Role stress and existential stress in adolescents: Relationship with emotional intelligence and wellbeing

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GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance: - *Analysis that compares the means of more than two independent groups and quantifies the difference among them*
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: - *An independent statutory agency produces information and statistics to assist in policy and decision making for the health and wellbeing of Australians.*
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth: - *An organisation established in 2002 by former Australian of The Year, Prof. Fiona Stanley AC with the aim of using the best available evidence to help all children and young people in Australia to thrive*
BEIS	Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale: - *A valid and reliable measurement tool that has particular utility in situations where brevity is important*
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations: *A Federal department that provides advice to the government and administers programs to achieve government objectives for education, employment, and workplace relations*
EI	Emotional Intelligence: - *Ability to appraise, regulate and utilisation of emotions*
ES	Existential stress: *Stress due to meaninglessness or lack of purpose in life*
GAS	General Adaptation Syndrome: - *An integrated syndrome related to body's reactions to non-specific stress*
NDSHS	National Drug Strategy Household Survey: - *The NDSHS collects information on alcohol and tobacco consumption, and illicit drug use among the general population in Australia*
PIL-SF	Purpose in Life test- Short Form: - *This is short version of original purpose in life test of Crumbaugh and Maholick, 1964*
PWS	Perceived Wellness Survey: - *The PWS assess individuals' own perception of their physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, social, intellectual wellness*
RS	Role stress: - *Stress due to absence of happy role relationships with family, peers, friends, teachers, school, and community*
WHO	World Health Organisation: - *WHO directs and coordinates international health within the United Nations system.*
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: - *This body communicates the contributions of the Department of Economic and Social*

	Affairs to the realisation of internationally agreed development goals and shared social, economic and environmental aspirations.
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund: - A *leading global humanitarian and development agency that works to uphold the rights of every child*
WB	Wellbeing: - *Individuals' own perception of their physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, social, and intellectual wellness*

ABSTRACT

Adolescents are critical in contributing to positive social, economic, health and wellbeing outcomes of future societies, which is potentially impacted by increasing reports of adolescent stress (AIHW, 2016; ARACY, 2018; UNICEF, 2020; WHO, 2021). Positive stress has been reported as being a motivational factor, however continued exposure to stress can have a harmful impact physically and/or psychologically (Seyle, 1974; 1983) on adolescents' lives. Therefore, addressing and investing in adolescent wellbeing has become a global priority (AIHW, 2016; ARACY, 2018; UNICEF, 2020; WHO, 2021), as experiences of stress may impact on their relationships (role stress), purpose or meaning in life (existential stress), emotional intelligence and/or wellbeing. Yet, to date, research specifically examining adolescent role stress and existential stress is limited as studies have primarily focused on adults who arguably have wider social interactions and multiple role identities (Garossa et al., 2011). Contesting this view, adolescents have been posited to be the first to be confronted with role stress (Fenzel, 1989; Liu & Kapan, 2004) and existential stress (Fitzgerald, 2005; Hacker, 1994) in their developmental years. The problematic of this study lies with identifying and critically analysing adolescent's perceptions of their experiences of role stress and existential stress and the potential relationship these have with an adolescent's emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

This explanatory sequential mixed methods research design contributes to the gap in literature by gaining insight into adolescents' lived experiences of their perceived role stress and/or existential stress and influence on their emotional intelligence and wellbeing. This study aimed to identify the potential stressors thereby providing a deeper understanding as to the possible interconnections between role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing. The significance of the study therefore was to contribute to the research field of adolescent wellbeing thereby specifically informing educational policy and practice while addressing the increasing prevalence of adolescent stress.

The study aimed to inform the research question: "What are adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress and the potential relationships of these stressors with their emotional intelligence and wellbeing?" To explore potential individual and ecological influences on adolescent role stress and/or existential stress, the theoretical lenses of Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory were applied. Adolescents (n = 375) aged 13-19 years from Years 8-12 in South Australia engaged in the explanatory sequential mixed methods design. Phase One involved adolescents responding to a quantitative online survey, followed by multiple case studies in Phase Two with nine participants engaging in semi-structured interviews.

