The study utilised Erikson's theory of psychosocial development in an endeavour to understand the development of the children attending these institutes. A qualitative methodological framework with an exploratory research design was employed. The sample was purposively selected and consisted of 24 learners (12 boys and 12 girls) between the ages of 11 and 15 (grades 5 to 9). The learners were selected from six *Hifth* schools registered with the Muslim Judicial Council's Academic Support Programme situated in Cape Town, in conjunction with the WCED. Data was collected through semi-structured individual interviews and was thematically analysed with Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process of thematic analysis. Governing such research is a set of ethics guidelines set by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape, which ensures participants' confidentiality, anonymity, and ability to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice or censure. These principles was strictly adhered to. Results indicated that learners experience social challenges such as pressure relating to family and societal expectations, lack of socialising with family and friends, dealing with peer pressure and emotional challenges such as stress, personal problems that affect their academic performance, and managing screen time. They further experience academic challenges related to adjusting to their *hifth* studies, quality of academic management and coping with the Mathematics and

English classes. To mitigate these challenges, many of these learners employ coping strategies such as engaging in leisure activities, parental assistance, and various personal coping strategies. In addition to employing these coping strategies, many of them receive support from family, peers, teachers, and tutors to cope with their studies. They also utilise technology in the form of Qur'an apps and listening to their favourite *Qari* to assist them with memorisation. Lastly, the learners felt that they required more conducive learning environments, both at school and at home.

Keywords: adolescence, coping strategies, emotional challenges, Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, *Haafith*, *hifth*, psychosocial, Muslim schools, support mechanisms

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Awqaf (SA) – National Awqaf Foundation of South Africa

MJC – Muslim Judicial Council

PBUH – Peace be upon him

PSE – Parental self-efficacy

SES – Socioeconomic status

WCED – Western Cape Education Department

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Cape Town has always enjoyed a rich legacy of Qur'anic scholarship (Da Costa & Davids, 1994), which traces its roots back more than 300 years (Mahida, 1993), to 60 years after the Cape of Good Hope was first colonised by the Dutch (Davids, 1980). The 300 years of unremitting reproduction of the Qur'an by the small minority of Muslims in the Cape have produced a plethora of individuals able to recite the entire scripture by memory, hereinafter referred to as *Hufaath* (s. *Haafith*) and reciters of the Qur'anic text, hereinafter referred to as *qurra* (s. *qari*) (Da Costa & Davids, 1994). Furthermore, many teachers were produced who continued this prophetic tradition and have left various legacies, but mostly in the form of students and acolytes (Da Costa & Davids, 1994; Francke, 2019).

Muslims proclaim that, unlike other religious manuscripts, the Qur'an is a divinely revealed text that has remained unchanged since its inception (Boyle, 2006; Moore, 2006). Part of ensuring its preservation entails that Muslims memorize the Qur'an, and this process is referred to as *hifth* (Dzulkifli et al., 2016). The Qur'an was originally memorized by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) when it was revealed to him more than 1400 years ago (Boyle, 2006; Dzulkifli et al., 2016; Rasmussen, 2010). This tradition is perpetuated by Muslims in all parts of the world (Boyle, 2006).

Hifth schools[1] have evolved from a traditional one-room school into modern Islamic schools, which have included Qur'an studies, Islamic religious text, and Arabic grammar, numeracy, and literacy in their curriculum (Boyle, 2006). Today the Western Cape has more than 70 *Hifth* schools operating at various locations (Muslim Judicial Council (SA) Department of Qur'anic Affairs, 2017). There has been exponential growth in the number of *Hifth* schools all over South Africa over the past two decades, which bears testimony to the rising popularity of the discipline of *hifth*.

In 2018, the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC), which is the largest recognized Muslim body in the Western Cape, in collaboration with the Western Cape Education Department (WCED),

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[1] When making reference to *Hifth* schools, the word *hifth* is used as a proper noun. In all other cases, it will be used as a common noun.

saw the need to launch an academic programme to support *hifth* learners (The Voice of the Cape, 2018). *Hifth* schools were encouraged to sign up for this programme. In 2020, the MJC and WCED signed a memorandum of understanding to formalize the agreement with the aim to better integrate learners who attend *Hifth* schools into secular schools (Mkentane, 2020). The MJC is also required to ensure that all *Hifth* schools comply with specific regulatory prescripts, which include regulations pertaining to buildings, municipal by-laws and health conditions (Mkentane, 2020). The MJC-WCED Academic Support Programme incorporates English, mathematics, and natural sciences to enable *hifth* learners to transition seamlessly into mainstream schooling (Mkentane, 2020).

Memorizing the Qur'an does not only involve rote learning, but is a process of "embodying the revealed knowledge of the Qur'an in the beings of the student" (Boyle, 2006). By memorizing the Qur'an, the student embodies or processes the words of God within their very being whereby they can physically reproduce, share, and refer to it systematically over the course of their lifetime (Boyle, 2006). Sells (1999) writes "As the students learn these *suras* [chapters of the Qur'an], they are not simply learning something by rote, but rather internalizing the inner rhythms, sound patterns, and textual dynamics—taking it to heart in the deepest manner" (p. 11). The learning of *hifth* therefore demands a high level of discipline and motivation (Moore, 2006), and more so when other subjects are taught with *hifth*. Learners endure extreme levels of frustration and emotional turmoil when learning the Qur'an (Coombes, 2013). The high demand for perfection and accurate reading comes with the afflictions of despair, anxiety and other social pressures. Not all children are able to cope with these challenges which ultimately manifest itself as anxiety issues; lack of motivation and self-esteem; and the strains of coping with 'normal' adolescent lifestyles while studying (Coombes, 2013). The teachers are hamstrung and they may not always possess the necessary expertise to address these challenges (S. E. Philander, personal communication, June 21, 2018[2]).

1.2 Rationale

There is a recent trend for Muslim parents to opt for *hifth* studies as an alternative to mainstream education or as additional to their children's secular education. The *hifth* institutes are historically exclusively religious organizations. However, recent phenomena show a strong

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[2] WCED Memo issued by Saul E. Philander, Chief Education Specialist, Directorate: IMG Planning (Independent Schools)

trend towards the inclusion of a secular academic programme into their curricula. This is due to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, which states that it is compulsory for all parents of learners of school-going age (between the ages of 7 and 15, or grades 1 and 9) to ensure their children receive appropriate schooling. However, the demands of the trending all-inclusive studies have brought tremendous pressure to bear upon the children. It is inclined to ratchet up an already heavy academic and psychological load, a characteristic of *hifth* studies by their very nature. Learners suffer from anxiety as well as motivational and emotional problems (Coombes, 2013). The educators in these institutions, as previously mentioned, are, for the most part, not trained to handle these challenges (S. E. Philander, personal communication, June 21, 2018[3]). The current system may lack the guiding principles and necessary institutional support that would enable them to put in place support mechanisms for the learners. This study seeks to understand the psychosocial and emotional challenges that South African Muslim adolescents experience when undergoing an integrated *hifth* programme. "Psychosocial" can be defined as "of or relating to processes or factors that are both social and psychological in origin" (Collins English Dictionary, 2020). The study examined the responses of both male and female adolescent learners in Cape Town ranging between the ages of 11 and 15. There is a dearth of published research pertaining to the psychosocial and emotional challenges that *hifth* learners experience; in fact, the researcher was unable to locate any documented research conducted in this area within the South African context. This study contributes to closing this gap in literature by addressing *hifth* learners' understanding of their challenges, how they are currently coping with these challenges, and the support mechanisms that are available to them. In addition, the findings may provide a basis for future intervention programmes to facilitate *hifth* learners' holistic development.

1.3 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework which informed this study to understand the psychosocial and emotional challenges experienced by *hifth* learners is Erikson's theory of psychosocial development. This theory discusses the psychosocial challenges experienced by an individual at eight developmental stages during their lifespan. It considers the impact of external factors, parents, and society on personality development from childhood to adulthood. Adolescence is

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[3] WCED Memo issued by Saul E. Philander, Chief Education Specialist, Directorate: IMG Planning (Independent Schools)

one of the eight inter-related developmental stages which an individual passes through over the course of their lifecycle (Louw & Louw, 2014). According to Erikson, adolescence is defined by the developmental crisis *identity versus role confusion*, and completing this stage satisfactorily results in *reliability or fidelity* (Meyer et al., 2008). It has great importance because this is the major stage of development where the adolescent searches for an identity and tries to integrate the roles that they have to occupy later (Erikson, 1968; Louw & Louw, 2014). It is important for the adolescent to develop an identity which is separate from that of their parents and peers and which is acceptable to society (Hamman & Hendricks, 2005). Erikson further posits that developing a healthy identity will positively affect adolescents' self-esteem and future aspirations (Erikson, 1962). School plays a vital role in the positive development of adolescents owing to the large amount of time that they spend in that environment (Hamman & Hendricks, 2005; Bista et al., 2016). Similarly, Erikson (1962) recognizes that religion is likely to play an important role in a youth's identity formation. In addition, if the parents and friends are supportive and allow the adolescent to experiment, the adolescent will develop a healthy identity that expresses who they are. It is also known to be a "stormy period" which involves conflict between the adolescents and their parents, a condition that is intensified when they come from a dysfunctional family background (Louw & Louw, 2014). Erikson's framework facilitated an understanding of the psychosocial challenges that these learners experience and was therefore deemed as an appropriate lens.

1.4 Research questions

This study was based on the research questions below:

- What psychosocial and emotional challenges do 11–15-year-old Muslim adolescents face while studying at *Hifth* schools in Cape Town?
- What are the coping strategies that they employ?
- What are the support mechanisms available to them and what types of support do they require?

1.5 Aims and objectives

This study aims to explore and examine the psychosocial and emotional challenges that the *hifth* learners face and to examine coping strategies with the purpose of enhancing the whole learning process.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1   To explore the barriers and enablers that adolescent *hifth* learners experience in terms of psychosocial and emotional aspects when undertaking an integrated *hifth* programme

2   To examine and explore, from the perspective of learners, the coping strategies they employ in order to successfully complete their studies

3   To explore the types of support available and what support is required

1.6 Significance of the study

Hifth schools are environments where great respect is afforded to the teachers and elders, and children are not always allowed to voice their concerns. This study hopes to give a voice to *hifth* learners and assist in contributing to their academic and spiritual journey, thereby adding value to their holistic development.

Furthermore, this study seeks to assist policymakers, schools, and the local community in their efforts to assist and improve the learning of *hifth* children and to enable them to implement appropriate coping strategies in order to meet and expand their educational goals, especially those pertaining to the psychological well-being of their learners. It also hopes to empower schools and educational authorities to be able to holistically develop learners better by empowering them with knowledge on the psychosocial and emotional challenges prevalent among *hifth* children. Ultimately, this study seeks to supplement and fortify the available research material on the matter of *hifth.*

1.7 Outline of chapters

This thesis comprises six chapters.

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the study, highlighting its background and providing the rationale for conducting it.

Chapter 2 consists of a review of the literature on early childhood development in South Africa as well as socio-emotional development in early childhood.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological framework the study has used and describes the research design, research context, sampling of participants, data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations for the study.

Chapter 4 presents the results and findings of the study.

Chapter 5 presents a comprehensive discussion on the results linked to previous research studies.

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Chapter 6 is the conclusion of the thesis. It highlights the strengths and limitations of the study and makes recommendations for future studies.

1.8 Conclusion

The introduction aimed to provide the context in which the current study is located by discussing the historical background of *hifth* and the educational transformation of *Hifth* schools. The rationale for this study was then established and further linked to an appropriate theoretical framework. Thereafter, the research questions, aims and objectives were identified in relation to the study. An elaboration of the significance of the study was given, followed by a brief outline of the chapters.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of Chapter 1 was to provide a rationale for the current study. Research questions which guided the study were formulated, followed by a brief overview of the theoretical framework and a discussion of the significance of this study.

In Chapter 2, a review of related literature is presented, focusing on Muslim schools, Islamic education, and the *hifth* tradition of the Western Cape. It further expounds on the categories of psychosocial and emotional challenges experienced by adolescents engaged in the study of *hifth*. Furthermore, the discussion will include the meaning of 'coping strategies' and the various categories of coping strategies employed by learners. Finally, the review will conclude with the types of support mechanisms and programmes available to learners, parents and schools.

2.2 Muslim schools, Islamic education and the *hifth* tradition of the Western Cape

2.2.1 Muslim schools and Islamic education

The first known Muslim schools were established at the beginning of the 20th century and were termed Moslem Mission schools (Davids, 2014; Tayob, 2011). To a great extent, they resembled other faith-based schools, which were prominent features of the apartheid era (Ajam, 1986; Davids, 2014). The Muslim schools originally constituted part of the mosque structure and proceeded as after-school classes (Davids, 2014) with the primary purpose of preserving Muslim identity and practices (Ajam, 1986; Da Costa & Davids, 1994). According to researchers Fataar (1994) and Tayob (2011), there has been a rapid rise in the number of Islamic Independent Schools in Cape Town since the beginning of the 20th century, a trend that endorsed a global demand by parents in search of more moral education for their children. Muslim parents also prefer Islamic schools because they allow their children to express their beliefs and perform their rituals without fear of negative consequences (Alidina, 2017). These schools are ultimately viewed as institutions that impart to the child the elements of personal salvation, not only for themselves but also for their family and the community at large (Fataar, 2005).

The Muslim population in South Africa currently has approximately two million members, consisting mainly of Cape Malay Muslims (located predominantly in the environs of Cape Town), Indian Muslims (found mainly in the Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces),

indigenous African Muslims, and supplementary immigrant Muslims from far-flung African countries such as Somalia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Egypt, etc. (Waghid, 2011). In South Africa, there are currently over 600 mosques and 400 Islamic educational institutions, including private schools and tertiary colleges (Waghid, 2011). It is estimated that more than 70 *haafith* schools have been established in the Western Cape (Muslim Judicial Council (SA) Department of Qur'anic Affairs, 2017).

Islamic education contrasts with Western education in that while the former adopts a narrower initial focus and broadens over time, Western education begins with a broad focus and moves towards narrower specializations (see figure 1) (Boyle, 2006). In the Islamic tradition, children start with the very specific (i.e. the Qur'an) and throughout their studies, spread their focus to include a progressively broader range of topics. Conversely, in the West, children are exposed to a wide variety of subjects to study such as science, mathematics, language, gym, art, music, and social sciences, to name a few, proceeding to specialize in particular fields in later years of high school and/or university education (Boyle, 2006). The Islamic approach to education described above, which, according to Boyle (2006), was typical in precolonial Muslim societies, is still relevant in most Qur'anic schools.
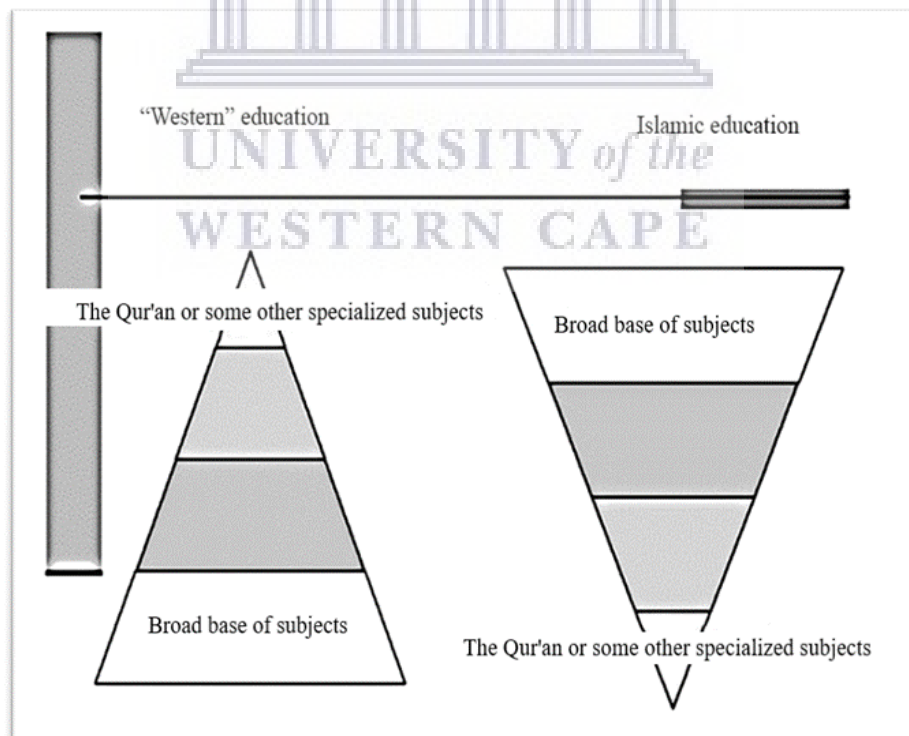
Figure 2.1 – Comparison of curriculum structure between Islamic and Western education (extracted from Boyle, 2006, p. 486)

The Islamic subjects also play a pivotal role in creating a religious ethos and moulding religious identities for the learners at the schools (Niehaus, 2011). In a comparative research study conducted by Niehaus (2011) on learners studying at a South African Islamic school and a British one, both showed a strong attachment to collective identities formed along religious lines.

2.2.2 Role and relevance of Muslim schools

There is a strong emphasis on social responsibility and contributing to the upliftment of society in Muslim schools (Davids, 2014). The principal objective of education in Islam is the assurance of social justice encouraging Muslim women and men to engage in the greater service of society and uphold its values with the central purpose of deriving maximum spiritual benefit for themselves and society at large (Waghid, 2011). Waghid (2013) argues that the foremost aim of Muslim schooling in South Africa is to produce learners who emulate and implement what they have learnt about Islam from the Qur'an, the Sunnah (that is, life experiences of the Prophet Muhammad [PBUH]) and Sharia (Islamic law). By adhering to these prescribed divine imperatives, Waghid (2013) further maintains that Muslim learners prevail as 'good Muslims'. This refers to the preservation of this value system that seems to have a positive impact on their identities, for the good of both the individual and the society they live in. Islamic education does not bifurcate what is considered as revealed and non-revealed knowledge because both can be employed in the implementation of ethical practices towards accomplishing the ultimate goal of being a good, cosmopolitan citizen (Davids & Waghid, 2016). Revealed knowledge refers to "the transmitted religious sciences such as Qur'an, Sunnah, Shariah, theology, Islamic metaphysics and the Arabic grammar" (Waghid, 2011, p. 8). Non-revealed knowledge refers to "the rational, intellectual and philosophical sciences such as human sciences, natural sciences, applied sciences, technological sciences, comparative religion, Western culture and civilization, linguistic sciences and Islamic history" (Waghid, 2011, p. 8).

Waghid (2011) holds that Islamic education is most appropriately schooled as *tarbiyyah* (nurturing), *talim* (learning) and *ta'dib* (goodness). He further describes the method of learning employed by most *Hifth* schools as minimalist because the learner memorizes the Qur'an without knowledge and understanding of the Arabic text (Waghid, 2011). Most non-Arabic speaking learners are taught to memorize the texts of the Holy Qur'an in its entirety without comprehension of its meaning (Boyle, 2006; Londt, 2008; Saleem, 2018; Waghid, 2011). Upon completion, they may wish to further their studies to include learning the meaning of the texts

and various other fields of Qur'anic sciences such as the various modes of recitation (*Maqaamaat)* and *Qira'ah* (melodious recitation of the Qur'an) (Coombes, 2013).

Musharraf and Nabeel (2015) conducted a study on Muslim parents resident in non-Muslim countries and found that the schooling options were classified into the following categories:
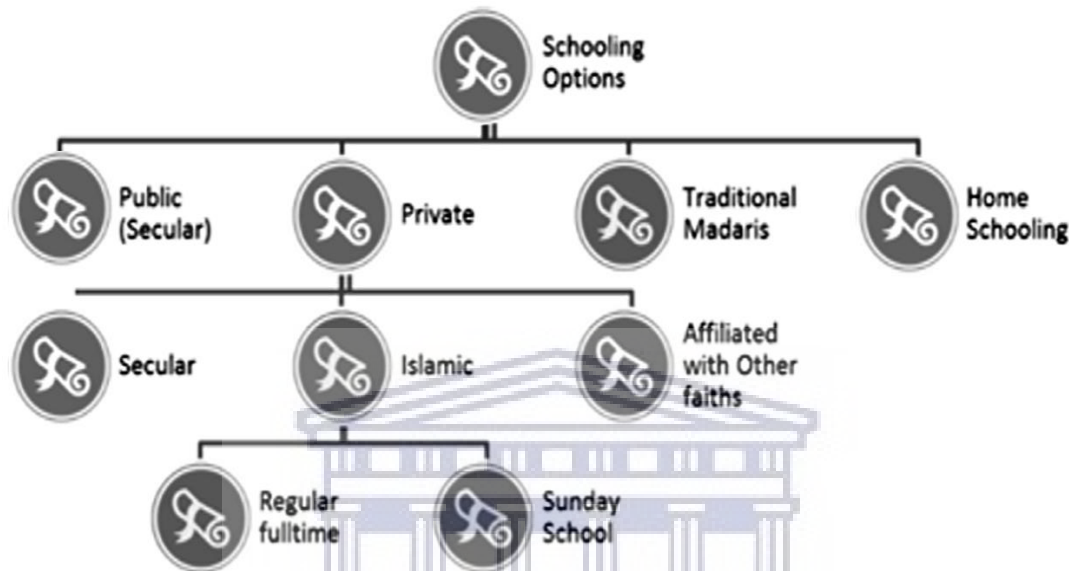
Figure 2.2 – Schooling options (extracted from Musharraf & Nabeel, 2015, p. 32)

In South Africa, *Hifth* schools can be classified as regular, full-time academic Islamic schools, but with a specialized *hifth* programme. Islamic schools without a *hifth* programme offer a full-time academic curriculum that includes Islamic Studies, Arabic, and/or Qur'an/Surah (elementary level) as subjects. By contrast, an exclusive *Hifth* school may only offer a few academic subjects such as Mathematics, English, Afrikaans, and Life Skills, dedicating the majority of the schedule to *hifth* studies.

2.2.3 The *hifth* tradition in the Western Cape

A characteristic type of Islamic school is the *Hifth* school, where students learn to memorise the entire Holy Qur'an. The *hifth* tradition is an integral component of Islam and had sown its seeds when Islam was first introduced in the Cape by immigrants from various parts of Africa and Asia, but mainly as a result of the European international slave trade between the 17th and 19th centuries (Da Costa & Davids, 1994). In 1705, the Raja of Tambora, one of the first political exiles to the Cape, was the first person chronicled to have penned the Qur'an from memory in the Cape (Da Costa & Davids, 1994; Mahida, 1993), followed in 1790 by another political exile, Imaam Abdullah bin Qadi Abdus Salaam, otherwise known as *Tuan Guru* (Mr.

Teacher), who also contributed several copies of the Qur'an from memory and went on to establish the first madrassa in Cape Town (Mahida, 1993). In 1903, the first locally born Muslim to have memorized the Qur'an was Ismail Ma'awiyyah Manie, who later taught the art of Qur'an memorization to the local Muslims (Da Costa & Davids, 1994). Many males subsequently travelled abroad to countries and cities such as Egypt, Medina and Makkah in order to study *hifth* and then returned to impart their knowledge to the local community (Da Costa & Davids, 1994). In 1940, the first *hifth* group was established. It served customary socio-religious functions, introducing the *Hufaath* to recite regularly and lead congregational prayers during the month of *Ramadaan* (the Muslim month of compulsory fasting) (Ajam, 1986; Da Costa & Davids, 1994). The *Hufaath* today are regarded with reverence in the community and enjoy elevated religious esteem (Da Costa & Davids, 1994; Esack, 2008; Londt, 2008).

Muslim schools, including *Hifth* schools, evolved over the years, operating for an extended period of time from the homes of teachers, mosques, or buildings designated for the purpose of establishing Muslim schools (Da Costa & Davids, 1994; Waghid, 2011). Currently, *Hifth* schools in South Africa bear a close correspondence with *Hifth* schools in other parts of Africa such as Nigeria and Morocco (Boyle, 2006). South African *Hifth* schools have also started to integrate secular subjects into their curricula, as is the case with *Hifth* schools in Nigeria, Morocco, and other parts of the world. This is due to government regulations and parents wanting their children to have more options for economic advancement through university enrolment or employment (Boyle, 2006).

In South Africa, initially, the study of *hifth* was undertaken mainly by Muslim male students and very few female students (Da Costa & Davids, 1994). Today, we find several *Hifth* schools where both male and female learners engage in the discipline (Mkentane, 2020). At full-time *Hifth* schools, learners are required to withdraw from mainstream schooling; they enter the *Hifth* schools for a period of four to five years and, upon completion, return to mainstream schooling in order to complete their academic studies (Mkentane, 2020). The main focus in these schools is the memorization of the Qur'an (Boyle, 2006; Da Costa & Davids, 1994).

Boyle (2006) postulates that Qur'anic memorization is a learner-orientated process that allows children to embody the Qur'an or possess the words of God within their very beings, which is taught by the method of guided repetition (Moore, 2006). It does not involve mere rote learning but encompasses a deeper and more intensified process of learning (Boyle, 2006; Gent, 2011;

Coombes, 2013). *Hifth* learners are expected to memorize the 30 chapters of the Qur'an and to maintain the verses that they have memorized for the rest of their lives (Coombes, 2013). Moore (2006) identified four phases in guided repetition activities which the *hifth* learner undertakes: modelling, imitation, rehearsal, and performance. Each includes objectives, rights, and obligations for both the learner and the teacher. The learner is also expected to recite the Qur'an with appropriate pronunciation and sound, referred to as *tajweed* (Sai, 2018). The study of *hifth* also involves several memory-enhanced practices such as elaboration, visual imagery of the words, the self-referent encoding of the text of the Qur'an, sequencing, chunking, and mnemonic coding (Dzulkifli et al., 2016; Sai, 2018; Saleem, 2018). The study of *hifth,* as well as academic achievement, involve enhanced memory capacity and storing. By all accounts, *hifth* therefore plays an essential role in acquiring high academic achievement for the individual who has memorized the Qur'an (Sai, 2018).

Boyle (2006), holds that the mission of Qur'anic schooling is to develop learners' spirituality and morality, as well as providing an alternative to public education. The demands and expectations of the *hifth* learner are thus extraordinary and great: they are expected to uphold high religious morals and be exemplary to their peers (Davids & Da Costa, 1994). On the whole, the reviewed studies have shown that recognition of a learner with *haafith* status implies not only skills in memorization and recitation but also quality of character that is in keeping with the Islamic perception of learning holistically (Gent, 2011). This process results in a very intimate relationship between teacher and learner, which in turn creates a strong bond between the two. Tremendous respect and regard are thus conferred upon the Qur'an teacher by the student, and by extension, the community (Gent, 2011).

As mentioned earlier, the main focus of all *Hifth* schools is the memorisation of the Qur'an (Boyle, 2006; Da Costa & Davids, 1994). Supplemental to *hifth* studies, *Hifth* schools also offer Islamic Studies and Arabic Language as subjects, each with their own unique curriculums (Boyle, 2006). In addition to these subjects, *Hifth s*chools have also introduced academic subjects such as Mathematics and English, with some schools offering a full WCED-aligned curriculum. The institutes have ensured that all academic teachers employed meet the qualification standards required by WCED, which means they are all qualified professionals in their respective fields. The same does not, however, hold true for the *hifth* teachers. *Hifth* teachers are mostly *haafith* themselves but do not hold a teaching qualification. *Hifth*, in South Africa, is not a systematically organized body of knowledge that one can officially call a subject and it is not recognized by the WCED. Furthermore, *hifth* institutions are not regulated by an

overseeing body, nor are they registered with the WCED (Mkentane, 2020). Efforts have been made, however, to register all *Hifth* schools with the MJC to endorse their legitimacy and ensure that they adhere to basic health and safety standards, but only a small percentage of schools have registered (The Voice of the Cape, 2018).

2.2.4 WCED-MJC Academic Support classes for *hifth* learners

In July 2018, the MJC, in collaboration with the WCED, the MJC's Department of Qur'anic Affairs, Awqaf (SA) and *Haafith* schools of Cape Town, launched a *Haafith* Academic Support programme. The objective of the programme is to assist *hifth* learners to integrate seamlessly back into mainstream education. The programme is conducted on Saturdays, focuses largely on numeracy, literacy, and natural science (Mkentane, 2020; The Voice of the Cape, 2018), and the classes currently cater for learners between the ages of 9 years and 15 years (grade 1 to grade 9). In addition to its role of facilitating reintegration into mainstream education, the programme is required to regulate the *Hifth* schools by ensuring that they comply with the basic health and safety requirements for an institution housing learners (Mkentane, 2020; The Voice of the Cape, 2018).

Parents of learners at *Hifth* schools are responsible for ensuring that all children between the ages of 7 to 15, or grades 1 and 9 (whichever comes first), are registered with the WCED in accordance with the National Education Policy Act of 1996. They then have the option of enrolling their children in the MJC's Saturday academic classes or employing a qualified tutor to perform this task at home. There are *Hifth* schools such as Islamia Hifth Academy and Jam'eyyatul Qurra' Hifth Institute that offer an integrated academic programme in conjunction with their daily *hifth* programme.

In summary, parents of learners at *Hifth* schools that do not offer a registered academic programme are required, by law, to register their children with the WCED for home-schooling and to ensure that their children keep pace with the education standard of the department whilst outside of mainstream schooling. The MJC Academic Support programme thus fulfils a need, as learners are required to exit mainstream schooling before they can commence a full-time *hifth* programme. Upon completion of their *hifth* studies, most learners return to mainstream schooling. The majority of *hifth* learners are found to be adolescents between the ages of 11 and 18 years. This age range, according to Louw and Louw (2014), represents adolescence, which starts between the ages of 11 and 13 years and ends between 17 and 21 years.

2.3 Adolescence as a developmental stage

Adolescence, typically defined as the period between 11 and 21 years, is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood and involves major physical, moral, and psychosocial developments (Louw & Louw, 2014; Motepe, 2006). It is also a very stressful and critical transitional stage for the individual (Louw & Louw, 2014). In developing socially, adolescents show a desire to be noticed and accepted by their peers as well as other important individuals in their lives, whilst at the same time striving for autonomy and independence (Louw & Louw, 2014). A salient feature of this stage is the search for self-identity, which Erik Erikson labels as identity formation (Louw & Louw, 2014). According to Erikson, their specific developmental task involves identifying, evaluating, and selecting values and roles for their adult lives (Hamman & Hendricks, 2005). Erikson's theory further states that if the search for identity is successful, the adolescent will develop a value of fidelity with positive self-esteem, positive psychological adjustment and good interpersonal relations (Meyer et al., 2008). Alternatively, if the adolescent does not develop a sense of identity, the they will be unable to integrate their desires, possibilities, and skills with the opportunities that society offers for growth (Meyer et al., 2008).

Moral development may have positive or negative aspects, depending on the interaction and influence that parents and significant others exert on the adolescent's life (Steca et al., 2011). A receptive and warm environment, the experts say, leads to a good moral and behavioural disposition in children (Good & Willoughby, 2014). Parents and teachers play a supportive role in providing a suitable environment for adolescents to explore and evaluate standards for their future. Erikson explains the adults' role in the lives of the adolescent as the bearers of societal standards (Hamman & Hendricks, 2005). We may therefore conclude that it is essential for adolescents to receive consistent and meaningful recognition for their achievements and accomplishments, because being recognized, accepted, and praised by those around them assists them to be able to establish a healthy identity. Furthermore, the growth of a positive self- concept is directly linked to the psychosocial stage of resolution, which contributes to the core of Erikson's development theory (Meyer et al., 2008). Alternatively, negative development serves to manifest itself in impaired self-concept, adjustment problems and possibly psychopathology (Brittian & Humphries, 2015; Shek et al., 2012).

Religious identity formation takes place during adolescence. Studies have also indicated that religiosity and spirituality play a positive role in mediating the social changes that adolescents are faced with and assist them to deal with these challenges in their lives (Brittian &

Humphries, 2015; Barry et al., 2010). Studies have indicated that Muslim parents prefer sending their adolescent children to Islamic schools to ensure that their children's identity formation is congruent with the Islamic value system (Nadvi, 2011; Niehaus, 2011).

From the above research, it can be concluded that adolescence is a crucial period of human development, which can be made more manageable through the support and involvement of parents, teachers and those significant others whom the adolescent holds dear. Religious intervention also plays a significant role in mitigating the challenges they are faced with, especially the psychosocial challenges.

2.4 Psychosocial challenges faced by adolescents

There appears to be a dearth of studies on *hifth* (Da Costa & Davids, 1994) and *hifth* learners in South Africa (Coombes, 2013). The literature review undertaken by the researcher indicates that some research studies focused on the processes and practices involved in Qur'an memorization where Arabic is a foreign language (Boyle, 2006; Coombes, 2013; Gent, 2011; Moore, 2006; Saleem, 2018), while others focus on the effects of memorizing and the academic achievements of learners (Batool, 2014; Dzulkifli & Solihu, 2018; Jahangir & Nawaz, 2014; Mukarromah, 2018; Sai, 2018). There have been no studies focusing on the psychosocial and emotional challenges experienced by *hifth* learners. As a result, the researcher has decided to refer to studies on general psychosocial and emotional challenges experienced by adolescents.

2.4.1 Psychosocial challenges

The term "psychosocial" is a combination of the word "psyche", referring to an individual psychological behaviour, and the word "social", which relates to a social setting or community in which the individual lives and interacts with others (Hayward, 2012). The psyche denotes factors related to emotions and feelings that affect an individual's behaviours, and social involves social and cultural support that an individual receives in their respective communities. Psychosocial can also be defined as the social environment that influences the individual's psychological factors and vice versa.

During the period of adolescence, the individual may encounter various forms of problems and conflicts that ultimately impair normal psychosocial development (Bista et al., 2016). Psychosocial problems experienced by individuals include behavioural problems such as conduct disorders, educational difficulties, substance abuse, hyperactivity, and emotional problems such as anxiety and depression (Ahmad et al., 2007).

Studies conducted in countries where Muslims are minorities revealed that Muslim adolescents experienced several challenges such as interaction with prejudiced school professionals, managing peer pressure and engaging in activities which conflicted their religious beliefs (Seward & Khan, 2016). Students reported that even casual friendships with the opposite sex were difficult to maintain as they feared the physical and emotional consequences these might have for them. Female students wearing hijab to school experienced pressure when confronted with questions regarding their dress code (Seward & Khan, 2016). A Canadian study on Muslim children similarly revealed feelings of dissatisfaction, marginalization, social isolation, and even loneliness when it came to expressing their Islamic identity (Amjad, 2018).

According to a study done in South Africa, psychosocial challenges experienced by adolescents include dealing with the loss of biological parents, coming to terms with their HIV+ status, identity issues, external stigma, discrimination (Petersen et al., 2010), poor relationships with parents, and substance abuse. However, their level of religiosity serves as a protective factor that assists them in dealing with these challenges (Good & Willoughby, 2014).

Furthermore, a study conducted by Ibanez-Gonzalez and Lewin (2019) on Soweto adolescents' risk behaviour and religious participation found that there was a decrease in risk behaviour if the adolescent was religious. Religion does not merely protect adolescents from the dangers and pitfalls of party-going, but the adolescents also place value upon it (Ibanez-Gonzalez & Lewin, 2019). A review of the influence of religion on risky behaviour such as drinking, drug use, and sexual activity indicated a positive countervailing influence on adolescents who were involved in religious activities (Regnerus, 2003). Religion is simply more than a social control mechanism concerning risky behaviour (Regnerus, 2003).

A South African study on Muslim adolescents indicated that religion played a role in their identity formation (Nadvi, 2011; Niehaus, 2011). They did not subscribe to conservative Islamic values but signal a proneness to a more moderate way of implementing their religious obligations (Nadvi, 2011). They particularly enjoy listening to the music of Muslim artists and do not conform to the strict rules regarding interaction with the opposite sex (Nadvi, 2011). Their identity is connected to a more "globalized world community" rather than a specific South African identity and the differentiation is unmistakably visible in their dress code. They listen to international as well as local Arabic music artists, and they engage the social network system to stay abreast of what Muslim youth are up to globally (Nadvi, 2011).

Religion plays a role in identity formation for adolescents learning *hifth* too, although they do experience various challenges.

2.4.2 Challenges experienced by *hifth* learners

A study conducted by Helen Boyle (2006) explained that memorising the Qur'an is a mammoth undertaking for the child that involves a tremendous amount of time, effort, and discipline. In a parallel ethnographic study conducted by Gent (2011) in the United Kingdom, the *hifth* students he interviewed contended that, from a social perspective, *hifth* studies did not impact on the rest of their lives, and they were not "losing out" compared with their non-Muslim friends; but they were consistent, however, that sacrifice and dedication towards their studies are essential ingredients for achieving success (Coombes, 2013; Gent, 2011). Furthermore, they indicated that learning *hifth* transformed them for the better in terms of their conduct and personality. They attributed the success of their studies to fortitude and determination (Coombes, 2013).

In addition to the aforementioned studies, Jahangir and Nawaz (2014) assert that engaging in the study of *hifth* positively influenced the personality and socio-cultural lives of the children and their parents. Moreover, they found that it has had a positive effect on their religious and daily life, including their being more obedient to their parents; that it has improved their brain and memory capabilities; and that after completing their studies their parents reported that they are treated with greater respect and enjoy more privileges in the community (Jahangir & Nawaz, 2014).

In a South African study conducted by Coombes (2013) at a female *Hifth* school in Cape Town, the learners interviewed described learning *hifth* as an enormous physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual challenge which they had undertaken, but it was also "a very big gift" from God and an opportunity for them to bestow this gift upon their parents. They also indicated that self-motivation and resilience play a pivotal role, especially when they "feel like giving up" due to the painstaking and cumbersome rigours of Qur'anic memorization (Moore, 2006; Coombes, 2013). Teachers also have to be innovative in finding ways of motivating the learners; these include praise, competition, insults, shaming, threats, and corporal punishment (Moore, 2006).

In another study, a grade 8 pupil residing in a gang-ridden area of the Cape Flats expressed that learning *hifth* involved hard work and making sacrifices such as giving up his daily afternoon sports activities in order to achieve his goal of becoming a *haafith* (Duval, 2018). His parents

indicated that his studies had a positive impact on his life and kept him from becoming involved in gangsterism (Duval, 2018).

Hifth learners are no different from other adolescents in terms of their engagement in technology use; however, not managing their time well has a negative impact on their studies (Gilded Dunya, 2018).

2.4.3 Cell phones, smartphones, tablet usage, and social media

Another challenge experienced by adolescents is cell phone, smartphone, and tablet usage and the influence it has on their academic performance, family life, and overall well-being (AAP Council on Communication and Media, 2016; Alkasirah & Nor, 2018; Hadlington et al., 2019; Louw & Louw, 2014; Samaha & Hawi, 2016). Research suggests both benefits and risks of media use for the health of children and adolescents. These technological devices have become ubiquitous and if clear boundaries for usage are not set, they can have a detrimental effect on children and adolescents' lives (Hadlington et al., 2019). Risks include negative health effects in terms of weight and sleep; exposure to inaccurate, inappropriate, or unsafe content and contacts; and compromised privacy and confidentiality (AAP Council on Communication and Media, 2016). The aspect of smartphone addiction risk was positively related to perceived stress and poor academic performance, and good academic performance in turn was positively related to satisfaction with life (Samaha & Hawi, 2016). Benefits, on the other hand, include exposure to new ideas and knowledge acquisition, increased opportunities for social contact and support, and new opportunities to access information. Cell phone and tablet usage amongst adolescents is in proliferation, and if it is not managed properly, studies have indicated that their academic performance is adversely affected (Hadlington et al., 2019; Samaha & Hawi, 2016; Alkasirah & Nor, 2018). Setting of boundaries was largely lacking for children using tablet technology, which affected the parent-child relationship (Hadlington et al., 2019). Alkasirah and Nor (2018) indicated that cell phone usage undoubtedly assisted students with their learning process. It facilitates learning at any time and wherever they may be (Alkasirah & Nor, 2018). Mobile technology is associated with positive student perceptions of collaborative learning, but also with increased disengagement during class and reduced use of critical thinking (Heflin et al., 2017). In a study conducted by AlMadura (2017), it was found that Qur'an mobile apps assisted learners with memorization and increased fun in their learning.

Social media platforms have become the primary mode of communication for young people (Kelly et al., 2018; Pfeiffer et al., 2014). They have dramatically changed the way young people get information and communicate with each other (Pfeiffer et al., 2014). While it may be acknowledged that there are benefits to social media, as it is a source of social support and knowledge acquisition, there is also evidence that suggests a link with poor mental health among young people (Garett et al., 2016; Kelly et al., 2018). High incidences of cyberbullying in school, increased personal information disclosure on social media, peer influences, and the safety of the school environment for both bully and victim are concerns related to social media usage among children (Garett et al., 2016). Tackling cyberbullying requires awareness, educating those involved in cyberbullying, development of software to detect cyberbullying and monitoring of cyberbullying (Garett et al., 2016).

It is therefore important that adolescents employ various coping strategies to deal with the challenges that they experience.

2.5 Coping strategies employed by adolescents

Coping strategies can be defined as survival skills, strategies that people employ to deal with stress, pain, and natural changes that they may experience in life. They are seen as central to the process of pressure management (Lucky et al., 2015; Achour et al., 2014). The following coping strategies employed by adolescents will be expounded on: self-leadership, self-coaching, parental self-efficacy, motivation in school, resilience, religiosity/spirituality, and leisure activities as a form of well-being.

2.5.1 Self-leadership, self- coaching, and self-motivation

Jooste and Maritz (2014) discussed two coping strategies adolescents find recourse in: self-leadership and self-coaching. These assist adolescents in developing skills such as self-awareness, coping with anxiety, goal setting, self-evaluation, and functional self-talk (Jooste & Maritz, 2014). Georgianna (2008), cited in an article by Jooste and Maritz (2014), defines self-leadership as "the process in which people direct and motivate themselves to behave and perform in the desired way in order to take responsibility for creating the conditions that help them to achieve the goals set" (Jooste & Maritz, 2014, p. 395). Jooste and Maritz (2014) further explain that their study found four principals of self-coaching strategies: cognitive strategies, emotional and spiritual care, and social support. These coping strategies enable the adolescent to succeed at tasks given to them both academically and personally. When faced with challenges, it is key that adolescents adopt these techniques in order to achieve their goals.

A study on memorization of the Qur'an conducted by Saleem (2018) revealed that self-motivation, being disciplined, and revision and repetition of the lessons assist in the memorization process. According to Londt (2008) and Samsodien (2018), consistency, being disciplined, having a plan (goal setting), and time management are important factors contributing to the successful memorization of the Qur'an. Boyle (2006) further indicated that students of *hifth* studies require high levels of self-motivation to succeed in their studies.

2.5.2 Motivation provided by teachers in schools

Significant links between religious education and motivation were also discovered (Frempong et al., 2011). Learners who contribute actively to the learning material and get involved in lesson planning and learning activities are inclined to develop into more motivated learners with the potential to achieve better results (Frempong et al., 2011; O'Grady, 2003). Moore (2006) recognized that the role of the teacher as a motivator is crucial in assisting *hifth* learners to cope with their studies. Frequent praising and acknowledgement of achievements are essential in the *hifth* classroom environment (Moore, 2006). Furthermore, it was established that *hifth* teachers who employ creative methods such as writing the lesson and understanding the meaning of the texts before memorizing them are also prone to achieving greater success with their students (Sai, 2018).

Hifth learners who are able to cope with the demands of their studies by remaining motivated and resilient throughout their journey have a good success rate (Coombes, 2013; Gent, 2011).

2.5.3 Resilience

Resilience can be defined as both a process and an outcome characterised by positive adaptation to adversity (Cyrulnik, 2009). It is also referred to as "bouncing back" or "jump or leap back" and being able to continue with a task even after failed attempts or experiencing adversity (Annalakshmi & Abeer, 2013). Perfectionism, extroversion, low optimism and low self-esteem accounted for the decreases in the physical and psychological health of students, while high optimism and self-esteem predicted better overall health for the students (Lucky et al., 2015). Theron and Theron's (2010) review of South African youth resilience studies established that the qualities of resilience were grounded in such personality traits as optimism, extroversion and enthusiasm, the ability to self-regulate, goal orientation, as well as resources such as problem-solving skills, internal locus of control and a preference for socially appropriate behaviour. In addition, a resilient person should have the capacity to tap into their biological, psychological, and environmental resources in order to complete arduous tasks

(Theron & Theron, 2010). Among their environmental resources is being involved in religious and community activities.

2.5.4 Religiosity/spirituality

Religiosity is defined as "the numerous aspects of the doctrines of religion relating to activity, dedication and belief" (Annalakshmi & Abeer, 2013, p. 725). Spirituality can be defined as "the search for sacred, divine, or nonmaterial aspects of life" (Good & Willoughby, 2014, p. 758). Various studies have expressed that religiosity and spirituality affect the behaviour of adolescents in a positive manner and promote prosocial behaviour (Annalakshmi & Abeer, 2013; Brittian & Humphries, 2015; Burg et al., 2011; Ismail, 2015; Park & Kim, 2018). Adolescence is considered an important stage for the development of religious beliefs (Erickson, 1992). It was found that Muslim adolescents frequently utilise the spiritual connection method of coping because its correlation to their religious commitment is considered most powerful (Ismail, 2015). In a similar study, it was found that adolescents and their fathers from religious schools displayed more moral behaviour as compared to those from non-religious schools (Annalakshmi & Abeer, 2013). Parental support and parental affection are related to increased spirituality in their children, and spirituality is closely linked to religiosity (Barry et al., 2010). Adolescents show a tendency to choose peers similar to them in spirituality. Research further indicates that, besides parents, adolescent spirituality is also influenced by significant others such as mentors, teachers and youth leaders (Burg et al., 2011; Henke et al., 2011). Hence, adolescents' prosocial behaviours do not develop on their own but are influenced by contextual factors. They are part of a larger system, involving family, peers, school, and societal values inside a historical context (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Brittian and Humphries (2015) posited that prosocial behaviour among adolescents is associated with their religiosity and their spirituality coming from their various backgrounds, and they have attributed this phenomenon to the fact that most religions encourage their followers to engage in altruistic behaviour and serving the community. Religiosity can be seen as preventing and protecting adolescents from engaging in antisocial behaviour. It would not seem an improbable conclusion, therefore, that adolescents who are often involved in religious activities or belong to religious organizations tend to exhibit characteristics that are more prosocial, contributing constructively to society.

2.5.5 Leisure activities to maintain well-being

Engaging in such activities as computer games, listening to music, accessing social media, attending parties, reading novels, watching movies, participating in sports activities, and travelling can be classified as coping strategies employed by students that allow them to unwind during their studies (Lucky et al., 2015). However, it also has an unwholesome influence because video games and the Internet can be considered sources of distraction for children, especially when they are required to complete homework or participate in family activities (Petitpas et al., 2005).

2.5.6 Parental self-efficacy and parental involvement

According to a study conducted by Steca et al. (2011), the concept of parental self-efficacy (PSE) plays an important role in children's adaption during adolescence. Parental self-efficacy is the confidence that parents have in their parenting strategies in being supportive of their children (Steca et al., 2011). Parents with high PSE values contribute positively to the construction of crucial skills required for adolescents to adjust to the challenges they will encounter in their transition to adulthood (Steca et al., 2011). Similarly, family and peer support are key in assisting adolescents to cope better (Petersen et al., 2010). Children are more likely to score higher academic achievement levels when their parents are actively involved in their education (Harbour, 2015). Parental involvement is also crucial in the success of learners undertaking *hifth* studies (Samsodien, 2018).

2.6 Supportive intervention programmes

There are various supportive intervention programmes available to assist adolescents with their challenges (Babedi, 2013; Cozett et al., 2016; Hampel et al., 2008). These programmes can be divided into three categories: the individual, the school, and the parents. The individual programmes focus on empowering the adolescent with self-management techniques (Cozett et al., 2016), stress management (Hampel et al., 2008), and enhancing physical health (Petitpas et al., 2005). The school programmes focus on empowering the teachers to assist the adolescents (Babedi, 2013) and the parental programmes focus on how the parental styles and parental support may enhance the relationship between the parents and their adolescent children.