Phase One employed an online survey comprising of four pre-existing scales: Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004); Purpose in Life test-Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011); Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010); Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997), capturing participant's self-reported perceptions of their current levels of role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Participants who self-reported experiencing either high role stress and existential stress or low role stress and existential stress in responding to the quantitative online survey were invited to participate in the second phase. Phase Two, a 20–30-minute semi-structured interview provided an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and captured the nuances that numbers alone could not explain (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Building on the quantitative findings, the nine case study participants were asked to describe their interactions within their ecological environment, specifically their family, friends, peers, school, teachers and the wider community before discussing their life goals, emotional disposition and wellbeing. The study contributes to research methodology by employing these two complimentary research methods thereby enabled the voice of adolescents to contribute to the knowledge and deeper understanding into adolescent's experiences of role stress and existential stress and the relationship that these have with their emotional intelligence and wellbeing (Bryman, 2008; Greene & Caracelli, 1997).

Phase One utilised SPSS version 25 for descriptive, correlation and inferential analysis across the four variables. The descriptive analysis revealed overall that, on average the adolescent participants reported moderate levels of role stress (M = 12.01), existential stress (M = 9.04), emotional intelligence (M = 37.15) and wellbeing (M = 124.35). Correlation analysis reported a significant positive relationship between role stress and existential stress (r = .64); and emotional intelligence and wellbeing (r = .67), yet a significant negative relationship was found between role stress and emotional intelligence (r = -.69); role stress and wellbeing (r = -.65); existential stress and emotional intelligence (r = -.76); and existential stress and wellbeing (r = -.68). Inferential analysis, which further included t-test analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA) to explore gender and year level differences. Significant gender differences in all four variables were recorded, with males reporting higher levels of role stress and existential stress, and lower levels of emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Findings further revealed significant difference for year levels 8-12, with those in years 9 and 10 reporting higher levels of role stress and existential stress, and lower levels of emotional intelligence and wellbeing than other year levels.

Semi-structured interviews employed in Phase Two captured the voice and lived experiences of nine participants who self-reported high role stress and existential stress and those with low role stress and existential stress. On completion of the semi-structured interviews, audio-recorded transcripts were

typed into a Microsoft Word document and data was manually coded to gain a deeper connection with participant's responses. Cross-case analysis revealed patterns, themes, similarities and differences across cases. The findings demonstrated that participant's scoring on the quantitative scales and qualitative descriptions of their role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing predominantly aligned, however this was not always the case. Analysis of the qualitative responses provided deeper insight into the lived experiences of these adolescent participants and complexity and interconnections between role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing, thus illustrating the contribution of this study's explanatory sequential mixed method design. Qualitative analysis also indicated a range of psychosocial elements influencing these constructs such as identity versus role confusion, social relationships, existential stress, and ecological elements ranging from microsystem to macrosystem to chronosystem experiences that were either increasing or reducing role stress and existential stress in these adolescents.

A clear bi-directional relationship between the four constructs also became apparent in the lives of these participants thus supporting the quantitative findings that a significant positive relationship existed between them. Relationships also played a significant role in protecting adolescents against role stress and existential stress or in some cases seemingly being the catalyst for this. Of these relationships, those with one's family appeared the most significant. Participants who reported low role stress and low existential stress reported positive, supportive family relationships which appeared to provide the foreground for other relationships perhaps because the social skills needed to develop and maintain relationships were modelled. There was also a clear interplay between each of the ecological systems within participant's lives where changes in one area seemingly impacted on another; something that was particularly evident in their micro and meso system experiences.

Implications of this study for informing educational policy and practice in supporting adolescent wellbeing aligns with a proposed integrated preventative approach founded on community commitment and engagement across multiple ecological systems to support adolescent's wellbeing thereby aiming to minimise risk of role stress and existential stress. The components include supporting adolescents to: (1) *Look Within:* to develop self-awareness of their innermost feelings and foster confidence in their emotional intelligence to identify potential role and existential stress risk factors, and thereby empower them to engage protective factors of relevance to their needs; (2). *Look Outward:* engage with a range of microsystems including contributing to local community and society to strengthen mesosystem relationships and promote meaning and purpose in life; and (3) *Look Between*: recognise the bi-directional and complex interconnectedness between role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing, to inform more holistic approaches in supporting wellbeing. To reduce and prevent adolescent role stress and existential stress, policy and practice

requires a community-based approach that enables adolescents to build on their strengths and protective factors with the support of significant others in an adolescent's micro and meso systems. While the current study has captured the voices of adolescents about their experiences of role stress and existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing, future research should respect that they are the experts in their own lives and invite them to be co-researchers and agents for change to inform policy and practice.

DECLARATION

This thesis presents work carried out by myself and does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; to the best of my knowledge it does not contain any materials previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; and all substantive contributions by others to the work presented, including jointly authored publications, is clearly acknowledged.