2.6.1 Individual programmes

2.6.1.1 Physical education and sports activities

According to a South African study by Cozett et al. (2016), adolescents are generally physically inactive, resulting in alarming cases of obesity. Self-efficacy, parental influence, peer pressure, and their level of confidence and belief in their sporting abilities play a key role in their willingness to engage in physical activity. A possible explanation for these findings is that adolescents value those activities that they are good at performing and thrive on acknowledgement from their peers and parents; this is important for them. Furthermore, there are youth sports programmes which are also effective in enhancing psychosocial and personal development (Petitpas et al., 2005). Participating in sports enhances the adolescents' self-esteem and also teaches them life skills (Petitpas et al., 2005). On the other hand, it can be detrimental to them in the absence of proper coaching and consistent parental involvement. This could lead to unhealthy competitiveness and serves to demoralize the adolescent (Petitpas et al., 2005). It is therefore imperative that parents become actively involved in the adolescent's sports activities, whether at school or privately. Sports have been known to assist learners in releasing academic stress (Lucky et al., 2015).

2.6.1.2 Stress management

Another adolescent supportive programme is stress management training, which assists them in coping with stress (Hampel et al., 2008). These programmes include, among other things, cognitive restructuring, relaxation, and skills training in, for example, social skills and school-related problem-solving. Activities such as sport and reading are 'passive recovery activities' that assist adolescents in non-stressful periods and promote healthy development (Hampel et al., 2008).

2.6.1.3 Counselling services

Adolescence is a fragile developmental stage and receiving guidance from psychological professionals empowers adolescents to deal with the challenges they face (Babedi, 2013), as well as to develop social and emotional competence (Ross et al., 2002). Peer pressure, cyber-bullying and domestic problems are common challenges experienced by high-school learners (Garett et al., 2016; Lebedina-Manzoni et al., 2011; Lucky et al., 2015). Many learners who experience problems while they are studying find it helpful to discuss their personal, educational or career concerns with a professional practitioner (Lucky et al., 2015). Learners who experience personal problems relating to family, peers, or academic stress find it difficult

to focus on their work. They become demotivated and their academic performance starts declining (Lucky et al., 2015). In order for them to overcome their challenges, it is necessary that they seek professional assistance, which teachers, unfortunately, are not always equipped to deal with (Babedi, 2013).

2.6.2 School programmes

Teachers can be more effective if they are able to identify the adolescent's developmental needs and implement the necessary interventions (Babedi, 2013). By implementing effective psychosocial programmes, teachers will be able to improve their ability to support their learners by empowering them with knowledge to understand themselves better (Babedi, 2013). This involves gaining an understanding of the adolescents' behavioural and emotional challenges by assessing their present and past context as well as all the relevant role-players in the child's educational life—a task that can be simplified by accessing the learner's academic records and implementing an individual improvement plan.

2.6.3 Parental programme

Parental involvement is crucial for children's performance in school (Harbour, 2015) and family support is key in assisting adolescents with their challenges (Petersen et al., 2010). The correlation between parental support and adolescent success with their various activities has been widely recognized (Cozett et al., 2016; Petitpas et al., 2005; Steca et al., 2011). Ten protective factors that were identified as buffering youth from risk factors were: effective parenting; connections to non-parental adults; their appeal to others (particularly to adults); intellectual skills; their talents and accomplishments as valued by others; self-efficacy, self-worth and hopefulness; religiosity; socio-economic advantages; school and community assets; and fortuitous circumstances (Bernat & Resnick, 2006).

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed background of Muslim schools and expounded on Islamic education and its key objectives. It further discussed the history of the *hifth* tradition in Cape Town and defined and explored what *hifth* is all about. Furthermore, it described the MJC's Academic Programme in order to provide an understanding of the landscape and developments that *hifth* learners have to undergo. The subject of adolescence was then explored, followed by a description and explanation of psychosocial and emotional challenges experienced by adolescents. The review concluded with a discussion on the general challenges experienced by

adolescents, the coping strategies they employ, and the various categories of support available to them during their schooling career to help them achieve their ambitions.

This study will contribute to the limited body of research on *hifth* and particularly *hifth* learners' psychosocial and emotional challenges, an area that, as indicated in the above review, is under-explored. It will further highlight the needs of *hifth* learners and serves as a means to create awareness among teachers and parents, accentuating the pivotal role they play in the holistic development and success of these learners.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Chapter 2 explored the existing literature pertaining to *Hifth* schools, Islamic education and psychosocial and emotional challenges experienced by adolescents. It further expounded on research studies pertaining to coping strategies and support mechanisms employed by learners. A theoretical framework for the study was provided.

In this chapter, the research design will be discussed and a detailed account of the data collection methods, data analysis and interpretation procedures followed will be provided. Finally, the quality criteria and ethical considerations adhered to within the current study will be discussed.

This study employed a qualitative methodological framework as it aimed to explore the participants' subjective experiences and in-depth accounts of their psychosocial and emotional challenges. A qualitative methodology is appropriate as it is concerned with "developing an understanding of the meaning and experience" of individuals' social worlds and lives (Fossey et al., 2002, p. 717). According to De Vos et al. (2011), the qualitative approach to research concentrates on understanding social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life. It is a strategy for gaining the insights into the *hifth* learners' views, perceptions, opinions, feelings and beliefs within their natural setting—their school. Qualitative approaches elicit a wealth of exhaustive information through the study of a limited number of participants, increasing the understanding of the studied subject (Mouton, 2009).

3.1 Research design

This study took on an exploratory research design to explore the *hifth* learners' psychosocial and emotional challenges while undertaking their studies. An exploratory design is preferred for studies that concern exploring and answering questions about the complex nature of phenomena on a topic for which relatively little scientific knowledge exists, with the aim of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participants' perspective (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). An exploratory design was therefore selected owing to the lack of scientific knowledge regarding the psychosocial and emotional challenges experienced by *hifth* learners. It allowed the researcher to explore the psychosocial and emotional challenges that these learners experience. In this way the present study contributed to fulfilling the exploratory aspect by providing significant insights into these learners' experiences and simultaneously forming the basis for further research in relation to this topic.

3.2 Research context

This study was conducted at six *Hifth* schools in Cape Town in the Western Cape. The schools were registered with the MJC-WCED Academic Support programme and/or directly with the WCED. The schools were located in three socio-economic (low, middle and upper-income) diverse communities. The motivation for the final selection of the six participating schools was that they offered access to learners from different social class backgrounds and that they offered their learners an integrated programme. The schools were located in Vanguard Estate, Sherwood Park, Lotus River, Ottery, Schaapkraal and Lansdowne. Low socioeconomic status (SES) households "have little income or wealth to buffer against the negative impacts of an adverse health event (health shock) among adult household members" (Leonard et al., 2018, p. 1). The low SES communities are situated on the Cape Flats, which is characterised by high levels of poverty and unemployment, community violence, substance use, poor infrastructure, and low levels of education (Savahl, 2010). Middle and upper socio-economic communities have more income, better infrastructure and access to more resources (Savahl, 2010). The diverse sampling approach ensured that children from diverse cultural and geographical locations participated in the study. This was important to provide more diverse inputs into the study. Their experiences and challenges may differ due to their backgrounds. There is general acknowledgement amongst researchers that children residing in varying socioeconomic backgrounds may display dissimilar and varied experiences of childhood (Jenks, 2004).

3.3 Participants

A total of 24 participants were selected to participate utilizing purposive sampling. Twenty-four learners (12 males and 12 females) between the ages of 11 and 15 years were selected from six *Hifth* schools in the Western Cape. Dworkin (2012) suggests that the selection of anywhere from five to 50 participants is an adequate sample size for qualitative studies. This is based on factors such as "the quality of data, the scope of the study, the nature of the topic, the amount of useful information obtained from each participant, and the qualitative method and study design used" (Morse, 2000, p. 1).

Participants were purposively selected as they were selected based on specific criteria (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The following eligibility criteria applied for learner participants:
1. Between the ages of 11 and 15 years or grades 5 and 9
2. Must have studied *hifth* during 2018 and 2019

The motivation for these criteria was to include learners who were of compulsory school-going age, as set by WCED, and who were in the adolescent developmental stage. According to the South African Schools' Act of 1996, all children between the ages of 7 and 15 or grade R and grade 9 (whichever comes first) must receive schooling, and the entry-level of adolescence is 11 years old (Louw & Louw, 2014). The research therefore focused on learners between the ages of 11 and 15 years. In addition to the above criteria, learners were selected from different levels in the *hifth* programme to allowed for a diversity of experience and information to be shared. Purposive sampling is employed when the researcher wants to select a sample that represents a broad group of closely connected cases (Teddlie & Yu, 2007) and to choose participants who have experience and knowledge of the research topic (Tongco, 2007). The exclusion criteria for this study were as follows: learners who were 10 years old and younger, or older than 15; learners who did not study *hifth* during 2018 and 2019.

Three additional learners who met the inclusion criteria were recruited and interviewed to pre-test the interview schedule to assess language appropriateness for the target audience and whether there was any ambiguity in the questions.
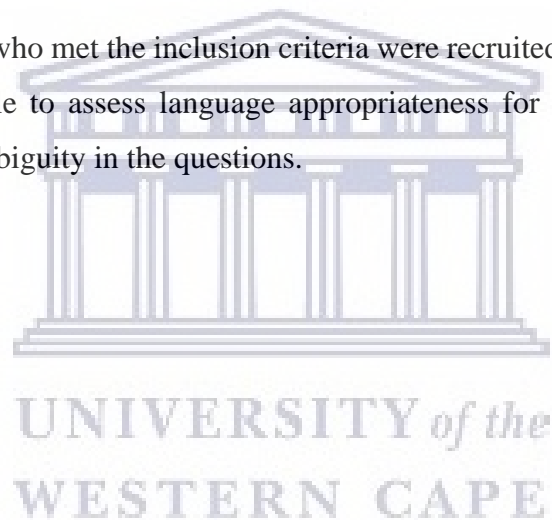
Table 3.1: Participant details

Learner	Sex	Age	Grade	No. of years studying *hifth*
A	M	11	5	2
B	M	15	6	1½
C	M	14	9	2
D	F	12	7	3
E	F	13	8	1
F	F	15	9	2
G	M	12	6	2
H	F	12	6	6
I	M	14	7	4
J	F	15	9	5
K	F	15	10	3
L	F	13	8	4
M	M	14	7	3
N	F	15	7	4
O	F	15	9	2
P	F	14	8	4
Q	M	12	6	1
R	M	15	8	3
S	F	13	7	3
T	M	15	9	6
U	M	15	9	5
V	M	12	6	2
W	M	11	5	1
X	F	12	5	3

Table 3.1 provides the demographic information of the participants. The study included 12 female and 12 male participants between the ages of 11 and 15. Participants' academic grade levels were between grade 5 and grade 10. The participants' number of years studying *hifth* varied between 1 and 6 years. With year 1 being their first year and subsequent years not necessarily reflecting the number of years of seniority, however, it reflected the number of years that they were studying *hifth* at the time of the research. All the participants were learners registered at *Hifth* schools in Cape Town. All participants' names were changed into pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity.

3.4 Data collection and procedure

Once ethics clearance was granted from the Humanities and Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape, permission was sought from the WCED to conduct the study

at the schools. Thereafter, the MJC was approached to provide a list of *Hifth* schools in the Western Cape and to confirm access to the list of schools willing to participate in the study. Once permission was granted by the MJC, the researcher approached the selected schools and met with the principals and/or Management Boards to request permission to conduct the research at the schools. Upon receiving permission from Management, the principals of the selected schools assisted with the recruitment of participants for the study. The researcher, together with the principal, promoted the study to the selected learners and requested volunteers. In cases where there were not enough volunteers, the principal was approached to identify additional participants for the research. An initial session was then held with the selected potential participants and their parents and they were informed about the purpose and the aim of the study, what their participation would entail, and the core ethical principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. Participants and their parents were then issued with information sheets (Appendix C), assent forms (Appendix A) and parent consent forms (Appendix B), respectively. They were advised to read the documents and ask questions about and points on which they required clarity. Once the potential participants and their parents had read through the documents and understood all of the information, they were asked to sign the consent forms. Only learners who signed the assent form (Appendix A) and received parental consent were allowed to participate in the study.

Data was then collected by means of in-depth, semi-structured individual interviews until saturation was reached. Data saturation is ensured by providing participants with questions that produce data that is rich in information and adequately addresses the objectives of the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The learner interviews were scheduled at times that were most convenient for the learners and agreed upon by the principal. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and an hour and took place at the school in a private room or area. The learners were welcomed to the interview and the researcher ensured that they were comfortable before the interview commenced. They were reassured that the interview was confidential and that they could terminate the interview at any time if they were uncomfortable with any of the questions. Throughout the interviews, the mood of the participants was positive, as evidenced by the fact that they were willing to share their experiences. The researcher at all times remained open-minded and aware of the participants' views expressed. One or two indicated that they were nervous at first but felt relaxed as the interview proceeded. The researcher tried to put the participants at ease by emphasising that the interview questions were not an examination, but

rather based on their own experiences and that they were not being judged. The researcher only proceeded with the interview once the participant was at ease. The participants were at times shy and only answered the questions they were asked. In these cases the researcher utilised probing questions to illicit more information from the participants. In some instances, the researcher rephrased what the participants shared to ensure that the participant was understood correctly. If the researcher required clarity or more information with regard to any of the responses after the interview was concluded, a follow-up interview was held with the respective participants. In the cases where follow-up interviews were required, the researcher liaised with the respective school principals to conduct the interviews. There were four follow-up interviews conducted.

The interview schedule (Appendix D) comprised two sections. Section A sought demographic information such as age, grade, number of years studying *hifth,* and area they resided in. Section B contained the interview schedule with twelve open-ended questions on topics such as the challenges that they experienced, how they coped with these challenges, and the support that they received and that they felt they required. Questions for the interview schedule were guided by the literature and theory as well as the broader research questions. Semi-structured individual interviews are used to aid a focused exploration of a specific topic by using an interview guide which contains a list of open-ended questions and prompts designed to guide the interview in a focused, yet flexible and conversational manner (Fossey et al., 2002; Jamshed, 2014). The interview schedules consisted of exploratory questions; however, as mentioned above, the researcher asked more filler questions as the interview proceeded.

Upon completion of the interview, the researcher thanked the participant for their time and asked whether they would like to add anything or if they had any questions. Any questions or comments that were conveyed by the participants were well received by the researcher and were responded to appropriately. This was followed by individual debriefing sessions with the learners to assess how they experienced the interview and whether they required counselling or further intervention. One participant required counselling due to becoming emotional when she shared a particular challenge that she experienced during her studies. The researcher, who is a registered counsellor, provided counselling before she continued with the interview and did follow-up counselling to ensure that the participant was feeling better. The sessions terminated when her class teacher indicated that she was feeling better and that she did not require further intervention. There were no other participants who required counselling.

All the interviews were audio-recorded as permission was granted by all the participants. Thereafter, these recordings were transcribed verbatim and the texts were analysed. The audio files and transcripts were stored on a secure computer that was only accessible by the researcher and the supervisor. After the interviews were conducted, regular debriefing sessions were held with the supervisor to discuss the outcomes and reflect on the interviews.

Prior to the main study, three interviews were conducted to pre-test the research instrument to assess the validity, highlight any possible flaws in the questions, assess language appropriateness for the target audience, determine whether each question elicited an adequate response, and record the time taken to complete an interview. According to Dikko (2016), one way to ensure the validity of a research study is to pre-test the research instrument. Furthermore, Babbie and Mouton (2011) advise pre-testing the research instrument to minimise errors such as ambiguous questions and questions that are not understood by the participants. Three learners meeting the inclusion criteria of the participants were selected and interviewed. Subsequent to the pre-testing, the interview schedule was adjusted slightly for the younger learners to include more simplified questions and more probing questions. During the pre-testing, the younger participants did not always understand the questions and struggled with a few of the words being used. Questions 3, 5, 7 and 11 were simplified and adjusted to be more probing. Question 3 was made more probing by changing it from "Are you faced with any challenges? If so, what are they?" to "Are you faced with any challenges? If so, what are they? Explain each challenge. Does learning *hifth* and academic subjects pose any challenges to you? If so what are they?" In question 5, examples of feeling sick were added to make it clearer for the younger participants. The question was changed from "Do you feel that you get sick often?" to "Do you feel that you get sick often (headaches, stomach cramps, backaches, etc.)? Please explain." Question 7 was made more probing by changing it from "What kind of support do you get from family, school, friends or others? Please explain each one and how can it be improved" to "What kind of support do you get from family, school, friends or others or from technology (audio devices, Qur'an apps, etc.)? Please explain each one and how can this be improved? What do you need? Is there anything at school/home that can be improved upon? Please explain." Lastly, question 11 was simplified and changed from using the word role-model to asking the participants whether they think people around them admired them. The question was changed from "Do you hope to be a role-model to other Muslims and non-Muslims? If so, in which way?" to "Do you think that people admire you and look up to you? How do you feel about it?"

Overall, the interview schedule was adjusted to make it more comprehensible, and therefore questions were simplified with language that was more understandable to younger children.

3.5 Data analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research involves "identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveals" (DeVos et al., 2011). For the purpose of this research, the researcher utilised in-depth interviews in which the participants shared their experiences pertaining to their challenges, coping strategies, and support mechanisms. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed using the thematic analysis method outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013). This qualitative analytic method is extensively used within psychology (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis "acknowledges the ways individuals make meaning of their experience, and, in turn, the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings, while retaining focus on the material and other limits of reality" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 9). Furthermore, it is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Braun and Clark (2006) identify six phases of thematic analysis: familiarising yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes and organizing them, refining themes, defining and naming themes, and lastly, producing a report which provides a logical and coherent account of the themes. The following six-step process was employed in the data analysis in order to ensure rigour:

Phase 1: Familiarizing yourself within your data

The audio recordings of the interviews were first transcribed and thereafter the researcher immersed herself in the data by repeatedly reading and re-reading the transcripts. This allowed the researcher to become familiar with the content of the data and gain a deeper understanding of the nature of the comments. The researcher made notes and captured early impressions. Immersion involves searching for meaning and patterns by "repeated reading" and reading the data in an "active" way (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). Braun and Clarke (2013) suggest that it is imperative that researchers immerse themselves in the data to get a deep understanding of it, and they advise that researchers read through it at least once before beginning to code the data.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

To allow the researcher to organize the data in a meaningful and systematic way (Braun & Clarke, 2013), the data were coded manually. The researcher worked through each transcript

coding every segment of text that seemed to be relevant to or specifically addressing the research questions. Patterns in the data that were important and interesting pertaining to the research questions were then highlighted. The researcher then created conceptual codes from the data which were refined after the second round of coding. Subsequently, the researcher grouped the codes into categories, which were then developed into themes. The provisional codes were generated from the conceptual framework of the study, the literature review, the research questions and the researcher's own knowledge and experience. It is important to code as many meaningful segments as possible to reduce the chance of losing any potential theme (Ando et al., 2014).

Phase 3: Searching for themes

Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that a theme encapsulates something important about the data with regard to the research question and "represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (p. 10). A theme is characterized by its significance (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The researcher went about this process by naming codes and briefly describing what each code entailed. Thereafter, some of the different codes were combined as they clearly fitted together and formed overarching themes. At this point, the researcher gave overarching themes preliminary names. At the end of this step the codes had been organized into broader preliminary themes.

Phase 4: Refining themes

This phased involved reviewing themes by refining themes so that data within themes are coherent (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher then reviewed, modified and developed the preliminary themes that were identified in Phase 3. The data within the themes had similar meanings and there were clear and identifiable distinctions between the themes. At this stage the individual themes were reviewed to ensure that they reflected the meanings that were evident in the data set as a whole. This was accomplished by re-reading the entire data set to identify any code that may have been missed in the early coding stages. At the end of this stage the researcher had an idea of what the different themes were, how they fit together, and the overall story they told (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

By defining and naming themes, Braun and Clarke (2013) suggest, the researcher identifies the essence of what each theme is about and determines what aspect of the data each theme captures. To ensure that the researcher fulfilled this criterion, she captured a detailed analysis

of what each individual theme encompassed and whether the individual themes contained sub-themes. Sub-themes are essentially "themes within a theme" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). At the end of this phase, the researcher identified concise, punchy names for each theme and sub-theme which were used in the final write-up and report.

Phase 6: Producing a report

Producing the report provides a concise, logical, and coherent account of the story the data tells within and across themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This phase began once the researcher fully understood the themes and commenced with the report. The report is discussed in Chapter 4 and provides sufficient evidence of the themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.6 Trustworthiness

To ensure that this study complied with trustworthiness, the four criteria identified by Guba (1981)—namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability—were adhered to. Credibility refers to the assurance that the study measures what it is intended to measure (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). This was ensured by frequent debriefing sessions with the supervisor, triangulation, documenting the findings, member checks and peer debriefing. Where necessary, the researcher also had follow-up interviews with the candidates to ensure that she understood them correctly.

Transferability refers to the generalisation of findings to other settings or groups, which was ensured by providing detailed information about the researcher as an instrument, the research context, procedures, and participants.

Dependability refers to whether the study will produce the same or similar results if it were repeated, with the same or similar subjects in the same or similar context (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). This was ensured by keeping an audit trail (a detailed account of research activities and processes) and the examination of analytic memos by the supervisor.

Conformability refers to the findings being the product of the focus of enquiry and not the biases of the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). This was achieved through an audit trail and the management of subjectivity (Morrow, 2005).

3.7 Ethics

The ethics considered and adhered to for this study were laid down by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape. Researchers obtain appropriate approval from host institutions or organizations prior to

conducting research (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). After permission was granted by the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape (Ref No.: HS 19/5/19) (Appendix G), permission was sought from the WCED (Appendix F), MJC (Appendix H) and Principals of the schools (Appendix E) to access the participants. All learners under the age of 18 who participated were required to complete an assent form (Appendix A) and their parents were required to complete a parent consent form (Appendix B). Only the participants who received consent from their parents and signed the assent form were allowed to participate in the research. In accordance with the South African Constitution of 1996, adolescents (under the age of 18) are viewed as minors, and therefore informed consent must be obtained from parents or guardians, as well as the adolescents, prior to participation in the study.

Information sheets (Appendix C) were provided to the participants and their parents during the information sessions held at the respective schools, and participants were informed of the nature of the study as well as their rights as participants in the research process, including the option to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequence. The researcher assured the participants that their opinions would be respected, irrespective of whether they were controversial or not. The researcher upheld confidentiality by not allowing anyone except the supervisor to have access to the research records or the participants' personal information. Furthermore, the participants' identity was protected by anonymity by using pseudonyms when referring to them in the study. The researcher hence endeavoured to uphold and respect the privacy of all participants at all times (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2010). The participants were also informed that the interview transcripts and audio recordings would be stored on a computer that is password protected and the raw data would be stored in a safe, locked cabinet for five years. Transcriptions will be shredded and the computer information will be permanently deleted from the computer at the end of the five-year period. The participants were assured of the absence of any form of deception or potential harm (De Vos et al., 2011). Once the interviews were concluded, debriefing sessions were held with the participants to ascertain how they experienced the interviews and to assess whether counselling was required. The researcher ensured that she respected the rights of the participants during the interview process as the study dealt with sensitive and emotional issues. Furthermore, the participants were referred to a registered counsellor or a psychologist when needed at no cost to the participant.

3.8 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a method in qualitative research by which researchers can validate their research practices (Pillow, 2003), which is vital to the integrity of qualitative research. It is seen as an essential process whereby researchers continuously reflect on how their own values, perspectives, and actions have an influence on the research setting and can affect both data collection and data analysis (Gerrish & Lacey, 2006).

The researcher is a Muslim and has experience working in a *hifth* environment for 13 years. The researcher therefore remained mindful of this throughout the research process. Journaling and recording one's feelings, thoughts, and activities linked to the process aids in developing self-awareness and turning back on one's initial biases (McGhee, Marland & Atkinson, 2007). To ensure that the participants' voices were captured, the researcher constantly reflected on her feelings and gave the participants the role of experts in this subject area. Follow-up interviews were held with the participants to clarify if the researcher had understood what they meant. The researcher recorded her feelings and actions in a journal and had regular discussions with her supervisor to minimize any biases, which helped the researcher to engage in self-reflection and to regain perspective when it was needed.

This chapter provided a detailed description of the research process undertaken by the researcher by providing sufficient information relating to the choice of methodological approach, specific research methods, the research context and participants, as well as how the researcher maintained the reliability and validity of the study, and lastly how the researcher upheld ethical considerations throughout the research process. The following chapter focuses on the results of the study by providing a detailed discussion of the themes that emerged within the data, followed by a discussion section which covers the main findings of the study in relation to previous research findings.

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, the reasons for using qualitative research were discussed. Thereafter, the research design, the research context and the details of the participants were discussed. This was followed by a detailed explanation of the data collection and procedure. Furthermore, an explanation of the data analysis was provided through thematic content analysis. Lastly, adherence to quality criteria and ethical considerations within the study were discussed.

In Chapter 4, the results of the study are presented by describing the data-generating content and discussing themes and sub-themes that emerged subsequent to the thematic analysis process.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we discussed the research processes that guided this study, and the type of research design and data collection methods employed to conduct this study were then presented. In the final analysis, we discussed the perspective of the researcher as well as the description of ethical considerations and the methodological rigor that were adhered to.

In this chapter, an overview of the research process and its context will be presented. The research results will also be presented in terms of the themes and sub-themes that emerged subsequent to the analysis of the data obtained from the individual interviews. The results are informed by the aim of this study, which is to explore and examine the psychosocial and emotional challenges that *hifth* learners face and to examine coping strategies and support mechanisms to improve their whole learning process and experience. The study was informed by the following objectives:

a) To explore the barriers and enablers that adolescent *hifth le*arners experience in terms of psychosocial and emotional aspects when undertaking an integrated *hifth* programme.

b) To examine and explore, from the perspective of learners, the coping strategies they employ to complete their studies.

c) To explore the types of support available and the support required.

4.2 Presentation of the results

In this section, themes and sub-themes of the study identified through thematic analysis of the data are discussed, as depicted in the diagrammatic representation, figure 2 below:
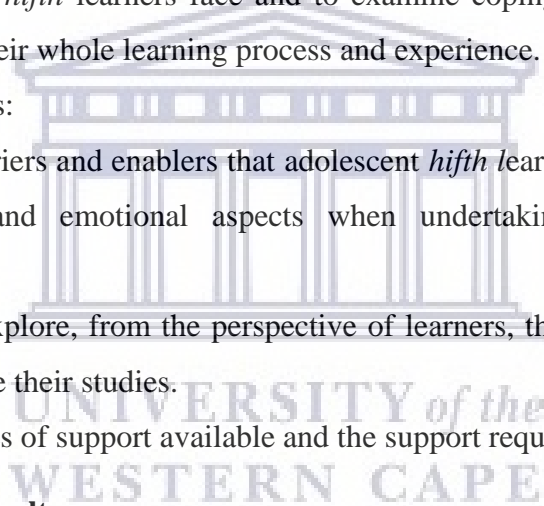
Table 4.1: Themes and sub-themes
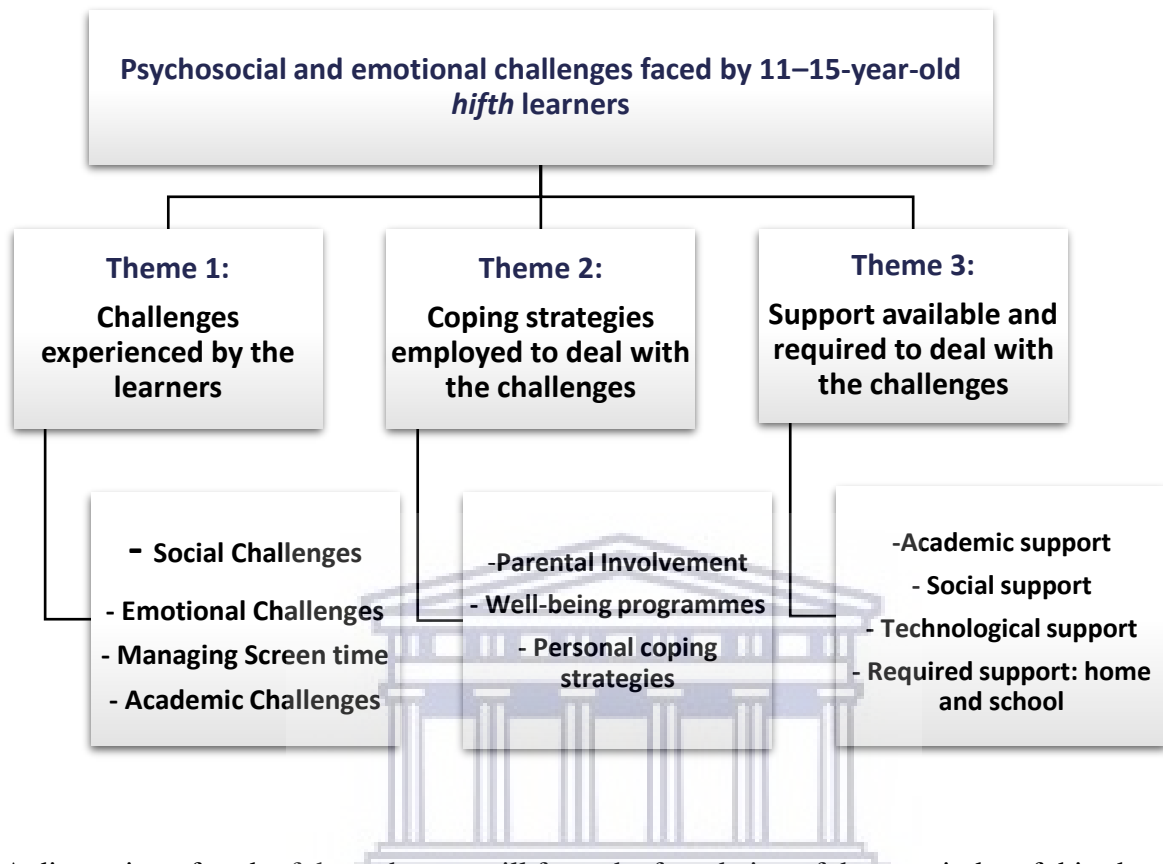
A discussion of each of these themes will form the foundation of the remainder of this chapter, with each main and subtheme illustrated and supported by intelligent quotations from the interviews. To strengthen the integrity of the data, some of the quotes selected from the original data are provided. These quotations ground the data in the authentic voices of the participants. Only quotations that provided a practical explanation of ideas, as well as the utmost clarification of the participants' subjective experiences and maximum representation of their feelings, were included. In presenting the intelligent quotations, various minor alterations have been made to make them more readable. Insignificant hesitations, word repetitions and utterances such as "uhm" and "aaa" have generally been removed. Missing information is indicated by dotted lines within brackets (…), and where information has been added (i.e. to explain what a participant is referring to), it is presented within square brackets […]. Information that is in Arabic or Afrikaans is also translated within square brackets […]. Dotted lines appearing at the beginning or end of a quotation indicate that the person was talking prior to or after the quotation.

4.2.1 Theme 1: Challenges experienced by the learners

The participants were asked whether they experienced any challenges relating to psychosocial and emotional challenges whilst learning *hifth*. Participants were also asked about the sacrifices that they were required to make and how they perceived it when it manifested itself as a challenge. The responses of the participants in relation to psychosocial and emotional challenges can be categorized into the following sub-themes: social, emotional, managing screen time and academic.

4.2.1.1 Sub-theme: Social challenges

In this sub-theme, the participants expressed concerns about mounting pressure from social challenges such as peer pressure to conform to the societal expectations of *hifth* learners. Adolescents are affected by societal expectations (Meyer et al., 2008), and a conducive environment where they receive the necessary support and acknowledgements leads to a balanced and morally good individual (Friend, 2008). Furthermore, adolescents show a desire for acceptance by their peers (Louw & Louw, 2014). For these participants, being *hifth* learners required them to conform to certain societal expectations, including dressing a certain way and behaving in a morally correct way. Social expectations demand that they not behave like 'typical' adolescents, i.e. adolescents who may have girlfriends/boyfriends, listen to music, smoke, or be involved in any risky/deviant behaviour. Many of the participants felt that they could not always uphold these expectations and that it was at times difficult for them to adjust and meet these expectations.

Furthermore, the participants felt pressured by their families' expectations of them. Parents and other family members tend to set expectations around their progress. They felt pressured if they did not fulfil these expectations. Participants felt that there was an expectation from their parents that all work needed to be learnt and revised daily and that parents did not empathise with them if they did not know their work.

Participants who were given responsibilities to look after siblings complained that it took up a lot of their revision time, especially if the childminding was predominantly done after school. Due to parents working, they were given responsibilities to look after their siblings while their parents were at work.

Many participants also felt that their non-*hifth* friends did not understand what they were going through. They expected them to still be involved in the activities and social events that they used to be involved in before learning *hifth*, such as going to parties, going to movies, and

hanging out with them. *Hifth* learners' time is very limited and they tend to sacrifice these lifestyles to focus on their *hifth* studies. The majority of the participants felt that their non-*hifth* friends did not understand this. They felt that their old friends tended to be critical of their new lives and to criticize them, and this usually resulted in them giving up those friendships. Some of the participants stayed in contact with old friends but did not necessarily socialize with them, although they still followed them on social media. These experiences are discussed below and categorized under family and societal expectations, socializing, and dealing with peer pressure.

4.2.1.1.1 Family and societal expectations

One of the primary societal expectations that female participants identified in their responses was adherence to an Islamic dress code. This involved wearing clothing that was typically used to perform religious rituals like prayer or when attending a religious gathering at a mosque or madrassa. In this study, some participants felt that the clothing was also an identifier of them as *hifth* students and distinguished them from other teenagers. Their clothes usually look like long robes, and for female learners, are commonly black in colour and include a headpiece to cover the hair. The participants added that for *hifth* students the etiquette requirement to be observed in social or public life is different from that which governs the conduct or behaviour of mainstream adolescents. They were not allowed to "talk too loud" or dress in an "un-Islamic" manner. Female learners were expected to wear scarves when they were in public and not to wear revealing clothing. They were not allowed to have boyfriends or girlfriends. These behaviours were considered not becoming of a learner undertaking *hifth* studies.

Another pressure point is the constant inquiries from their family and parents regarding their memorization progress. The following quotations from some of the participants depict how they feel regarding these societal and family expectations:

"Man, like everyone's like when I started my hifth, everyone was like, 'oh, you're a hifth child, start dressing appropriately and start wearing scarves and all that stuff.' It's like a lot…a lot was expected of you when you're a hifth child or hifth student…" (Learner F, female, 15 years old)

"I do feel that it's wrong sometimes, but sometimes I do want to fit in and be normal like other girls…I think like people that don't know what hifth is or not that doesn't know what it is, just that they haven't done it before, they maybe be more understanding towards it and realise that…I don't know…you just got to be normal." (Learner K, female, 15 years old)

"And it's like, then I wouldn't mind if my hair would come out at school but, like, now I just feel like I need to cover my hair because I have that title of a hifth student…" (Learner O, female, 15 years old)

Participants also complained about the pressure that they experience when family members or their parents expect them to perform better or to achieve higher results than they have achieved. This seems to add to the general stress and pressure. They felt that their parents did not understand what they were going through and did not acknowledge their efforts, as reflected by the following quotations:

"For instance, my new lesson, if I didn't know it properly then sometimes my parents would be upset or say, 'why weren't you sitting,' and sometimes ask me why weren't I sitting, and then it just puts a whole lot of pressure on me." (Learner G, male, 12 years old)

"…she [mother] *wants me to be at a certain spot in a certain week and I think that is where a lot of my stress comes in because I don't want to disappoint her but sometimes the things are hard and I think that, especially with parents today who haven't done hifth before, they have such high expectations."* (Learner K, female, 15 years old)

Participants also complained about their inability to prepare their work for the following day if responsibilities such as babysitting supervened or playing "second parent", for that matter, while their parents were at work. The following statements illustrate how they felt about these extra responsibilities:

"I can't do my work also…at alone in my room or sit alone without distractions cos I share a room with two other siblings, cos we're five siblings, so…my sister's only six months old. So, my mommy's a dressmaker, so most of the time she'll ask me to look after her. But then I say, 'mommy I must do my work.' And she likes, 'just hold her there,' and that's also a distraction." (Learner H, female, 12 years old)

"At home there is a lot of responsibility for me because I am the eldest and I have three brothers that I have to look after. My mother needs a lot of help, so I help her with the new-born baby. So, there is times that, that take a lot of my time of learning…" (Learner T, male, 15 years old)

"They're [parents] *not so much involved with what I'm doing, but they support what I'm doing basically, and my family, like, I have three brothers…so it is kind of a heavy task to be like the big sister and to be looking after…I feel like I'm the second mom, basically. I have two younger brothers that I like to spend time with, and obviously I can't always be with them, and I*

obviously have to be going over my work and all of that stuff, and I think that's also one of the biggest challenges is that my brothers…they're crazy, and I always ask my parents, can I get this half an hour or this hour just to go over my work and that they take my brothers. But my parents are working in the day and I know that I have to be the big sis around the house." (Learner J, female, 15 years old)

Having a girlfriend, one male participant reveals, is a challenge since it goes against his religious beliefs and what society and his parents expect of him. He mentioned that it was without the consent of his parents; however, she was his tower of strength during his studies and he felt reluctant to give her up:

"It does affect me sometimes when I think this is wrong, but we are all…Allah created us weak, we can't always put ourselves down, but it's very difficult, but I am very happy that I have her." (Learner T, male, 15 years old)

He acknowledged that having a relationship with a member of the opposite sex went against his religious beliefs, yet at the same he felt that he was just being 'normal' in his desire to have a girlfriend. He did not feel that his behaviour was in direct contradiction to his *hifth* studies, and in addition he expressed that he intended to marry his girlfriend when he was older. One could conclude that he knows this behaviour, which is typical of an adolescent, is seen to be a problem by society, and this participant seems to have reconciled it with and his religious beliefs by adding that he had intentions to marry her, i.e. normalising the relationship in accordance with Islamic beliefs and principles.

4.2.1.1.2 Socializing

Participants acknowledged that going out with their families, socializing with friends, and attending parties were challenges that affected their studies and therefore necessitated sacrifice if they wanted to progress. Quotes from the following participants depict their concerns:

"When I'm distracted and then I play on the phones and the iPad and stuff, and when I go out and then I don't learn my lesson." (Learner B, male, 12 years old)

"The only thing that's changed is that sometimes you can't go out with your family because you have to do Qur'an and academic work. So, something you have to sacrifice and staying at home and doing your work…because it is not that easy coping with everything, and I think it is a challenge." (Learner S, female, 13 years old)

"I manage it because…sometimes I manage it, and sometimes I can't because when I go out I can't learn, maybe go to parties and stuff, I can't learn after that. I don't want to be at school anymore…" (Learner R, male, 15 years old)

For this participant, it was very challenging to attend parties and then return to his studies without feeling despondent and demotivated. He felt that the socializing affected his desire to continue his studies. He also expressed the need to give up that lifestyle if he wanted to continue with his studies.

Many of the younger learners missed playing outside and viewed it as a huge challenge that they were required to sacrifice it for study time, as stated by these participants:

"It's hard, very hard. And it's cos I was so young. Time management is also a big thing, like it's hard to manage your time cos you want to play outside and, like, have fun also, but then you have to come inside and do your work. It's, like, hard, it's so hard." (Learner H, female, 12 years old)

"It's been hard because sometimes when you want to play outside and then you have to go inside because it's time for you to batcha [recite the Qur'an] *and then you're playing with all your cousins, and then you have to go inside."* (Learner B, male, 12 years old)

Playing outside is normal behaviour for children at this age. They enjoy it and it is a form of socialising with other children and having fun. For *fifth* learners, it is not always possible if they need to revise their lessons and/or if they don't manage their daily routine well. Included in the daily routine of a *fifth* learner is free time, when the learner can be involved in leisure activities; however, not all learners can do so if they have work to revise, and it is normally limited to short periods between study sessions.

Most of the older participants utilized social media to keep in contact with their friends and to stay updated with what was happening in their environments. The participants viewed it as a major distraction that consumed a lot of their study time and made them feel that they were missing out on things that were happening to their peers. They viewed it as especially challenging when they could not manage their time spent on social media. The following statements indicate how they felt about it:

"…for me, social media is evil. It's evil. It influences many people, including me, and I don't like it, but I can't stay away from it same time." (Learner E, female, 13 years old)

"It will be like…you know, like the distractions around like social media, people and, like, you know, someone who will be in the back of my mind like, what other people's doing and, like, what I'm doing, like I'm sitting and memorizing, and as I was in high school, like my previous friends. Like they're all in high school. It's just, like, sometimes I think about it and, like, I could also be but there, but it's never came to that point. Like when I want to tell my daddy, I don't wanna [want to] *do it anymore."* (Learner F, Female, 15 years old)

For some participants it was important to be on social media in order for them to keep up with the latest trends and developments as stated below:

"I have a Qur'an app on my phone, and obviously I am on social media and all of that, and I like to know what is going on in the world and stuff. It does take up time and most people think it is a waste of time, but you can always use social media and technology to benefit you in many ways. I think that's basically how I deal with that as a hifth student." (Learner J, female, 15 years old)

4.2.1.1.3 Dealing with peer pressure

Participants felt pressured by their friends who were not in a *hifth* programme and to whom the trials and tribulations of learning *hifth* were beyond their grasp. Participants felt more comfortable in the company of their peers who were also learning *hifth* because they provided each other with a system of support. Adolescents have a need to belong, and many of them join organized groups to gain peer acceptance and a sense of identity (Louw & Louw, 2014).

Participants residing in low SES areas indicated that their *hifth* studies seem to provide them with a positive alternative to the lure of the street gangs and other social ills. They felt compelled to discontinue their relationships with those who were not learning *hifth* and whose lifestyle runs counter to established *hifth* customs. The following quotations illustrate these feelings:

"They see us as, like, 'why are you doing that like,' or like 'why are you wearing a scarf like,' or like my friend was like that, and I would say like, 'because this is my religion. I follow what our Prophet [Messenger] *did,' and then they would get angry and they say things at me like, 'my friend, before I changed my number, like, we used to speak.' She would say, 'how you doing…your hifth…and Alhamdulillah* [praising God]*,' then I tell her like it's fine. 'Don't do that, come to high school'* [said by her friend to her]*, and then I don't know what to tell them* [non-*hifth* friends] *anymore. I enjoy what I'm doing and they* [non-*hifth* friends] *don't*

understand. And then sometimes they [non-*hifth* friends] *tell it's boring and why you doing that…I hate that."* (Learner E, female, 13 years old)

"…sometimes, like, I wouldn't want to wear it because, like…you know…like, the people and, like, some people will, like, say, like, this and this and, like, judge you and all that stuff…because when I go out to the mall and with my mommy and them, like whoever, and then I feel so because everyone around you is like wearing this and, like, you know the girls have, like, their hair out and they like all this stuff, and I like there with my scarf on, and it's just, sometimes I feel so, like, uncomfortable, like I would feel like, but if I go out with my friends and we all have our stuff and I would feel, like, comfortable, and it would be easy, but if I go out with my mommy them or with my cousins and then it would be so I would, like, want to take it off. It's like I wouldn't feel comfortable." (Learner F, female, 15 years old)

In summary, the participants were negatively affected by societal and family expectations. They realized that certain sacrifices were necessary to succeed with their studies. They felt pressured by friends who were uninformed about the rigours of being a *hifth* student, their prerequisite dress code and modest behaviour. Some participants even felt that they had acquired such a taste for normal teenage activities that they did not want to study *hifth* any longer.

It is noteworthy that not one of the participants raised the issue of bullying, which is rife in mainstream schools. The only context in which bullying was raised was in relation to their experiences with their non-*hifth* peers.

4.2.1.2 Sub-theme: Emotional challenges

Participants complained about experiencing immense sadness and frustration and feeling stressed when they "struggled to get the lesson content into their head" or when they had a bad day at school. The major causes of the 'bad days' were experiencing a difficult lesson or failing to perform as per expectations. They also realized that when they experienced personal problems, they were unable to focus on their schoolwork.

4.2.1.2.1 Stress

Stress has become a devastating problem at every level, namely personal, social, and institutional (Reddy et al., 2018). Academic stress is experienced by learners who do not cope well with their studies and can be caused by factors such as perfectionism and lack of optimism (Lucky et al., 2015). *Hifth* learners strive to produce their lessons without making any mistakes

or with minimal mistakes (Coombes, 2013). This necessitates a very high level of performance, and if a learner is unable to do so they feel disappointed (Boyle, 2006). Due to these high expectations, some of the challenges participants complained of included health and emotional issues such as headaches and emotional distress, which resulted in crying, as well as immense sadness and stress. They also seemed unable to proceed with their studies if they did not resolve it. This is illustrated in the following statements:

"...I felt sad because I used to cry a lot, but then...like, I basically felt sad because...something would tell me you shouldn't do this, that this isn't for you, but then there's another side of me saying, 'you can do it, just push yourself,' and here I am today, I'm still sitting here and I'm happy." (Learner E, female, 13 years old)

"Yes, maybe every third or second day I get maybe like a headache, then I feel like I need to lie down. On those days I just sleep a bit earlier and wake up earlier, and then I sleep earlier, so then I can wake up in the morning and do my work. Say, when I have a headache or when I'm not feeling too good, I can't really concentrate to get the work in my head."

He further explained that:

"...if I had a hard day or a rough day and I come back, and I feel like I didn't accomplish what I was meant to accomplish, then I just feel so much stress on me. By the time I get home and the day is over then I just have this headache that's so painful. I just can't take it sometimes. But eventually I get through it." (Learner G, male, 12 years old)

"I throw up when I stress, and my stomach gets sore. I just can't think, like, properly. Like I can sit there, I would be trying to be learning, but I'm just reading but nothing is going into my head." (Learner K, female, 15 years old)

"When the work starts becoming difficult, you start stressing, headaches, you feel sick...like you start feeling sick your brains." (Learner U, male, 15 years old)

Another participant explained how she felt when she did not know her work:

"...I'll just cry myself out." (Learner H, female, 12 years old)

One participant attributed her stress to teachers who pushed her too hard to excel. Her situation changed for the better when she relocated to a school where she received more support from the teachers, as indicated by the following statement:

"You know, actually, at my old school I used to get sick so much. I was working myself sick and stressing so much because I had this teacher and she would push everyone to the best of their abilities. And sometimes she wouldn't realise that maybe it's a breaking point and maybe this isn't healthy for the student, and it is not…it is obviously not good to stress so much about anything that you're doing. I spent three years with her, and in that time I would get sick constantly because I was stressing myself sick, and now that I came to the [name of school] *it's been…I think it's been way better."* (Learner J, female, 15 years old)

Participants also attributed their stress to having extra-mural activities after school, such as belonging to a choir groups or sports club. Participants felt that they had to give up these activities if they wanted to succeed in their studies. The sports clubs normally required that they attend practice sessions during the week and then match days over the weekend. This impacted on their study time. Choir practices also impacted on participants' study time, hence following complaint:

"Yes, and other stress when I have other extra-murals, like sometimes I do nasheets [Islamic song]*, but then I'm stressing about the concert or something…or the day before I'm reciting my juz, like today, and I also tend to be very nervous."* (Learner G, male, 12 years old)

Many of the participants expressed similar experiences to those mentioned above. What emerges quite clearly is that the common emotional problems experienced by them are stress, headaches, vomiting and emotional turmoil, especially when confronted with a challenging lesson, and these have detrimental effects on their studies. The pressure exerted by teachers as well as extra-mural classes also impacted negatively on their experiences and led to emotional turmoil and demotivation. In some cases, participants expressed an impetuous/irrational/injudicious desire to throw in the towel on account of lagging behind or not being able to focus. Some sought intervention in the form of medication to address their health problem. They spoke of taking a rest or taking medication. They also sought assistance from concerned teachers, which helped them to remain focused on their studies. Most participants confirmed that they experienced various amounts of stress because of the demands of the programme.

4.2.1.2.2 Personal challenges

Some participants had to endure the loss of a loved family member, whilst others got caught up in the middle of their parents' marital problems; these situations impacted negatively on their learning processes. The demotivation brought about by lagging behind as a result of their

inability to effectively focus on their work rendered them susceptible to dropping out of the programme. This is illustrated in the following comments:

"My grandma passed away. My mind was whole time on that my grandma is not anymore here. So, my mind wasn't on the Qur'an anymore. So, it got hard. So, I thought I don't want to do this anymore." (Learner I, male, 14 years old)

"The first one I could not learn at home because of TV, games and stuff. I couldn't learn, and my grandfather passed away. I could not learn after that. It took me like a month to learn again and to get to the Qur'an again and so on." (Learner R, male, 15 years old)

P: *"Things that happened in the past also is always on my mind, and that affected my work a lot, yeah."*
I: *"Things like what? What was always on your mind?"*
P: *"My mommy's miscarriage. That was always on my mind."* (Learner K, female, 15 years old)

The latter participant subsequently broke down during her interview and required counselling before the researcher was able to continue. The painful memory of her mother's miscarriage caused her emotional distress, which had distracted her and prevented her from focusing on her work. Her teacher also advised of her lack of progress as a result of her trauma.