[redacted]

~~Ajit~~ Kaur

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Adolescence, spanning 13 to 19 years of age, is arguably one of the most important times of an individual's development (Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing [AIHW], 2011) where physical and psychological development coincides with the transition from puberty to legal adulthood (Brockman, 2018; Cook & Furstenberg, 2002). The very nature of these transitions means that most adolescents encounter numerous life changing events, potentially evoking stress (Andersen & Teicher, 2008; Hamburg, 1992). While positive stress has been reported to sometimes be a motivational factor, continued exposure to stress can have a harmful impact physically and/or psychologically (Selye, 1974; 1983) on adolescents' lives. Australian research found that 14% (560,000) of young people aged 4-17 years, reported experiencing high or very high psychological stress (AIHW, 2016). Similar findings have been reported by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (2018), where issues in adolescents' mental health in Australia increased by 11.8% during the period 2014-15 when compared with data in 2011. Of concern, 15.4% of adolescent respondents in this Australian study reported high or very high psychological stress which potentially contributed to premature school leaving, antisocial behaviour, alcohol and drug misuse and suicide (AIHW, 2016). There is therefore a need for research to explore adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress in their local contexts and any potential influence of these stressors on their emotional intelligence (ability of appraisal and expression of emotions; regulation of emotions; utilization of emotions) (Davies et al., 2010) and wellbeing (physical, emotional, social, psychological, spiritual and intellectual) (Adams et al., 1997); a gap the current study has addressed.

The period of adolescence has been well evidenced to incorporate challenges and changes which occur at a rapid rate, attributed to the body changes due to an influx of hormones, and the thought process development, enabling abstract thinking (Adeyemo & Adeleye, 2008). Socially, life also changes as close relationships with parents shift to peers, teachers, friends and the wider community (Adeyemo & Adeleye, 2008, Erikson, 1968). These broader social interactions become more influential and important, leaving the young person to manage these changes simultaneously (Adeyemo & Adeleye, 2008). Considering the potential vulnerability of adolescents during this period, their wellbeing and particularly their emotional capabilities in coping is a major concern for policy makers, educators, and researchers and particularly for the adolescents themselves.

Erikson (1968), in his Psychosocial Development Theory, defined the period of adolescence as one of identity versus role confusion arguing that adolescents must determine who they are and combine their self-understanding and social roles into a coherent identity. This involves an individual questioning about their identity and the roles they assume for example: 'who am I?', 'why am I here?' and 'what is the purpose of my life?' Each of these questions presents potential sources of; role stress, that is, an unhappiness with relationships (Hacker, 1994; Kaplan, et al., 2005; Liu & Kaplan, 2004), and/or existential stress, a lack of purpose in life (Bronk et al., 2009; Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964; Damon, 2009; Debnam et al., 2016; Heisel & Flett, 2004; Thoits, 1992; Yalom, 1980). Although these questions require self-reflection, Bronfenbrenner (1979), in his Ecological Systems Theory, argues that an individual's development cannot be considered independent of their social and interpersonal contexts. Also, an individual's interactions with family changes as they approach adolescence, where peers become paramount and social interactions including friends, teachers, schools, and the wider community become central. If such interactions are positive and strong, individuals become more confident, contributing to the development of a positive self-identity. In contrast, negative interactions may lead to adverse effects such as existential stress (ARACY, 2018; Erikson, 1968) where the adolescent questions their purpose in life. According to Erikson (1968), the interrelation between role stress and existential stress becomes more apparent when adolescents fail to establish a sense of identity within society, thus the risk for individuals to experience role stress and/or existential stress seemingly increases during adolescence.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Historically, role stress and existential stress have been exclusively applied to adult populations with researchers contesting that adult have wider social interactions and multiple role-identities (Adiningsih et al., 2020; Arrindell, 2005; Liu & Kaplan, 2004; Lou et al., 2007). However, many researchers have challenged this view, arguing that adolescents indeed, are confronted with role stress (Bird & Harris, 1990; De Bruyn, 2005; Fenzel, 1989; Siddique & Arcy, 1984) and existential stress (Berman et al., 2006; Fitzgerald, 2005; Hacker, 1994). Whilst researchers have empirically and theoretically reported that role stress and existential stress are prevalent among American, Asian, European and African adolescents, less research has been conducted with Australian adolescents, particularly South Australian adolescents (Brassai et al., 2011; Sasikala & Cecil, 2016). Further to this, previous studies related to role stress in adolescents have concentrated on either 'gender role stress' (Kulis et al., 2010; Naditch & Morrissey, 1976; Preiss et al., 2009) or 'role strain' (Bird & Harris, 1990; De Bruyn, 2005; Fenzel, 1989), and highlighted that if role strain persists it can result in role stress.