In summary, personal problems affected the participants' academic performance negatively and necessitated that they overcome it in order to continue with their studies.

4.2.1.3 Sub-theme: Managing screen time

This sub-theme highlights challenges that the participants viewed as distractions that affected their studies. Included in these distractions are preoccupations with their smartphones, electronic tablets, gaming consoles like PlayStation, and watching television. Setting boundaries and parental control are important when adolescents use their cell phones and tablets (Hadlington et al., 2019). Although adolescents have life satisfaction, they suffer from stress and poor academic performance if they are addicted to their smartphones (Samaha & Hawi, 2016). It is therefore important for parents to manage their children's screen time.

4.2.1.3.1 Television and gaming consoles

Most participants believed that television, PlayStation, cell phones and electronic tablets were enormous distractions for them and that over-indulgence in these activities led to a lack of preparedness in their work. They felt that it was detrimental to their progress, but in cases where

they abstained from it, they experienced an improvement in their work. It was a real challenge for them to maintain a balance when they used it. Parental control was key in the successful management of their technological devices.

"There is a few stuff that is stopping me from learning hifth, because every day when I come home then my sister, my youngest sister, she also goes, she goes to the primary school of [name of school]*, she watches TV and I just…I must not think about watching TV, I must try not to get distracted, I must just learn my work."* (Learner A, male, 11 years old)

"Yeah, ever since I entered the [name of school]*, there had to be a sacrifice. So, now the rule is at my house, there is no TV during the week, only on weekends, and only after we do our work, we've recited to my parents or my sister. Yeah."* (Learner G, male, 12 years old)

What emerges quite clearly is that in cases where participants were able to dispense with their electronic devices or where parental guidance was involved, there was evidence of a marked improvement in their schoolwork.

A further testimonial that presents evidence of improved performance in their studies when their distractions were well-managed is illustrated by the following participant's statement:

P: *"Because I played a bit too much games. That's why about three weeks ago I stopped playing. I finally just left it and put it away and so I kinda* [kind of] *done with it—with playing games."*
I: *"Why did you decide to do that?"*
P: *"Because I would come home, stressed out, exhausted, just because of the day that I did not know by work."* (Learner V, male, 12 years old)

4.2.1.3.2 Cell phones and electronic tablets

Feedback from participants revealed that cell phone and electronic tablet usage is widespread among Generation Z. All the participants owned a cell phone or a tablet. There was one participant who had one that broke, and because he did not want it to interfere with his studies, he indicated that he did not want another one. There were mixed reactions about the usage of these devices: whilst some regarded them as presenting a major stumbling block to their studies, others were comfortable with them in their lives, claiming that they were able to manage them. The following statements demonstrate their sentiments:

"That is a very hard challenge if you have a phone or an iPad…try and not to play on it less than you do than normally, you know." (Learner B, male, 12 years old)

*"...because when I was on my phone, I was like, I was always on it and I used to get in trouble a lot because I'm always on my phone, and I was talking to my one friend and then...something kind of happened, and so then my mommy took my phone off and then she said I couldn't have it anymore. And then I realised, like, it's so, like, unnecessary, what I was doing, so I was just like, it's okay, I don't need it anymore." (*Learner L, female, 13 years old)

"...that's [cell phone] *a big distraction to me, a really big one. But I basically keeps me company when I'm bored, and I also use it for my work, of course. Then, how can I say, while I'm sitting with the Qur'an and then something would, like, just check your phone or, like, or there's something on YouTube or watch something on Netflix, and then I do it, right, and then the next day I come to school I don't know my work, and then I ask myself, why did I do that? But now I'm trying to work that out, and it's not working. It's so not working for me."* (Learner E, female, 13 years old)

"When I started, so I was whole time on my phone. I never used to learn my work, and then I would always get [inaudible] *by the sheikh* [male teacher]. *So, my daddy told me that he's going to take my phone away because I never know my work, and he is going to take it away, then I'm going to start learning my work again. And that's why he said he's going to take the phone away from me until I finish, then I can get my phone back."* (Learner I, male, 14 years old)

"Like, you can get a lot of haram things like social media, there's distractions to you. There's, like, YouTube. Keeps you busy from learning." (Learner U, male, 15 years old)

Those who claimed to be able to manage their cell phone usage felt that it was a benefit for them, as reflected in the following quotes:

"For...my...no...I don't think for me that my cell phone is a distraction, like I don't think so because I'm on it a lot but it doesn't affect me, like if I must say so for myself, but it doesn't affect me in any way. Like, the music and that stuff, that's another thing. I need to challenge myself to get off the music and stuff. But my cell phone and social media, no. No, I don't think so." (Learner F, female, 15 years old)

"I think in a way you can always base what you're doing and turn it into something worth your time, like your cell phone: I have a Qur'an app on my phone, and obviously I am on social media and all of that, and I like to know what is going on in the world and stuff. It does take up time and most people think it is a waste of time, but you can always use social media and

technology to benefit you in many ways. I think that's basically how I deal with that as a hifth student." (Learner J, female, 15 years old)

We can conclude from these statements that participants viewed their screen time as a need in their lives; however, if they did not manage it well—whether personally or with the assistance of their parents—it was a major distraction for them and affected their studies negatively.

4.2.1.4 Sub-theme: Academic challenges

In this sub-theme, participants expressed concern about the inclusion of academic subjects such as Mathematics and English in their curriculum. Whilst certain *Hifth* schools limited the subjects included to Mathematics and English, one *Hifth* school introduced the entire WCED syllabus. The participants at the latter school felt overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task and felt that it imposed on their *hifth* studies at times. Participants at the schools with a 'no homework policy' believed that the inclusion did not interfere with their studies and therefore enjoyed the break from their *hifth* studies when in session. In contrast, those with a full academic programme found it onerous, especially when homework was included.

Another challenge involved the methods employed by teachers in the classroom to get the learners to adjust to *hifth* studies after leaving mainstream schooling.

4.2.1.4.1 Mathematics and English classes

It was mentioned that participants who attended a school where a full WCED curriculum was active were overwrought by the heavy workload and expressed their inability to cope with their studies, especially when homework was imposed by the academic teachers. The following statements summarize how these participants felt:

"Well, sometimes the academic teachers get a bit carried away and they forget that the hifth is the priority so they'll give us too much homework or something…say we usually get two exercises for a subject, and they would forget that we also have hifth to do and they would give us, say, five. And then we try to explain to them why we couldn't finish it, they don't want to really…they just scold us out or something, but it is hard juggling the two—hifth and academics." (Learner G, male, 12 years old)

"And then coming over here you're doing academics also, and that, obviously, was way more challenging to be balancing hifth and academics, and then this year adding more academic work and prefect duties and head girl duties. So, overall, I would say my hifth journey was challenging, but so worth it. So worth it." (Learner J, female, 15 years old)

"Sometimes you like to focus on academics and then you push and push the academics, and then your Qur'an work seems difficult. It seems like, oh, I must still do Qur'an and I want to reach my goal, so I have to work harder. And now that it's close to the exams it's really difficult because you have a lot of work today and then you must also prepare for academic exams. So that's when it gets a little difficult, when you have to prepare for academic exams and hifth exams. It is a lot of pressure. It is a lot." (Learner S, female, 13 years old)

One participant who attended a 'no homework policy' school expressed dissatisfaction with the inclusion of academic subjects and found the programme unnecessary, especially when the work received was not in line with her grade level.

"When I first came here and then, like, and we were doing, like, doing the work that we were supposed to do in A. And it was nice, like I could work with my friends and we were doing projects and stuff, but like now I am getting more ajaza [chapters]*, I need more time to batcha* [recite Qur'an]*, like academic I feel like it is just a side thing, but I feel, like, bad if I get bad marks. I also have to focus on that, but I really don't have time to cos, and we doing grade 7, and I suppose to be in grade 9. So, I feel like, do I really need to do it? I know, like, it helps me in some ways, but like, in some other ways I don't really need it cos, I mean, I don't want it cos I need more time to batcha."* (Learner N, female, 15 years old)

Some participants attended extra Mathematics and English classes because they believed these subjects were being dealt with insufficiently at their *Hifth* school. The following comments illustrate how they felt:

P: *"I go to extra classes on a Saturday."*

I: *"What kind of extra classes?"*

P: *"Maths classes."*

I: *"Ok, how come you doing extra Maths classes?"*

P: *"Here at the school they don't explain so nice, so I just decided to go there."* (Learner R, male, 15 years old)

The findings indicate that the participants had concerns about their Mathematics and English classes. They viewed these subjects as important, but juggling them with their *hifth* studies was at times an arduous task. Much depended on how these subjects were implemented and whether the syllabus involved having to revise and do tasks after the class. Participants acknowledged that it was beneficial for them; however, they struggled to cope with the amount of work. On the other hand, those who came from schools where there was a 'no homework policy'

experienced it as a positive break from their *hifth* studies. Some participants at the latter schools sought extra classes because they felt that the work was not sufficient or that they were not getting work suitable for their grade level.

4.2.1.4.2 Quality of academic management

Teacher interaction with learners is critical to the learning process. In this theme, participants experienced challenges when teachers were not supportive, or the school experienced a large staff turnover within one academic year. Further distractions are caused when sudden structural changes are made to the classrooms. They complained about disruptive activities that took place during school hours. The following quotes indicate how they felt:

"Sometimes I get headaches when there is too much noise, then, like, it's hard for me to learn my work when like everybody in the class is just shouting and they making a noise, then it is very difficult for me to learn my work." (Learner A, male, 11 years old)

"There was a challenge last year when I did not expect to move over to the senior class, so for the first two years I was in the junior class, [name of class teacher] *class. So, I skipped a class and I moved over, and I was the only one that moved over. So, at first, I did not feel like I was in that class, all my friends was in the other class and I was the only one in the other class, but then my mualima* [female teacher] *helped me through it. She said that it was going to be okay, the reason that they put me there is because they want me to move faster."* (Learner P, female, 14 years old)

Participants also complained about a lack of support from their teachers:

"The one day through the week you have a bad day, then they [teachers] *will shout at you for not knowing your work, even though you can't help it. They must be hard on you, but if they tell you that there is going to be a bad day, they must understand as well that us learners also struggle sometimes, and yes, they have been through the same, so they must also understand how we feel."* (Learner D, female, 12 years old)

Furthermore, participants expressed concern about a high teacher-turnover during one academic year:

"We had a few teachers that year because we had mualima [name of teacher]*, then she left. And we had mualima* [name of teacher]*: she wasn't a really good teacher, cos she never listened to us properly. Then we had mualima* [name of teacher]*. She was a good teacher. Yes, she motivated us also."* (Learner L, female, 13 years old)

"I left that school because I wasn't progressing, and the teachers, I had three teachers and I was only there for three-quarters of the year and they weren't, like, fully committed to me as a student or the other girls because there were a lot of boys and I think they took on too many children that they couldn't handle because there wasn't enough sheiks [male teachers] *and mualimas* [female teachers] *for us. And at the end of the year, there were no mualimas* [female teachers]*, so we all had one sheikh* [male teacher]*."* (Learner K, female, 15 years old)

4.2.1.4.3 Adjusting to *hifth* studies

One of the toughest challenges that participants faced was having to adjust to *hifth* studies after leaving mainstream schooling. All acknowledged that this was a challenge for them. They grappled with the technique, methods of memorizing, and implementing a revision programme tailor-made for them to study. At the same time, they felt that assistance from their parents and teachers vastly improved their condition and contributed to their success. The following comments summarize how the participants felt:

"One day I would come to school thinking I would know my work and then, like, I don't, and then my mualima [teacher] *say, 'ok, you've got to repeat,' and then tomorrow I come and then I get another repeat, and then I feel so, like I can't do this. I feel so, like…how can I say…like…I don't want to be here anymore. That's almost how you feel. But then, so I went home, I sat with my work and, like…you basically shouldn't give up, and then you can get through the challenges."* (Learner E, female, 13 years old)

"…wouldn't know my work some time, and then sheikh [male teacher] *would skel* [scold] *me and I thought to myself, if I don't learn my work then it is not going to be good enough for me. So that was hard for me. When I started learning my work and so I learnt and learnt and learnt until I knew it, but when I come to school the next day, I used to make a lot of mistakes and then sheikh* [male teacher] *skel* [scold] *me or something. It was very hard for me."* (Learner I, male, 14 years old)

"Yes, it's not stressful also in a way because it's like you're learning Qur'an, it's so like a peaceful type of thing almost, but it's a mental game also because of how much goes into your mind every single day. It's not as much as when you go to school, you just learn sums like that you know already, and like at this school it's like new work constantly and it's…what a lot of people don't understand is like it might seem like, oh, you're just memorising it, it's easy, it's not. It's like remembering everything and, like, knowing what order each ayah [word] *comes in and what tajweed* [Qur'an rules] *you must put and where you must pull, where you must*

stop. It's like a lot that you must remember, like sometimes when you're reciting you just completely forget, and that's where it gets, like, really stressful, when it's like, 'huhh! [shocking sound] *I know my work but why is this not coming into my head?' It's like stressful and not stressful."* (Learner O, female, 15 years old)

"Especially at the start, every day I used to come home crying because I did not know how to do it. When I was younger, I did not find it very easy to recite the Qur'an. So, my mommy had to drill it into my head, so like 'ee,' when you go to the toilet and pee, and certain things you had to get and so." (Learner P, female, 14 years old)

The findings indicate that participants experienced challenges in the aspects of their extra academic classes, teacher turnover, teaching style, and last but not least, the *hifth* studies themselves. The *hifth* studies demand exacting standards (Boyle, 2006), and this is a very cumbersome task for most of the learners. They require support from their teachers and parents to cope with these challenges.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Coping strategies employed by *hifth* learners

The learning of *hifth* is a daunting task and involves high levels of stress and other challenges discussed in the previous theme. Learners employ coping strategies to assist them with these challenges. As Lucky et al. (2015) and Achour et.al. (2014) discussed regarding pressure management, coping strategies are utilized by individuals to deal with stress and other life challenges. In this theme, participants discussed the coping strategies that they employed to deal with the challenges they experienced. Four sub-themes emerged during these discussions: parental involvement, well-being programmes, personal, and academic.

4.2.2.1 Sub-theme: Parental involvement

Parents assist their children to cope with their challenges by ensuring that they do their daily revision and guiding them in their daily activities. Parental involvement is also crucial to the children's performance (Harbour, 2015). Furthermore, parents play a pivotal role in motivating and encouraging them outside the classroom. In cases where parental involvement is absent, the child is unable to cope and requires support from external service providers. Types of parental styles affect the success of the child in coping with academic work as well as other aspects of the adolescent child's life. According to participants who reside in gangster-ridden areas, their parents guided and protected them from getting involved in social ills such as gangsterism. This is indicated in the response by the following participant:

"I can't explain, they always there, they support me in everything. There are times that I feel like I can't, and I become emotional, and my mother will always say, 'you can do it. You completed the Qur'an, so what is this? This is just revising it, making it stronger.' My father will always tell me, 'you can't give up now, you put through that six years of struggle. This is just two years; this is nothing for you.' And then I will get back up and start reciting and start learning again." (Learner T, male, 15 years old)

Participants indicated that their parents assisted them with difficult lessons by utilizing creative learning techniques. As indicated by the following participant's statement:

"Especially at the start, every day I use to come home crying because I did not know how to do it. When I was younger I did not find it very easy to recite the Qur'an. So, my mommy had to drill it into my head, so like 'ee' when you go to the toilet and pee, and certain things you had to get and so." (Learner P, female, 14 years old).

Participants furthermore indicated that their parents played a huge role in motivating them, especially when they were feeling despondent and the work was difficult. The following statement by a participant summarises how many of them felt:

"At first I thought that I actually don't want to give it up at first, but then my mommy gave me a motivational speech and then I realized that this is actually for my own good and that I am going to have to do it." (Learner A, male, 11 years old).

Participants also indicated that their parents assisted them with their daily activities, as indicated in this quote by the following participant:

"It takes time and effort. I never used to always…I used to think about playing soccer outside and then I…then I just batcha my work. I just batcha it not to think of it. Knowing it. If I just think of playing soccer outside, then I just batcha it, then I don't…that's what makes it hard for me. But after that…that's when my mommy encouraged me to learn it; not to think about soccer. That's why my mommy say I can only play soccer on the weekend." (Learner I, male, 14 years old)

In summary, parental involvement in the journey of a *hifth* learners is vital to the learner's success. We can deduce from the above feedback given by the participants that their parents played an important role by assisting them with their studies, motivating them, and encouraging and guiding them to stay away from social ills.

4.2.2.2 Sub-theme: Well-being programmes

4.2.2.2.1 Leisure activities and reading

When participants were asked what they do for leisure to assist them with their studies, their responses were reading, watching movies, and using their cell phones, as indicated by this participant:

"…I feel reading is really, like, therapeutic…makes me picture the Qur'an as this, like, poetry book that has so much poetry, like from the best poet that there ever was, and it kind of make me more, like…it's more like I tell myself that Allah is the best poet, like he made this for you…almost like a rule book type of thing." (Learner O, female, 15 years old).

Other participants enjoyed relaxing with their phones or watching a movie.

"I will lay down, be busy with my phone, watching movie or whatever it is." (Learner T, male, 15 years old)

Participants were, however, aware that they could not spend long hours participating in these leisure activities and that as they progressed with their memorization of the Qur'an they would have less leisure time and would have to spend more time revising their Qur'an lessons, as indicated by this participant who was a final-year learner:

"But I think next year will be my tamat [final] *year, I will have to sacrifice more stuff, so maybe I won't be able to go out with my family that much, like read that much, but for the time being, yes. Like your first few years when you don't have that much ajaza, you still get to do the stuff you like."* (Learner N, female, 15 years old)

These well-being activities which the majority of the participants were involved in assist them to unwind. Watching television, playing computer games, and reading allowed learners to relax, and we can conclude that these activities had a positive effect on their well-being.

4.2.2.2.2 Sports and physical education

Another recreational activity that participants felt contributed positively to their well-being was sports and physical education. However, they did express concern as to the available time to do sports activities. At institutions where sports are not offered by the school, the participants joined local clubs and trained outside school hours. At some of the schools where there was a sports or physical education programme, the participants expressed that it had a positive impact on their studies. Some participants, however, complained that they were not able to continue with their sporting code due to their not receiving notification of training schedules or their

hifth teachers not allowing them to participate when they entered the *hifth* department at their institute. The following statements illustrate how the participants felt about their sports activities:

"*No, it' s better because I'm more fresh. I'm not so, like, going in front of the TV, and when you come away then you have a headache, and then you're tired because your eyes were focusing on that, then you have to do your work and then your eyes must focus again. It's better to do something else because your body's fresh.*" (Learner H, female, 12 years old)

"*During my hifth journey I have been less sporty…the school decided that we all have to be doing a sport, and the teacher, my one teacher was very good at archery. So she brought her equipment and it was actually so fun for all the students to be involved with that. And just because we've been doing the same thing day in and day out, so to have a different change it was very, very…good.*" (Learner J, female, 15 years old)

"*Yes, on Saturdays we do netball. When I first started with that it was like you, I didn't think, but it helped me with just not like the physical, also it was like fun and you on a team and like everyone is helping to get this one goal and you are not alone. It helps you with your self-esteem also, like it makes you more confidant on the field…because the week you sitting on your bum and you are not, like, you batcharing* [reciting the Qur'an] *and you sitting on one place and, like, you are not doing anything active, whatever you…but you should, because it makes you feel good you can, like, do anything, not just like small stuff. It helps you and it also makes you happy.*" (Learner N, female, 15 years old)

"*For me the sports it helps me to take my mind off something, and then after I train it makes me feel better, like it makes me feel relief and I feel like not everything has to be, like, so stressful, and not everything revolves around my Qur'an, and I can, like, still do things.*" (Learner P, female, 14 years old)

Some participants complained that they could not do sport codes:

"*Because of the hifth they don't really give you notifications, and no one else did it so I was not sure what time to go, and the mualima* [female teacher] *would not let me go to netball sometimes. So, it was very difficult, so I just stopped. I wouldn't get the notifications so I wouldn't know when they practised, so I just stopped.*" (Learner S, female, 13 years old)

"*…on a weekend, on a Saturday I play a bit of cricket. I play for a club here in Kenilworth. So, like once a week I'll go there and have some practice. Sometimes even a game. Sometimes in*

the holidays, like the September holidays now, I have tournaments then I'll go for the tournaments in holidays—play matches, sometimes in the weekend go for training. It is good because most of the time I'm inside…It helps me also to get my brain sometimes relaxed and then I can work again later." (Learner W, male, 11 years old)

"*At school we do karate. It helps me to focus…It calms me down because I like it.*" (Learner X, female, 12 years old)

The responses clearly suggest that participants were positive about the effects of participating in sports activities during their studies and they complained when they could not participate. The *hifth* studies involve mostly one activity, and that is reciting and memorizing the Qur'an, all done while sitting, which seems to be why any and all physical activity was welcomed. They also felt that it had positive effects on their self-esteem and taught them other skills, like working in a team and working towards one goal, that is winning the game.

4.2.2.3 Sub-theme: Personal coping strategies

Independent study habits, organizational skills, scheduling ability, and working autonomously are important characteristics of a successful *hifth* learner. Most of the learners' time is spent at home where they need to revise their work and produce it daily to exacting standards. Higher self-discipline than is usually demanded of school-going children is required to cope with the workload and daily programme necessary to ensure that a learner successfully completes their studies. It appeared throughout the accounts that participants implemented certain personal coping strategies to succeed with their studies. These included goal setting, time management, having a study programme, perseverance, self-discipline, self-motivation, and religiosity.

4.2.2.3.1 Goal setting

Goal setting consisted largely of targets set by the student for themselves or with the assistance of their teachers. The participants set these targets to regularly measure their progress and success. They also set the goals to motivate them to work towards achieving them. Some schools have learner general targets and others are individually designed by the teacher for each learner. This was illustrated in the following statements:

"*So at the beginning of the year we try to set a goal for the end of the year, but in the middle of the year, if we're not so close to our goal we'll maybe put it a little down, but if we're close then we'll rise it upwards.*" (Learner S, female, 13 years old)

"...like, they say it's good to have targets, like your own personal target. So, like, in my first year I was so frustrated because everyone was getting their targets. So, I was like I am going to do nine, nine in my first year. Then afterwards my daddy was like, 'look here, you can give yourself a target, but don't give yourself an impossible target and get disappointed when you don't get there because you gave yourself that target.' You must also be reasonable about it. You push yourself and you must be determined and you must give up if you really can't. You need to know beforehand, and you must keep reminding yourself." (Learner N, female, 15 years old)

This participant set unrealistically high targets for herself and realised that this only leads to disappointment. The targets and goals should be reviewed regularly and should be realistic and pegged to the learners' abilities. Participants also expressed being demotivated when they did not reach their targets, as indicated by this participant:

"...then my mualima decided we gonna [going to] *make a programme that something that we can work to and...like set a goal. At the end of the year, I reached my goal, although I was like at the end, like I was literally on a tough spot, I was just like there, and I also had exams coming up, and I was like kinda* [kind of], *it was a hard, it was a tough one."* (Learner F, female, 15 years old)

4.2.2.3.2 Time management

Participants identified time management as an important coping strategy to assist them with the workload and to protect them from distractions. The following statements depict how most of the participants managed their time:

"You just have to work your way around it and make sure...that you're spending your time wisely. You can't say you're going to be on social media and let that take up your life—or TV or cell phone—you can't. You have to set up your day-to-day...I think you always have to strategize going day to day. You can have a strategy and a method and know what you're going to be doing and spend your time wisely." (Learner J, female, 15 years old)

"So I would say, like, you have to prepare yourself to cut down on, like, distractions and whatever. And people think, like, this is good and whatever. Maybe this is good, the stuff that distract you is not necessarily bad. So, you have to see the stuff, like, or you can, like, make time, like give a specific amount of time for each thing that you would like to do." (Learner N, female, 15 years old)

"There has been challenges because everyone will say that you're not going to sit with your work, you're never going to know it, but to most of the children it just slides past them, but you can actually see that if you don't sit at least two hours then you never going to know your work." (Learner V, male, 12 years old)

Participants who managed their time well indicated that they had a study programme in place.