Studies in the field of existential stress have provided a theoretical justification that adolescents are the first to confront existential stress (Erikson, 1968; Fitzgerald, 2005; Hacker, 1994) highlighting the benefit of having a purpose in life at this age. However, to the researcher's knowledge, there are few empirical studies that have simultaneously examined adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress in relation to their emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Thereby the current explanatory sequential mixed methods research design explores role stress and existential stress in adolescents and the potential relationship of these stressors with their emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Participants aged 13-19 years from Years 8-12 in South Australia participated in the study, thus adding to the existing body of knowledge in this field. This contributes to the gap in literature gaining insight into adolescents' lived experiences of their perceived role stress and/or existential stress and the potential influence on their emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Employing statistical analysis, relationships among the variables were examined while a cross-case analysis enabled common themes to emerge from adolescents' responses to semi-structured interviews.

1.3 Research Questions

The following questions underpinned the current study on the relationships between role stress and existential stress in adolescents:

- What are adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress and what are the potential relationships of these stressors with their emotional intelligence and wellbeing?

    - What are adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress?
    - What, if any, relationship is there between adolescents' role stress and existential stress?
    - What, if any, relationship does role stress and/or existential stress have on adolescents' emotional intelligence?
    - What, if any, relationship does role stress and existential stress have on adolescents' wellbeing?
    - What, if any, relationship is there between emotional intelligence and adolescents' wellbeing?

1.4 Explication of the Thesis

Considering the extent of interactions and the dependency of adolescents on family, school, and peer groups, stress emanating from these relationships can directly influence their wellbeing (Alegre, 2012; Argyriou et al., 2016; Poulou, 2017; Seiffge-Krenke, 2013; Shin et al., 2016). Previous stress-related research has primarily focussed on the prevalence and psychological symptoms of either role stress or existential stress in adolescence, with a particular interest in suicidal ideation (Hacker, 1994; Taliaferro et al., 2009) and antisocial behaviour (Fenzel, 1989; Kaplan et al., 2005). However, lacking are cross-sectional studies that simultaneously assess role stress and existential stress in adolescents in relation to their emotional intelligence and wellbeing. The current study was designed to address this shortcoming in literature.

Moreover, while earlier research investigated adolescents' academic stress (Bartwal & Raj, 2013; Downey et al., 2008; Glozah, 2013; Parker et al., 2004), school-related stress (Fenzel, 1989; De Bruyn, 2005) and social stress (Charbonneau et al., 2009; Moksnes et al., 2010; Siddique & Arcy, 1984), there is limited insight into role stress and/or existential stress and the relationship that these have with emotional intelligence and wellbeing; something the current study addressed.

Researchers have reported that emotional intelligence mediates the effect of stress on mental health and wellbeing (Ciarrochi et al., 2002; Fernandez-Berrocal et al., 2006; Qualter et al., 2007). In this regard, emotional intelligence has been identified as a key factor in influencing students' learning, moderating stress and contributing to academic achievement (Parker et al., 2004; Petrides et al., 2004; McCann et al., 2011). Thus, a student's level of academic achievement is found to be positively related to their emotional stability, where balanced emotions support academic success. Conversely, instability in emotions negatively impact on academic achievement potentially inducing stress (Parker et al., 2004; Petrides et al., 2004; McCann et al., 2011). Previous research has evidenced that individuals who possess high emotional intelligence were better able to manage stress, as opposed to those with low or no emotional intelligence (Adeyemo & Adeleye, 2008; Almeida, 2005; Slaski & Cartwright, 2003). The current study considered the potential impact that emotional intelligence may have on adolescents' role stress and existential stress.

Although the relationship between stress and wellbeing (Dockery et al., 2016; Lawrence et al., 2015; Shourie & Kaur, 2017), social stress and psychological wellbeing (Holopainen, et al., 2012; Siddique & Arcy, 1984), academic stress and academic wellbeing (Korhonen et al., 2014), academic stress and psychological wellbeing (Glozah, 2013), adolescent stress and psychological wellbeing (Marikutty & Joseph, 2016), and emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing (Adeyemo & Adeleye,

2008) have been explored, there is limited research on the relationship between role stress and/or existential stress with wellbeing in adolescents. Employing an explanatory sequential mixed method approach (Creswell et al., 2011), the current study explored the potential relationship between role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing of adolescents aged 13-19 years in Years 8-12.