4.2.2.3.3 Study programme

The majority of the participants identified having a study programme or daily roster that guided them with their daily routine. Participants noted that they experienced a lack of progress if they did not adhere to their study programme. The study programme was either designed by their teachers or by the learners themselves, and their parents supervised the implementation of their programmes, especially in the case of younger participants. Older participants tend to take responsibility for the follow-through of the programme. According to the participants, the programme included study time, leisure (free) time, mealtimes and sleeping time. Some participants went into detail by including the lessons that they needed to cover during their study time, for example, learning a new lesson or revising old lessons. The following statements expresses how the participants implemented their study programmes:

"After school, when I get dropped off by my house, first of all, I get undressed into my normal clothes, then I make me something to eat, and then I go over my work from 4 o'clock till 6 o'clock, then from 6 o'clock I have free time, then at half past 6 I have supper, then I go over my work before I go to sleep, then when I wake up in the morning. When I am done getting dressed and having breakfast then I go over my work again." (Learner A, male, 11 years old)

"So, I'll come from school, I'll take a quick nap, and then I'll wake up for Asr [prayer]*, I'll make Asr* [prayer] *and then I'll sit with my work like for an hour, that's my new lesson...then maybe I'll go wash, have supper, then recent back and back lesson together, like that's just for an hour basically."* (Learner E, female, 13 years old)

"Well, my sheikh [male teacher] *has given every learner in the class a programme where you come home, you first take a, like, a 40-minute break, then you read your new lesson like a couple of times until you read it fluently, then for the next 20 minutes you read the revision of the juz, have supper break, then you come back, memorize your new lesson, and then before you go sleep you read your back lesson."* (Learner G, male 12 years old)

"[I] try to do at least two to three hours a day. So normally I'll come home, I'll have like a 15–20-minute break. I'll do about 45-minute session which is my new work. Then I'll have another break which I most probably pray Asr [prayer time] *and then I'll do another session, another 45 minutes. Have supper, pray Maghrieb* [prayer time] *and then I'll do another hour to 45 minutes. So I try to do that. Also, in the morning, before Fajr* [prayer time]*, like normally 5 o'clock, I'll wake up, I'll do 45 minutes to one hour just to prepare my new lesson, like get it solid."* (Learner W, male, 11 years old)

4.2.2.3.4 Perseverance and resilience

All the participants indicated that learning the Qur'an was difficult and required diligence and perseverance. They were required to learn a technique for memorizing, and some lessons were more difficult than others. The techniques varied from person to person, and learners usually tried various techniques before they could do it successfully. These techniques are given to them either by their teachers or their fellow learners in their class. The learner will undergo a trial-and-error process to ascertain which technique is suitable for them. The process of learning their lesson daily then begins and undergoes various stages of difficulty throughout the learning period. The following participants expressed their diligent approach towards lessons that they found very difficult to memorize:

"Like you will struggle and you won't know it for a few days, and then after that, after going over it multiple times, you will know it better than all the other lessons because you struggled on that lesson." (Learner S, female, 13 years old)

"Quite a few the times the lessons were a bit harder than usual, so then I just try to sit more time to get it more solid. Then those lessons become a bit more solid than others." (Learner W, male, 11 years old)

"There is some times when I feel like that, but Alhamdulillah, I sit and I sit and it just all fall in my head, Alhamdulillah." (Learner C, male, 14 years old)

Some participants indicated resilience with regard to their work when they did not do well: they persevered, going over the work more often, and then succeeded, as indicated by these participants:

"Because I felt angry with myself and I didn't, and I couldn't learn the one ayah, and I said you are not gonna [going to] *finish, and then afterwards I told myself, yes I am gonna* [going

to] *finish, and then I carried on and I knew the ayah afterwards."* (Learner B, male, 12 years old)

"There's been a lot of challenges, but once you face those challenges you just…have to work hard. You shouldn't give up because sometimes you feel like you don't want to do this. You shouldn't say that to yourself. You just tell yourself: I can do this, I will just work harder. And then you busy achieve if you go like that. I didn't give up." (Learner E, female, 13 years old)

"My journey, I started off rough, and then it's getting easier, but some days there are like bad days and, like, I struggle, but like it's never came to a point where I want to give up. Where, like, I like just tell myself I'm tired, I don't want to do it anymore. Like, every day I'll…like, when I struggle it's like I tell myself, it's okay to struggle, like, everyone struggles, but then I still go on." (Learner F, female, 15 years old)

"It is not easy. Like Sheikh [male teacher] *always come and say how Allah made the Qur'an easy for you, and if it is not easy then there is something wrong with you spiritually and whatever. I would say that if it is hard for you, you have to check yourself…Like you will have to be patient, you can't just expect just every…come easy, every single day you know your work. Because, like, before you actually make the decision you must prepare and you must tell yourself it's not going to be easy and you must expect barriers, and I can't just give up if I have a lot of bad days because it will get better, Inshaa-Allah* [God willing]*."* (Learner N, female,15 years old)

"Sometimes I just don't learn. The thing is, you must learn, you must put in your time to learn, then you will know your work. That is the only thing. But if you are not going to put in your time then you are not going to know your work. And it happened to me." (Learner R, male, 15 years old)

4.2.2.3.5 Self-discipline

Another key personal coping strategy for most of the participants was self-discipline. Self-discipline refers to their ability to make the necessary sacrifices to revise their work daily and adhere to a study programme—being able to focus on their work and not be distracted by a cell phone, television, PlayStation or other device around them. Participants also indicated that they required self-discipline to adhere to their study programme and to stay focused on their studies. The following statements are evidence of this:

"Hard work. You just need to work hard. That is the key. And patience, lots and lots of patience. (giggles) Uhm…you shouldn't stress yourself out too much, but then you should have a lot of patience at the same time, and then you just have to work hard." (Learner E, female, 13 years old)

"Discipline is like self-discipline. It's definitely a big thing because it's like there's nobody to tell you, like, you can't…like my mualima [female teacher] *told me to give my programme to my mommy, but my mommy kind of just, like, knows that I must batcha and, like, recite and stuff, so it's like I kinda* [kind of] *have made it my own type of mission, you could say, to know when to recite and when to put down my phone and when to like stop messing around and just like go and sit with my work."* (Learner O, female, 15 years old)

"It is a bit of a struggle, but if you focus, recite whole day, every time, it will start becoming, or you will start knowing your work. You just sit, focus, recite, don't worry." (Learner U, male, 15 years old)

Interestingly, the following participant felt that the *hifth* studies inculcated a sense of self-discipline in him:

"Now that I am doing hifth, it has given me the responsibility and self-discipline to go sit with my work and go over my work that I have to do for tomorrow." (Learner A, male, 11 years old)

4.2.2.3.6 Self-motivation

The majority of participants indicated that they needed to be self-motivated during their studies. The fact that others—like their teachers, parents, and friends—might motivate them did not matter if they were not self-motivated. They felt that to do the *hifth* studies they needed to do it for themselves and not for their parents. The self-motivation also played a role in assisting them through the difficult times that they experienced. This is illustrated in the following comments:

"Since I started it was my choice, and I'd rather not give up, but yes, self-motivation is very important. And you need to constantly remind yourself, but sometimes I don't. Positive mindset also helps…Negative mindsets bring, also, like, you down, but positive mindsets help your motivation. You need to think good about yourself. You can make it, you are worth learning the Qur'an, like stuff like that." (Learner N, female, 15 years old)

"I think if anyone put their mind to what they want to do it can happen, and if someone is there to support them through it all, it will happen." (Learner P, female, 14 years old)

"…it is the environment, but altogether it is about you. If you put in enough effort in, you're going to get somewhere. If you're focused, you're going to get somewhere." (Learner V, male, 12 years old)

"…You should know what you can and cannot do and know that this is for you. Not anyone else, but you're doing this for you." (Learner J, female, 15 years old)

4.2.2.3.7 Religiosity

Religiosity was a protective factor for most of the participants. They cited it as helping them cope with not being part of certain social distractions that other adolescents are involved in. It also shielded them from many of the social ills that other adolescents are exposed to. All the participants indicated that they chose *hifth* studies for religious reasons, such as the promise of its eternal benefits (i.e. the benefits that it will bring them and their parents in the Hereafter). The younger participants acknowledge that their parents wanted them to do it; however, they also indicated that they know the eternal benefits that it has for them. Some participants viewed their *hifth* studies as the reason for them becoming better human beings. As stated by some of these learners:

"My mommy said that one day, when it is the day of Qiyamat [Day of Judgement] *and when everybody is judged, and my mommy told me and when I am done with hifth I am going to be one of Allah's* [God's] *soldiers."* (Learner A, male, 11 years old)

When asked about the sacrifices that the participants are making, they responded that they felt it was worth it, as depicted by this participant:

"By me it is actually fine because I realise what I am sacrificing for and what I am going to become one day if I am gonna achieve my dream [of becoming haafith] *or what I am going to achieve at this school, Inshaa-Allah."* (Learner C, male, 14 years old)

"…like, I don't feel…like they have something I don't because I have something actually better than what they have." (Learner H, female, 12 years old)

Participants also felt that the *hifth* studies have had a positive effect on their lives, as indicated by this participant:

"…if I had to compare myself now from two years ago it will be a whole different person, and like now it's like I'm a better person." (Learner F, female, 15 years old)

"…because it's the right thing and I want to be a good Muslim and go to Jannah inshallah one day…" (Learner G, male, 12 years old)

"…I know if I had to go back to school it would've been more stress, and like it just, I wouldn't have become the better person that I am now." (Learner F, female, 15 years old)

"…I don't want to die and be remembered as the hifth student that wasn't a hifth student, like a hifth student who was like bad and did all the wrong things. If I want to be remembered as a hifth student that was a hifth student and who loves her Qur'an and was known for her Qur'an, if that makes sense." (Learner O, female, 15 years old)

Another participant expressed her satisfaction that she was missing out on activities that other adolescents were involved in, because she felt that it was better for her in the long run. However, she did mention that she suffers from FOMO, an acronym which stands for "fear of missing out". Further on in the conversation, she added that despite that, it did not make her want to give up her *hifth* studies:

"Sometimes I feel like sad, sometimes I feel sad about it, but sometimes it's fine, man, like, man, I'll get a better reward and I don't think like I could change back to mainstream and not do hifth. I won't because I think this is better." (Learner S, female, 13 years old)

Participants who resided in gangster-ridden areas cited their *hifth* studies as preventing them from becoming involved in gangsterism.

"I don't really worry with them [gangsters] *because I know what it does and how it affects your life, what the Qur'an says about it. So I don't really interact with gangsters."* (Learner U, male, 15 years old)

During this period, individuals are required to begin the process of establishing a clear and positive sense of personal identity and allegiance to a valued social and cultural sub-group (Erikson, 1962). Youth are faced with many developmental tasks as they proceed from childhood through to adolescence (Meyer et al., 2008). For adolescents, participating in *hifth* studies provides opportunities to be important figures in their social world and allows them to accrue successful experiences and a sense of individual and personal identity.

In summary, it can be deduced from the findings that most of the participants employed coping mechanisms to succeed with their studies. The younger participants depended on their parents for support and assistance in managing their time and setting goals, whereas the older

participants tended to employ personal coping strategies to assist them in coping with the demands of their studies. Many of the participants credited their *fifth* studies with making them better human beings and contributing to their positive development.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Support

The theme described above represents a comprehensive view of who the participants felt supported them with their challenges and studies overall. Participants were asked who supported them with their challenges and to explain how they supported them. The following sub-themes emerged as external support received by the participants: academic, social, parental, and technological support. Each of the sub-themes will be discussed below:

4.2.3.1 Sub-theme: Academic support

4.2.3.1.1 Teachers

There was a considerable number of participants who cited their teachers as providing them with support. The support that the participants received from their teachers was mainly in the form of guidance, motivational talks and goal setting. Some participants felt that they did not receive the correct support from their teachers and this had a detrimental effect on their performance. The different teaching styles employed by the teachers and the different ways in which the participants are able to learn impacted on the learners' performance.

The following statements reflect how the teachers supported the participants through motivational talks and assisting them to set goals for themselves:

"Our teacher, he writes down goals for each and every single child and he records each and every single juz, how many juz you've done this year. And he's always giving us motivational talks and what to do when certain things happen and how to cope with this and this and that and what-not." (Learner G, male, 12 years old)

"The mualimas, they help me, they speak to me, encouragement talks." (Learner B, male, 12 years old)

"When I struggle, well, my mualima, like, she will be hard on me, but then afterwards she will tell me, like, yes, I know what you've going through, like obviously she's been through it. So, she will, like, help me and give me advice. She will, like, tell me, 'you can do this; you can go over this like that time.' She would give me a plan, and that would be a help." (Learner N, female, 15 years old)

"My mualimas definitely have talks, like they really motivate us, and there are some times when they like, 'girls, you like need to pull up your socks.' Sometimes they obviously get a little frustrated with us cos they know, like, I know they aren't trying to be mean or anything, just, like, they know we can do it, so they trying to push us to see our own potential and stuff like that, and the talks they give are extremely helpful, especially when they say like how they struggled and they remind us that it's different for everybody and how they say, like, 'don't worry.' like, 'you can do this,' and it's cool, like, in your head. They support us in that way, I could say." (Learner O, female, 15 years old)

"When I'm really feeling like…sometimes I feel like I don't want to be here, then that is when it comes in, like, why did I choose this? I could've been in high school now, but then I come to school and then like Mudira [teacher] *then would speak to us and say, 'girls! You guys are doing so well, you are going to get so much blessings for it.' I mean, that's like when doubt goes away."* (Learner E, female, 13 years old)

"…your hifth journey is like this bumpy obstacle…every obstacle that you overcome there's just another one waiting for you around the corner. But I feel like every time I went through something like that I had doubts, I would get inspiration and motivation and the teachers would say that the more you struggle it's actually you're getting more reward." (Learner J, female, 15 years old)

Participants also indicated that their teachers assisted them with techniques for memorizing when they were struggling with their work, as indicated in the following quotations:

"I think the teachers help me a lot. They also help me memorize at school, but I also need to go over it at home to make sure I know it." (Learner X, female, 12 years old)

"Every day Mudira [teacher] *would like say,* [teacher's name] *would say like, 'girls, don't have any distractions.' Like yesterday we did methodology. It's where she will like basically give us methods how to, like, memorise, and you must be in a clean area and, like, yes, that also helps a lot."* (Learner E, female, 13 years old)

"I recite it over and over. I stay up later at night to recite that lesson and I will recite it, and then the next morning I'll tell my muallimah [female teacher] *I was struggling with this lesson, and she'll help me with that lesson."* (Learner S, female, 13 years old)

"Very nice, like if I struggle, they'd be, like, tell me to go revise it, tell me to pray. If like I'm struggling with, like…they tell me to do one-and-a-half pages, but I struggle with one-and-a-

half pages, then they reduce it to a page, half a page, three quarter page. So then they help me with that, like, to get it, but not that stressful." (Learner W, male, 11 years old)

"It is really, it is good support. My teacher is very supportive. Very motivational. She always pushes you to do your best, but she knows what you're going through because obviously she's done it herself and she helps you along your journey. She knows everyone is not the same. Everyone is not going to learn…this student learnt in two years and this one took maybe like seven years." (Learner J, female, 15 years old)

According to the research, learners attending schools in low SES areas tend to offer afterschool support programmes that include the principal/teacher visiting learners' homes, offering revision classes after school and allowing learners to utilise the school premises for study purposes due to lack of study areas at home. A participant residing in a low SES area indicated that the Qur'an "opened his mind", an expression indicating that he enjoyed studying it and that he coped well with his studies because of the support of his teachers.

"It's harder, but as you go it gets easier; that's my experience. It gets easier actually because the more you memorize, it's like it opens your brain and you can, like, memorize faster, and with the teachers it is also very nice. The way they treat us, it's good here." (Learner C, male 14 years old)

4.2.3.1.2 Tutors

Some of the younger participants indicated that they received assistance from a tutor and that this helped them prepare their lessons for the following day. Tutors were only used when the parents could afford the service for their children. This was viewed as an additional resource that provided support in addition to the school/teachers. The following statements reflect the support the participants received from their tutors.

"My mommy is sending me to her cousin for extra classes to help me learn my work." (Learner A, male, 11 years old)

I: *"So you have a tutor also? A Qur'an tutor?"*
P: *"I wouldn't say it's a tutor because I don't go there every night, but if I do go, but if I can't make it, I'll do it on my own at home."*
I: *"And when you do go to your tutor, does it help?"*
P: *"It does help."*
I: *"Or would you go to the sheikh?"*

P: *"It really helps. You can see the next day, it helps."*

I: *"In which way?"*

P: *"He'd take out all your mistakes and would send you back and then you learn, you learn, you learn, and then you read it again and when you're done then we make Eshaai* [prayer time] *and then we go home."* (Learner V, male, 12 years old)

"Yes, my sister and my dad. They assisted me, and I had a tutor as well." (Learner E, female, 13 years old)

P: *"[name of tutor], I used to go to her house and then she would help me."*

I: *"Ok, and how was that for you?"*

P: *"It was very nice because I got a lot done."* (Learner D, female, 12 years old)

4.2.3.2 Sub-theme: Social support

4.2.3.2.1 Peer support

At an interpersonal level, peer, family and parental support emerged as key to assisting the participants to cope. Participants also explained the support that they received from their peers as largely motivating and as a mentoring relationship, where those who were further in their studies assisted them. The following statements illustrate their peer support:

"My one friend, she's finishing this year, and like, when I came and she was, like, she was also doing it. She was way further than me because she started before me and, like, she always used to motivate me and…like all my friends actually, they all motivate me and they all, like, finish, and I also want to be there…so if I feel like I don't feel good and then, like, they will, like, motivate me every single day and it will just go on." (Learner F, female, 15 years old)

"If I am…like, they'll always motivate me. And they'll always tell me like when I'm slacking off, they'll always, like, tell me, '[name of participant], you have to push up.' They can like see when I'm not doing my best. Like, if they tell me, '[name of participant], you like, you're not bringing it, you're not bringing you work today,' or like, 'what's happening?' and then they'll tell me when I'm being lazy, and if they tell me then I know, like, '[name of participant], you'd better now step up because they've seen like what I can do,' and like, what…they can…they, they can see what's my best and, like, when I'm being lazy and I'm…yeah." (Learner F, female, 15 years old)

"Yes, there's a couple of friends who are at the same level as I am. So then sometimes I would spot test them or they would test me or help me or tell me that's not that, that this is the way to

say it, or correct me in my tajweed, and I would do the same for them." (Learner G, male, 12 years old)

"She knows that, okay, every student is different and you just have to find yourself on your own hifth journey, and my peers are also very supportive because we all going through the same journey together and we're all working through the obstacles together and supporting each other and lifting each other up, and all of my teachers are very supportive." (Learner J, female, 15 years old)

"In my first school, my friends was kind of my motivation. Well, in my first year, I was my friends' motivation, and then after that they kind of had to motivate me because I started feeling like I don't want to do it anymore, but I'm still doing it now." (Learner L, female, 13 years old)

"There are some that, wow, I really appreciate them a lot for their support, their advice. There are some that told me, maybe you should just give up, but then I listen to them, but then I also think, no, I can't, I must listen to the ones who's encouraging me to never give up and just carry on with this journey." (Learner T, male, 15 years old)

4.2.3.2.2 Family support

Many of the participants indicated that they received support from their family members which included siblings, grandparents, uncles and aunts and cousins. The family member was not necessarily knowledgeable in the field of *hifth*. The support was in the form of encouragement, motivation, and assisting with the preparation of lessons. Participants who had strong family support appeared to cope better with their studies. The following statements highlight the support many of the participants received from family members:

I: *"Are they helping you now? Your grandfather, is he helping you with your hifth study?"*

P: *"Yes. Every day he helps me."*

I: *"Okay. And how does he help you?"*

P: *"He'll tell me every time how to read it over and over and over until it will be fluent in my mouth and then you can memorise it very easily."* (Learner B, male, 12 years old)

"My aunty, she used to have like this madrassa classes on the weekends and by her, and then my cousins will all recite together in groups, and my mom, she just listens to my lessons sometimes, and my granny, she tells me to get done and she encourages me more, and then my cousin [name of cousin] *who finished at the boys' school, he always asks me how far I am and*

that I must not give up and stuff, and my other aunties, they all make bets." (Learner D, female, 12 years old)

"Yes, my father always offers to test me, and my mother and my brother, and sometimes when I visit my grandma and my grandpa. My father also tests me because he also memorized some ajazaa [chapters].*"* (Learner G, male, 12 years old)

"They [grandparents] *will tell me that it is going to be okay and that you can do it. They support me emotionally and he supports me with my Qur'an."* (Learner P, female, 14 years old)

"Well, when I go home I go sit by my sister and she helps me memorize my hifth." (Learner X, female, 12 years old)

"My pa really wants us to finish cos he said that he wants his grandson to be in the same masjid as his son. And he said he…like I was the first granddaughter, so he said he wanted me to also learn the Qur'an. And he tells us so much stories about the Qur'an and things like that. So, he, like, kind of…he's our motivator." (Learner L, female, 13 years old)

"*Well, usually my mother would tell me…if I'm struggling with my work and my mother notices it, or if I tell her, then she would leave what she's doing, say she's cooking the food or writing emails for her bosses, then she would leave that off for like an hour or so and sit with me and help me. If not her, then maybe my father and sometimes even my sister."* (Learner G, male, 12 years old)

4.2.3.2.3 Parental support

Parental monitoring and involvement are other external support mechanisms that had clear benefits for the participants. Participants who indicated that they received support and motivation from their parents coped better with their studies. Parental influences were thought to operate primarily by providing support and encouragement. Supporting home environments emerged from the data as important in helping the participants cope with their studies. Many of the participants also indicated that their parents provided hands-on care. From the data, it is clear that parents who became involved in their children's studies and demonstrated a clear interest on a day-to-day basis without being intrusive and setting high expectations for their children supported them well during their studies. It was also important that parents work with the school/teacher to provide effective support. Parents did not necessarily have to be *haafith* themselves. This is illustrated in the following statements:

"She [mother] *will sit with me and she will test me and things like that. She will help me a lot. She is actually my helping hand* (smiles)*."* (Learner C, male, 14 years old)

"Like, he [uncle] *helps me with my work sometimes, and my mommy, she's almost like the lady that pushes you to do everything."* (Learner L, female, 13 years old)

"Especially at the start, every day I used to come home crying because I did not know how to do it. When I was younger I did not find it very easy to recite the Qur'an. So, my mommy had to drill it into my head, so like, 'ee,' when you go to the toilet and pee, and certain things you had to get and so." (Learner P, female, 14 years old)

P: *"Only my daddy help me sometimes, only my…on Tuesday nights then my mommy needs to help me, then my daddy go teach."*
I*: "Now what kind of help do you get from your mommy and daddy? You said your daddy listens to your lessons, and how does your mommy help you?"*
P: *"And my mommy like read the words, like, I can't say properly out."* (Learner Q, male, 12 years old)

"I can't explain, they always there, they support me in everything. There are times that I feel like I can't and I become emotional, and my mother will always say, ;you can do it. You completed the Qur'an, so what is this? This is just revising it, making it stronger.' My father will always tell me, 'you can't give up now, you put through that six years of struggle. This is just two years, this is nothing for you.' And then I will get back up and start reciting and start learning again." (Learner T, male, 15 years old)

The results indicated that having more extensive supportive networks was associated with coping better with the participants studies. Learners whose parents and family were involved in their studies by encouraging them when they did not know their work or by motivating them regularly indicated that they coped better with their studies.