Employing a cross-sectional online survey (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003) comprising of four existing instruments: Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004); The Existence Scale: Purpose in Life-SF (Schulenberg et al., 2011); Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010); Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997) enabled the potential relationship among variables to be explored at a particular point in time. A total of 165 males and 210 females aged 13-19 years participated in Phase One of the study, the quantitative survey. This survey identified relationships among the variables, while highlighting gender and age differences between adolescents on all four variables. Results of the quantitative study were used to purposefully select participants for follow-up, in-depth qualitative case studies, where qualitative data provided further insights into the quantitative findings. Adolescents in Years 8, 10 and 12, whose survey responses indicated high role stress and high existential stress as well as those who reported low/no role stress and existential stress were invited to participate in a semi structured interview. Nine semi-structured interviews were conducted to develop case studies of individuals who reported high or low role stress and existential stress. Providing insights into the quantitative findings and the nature of the relationships amongst all four variables, interviews included discussions about participant's life goals, interactions with their family, friends, peers, teachers, school and wider community. As Yin (1994) suggests a "multiple case study is an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence" (p.1211). In line with this, the current study provided insights into the similarities and differences among cases, providing deeper understandings of adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress and how these stressors may influence their emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

In further understanding adolescents' potential stressors, Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory, particularly stage 5, provided the foundation for examining an adolescent's inner crisis. During this stage, adolescence is a time of role versus identity confusion where questions such as: Who am I? Why am I here? What is the meaning or purpose in my life? are asked (Erikson, 1968; Stone, 2014). Thus, it is during this period that adolescents widen their social interactions while developing their identity and learning in relation to their societal roles (Erikson, 1968). Erikson (1968) claimed that success at stage five leads to the virtue of fidelity, which involves accepting others and their ideas, despite having different ideological beliefs (Erikson, 1968). Conversely,

Erikson (1968) argued that failure can result in psychosocial crisis such as role versus identity confusion. Therefore, it is contended that adolescents are potentially at risk of experiencing role stress, feeling unhappy with their social relationships with their family, friends, peers, school and teachers (Liu & Kaplan, 2004), and/or existential stress, a lack of purpose in life (Schulenberg et al., 2011).

To further support adolescent's wellbeing and reduce potential role stress and existential stress, this study aimed to explore the relationship of these stressors with emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Exploring ecological influences was necessary to shed light on individual psychosocial characteristics that could potentially influence an adolescent's role stress and existential stress. This is important in informing an adolescent's educational context and their interconnected relationships, starting from the self and broadening to wider environmental and societal influences. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, this thesis explored adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress and their potential influence on emotional intelligence and wellbeing. To further inform understandings of the potential interplay between an adolescent and their social environments, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory and Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory have been chosen as complementary theoretical frameworks.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Of all the life-stages, adolescence is arguably the one most marked by rapid and potentially tumultuous transitions (Brockman, 2018; Cook & Furstenberg, 2002), not just biologically where changes are externally manifested (Moksnes et al., 2016; Siefert & Hoffnung, 2000), but also psychosocially where maturity from childhood to adulthood occurs (Debnam et al., 2016; Erikson, 1968; Willeman et al., 2009). While the transition through adolescence is inevitable, for some individuals, the speed and magnitude of these changes has been reported to cause elevated stress levels; something that is well documented in literature (Buchanan, 1990; Gallagher & Vella-Brodrick, 2008; Marcia 1966; Moksnes et al., 2016; Noble-Carr et al., 2013; Rose & Bond, 2008). Therefore, within the field of education, this study simultaneously examined role stress and existential stress in adolescents and the potential relationship that these stressors had with their emotional intelligence and wellbeing. This study therefore took the influences across individual and ecological contexts into account to contribute to the body of knowledge on adolescent stress and wellbeing, thus leading to potential implications for educational wellbeing policies and practice.

Globally, antisocial behaviour among adolescents including truanting from school, bullying and suicidal ideation, has highlighted the need for further research to support adolescent wellbeing

(AIHW, 2011). The Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health and Wellbeing (2016) highlighted the triple dividend, arguing that "we have a unique opportunity to focus on this previously neglected age group in a way that it is beneficial for adolescents themselves, for society, and perhaps even for the health of our planet" (p. 2355). Moreover, Erikson (1968) in his Psychosocial Development Theory explicitly defined adolescence as a time of role versus identity confusion, where an individual searches for their sense of self and personal identity and strives to belong to society and fit in; all of which could positively or negatively impact on their wellbeing.