4.2.3.3 Sub-theme: Technological support

A significant number of participants mentioned using technology to support their learning process. Technological support was in the form of listening to lessons from a Qur'an reciter or learning how to pronounce words or sentences correctly by listening to them being recited. The participants made use of Qur'an apps or Qur'an recitations by famous Qur'an reciters. This form of support was cited by many participants as an educational aid in their learning process; however, if they did not manage their technology use well, it hindered the learning process. It

was seen as additional support that facilitated the participants' learning, revision and effective learning of their daily lessons. The following comments illustrate how participants used technology to support their learning:

"If I don't know my work, I'll put like the surah on and I'll listen to it the whole time, the whole time until it basically gets into my head, then I'll put it off. Then afterwards, I'll just know it." (Learner E, female, 13 years old)

P: *"For when I have to memorize, then I use audio cos it gets in my head quicker, and then, yeah, I use my phone with the audio to help me with my new work."*
I: *"If you say audio, is that like the Qari* [reciter] *reciting?"*
P: *"It's like a recital. The guy's like reciting it and then it plays in my ears."* (Learner F, female, 15 years old)

"Sometimes, if I can't hear a word or if I'm struggling with a word, then I'll just go on my tablet, play it and then get familiar with that word, particular word. Then I get that word for it. If sometimes, like I went overseas at beginning of the year, and then like my mother said, 'don't bring your Qur'an, take your tablet.' So then, like, in the morning, like, all this time, I just take my tablet like I used to do. So I used that instead of the Qur'an." (Learner W, male, 11 years old)

"I listen to one of the sheikhs that stand in front in the haram [mosque in Mecca]*, I've not know his name, but his name is Maahir Al-Mukay, I think. His very helpful, his tajweed, his recitation is very...I can listen to it, Alhamdulillah, and it really helps me a lot. I do use the Holy Qur'an app. I read out of the 13 line, so it helps me a lot. So, if I am not with my Qur'an and I need to remember this ayat* [verse of the Qur'an] *or if I can't, then I go check, yes."* (Learner T, male, 15 years old)

P*: "So, at night what I saw helps, seen helps, is that before you go to bed, you should leave your Qur'an on. You can leave it very soft, but as you sleeping it will go through the whole time."*
I: *"Ok, so you leave your Qur'an on while you are sleeping?"*
P: *"Like on the radio, like the iPod, then you let it play and then it actually helps."* (Learner P, female, 14 years old)

4.2.3.4 Sub-theme: Required support – home and school

Participants were asked if they had any suggestions regarding support that they felt they required based on their experience. A number of suggestions were made, which focused mainly on creating a more conducive learning environment at home and at school. The suggestions received from the participants were as follows: extra teachers in the classroom to listen to their lessons, having extra time at school to spend more time revising their lessons instead of at home where they had no one to assist them, privacy in the home environment, and having someone at home who can assist them with their work. One of the participants suggested that the programme be made accessible to all students, especially those with financial constraints.

The participants who suggested home environment improvements were as follows:

One participant wanted to have siblings who could assist him at home to learn his work:

"If I had a brother or sister that was already done with hifth, they would, they could have really helped me a lot." (Learner A, male, 11 years old)

Another participant required more privacy in order to allow her to concentrate when she is studying:

"And at home, for me it's like I need a bit more privacy, yes, I need a lot of privacy because whenever I'm busy with my work and I'm struggling just to memorise this one ayaa, then my sister will come in the room and then she's maybe on a phone call, and be like, 'I'm busy,' and she'll like ignore me, and I can't take that. Oh, then I get so angry." (Learner E, female, 13 years old)

"Sometimes my house is, like, noisy, so I would prefer them to quiet…my household is sometime too noisy for me…" (Learner N, female, 15 years old)

The following participants suggested that their school environment required some changes to enhance their learning abilities. The following learner suggested that more breaks/recesses are required during the day because she feels she is very exhausted, and focusing on her work for a long period affects her ability to work well:

"…when I get home, I'm like super-tired. But I feel like just my advice, like I feel like we should get…more, like, free time, because we…now I feel we deserve another break. Somewhere…" (Learner F, female, 15 years old)

On the other hand, another participant felt that at her school they have breaks that are too long and that she could spend more time with their Qur'an lessons, as quoted below:

"...school ends at two, but we stop reciting at quarter past twelve, so they have like a few minutes before solaah [prayer] *time. Then we have classes after solaah* [prayer]*, but I feel like we can recite longer and then we get like the last 20 minutes before one o'clock rather than a whole 45 minutes of doing nothing."* (Learner L, female, 13 years old)

A participant suggested that the school incorporate audio devices, as his brother's school utilized them and it was a benefit to the learners. He further indicated that he used audio devices at home and that they helped him prepare his lessons:

"I think this school could also encourage to use the audio because sometimes it actually helps. My brother is so far three juz because he started out, I think, last year." (Learner G, male, 12 years old)

Each school appears to have its own daily timetable, with some schools having longer breaks than others. All schools break for mid-day prayer and most return to their classwork afterwards. The time for each period varies at the respective schools and it is the prerogative of the teacher to ensure that the class is actively involved in schoolwork at all times. The teacher also determines the structure of the day and is responsible for implementing the decisions set by the school management. The principal seems to have an oversight role and ensures quality control at the school.

In addition, a participant expressed the need for more teachers in the classroom to listen to her work instead of having peer listeners. *Hifth* schools employ a system of peer listening to assist the teachers with the workload that each learner needs to cover. The peers are usually learners in the classroom that are either ahead of the learner or at the same academic level. The following suggestion was made by this participant:

"I think there should be two mualimas [teachers] *in a class so that you can get more work done and read to a mualima* [teacher] *than one of your friends, because sometimes when you read to them they get distracted and you not sure whether you right or you wrong, and then you read to the mualima* [teacher] *you just forget about it. Oh, you forget about that mistake. So, I think there should be two mualimas* [teachers] *in a class so that you can get more work done."* (Learner S, female, 13 years old)

Lastly, a participant suggested that the *hifth* programme be made accessible to all students who wanted undertake it and scholarships be given to those with financial constraints:

"I think there are many students that deserve to do hifth and want to do hifth but they can't afford it. I know my cousin wanted to do hifth but she couldn't afford it, and I think sponsorships or something like that…because there are many deserving children they want to do it but they can't." (Learner J, female, 15 years old)

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, the results of the study relating to the themes and sub-themes that emerged from an analysis of the data were presented. The study results were supported by providing verbatim quotations from the participants.

In Chapter 5, the researcher will discuss the results by integrating and determining correlations between known literature and empirical research and the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This study aimed to explore and examine the psychosocial and emotional challenges that *hifth* learners face and to examine the coping strategies and support mechanisms that these learners employ while undergoing an integrated *hifth* programme. To accomplish this, the researcher interviewed and analysed interviews with 24 learners between the ages of 11 and 15 years old from six *Hifth* schools in Cape Town. Similar and common themes emerged from the data to provide insight into the type of challenges these learners experience, the coping strategies that they employ to deal with these challenges, and the support mechanisms available to them. Furthermore, the study highlights suggestions made by the participants regarding support mechanisms that they require while undergoing their studies.

In this chapter, we will discuss the emerging themes and sub-themes in conjunction with existing research and literature, and we will give an overview of the findings for each of the study's research objectives.

5.1 Objective 1: Exploring the barriers and enablers that adolescent *hifth* learners experience in terms of psychosocial and emotional aspects when undertaking an integrated *hifth* programme

The study revealed that there are several psychosocial and emotional challenges that *hifth* learners experience as barriers while undertaking their studies, and there are a few important enablers that they identified as contributing positively to their studies. Four sub-themes emerged from the results of the study: social challenges, emotional challenges, managing screen time, and academic challenges.

Social challenges

The results reflected that the participants experienced the following social challenges; societal, parental and family expectations, socializing with significant others and dealing with peer pressure. The first challenge that was perceived as a barrier for the participants was the pressure that they experience when they do not fulfil the expectations of significant others in their lives. Many of the participants complained that they experience distress when they do not live up to the expectations of their family, parents, and society.

Society has certain expectations regarding *hifth* learners, such as adhering to a certain dress code, not having a girlfriend or boyfriend, and not attending parties. These participants felt that they were normal adolescents and that it took time to give up these activities. Participants further indicated that they could not always live up to these expectations and that trying to do

so caused them undue pressure. Behaviours such as dating, socializing with the opposite sex and partying are considered normal behaviour for adolescents (Louw & Louw, 2014). According to the participants, the Muslim community does not expect these behaviours from *hifth* learners, as they are involved in religious studies. This creates undue pressure on them, and although they try to conform, they would sometimes like to be 'normal' and partake in these activities. Erikson (1962), in his psychosocial theory, posited that adolescents are in search of their identity and that they don't necessarily conform to the expectations of their family and society. Adolescents also explore new ideas about themselves and their place in the world (Louw & Louw, 2014).

Another social challenge that many of the participants perceived as a barrier was parental expectations regarding their performance and the lack of support received from their parents when they do not perform as well as expected. They mainly attributed this to their parents not being *haafith* themselves and therefore not understanding what the learners are experiencing. Parental expectations have a notable influence on children's academic results, and high parental expectations and parents' unwillingness to accommodate alternatives could result in counterproductive anxiety in their children (Moyo & Maseko, 2016). Some of the participants also complained that their families have expectations regarding their academic progress which causes undue pressure on them if they do not fulfil these expectations. Erikson reiterates the importance of parental support and guidance during adolescence and the positive effect it has on their development (Meyer et al., 2008). These learners felt that if they received the appropriate support from their parents and families, they would be able to deal with the challenges they experienced much better. Receiving support from their parents and families was therefore an enabler while they were undertaking their studies.

The results further indicated that many of the participants felt it was a huge sacrifice for them not to go on family outings or attend social gatherings, to socialize with their friends and to attend parties. These were sacrifices that they were required to make to ensure that they progressed in their studies. Most of the participants utilized social media to socialize with their friends and acquire trending news; however, if they did not manage the time they spent on it, it detrimentally affected their studies. Younger learners indicated that they had to sacrifice playing outside to prepare their daily lessons. Overall, participants acknowledged that they needed to make these sacrifices; however, it was not easy and thus posed as a challenge that was a barrier for them during their studies.

Additionally, the results indicated that most of the participants felt pressured by their friends who were not learning *hifth* and that this led to them either severing ties with their non- *hifth* friends or not socializing with them. The peer pressure that they experienced was mainly due to their non-*hifth* friends not understanding how they were feeling and what they were experiencing. The participants felt more comfortable and accepted by their *hifth* peers. Recognition and acceptance by peers are important to adolescents (Louw & Louw, 2014). An important feature of adolescence is identity formation (Erikson, 1968), and these learners identified themselves with their peers who were learning *hifth*. The peer pressure experienced from their non-*hifth* peers resonates with the assertion of Erikson's psychosocial theory of development that adolescents desire the approval of their peers (Louw & Louw, 2014). Adolescents have a need to belong (Erikson, 1968), and the *hifth* learners identify themselves with their *hifth* peers to establish a sense of identity and peer acceptance.

Emotional challenges

The current study further indicated that the participants experienced emotional challenges caused by stress and personal problems as a barrier. These challenges detrimentally affected their studies and required intervention to ensure that they remained focused on their studies. Participants who experienced personal problems such as the death of a loved one, parents going through a divorce, and a mother who had a miscarriage were unable to focus on their studies and experienced emotional turmoil and distress. Furthermore, during this time they experienced demotivation to the extent that they wanted to drop out of the programme. Some of these participants indicated that they confided in a teacher, and some tried to deal with it themselves. One of the participants broke down during her interview. She was experiencing emotional distress because her mother had had a miscarriage the previous year, for which the participant blamed herself. The participant had to receive counselling before the researcher could proceed with the interview.

According to the above participants, it took them a few weeks and time off from their studies to overcome their problems. The support that they received from their teachers also assisted them in dealing with their problems and being able to refocus on their studies. These findings are consistent with a study conducted by Babedi (2013), who espoused the notion that teachers play an important role in psychosocial support for learners. For these learners, receiving compassion and understanding from their teachers was an enabler in the learning process.

The results further revealed that many of the participants experienced stress in the form of headaches, crying uncontrollably, and immense sadness that led to their feeling despondent and demotivated when they had a difficult lesson or when they did not perform as well as they anticipated. Prior research suggests learners involved in *hifth* learning experience intense frustration and disappointment during their studies, to the extent that their desire wanes and they want to give up (Boyle, 2006; Coombes, 2013). The participants attributed their stress to the approach of their teachers, difficult lessons and the intense process of learning that is required of them. Several previous studies ascertained that *hifth* did not involve mere rote learning, but rather it encompassed a deeper and more intensified process of learning (Boyle, 2006; Coombes, 2013; Gent, 2011).

Managing screen time

Another common challenge that the participants perceived as a salient barrier was their ability to manage their screen time when watching television and using gaming consoles, mobile phones, and other electronic tablets. Television, games, mobile phones, and computers have come to affect the lives of children greatly. The majority of the participants felt that these devices had a negative impact on their studies by distracting them during their study time. Many of the younger participants felt that parental intervention and assistance helped them to restrict usage of these devices to specific times; for example, using them only over weekends. Some of the older participants felt that they were able to manage the usage of their electronic devices themselves and that the devices benefited them. The latter group used the devices to socialize with their peers, acquire trending news, and use Qur'an apps to assist them with their schoolwork. These findings are consistent with several previous studies that indicated that cell phone and tablet usage among students has adverse effects on their studies (Alkasirah & Nor, 2018; Hadlington et al., 2019; Samaha & Hawi, 2016). It was also ascertained that setting boundaries and parental involvement are important in managing screen time among children (Hadlington et al., 2019).

Academic challenges

Further challenges that the participants perceived as barriers were academic challenges pertaining to: studying additional academic subjects like Mathematics and English while undertaking their *hifth* studies, the quality of the academic management at their respective schools, and adjusting to their *hifth* studies after exiting mainstream schooling.

Many *Hifth* schools introduced Mathematics and English as additional subjects in their curricula due to the legislation of the WCED. The impact that this had on learners was not always positive and presented challenges for many of the participants in this study. Participants at schools where a full WCED curriculum was introduced concurrently with the *hifth* studies experienced it as cumbersome and tedious. These participants complained of an overload of work due to homework impacting on their study time for their *hifth* studies and having too great a workload during examination time. On the other hand, at schools where they had a 'no homework policy' and where not all the WCED subjects were taught, participants reported that they were able to cope better and that it gave them a break from their *hifth* studies. At the latter schools, participants did, however, complain that the work covered was not always grade-appropriate and that it was at times at a level lower than their age-appropriate grade. As a result, some of these participants attended extra classes after school to make up for the lack of secular academic work received at their respective schools. There have been no studies conducted in this area, and therefore the researcher recommends that further research be conducted to understand the impact these subjects have on *hifth* learners.

The classroom environment and the teaching styles employed by the teacher and/or management of the schools significantly impacted on the academic performance of learners. Participants complained about high teacher turnover, lack of support from their teachers, high teacher attrition and unconducive environments that had high noise levels which negatively affected their academic performance. These findings echo a study conducted by Moore (2006), which found that motivation provided by the teachers is crucial in the learning process of *hifth* learners. Furthermore, several studies have shown that an unhealthy classroom environment that lacks collaborative support between teachers and learners negatively affects the learning progress (Clarke, 2012; Lemov, 2010; Sithole, 2017). High teacher attrition is another factor that affects the quality of learning and teaching (Pitsoe, 2013). Consistent with the findings, Naude and Meier (2019) found that noise, as a result of a large number of learners in the class, as well as noise from the outdoor environment, impacts negatively on learning. Many *Hifth* schools lack the necessary resources and infrastructure to provide a conducive learning environment for their learners. They are minimally equipped with learning material and many suffer financial constraints and lack the expertise to improve their set-ups. The teachers follow an apprenticeship model—which is characteristic of Qur'anic schooling—and do not have any formal teaching qualifications (Moore, 2006; Gaibie, 2018).

The results further indicated that participants experienced difficulty adjusting to their *hifth* studies after exiting mainstream schooling. The participants reported that it was challenging for them to adjust to the new academic structure and implement the daily programme required of them. Furthermore, they struggled initially to learn the Arabic text, which some of them perceived as a new language that was foreign to them. However, through the assistance of their teachers, peers, and/or parents, they were able to adjust. These findings concur with a study conducted by Gent (2011) which found that *hifth* learners cope with the demands of the programme with the assistance of their parents and teachers. If the support of parents is absent, the learners find it difficult to cope (Boyle, 2006).

The barriers for the participants are societal and parental expectations, lack of socialising, managing their screen time, and academic challenges such as adjusting to their *hifth* studies, managing a full WCED curriculum together with their *hifth* studies, and unconducive learning environments.

The enablers presented by the themes are support received from parents, family and peers. In addition, having supportive teachers and studying in an environment with low noise levels and teachers who encouraged them rather than demotivated them were significant enablers for these learners. More information on these enablers will be explained in detail below.

5.2 Objective 2: Examining and exploring, from the perspective of the learners, the coping strategies they employ to complete their studies

Due to the number of psychosocial and emotional challenges these learners experienced while undergoing an integrated *hifth* study programme, this study explored the coping strategies they employed to mitigate these challenges. Coping strategies are survival skills (Lucky et al., 2015) and behavioural efforts (Lazarus, 1990) employed by individuals to deal with pressure. The following coping strategies were identified by the participants: parental involvement, well-being programmes, and a number of personal coping strategies.

Parental involvement

This study showed that parents play a pivotal role in the academic achievements of their children. They are a salient protective factor that contributes to the transition from childhood to adolescence as their children's development mostly relies on their capacity to provide an adaptive, engaging, and nurturing environment (Steca et al., 2011). Parents who provide assistance and guidance for their children in terms of homework and playing an active role in their child's schooling career have a positive effect on their children's performance (Cozett et

al., 2016; Harbour, 2015). Furthermore, parents who provide the right amount of support and unconditional love can assist their adolescent children in the transition through adolescence with minimal rebellious behaviour (Good & Willoughby, 2008; Hamman & Hendricks, 2005; Louw & Louw, 2014). Many of the participants indicated that their parents assisted them with their studies and that they coped better than those who did not receive any assistance from their parents. In addition, parents of participants who were *haafith* themselves were able to assist their children better, and their children experienced them to be more empathetic. Moreover, many participants indicated that their parents motivated and encouraged them and that this had a positive effect on their studies.

Participants residing in gangster-ridden areas indicated that their parents guided and protected them from social ills. Their parents allowed them to socialize only with specific individuals, and the younger participants were not allowed to play outside. Parents encouraged them to be involved in religious activities and enforced strict discipline on them. These findings concur with Londt (2008) and Samsodien (2018) regarding the importance of parental involvement when studying *hifth*. These findings further align with studies conducted by Steca et al. (2011), who espoused the positive role that parental self-efficacy has on adaption to adolescence and academic success. Furthermore, it aligns with the study conducted by Cozett et al. (2016), who established a positive association between parental involvement and adolescent success. Brittian & Humphries (2015) further indicated that parental involvement and religiosity contributed to prosocial behaviour in adolescents.

Well-being programmes

Well-being programmes such as leisure activities and sports and recreational programmes were employed by the participants to help them cope with their studies. Leisure activities in the form of reading books, watching television, and accessing their cell phones helped the participants to unwind during their break-times. These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Lucky et al. (2015), which found that leisure activities assisted students to cope better with their studies. Participants further indicated that sports and recreational activities helped them to relax and enhanced their ability to focus on their studies. It had a therapeutic effect by causing them to feel refreshed and revitalized after spending long hours revising their work. The results corroborate the findings of Lucky et al. (2015), who posited that sports activities relieve academic stress. The data, however, indicated that a significant number of participants complained that they could not participate in sports activities due to their schools not offering

them or the fact that the training time clashed with their *hifth* classes. These participants indicated that they stopped participating in sports activities, but that if they were given the opportunity they would participate in sports. The reason for this is that they felt it had a positive effects on their well-being. *Hifth* schools that have a sports programme offer it on Saturdays as an extra-mural and utilize external service providers to conduct it at their respective schools. The types of sports offered are karate, soccer, netball, and arts and crafts. Learners who attend outside sports clubs are exempted from the in-house sports programme. Some participants reported that sports improved their self-esteem and ability to work in groups. Cozett et al. (2016) posited that adolescents enjoy doing activities that they are good at and thrive on acknowledgement from their peers and positive involvement of their parents. These results concur with those of a study by Petitpas et al. (2005), which highlighted that sports activities are effective in enhancing the level of self-esteem and developing teamwork and communication skills in children.

Personal coping strategies

Participants from the study also reported that they employed various personal coping strategies such as goal setting, time management, study programmes, self-discipline, self-motivation, perseverance and religiosity to deal with the demands of their studies. High levels of self-discipline and self-motivation are required by these learners (Boyle, 2006; Coombes, 2013; Saleem, 2018). The participants highlighted that they needed to make sacrifices in areas such as going out with their friends, playing outside, and other leisure activities to revise their lessons and prepare their work every day. Resilience and diligence were highlighted by the majority of the participants as helping them with difficult lessons or to overcome setbacks. Several studies indicate that resilience is important when dealing with difficult tasks (Annalakshmi & Abeer, 2013; Cyrulnik, 2009; Theron & Theron, 2010). A study conducted by Coombes (2013) regarding *hifth* learners established that endurance and perseverance were required when undertaking hifth studies.

Many participants indicated that they followed a daily study programme and set weekly, monthly, and annual goals to ensure that they progress successfully. According to the results, it is imperative that *hifth* learners establish a daily study programme early during their studies (Samsodien, 2018). Participants who did not have targets or follow a daily programme indicated that they struggled. Many participants reported that they had to manage their time well to ensure that they adhered to their daily study programme. Younger participants indicated

that their parents assisted them to implement their study roster. The majority of the *Hifth* schools have standardized targets; however, the class teacher is able to individualize the target based on the learner's capabilities. At a few schools, it was expected of the learner to draw it up themselves.

Sikhwari et al. (2019) found that being organized, self-motivated, studying and working hard, remaining disciplined and determined, having friends who share the same vision, better utilization of time management skills, having peer support, and engaging in teamwork led to academic excellence for students. The current finding further shares similarities with Jooste and Maritz's (2014) study on self-leadership and self-coaching, which are coping strategies utilized by adolescents to succeed with academic and personal tasks. These results are further in line with those of Londt (2008) and Samsodien (2018).

Finally, many participants indicated that religiosity played a salient role in their being able to cope with their studies and that it was a preventative factor against social ills. Participants residing in gangster-ridden areas indicated that being involved in religious studies and spending a significant amount of time in religious environments prevented them from becoming involved in activities like gangsterism, drug abuse, and smoking. Similar findings were attained by Brittian and Humphries (2015) in their study on prosocial behaviour and religiosity. The authors found that religiosity contributed to prosocial behaviour in adolescents. Several other studies also indicated that religiosity played a role in preventing adolescents from getting involved in delinquent behaviour (Annalakshmi & Abeer, 2013; Brittian & Humphries, 2015; Burg et al., 2011; Ismail, 2015; Park & Kim, 2018).

5.3 Objective 3: Exploring the types of support available and the support required

The study further explored the support mechanisms that are available to the participants during their studies and whether there was any support that they required based on their experience. The majority of the participants indicated that they received various sources of external support while undergoing their studies. Based on the results, three categories of support were identified: academic, social and technological. Lastly, the researcher enquired whether there was any support that they required while they were studying, either at home or school. Several suggestions were made, which will be elaborated upon below.

Academic support available

Teachers and tutors were identified by most of the participants as an important support mechanism during their studies. Teachers supported them by giving them motivational talks,

helping them with techniques to memorize, and sharing their own experiences with their learners. The participants indicated that this contributed to them remaining motivated, that it inspired them to work harder, and that they were able to confide in the teachers about their problems. On the other hand, some participants complained that their teachers pushed them too hard and that this had a detrimental effect on their performance and attitude. The reasons for this were mainly the teachers' approach and teaching techniques. In a highly effective classroom, students should know what their teachers' expectations are and what would lead to their own success (Heick, 2020). Heick (2020) buttresses this by stating that class assessments should be persistent, authentic, transparent, and never punitive, and that this is mainly to do with the tone and emotion of the classroom in general.

The results also indicated that *Hifth* schools situated in low SES areas tend to have more learner support programmes like afterschool tuition, home visits by teachers/management, and providing study areas at school for learners to revise their work after school.

Many of the young participants (under 14 years old) indicated that they received support from tutors who helped them prepare for their lessons. They attended these classes after school and it had a positive effect on their performance the following day. It was clear from the results that this was an additional expense, and only those who could afford it had tutors. For them, support from tutors emerged as an important external resource providing adjunct support.

Social support available

Peer, family and parental support were received by many of the participants at an interpersonal level. Participants leaned on their friends who were also doing *hifth* to motivate them when they felt down. Many participants reported that they received assistance from their friends when they struggled with a lesson and when they needed someone to revise their work with them in class. The results indicate that peer support contributed positively to the motivational levels and academic performance of the learners.

Many of the participants also received social support was from their family and parents, which emerged as key to assisting learners to cope with their studies. Learners who had strong family social support appeared to cope better. Participants indicated that their families encouraged them by giving them positive advice and assisting them with the preparation of their lessons. Parents keep the learners motivated by playing an active role in their studies. Parents play an important role in the academic success of their children, and lack of parental involvement affects learner progress (Harbour, 2015; Moyo & Maseko, 2016).

Based on these findings, it appears that having more extensive support networks was associated with better academic success.