The wellbeing of young people affects their quality of life and productivity, while shaping their future health and contribution to society (Eckersley, 2008). Several studies have noted that adolescence is a period of opportunities (Balluerka et al., 2013; Lopez-Zafra et al., 2019) to enhance development and understand their own behaviour and emotions (Ronen et al., 2016). Yet adolescence also brings challenges related to emotional stability and wellbeing, which may lead to negative outcomes if not supported (EI Kazdouh et al., 2018; McDonough et al., 2016). For instance, suicide is rare in childhood (<14 years) but becomes more common during adolescence (The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne [RCHM], 2016, p.1) and more than 4 in 10 Australians over the age of 14 have used an illicit drug at some stage (National Drug Strategy Household Survey [NDSHS], 2016). Young people who experience interpersonal conflict in secondary school are more likely to experience mental health problems and substance abuse in the later years of schooling (Bond et al., 2007; Libbey, 2004). Australian adolescents who reported poor school connectedness were 2 to 3 times more likely to experience depressive symptoms when compared to peers who felt more connected (Bond et al., 2007). These results are consistent with findings from other studies that have demonstrated that a sense of belonging reduces substance abuse and mental health issues (Beyers et al., 2004; Libbey, 2004; McNeely & Falci, 2004).

Previous researchers have identified adolescence as a developmental period where young people increasingly prioritise social interactions with friends, peers, school, teachers and the community, over family (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Moksnes et al., 2013). It is at this age that adolescents become curious and explore new and risky horizons (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Moksnes et al., 2013) with little awareness of the risks. Developing a sense of personal independence and social connectedness is important for positive development and wellbeing (Kern et al., 2015). During this time, individuals need support and positive relationships from their family and social environments to overcome a diverse range of personal and social challenges (Diener et al., 2010; Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2016).

In addition to positive relationships, whether in relation to peer connections or a sense of belonging, education plays an important role (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Osterman 2000). In this regard, education is not solely focussed on academic achievement but instead supports adolescents to become pro-social and responsible so they can fully participate in society (Noble et al., 2008). To enable young people to have productive interactions across their social environments addressing role stress and existential stress needs to be an educational priority, thus highlighting the significance of the current study.

Numerous studies have considered the prevalence of either role stress or existential stress among American, Asian, European and African adolescents and young adults (Brassai et al., 2011; Sasikala & Cecil, 2016; Taliaferro et al., 2009;), and some studies have examined the relationship between identity status, stress and substance abuse among Australian adolescents (Kelada et al., 2016; Rose & Bond, 2008;). Findings from these studies have revealed a strong relationship between role stress and drug and alcohol use (Fenzel, 1989; Bobo et al., 1986; Kaplan et al., 2005), and existential stress and suicidal ideation (Brassai et al., 2011; Taliaferro et al., 2009; Thoits, 1992). Therefore, examining the relationship between role stress and existential stress and the impact this has on emotional intelligence may enhance self-regulation among adolescents and promote their wellbeing.

The current study added to literature in several ways. Firstly, it simultaneously identified role stress and existential stress in adolescents aged 13-19 years in relation to their emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Secondly, both quantitative and qualitative analysis were conducted to provide an in-depth understanding of this relationship. Thirdly, adolescents provided their perceptions about their experiences of role stress and existential stress thus providing them with a 'voice'; something that is scant in the literature in this field to date. Thus, collectively they have advanced literature specifically exploring adolescents' role stress and existential stress.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

Following Chapter One, the literature review in Chapter Two presents an introduction, scope of the literature review, critical analysis of relevant literature across the broad areas of adolescence and adolescents, Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, stress and adolescence, role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, wellbeing, and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. A rationale for drawing on Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems is presented highlighting the reason for focussing on adolescents. Studies that have examined the relationship between the four key variables under

investigation were analysed to identify a gap in literature on adolescent role stress, existential stress, and relationship with emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

Chapter Three outlines the theoretical foundation regarding the methods, tools, techniques and instruments employed for data collection and analysis. Commencing with a discussion of the different research paradigms, the focus turns to the rationale for the chosen approach. An overview of how Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory is then outlined. In light of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, an Adolescent Wellbeing Model that reflects the purpose of the current study and the methods employed is then presented. Chapter Three further provides the rationale for adopting an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach (Creswell et al., 2011). An overview of the research design, phases, timelines, methods, sample selection criteria, techniques for data collection and analysis are also presented. An overview of the quantitative cross-sectional online survey, qualitative semi-structured interviews, methods, techniques, and instruments employed for data collection and data analysis follows. This chapter also outlines the background and demographic information of participants. Research integrity is discussed before concluding with the ethical responsibilities employed throughout the research process.

Chapter Four commences with an introduction and overview of the research hypotheses for the quantitative analysis. Descriptive analysis of each of the four variables is presented with a description of the findings elicited from the statistical analyses following. Correlation analysis was utilised to examine the association between: role stress and existential stress; role stress and emotional intelligence; role stress and wellbeing; existential stress and emotional intelligence; and existential stress and wellbeing. Additionally, post-hoc statistical analysis for gender and age differences are presented. T-test analyses were performed to identify gender differences on the variables under exploration, and then F-test or ANOVA analysis were used to test the significance of differences of means according to age. Chapter Four concludes with a summary of the findings and a brief introduction to the qualitative study and the recruited participants.

Chapter Five and Six present the lived experiences of adolescents who reported high role stress and high existential stress and those who reported low role stress and low existential stress in their quantitative survey. Identified common themes are presented with reference to literature and direct quotes from participants. Each adolescent's story concludes with a summary of their experiences, which provided insights into their quantitative survey results while enabling commonalties and differences across cases to be identified.

Chapter Seven addresses the research questions and draws the findings of the quantitative cross-sectional survey and qualitative semi-structured interviews together. Key findings are critically discussed before presenting implications for the field in terms of policy and practice. Discussion then focuses on the unique contribution that this study makes to the field before turning to the strengths and potential areas for future study.

1.7 Conclusion

It is evident that an exploration of the potential relationship between role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing is crucial if we are to improve adolescent wellbeing. To do this, it is important that adolescents' voices are central in research as they are the experts in issues immediately impacting on their lives. Chapter Two presents a critical analysis of relevant literature across the broad areas of adolescence, wellbeing, role stress, existential stress and emotional intelligence, before presenting a discussion and rationale of the key theories underpinning the current study.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Despite global and national movements supporting young people's wellbeing, adolescents are increasingly reporting high levels of stress, highlighting the significance of the current study. In addressing this, studies related to adolescents' health and wellbeing emphasise the need to further understand their perceptions (AIHW, 2016; ARACY, 2018; EI Kazdouh et al., 2018) and experiences within the environments and contexts within which they interact (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Debnam et al., 2016; Fenzel, 1989; Liu & Kaplan, 2004). The current research aimed to contribute to these understandings and further inform educational policy and practice in supporting adolescent wellbeing, particularly preventative measures aimed at reducing and minimising their stress. Understanding an adolescents' wellbeing, specifically the potential relationship this has with role stress and/or existential stress, is a significant contribution to the field while also having societal benefits.

This chapter critically analyses and synthesises the theoretical, conceptual and methodological body of research across the key fields of adolescence, role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing. This foundational literature informed the research design underpinning the research question: What are adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress and their potential relationship with emotional intelligence and wellbeing? A brief picture of the detailed analysis conducted, including the key areas and different constructs examined and what methods were employed, is presented in the scoping below.

2.2 Scoping of Literature Review

Commencing at the start of this study, the literature review continued throughout and examined the key areas of adolescence, role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing. While a thorough search of literature was completed to identify studies exploring role stress and existential stress in adolescents and adults, the search for literature on wellbeing and emotional intelligence scoped studies that specifically explored these constructs in relation to role stress and/or existential stress. The literature search was not limited by sample size or date of publication and was conducted in a range of educational contexts to capture the breadth of research in the field and identify seminal studies in these key areas.

Multiple databases were used including Scopus, ProQuest ERIC, Web of Science and Google Scholar. As research about role stress and existential stress originated in psychology, Scopus, ProQuest ERIC, Web of Science databases were used to scope literature across disciplines. Google Scholar was also employed to capture further relevant studies beyond these databases.

Snowballing techniques were employed to provide additional sources (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Emerson, 2015; Etikan et al., 2016) where the most recent works were used to locate cited articles that were relevant to the current study. To gain a holistic understanding of adolescent wellbeing in relation to role stress and/or existential stress, international, national (Australian) and local (South Australian) studies and reports were reviewed. An exploration of the proposed frameworks that were adopted in the current study, namely Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory (refer Section 2.3.2.1) and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory (refer Section 2.7) were also included.