Technological support available

Many of the participants reported that they utilized Qur'an apps to read and listen to audio recordings of Qur'an recitation, which contributed positively to their preparation for their lessons. These resources also allowed them to revise their lessons outside the classroom. It was, however, important for them to manage the time they spent using them well and not to be distracted by other features on their phones or tablets. Interestingly, none of the schools utilized electronic devices in the classrooms. Many participants identified them as good tools which can assist them with memorization and that they should be available at school. The participants indicated that the apps enhanced their learning process by making the work easier to memorize. The results indicate that apps are an efficient and inventive method of learning if managed properly. These findings are consistent with studies conducted by Alkasirah and Nor (2018), who found that technology assisted with Islamic learning. In their study, learners used mobile devices to revise their work outside the classroom (ibid.). AlMudara (2017) found that using a mobile app when memorizing improved memorization and increased student attention in memorization. Furthermore, it necessitates active learning and increases fun in learning (AlMudara, 2017). Indeed, many research studies have indicated that mobile learning contributes positively to the learning process; however, it is imperative that boundaries be set, and parental involvement is critical (Samaha & Hawi, 2016; Alkasirah & Nor, 2018; Hadlington et al., 2019).

In summary, like any technological advancement, the Qur'an apps and mobile learning as a whole are determined by the utility of the user. If the learners use it to enhance their learning and do not abuse their time on it, then it has a positive effect on their learning. On the other hand, if it is not managed well, it is a form of distraction that negatively affects their learning process.

Home and school support required

Varied suggestions were received from the participants regarding support that they felt they required. Reflecting on their own experiences, the following suggestions came to the fore: extra teachers in their classroom to listen to their lessons, having extra time at school to spend more time revising their lessons instead of at home where many of them had no one to assist them, having someone at home who could assist them with their work, and privacy in the home

environment. Al Shawwa et al. (2015) posited that a noiseless and conducive space has a positive effect on students' academic achievement. There was also a suggestion that financial support be given to underprivileged children who wanted to learn *hifth*. The diagram below illustrates the suggestions made by the participants:
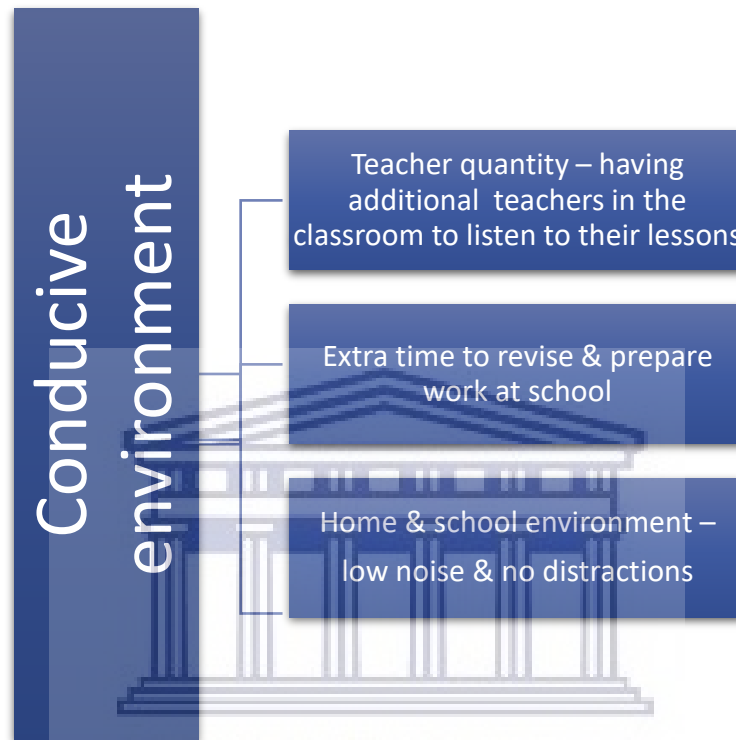

Figure 5.1 – Summary of suggestions received from participants

Based on the above suggestions from the participants, the first aspect is that they would like to have more teachers available to assist them in the classroom instead of peer listeners. They were concerned that the peer listeners were not identifying all their mistakes as would be the case with a teacher.

The second aspect was the quality time that they spent with their studies and receiving input from individuals who are able to assist them productively. Many of the learners did not have family members who were *haafith* at home, and therefore they preferred to spend more time at school and receive guidance from their teachers to prepare their schoolwork.

In addition, they need to have a private space, free from distraction, while they are revising their work, both at school and at home. At home, the participants complained that their younger siblings and the television created noise and disrupted their study time. They preferred having a designated area where they were not disrupted and where distractions were minimal while

they were studying. At school, noise from learners who were talking in class distracted them. Enhanced study skills and conducive study environments are key factors that lead to success and learner well-being (Babedi, 2013; Heick, 2020; Moyo & Maseko, 2016). The availability of educational resources at home like books, electronic resources such as a computer, a study desk for their use, and general academic support is crucial (Moyo & Maseko, 2016). Furthermore, a characteristic of a highly effective classroom is one that it has varied learning models available to the children such as inquiry-based learning, project-based learning, direct instruction, peer-to-peer learning, school-to-school learning, e-Learning and mobile learning (Heick, 2020). Having restrictive and impeding learning environments has been shown to be detrimental to *hifth* learners' personality development (Batool, 2014).

In addition to the above, one participant suggested that the *hifth* programme must be more accessible to underprivileged learners. At her school, she was aware that learners who could not afford the programme were not admitted at the school. The participant felt that there were children who could not afford the tuition costs at her school and therefore were deprived of the learning opportunity. She was concerned that these children were missing out due to financial constraints and felt that the school should offer bursary opportunities for these learners.

In conclusion the results of this study revealed three possible themes. Firstly, the barriers and enablers that adolescent *hifth* learners experience in terms of psychosocial and emotional aspects can be categorized into the following sub-themes: social, emotional, managing screen time, and academic challenges. Receiving appropriate support from their parents and family, having a conducive classroom environment, feeling a sense of belonging, and having peer support were characterized as enablers for these learners. During the period of adolescence, the individual may encounter various forms of problems and conflicts that ultimately impair normal psychosocial development (Bista et al., 2016); however, receiving the necessary support from their parents and teachers is an important factor in helping the adolescent to deal with the challenges that they experience (Hamman &Hendricks, 2005). Parents and teachers play a supportive role in providing a suitable environment for adolescents to explore and evaluate standards for their future (Hamman & Hendricks, 2005). Being accepted by their peers and having a sense of belonging is also important for these learners (Louw & Louw, 2014). They therefore desire the acceptance of their *hifth* peers to help them deal with the peer pressure.

The second theme that emerged from the results were the coping strategies that the participants employed to mitigate these challenges, namely parental involvement, well-being programmes, and personal and academic coping strategies. By employing these coping strategies, the *hifth* learners are able to deal better with the high demands of their studies. Being involved in regular sports programmes, implementing resilience techniques, setting goals, implementing a study programme and managing their time well are among the coping strategies that assist them to successfully progress in their studies. Furthermore, younger learners required input from their parents to implement these coping strategies. And many of the participants indicated that religiosity played a salient role in their being able to cope with their studies and was a preventative factor against social ills (Good & Willoughby, 2008).

Finally, the third theme that emerged from the results was the support mechanisms that in place to help the learners cope with the demands of their studies, namely academic, social, parental, and technological support. Furthermore, participants suggested that there should be extra teachers in their classroom to listen to their lessons, that they should have extra time at school to spend revising their lessons, that they required more privacy in the home environment, and that the programme be made accessible to all students, especially those with financial constraints.
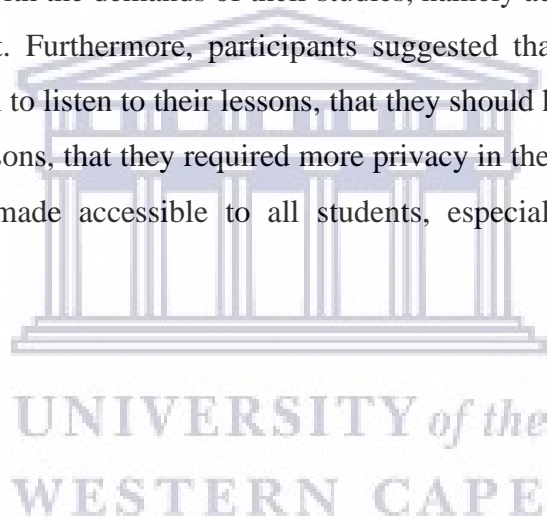
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In Chapter 4, the results of the study, subsequent to the thematic data analysis, was presented. In Chapter 5, the researcher then interpreted and discussed the themes and sub-themes in relation to the current literature and the theoretical framework as presented in Chapter 2.

In this chapter , final conclusions are presented. Furthermore, the potential contributions of the study, as well as the limitations faced, are reflected upon. The researcher concludes with recommendations for further research, practice and training.

6.1 Conclusion

Hifth is an age-old tradition recognized by Muslims as an immense spiritual accomplishment, and it is a common practice for families to have at least one child fulfil this prophetic tradition. South African Muslims are no different and have upheld this tradition for many years. Today, it is no longer undertaken in an informal schooling system, but constitutes established, institutionalized studies that children attend on a full-time basis, necessitating their exit from mainstream schooling. Due to government requirements, *Hifth* schools are including other subjects such as Literacy, Numeracy and Social Sciences. These additional subjects are cumbersome for the learners undertaking *hifth*, who already have a huge workload. Learning *hifth* is not only rote learning, it involves embodying the sacred Words of God into the very being of the memorizer (Boyle, 2006). With this comes many challenges, and this study focused on the psychosocial and emotional challenges these learners face. Peer pressure, managing screen time, academic problems, and dealing with societal and family expectations are the reported psychosocial challenges that these learners experience. The emotional challenges include academic stress, dealing with personal problems when they arise (such as the death of a loved one), and family problems such as the divorce of parents. These challenges lead to learners suffering from headaches, emotional distress, and not being able to focus on their studies. Learners employ coping strategies such as goal setting, time management, having a study programme, self-discipline, self-motivation and religiosity, parental involvement, and well-being programmes to assist them to cope with these challenges. Not managing their time well and spending excessive time on their digital devices leads to a serious negative impact on their studies and requires assistance from their parents. Furthermore, to succeed in their studies, these learners require support mechanisms to mitigates these challenges. Support mechanisms such as academic support, which involves teacher support and receiving additional revision

classes from tutors, help them to cope well with their studies. They also reported receiving support from family, friends, and their parents. In addition, many of them reported using technology such as Qur'an apps and listening to audio recordings from their favourite *Qaris*, which assisted them to memorize their work. Participants felt that they required more conducive learning environments, both at home and at school: including having a designated area at home where they can study with minimal noise and distractions, positive classroom environments where there are sufficient teachers who can listen to their work, and having sufficient time to prepare their work at school. One participant indicated that she felt that the *hifth* programme needs to be more accessible to underprivileged children as there are children who can't afford the fees of her school and therefore are unable to do *hifth*.

It is important that school management and policymakers address these challenges to allow these learners not only to complete the spiritual aspect of this age-old, noble tradition, but to attain their full potential. Improving the classroom environment by addressing issues such as high teacher attrition, and upskilling the teachers to enable them to assist the learners better, will provide a much more conducive learning environment for these learners. Implementing a recognized academic curriculum with the *hifth* programme will enhance the opportunities for further studies for these learners and thereby contribute to their being better equipped to assist their respective communities. Furthermore, incorporating well-being programmes into their curriculum will provide the necessary support for them to deal with the demands of these studies, and conducting support programmes for their caregivers will empower them to assist their children better.

Further research needs to look at a well-being programme that will address the needs of these learners, not only in terms of academics, but their psychological and vocational needs as well. Learning *hifth* can be a gift, but to ensure that it is, we need to rethink how we approach the learning process and, in particular, the holistic development of the child.

6.2 Strengths and limitations of the study

The current study contributes to the limited body of research on *hifth*, and particularly *hifth* learners' psychosocial and emotional challenges, an area that is seriously neglected and under-explored. The findings of the study can inform policymakers on the planning and policies regarding *Hifth* schools and contribute to the education industry for those who want to set up a *Hifth* school. Furthermore, this study highlights the needs of *hifth* learners and serves as a

means to create awareness among teachers and parents, accentuating the pivotal role they play in the holistic development and success of these learners.

The limitation of this study could be that it did not include learners who dropped out of the programme and thereby could have allowed for a more extensive viewpoint on the challenges that *hifth* learners experience.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations for future research are made:

- A further study on the challenges that *hifth* learners experience and include a more diverse group of learners such as drop-outs and graduates

- A study to develop a well-being programme to enhance learner competencies, new skills and coping strategies for *hifth* learners

- A study to establish the feasibility of training all role-players in providing support to the learners

- A study focusing on developing psychometric testing to address risk assessment and learner competencies to improve student performance and, in turn, academic success

- A study to investigate a feasible, recognized, integrated academic programme for *hifth* learners
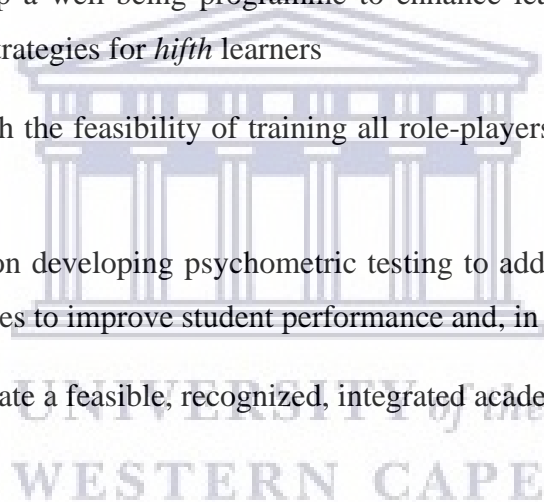
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Assent form

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE
Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2825, Fax: 27 21-959 3515

E-MAIL: faizatoefy@gmail.com

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT (CHILDREN UNDER 12 YEARS OLD) ASSENT FORM

Purpose of research: This study aims to explore and examine the psychosocial and emotional challenges that *hifth* learners face and to examine coping strategies with the purpose of enhancing the whole learning process.

Procedures: If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to come for an interview where the researcher will ask you a few questions which will take approximately 1 hour.
The discussion will be audio recorded in order for the researcher to refer back to the discussion at a later stage.

Benefits: Your contributions to this research will help us to understand the challenges of *hifth* students and by doing so we can assist other students in the future by supporting them holistically.

Confidentiality: Your name will not be used when data from this study is published. All of your records about this research study will be kept locked up so no one else can see them. Also, no names or identifiable information will be used on records, all participants will receive a codename (e.g. Participant A, B, C) and the records will be locked away securely where only the researcher and the researcher's supervisor will have access to the data. The data will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of the study.

Contact person: You can ask any questions that you have about the study. If you have a question later that you didn't think of now, you can contact me (Faiza Toefy: 082-9639497 or email faizatoefy@gmail.com)

Consent: Signing my name at the bottom means that I agree to participate in this study (both you and your parents will be given a copy of this form after you have signed it. I understand that when I give permission to have the interview audio-recorded it will be stored in a safe place with only the researcher and supervisor having access to the audio-file. Please tick your answer below:

I hereby agree to have the interview audio-recorded. _____

I hereby disagree to have the interview audio-recorded. _____

Adolescent Assent Signature

_____

Appendix B: Parent consent form

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE
Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2825, Fax: 27 21-959 3515

E-MAIL: faizatoefy@gmail.com

PARENT/ GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: Exploring the psychosocial and emotional challenges faced by 11 – 15-year-old Muslim Adolescents studying at Hifth schools in Cape Town.

The study has been described to me in a language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my child's participation will involve, and I agree for my child to participate. I understand that my child's identity will not be disclosed to anyone by the researchers. I acknowledge that my child may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits. I understand that when I give permission to have my child's interview audio-recorded it will be stored in a safe place with only the researcher and supervisor having access to the audio-file. The data will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of the study.

Please tick your answer below.

I hereby agree to have the interview audio-recorded. _____

I hereby disagree to have the interview audio-recorded. _____

Parent/guardian name: ………………………..

Parent/guardian signature: ……………………….

Date: ………………………

Appendix C: Information sheet

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE
Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2825 Fax: 27 21-959 3515

E-mail: faizatoefy@gmail.com

INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE: Exploring the psychosocial and emotional challenges faced by 11 – 15-year-old Muslim Adolescents studying at *Hifth* schools in Cape Town.

WHAT IS THIS STUDY ABOUT?
This is a research project being conducted by Faiza Toefy at the University of Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you play a fundamental role in the learning process of *hifth* learners. The purpose of this study is to explore and examine the psychosocial and emotional challenges that the learners face and to examine coping strategies with the purpose of enhancing the whole learning process for them. Psychosocial challenges are psychological and social factors that influence mental health. Some examples of these challenges are depression, eating disorders and anxiety. We believe that by you sharing your experiences with us that we will be able to better assist future learners who would like to undertake *hifth* studies.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE?
You will be asked to avail yourself for a one-hour interview. The interview will be conducted at a time and venue that is most convenient for you. The interview questions will be aimed at gaining your understanding of what challenges *hifth* learners experience, the coping strategies they may employ and the type of support they may require. More specifically, some demographic information about yourself (age, gender, area you live in, school), your understanding of the challenges *hifth* learners experience, their coping strategies and the type of support they require or are given at school and at home.

All learners under the age of 12 will be required to complete an assent form and learners above 12 will be required to complete a consent form. Your parents will also be required to complete a consent form before you can participate in the study.

WOULD MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?
Every effort will be made to keep the information in this study such as clinical records, research records, and other personal information confidential, except as may be required by court order or by law. We will take the following steps to keep information confidential, and to protect it from unauthorized disclosure, tampering, or damage:
1. The recordings will be loaded onto a laptop which is password protected.
2. The transcripts will be kept in a locked filling cabin.
3. All information will be destroyed after 5 years after the completion of the study.

If any publication results from this research, you will not be identified by name.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS RESEARCH?

Some of the questions during the interview may touch on sensitive areas. However, every effort will be made to by the researcher to minimise your discomfort. You are encouraged to discuss with the research staff and /or co-ordinator any negative or difficult feelings or experiences that you may have as a result of participating in this research project. If at any time you would like to stop your participation in the research study, you will be free to do so. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to a suitable professional for further assistance or intervention.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS RESEARCH?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about psychosocial and emotional challenges experienced by adolescent *hifth* learners. We hope that others may benefit in the future from the information we find in this study and that this may provide a basis for future intervention programmes to facilitate *hifth* learner's holistic development.

DO I HAVE TO BE IN THIS RESEARCH AND MAY I STOP PARTICIPATING AT ANY TIME?

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right not to participate at all or to leave the study at any time. Deciding not to participate or choosing to leave the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you otherwise may qualify.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact the researcher, Faiza Toefy by telephone 082-9639497 or email at faizatoefy@gmail.com .

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Dr. Maria Florence
Deputy Head of Department: Psychology
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535
mflorence@uwc.ac.za

Prof Anthea Rhoda
Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535
chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za

Research Office
Tel.: 021 959 4111
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.(**REFERENCE NUMBER: HS 19/5/19**)

Appendix D: Interview schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LEARNERS

<u>**Section A:**</u>

Name: _____

Age: _____   Grade: _____

Year of Study: _____

No. of Ajaza Memorized: _____

Name of School: _____

Where do you live: _____ (area/ suburb)

<u>**Section B:**</u>

1. Why did you decide to learn *hifth*?

2. Before you began *hifth* yourself, did you know anyone who completed *hifth*? If so, who were they? What advice did they give you?

3. Are you faced with any challenges? If so, what are they? Explain each challenge. Does learning *hifth* and academic subjects pose any challenges to you. If so what are they?

4. How do you feel about the sacrifices that you have to make?

5. Do you get sick often? Headaches, stomach cramps, backache, ect. Please explain.

6. Do you have a daily study programme? Please explain.

7. What kind of support do you get from family, school, friends or others or from technology(audio devices, Qur'an apps, ect.? Please explain each one and how can this be improved?

8. Are you involved in any other activities like sports or other extra-mural activities? Please explain.

9. Have you ever had any doubt that you made the right decision to learn *hifth*? If so, explain.

10. What plans do you have when you complete your *hifth* studies?

11. Do you think that people around you(family and friends, the community) admire you and how look up to you? How do you feel about it?

12. Is there anything that you would like to add?

THANK YOU!

Appendix E: Letter of request (schools)

Enquiries: *F. Toefy*
Cell: *082-9639497*
Email: *faizatoefy@gmail.com*

The Principal
School name
School address

Dear Sir/ Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

I hereby request permission to conduct research for Master's studies in psychology.

The title of my dissertation is *"Exploring the Psychosocial and emotional challenges faced by 11 – 15 year old Muslim adolescents studying at Hifth schools in Cape Town"*.

I am registered with the University of the Western Cape.

My proposed fieldwork plan is as follows:

- An interview will be conducted with a sample of 24 learners from 3 *Hifth* schools registered with WCED-MJC Academic Support Programme or directly with the WCED.
- 8 learners (4 males and 4 females) between the ages of 11 and 15 will be selected per school
- The research will be conducted during the month of June and July 2019.

I thank you in anticipation and look forward to your favourable response.

Yours sincerely

Faiza Toefy

Appendix F: Research approval letter from WCED

Western Cape Government
Education

Directorate: Research

Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za
tel: +27 021 467 9272 Fax: 0865902282
Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000 wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20190716-6794
ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Mrs Faiza Toefy
17 Kinsale Road
Fairways
Wynberg
7800

Dear Mrs Faiza Toefy

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: EXPLORING THE PSYCHOSOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES FACED BY 11-15 YEAR OLD MUSLIM ADOLESCENTS STUDYING AT *HIFTH* SCHOOLS IN CAPE TOWN

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **22 July 2019 till 20 September 2019**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:
        The Director: Research Services
        Western Cape Education
        Department
        Private Bag X9114
        CAPE TOWN
        8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard

Directorate: Research
DATE: 17 July 2019

Lower Parliament Street, Cape Town, 8001   Private Bag X9114, Cape Town, 8000
tel: +27 21 467 9272   fax: 0865902282   Employment and salary enquiries: 0861 92 33 22
Safe Schools: 0800 45 46 47   www.westerncape.gov.za

Appendix G: Letter of approval from the University of the Western Cape

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR: RESEARCH
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION DIVISION

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535
South Africa
T: +27 21 959 4111 /2948
F: +27 21 959 3170
E: research -ethics@uwc.ac.z a
www.uwc.ac.za

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

10 July 2019

Mrs F Toefy
Psychology
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

Ethics Reference Number: HS19/5/19

Project Title: Exploring the psychosocial and emotional challenges
faced by 11   _15 YEAR -OLD Musl im adolescents
studying at hifth schools in Cape Town.

Approval Period: 10 July 2019 _ 10 July 2020

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of
the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above
mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted
to the Ethics Committee for approval.

Please remember to submit a progress report in good time for annual renewal.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of
the study.

Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape http://etd.uwc.ac.za/

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE.

Appendix H: Letter of endorsement from the MJC

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

MUSLIM JUDICIAL COUNCIL(SA)

Head Quarters:
Darul Arqam
20 Cashel Avenue
Athlone 7764
Republic of South Africa
Telephone: (+2721) 684 4600

www.mjc.org.za

info@mjc.org.za / sec.general@mjc.org.za

Postal address:
P.O. Box 38311
Gatesville 7766
Republic of South Africa

Fax: 0860 522 5963

160-172 NPO

26 July 2019

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

We, the Muslim Judicial Council (SA), who represents the Muslim Community of the Western Cape Province and to whom is affiliated it's Masaajid and so many other Muslim Organizations, hereby introduces **FAIZA TOEFY ID NO: 740213 0229 08 2** who is in the process of doing her Educational research for her Master's studies in psychology

Faiza will be conducting interviews with learners between the ages of 11 – 15 years old at different Hifth's (Quranic teaching) schools to explore the Psychosocial and emotional challenges that they face. The interviews will be conducted from 3 different socio-economic (low, middle and upper-income) communities as part of her research. The schools that she will be approaching are registered with the WCED-MJC Academic Support Programme.

The MJC (SA) strongly supports and endorses Faiza Toefy's research and know that she will indeed inspire and enlighten the different challenges and circumstances that these adolescents are faced with. We, therefore, recommend that she be granted the opportunity to interview the learners as it will be beneficial to the community at large.

For any further inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact our offices.

Yours in the service of Islam

Sheikh Riad Fataar
2ⁿᵈ Deputy President