An extensive review of literature plays a vital role in selecting instrument(s) for a study (Mertens, 2014). Therefore, this literature review examined numerous quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments and methods within the fields of role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing, ensuring trustworthiness, reliability and validity.

To commence the literature search, the following terms were employed due to their appropriateness and relevance to the purpose of the review: *adolescents (including adolescence, teenagers); role stress; existential stress (*including *meaning in life, purpose in life, life goals); emotional intelligence;* and *wellbeing*. Given that role stress and existential stress were initially based on adult populations, literature about adults was included. To ensure an extensive review of the literature was conducted, each search was repeated and refined to include other keywords, synonyms and similar terms and phrases. Terms for each of the four constructs of this study are outlined below.

2.2.1 Scoping for role stress literature

Using the keyword *role stress* in the title yielded 17,043 documents in Scopus. As these keywords were not in quotation marks, documents with either role and/or stress were captured hence the high number of documents. Refining this search to *"role stress"* as an exact phrase yielded 380 results which was further refined by using a combination of keywords such as *"role stress"* AND *adolescents* OR *teenagers* OR *adolescence* in the titles which yielded two documents. To capture documents that included seminal role stress studies with adult samples as outlined in section 2.2, a combination of *"role stress"* AND *adults* was used yielding four documents.

This approach was then employed using the Web of Science database, with an initial search using role and/or stress in the title yielding 18,142 articles. By using the exact phrase of *"role stress"* in the title, 295 documents were located. Further refining the search by using *"role stress"* AND *adolescents* OR *adolescence* OR *teenagers* in the title, limited the previous result to only two documents. For adults, the keyword combination of *"role stress"* AND *adults* in the tile yielded four documents.

Scoping the ProQuest ERIC database and the same keywords of *role stress* in the title resulted in 317 documents as all literature exploring role and/or stress were included. By using *"role stress"* as an exact phrase, 44 documents were found. Refining the search to include *"role stress"* AND *adolescents* OR *adolescence* OR *teenagers* in the title yielded two articles. For adults, *"role stress"* AND *adults* in the title yielded two documents.

In Google Scholar an initial advanced search using *role stress* provided 60,600 documents in 0.03 seconds. Using *"role stress"* as an exact phrase yielded 2,530 articles in 0.12 seconds. In Google Scholar there is no option to refine the search other than using keywords anywhere in the article or in the title only therefore, the keyword combination of *"role stress"* in an advanced search option as an exact phrase and *adolescents, adolescence, teenagers* in an option *with at least one of the words* yielded four documents in 0.05 seconds. For adults, the keyword combination of *"role stress"* AND *adults* in the title yielded six documents in 0.07 seconds.

In total 26 studies were identified for role stress in adolescents and adults: six in Scopus, six in Web of Science; four in ProQuest ERIC and 10 in Google Scholar. Elimination of duplicates reduced the number to 16 which were read in full and identified as relevant; therefore, they were included in the current study. At this stage, empirical studies published in English investigating role stress itself, or in relation to other key constructs in this study, were included; for some studies full articles were not available so they were also excluded. As mentioned in section 2.1, snowballing techniques were employed to provide additional sources. Therefore, references of selected articles were scanned to locate seminal and other relevant studies, which increased the total number of articles to 55. Out of these, 36 included adult participants and 19 involved adolescents.

2.2.2 Scoping for existential stress literature

Scopus, ProQuest ERIC, Web of Science and Google Scholar were scoped to locate studies that explored existential stress in adult and adolescent populations. For existential stress, the following keywords and combinations were used: *existential stress* OR *purpose in life* or *meaning in life* AND

adolescents OR *teenagers* OR *adolescence*; *existential stress* OR *purpose in life* OR *meaning in life* AND *adults*. The inclusion of meaning in life or purpose in life aligned with the definition of existential stress applied within the current study, that is a "feeling of stress due to lack of meaning or purpose in life" (Schulenberg et al., 2011, p. 862). To ascertain seminal studies within the field of existential stress, no time limits were used in the initial search.

Keyword combinations including *existential stress* or *meaning in life* OR *purpose in life* in the title yielded 1,868 documents in Scopus. Refining this search by using *"existential stress"* OR *"meaning in life"* OR *"purpose in life"* in the title reduced the number of documents to 1,080. Adding AND *adolescent* OR *adolescence* OR *teenagers* to this search reduced the number of articles to 63. Selecting the social sciences as a subject area from the given options limited the previous results to 23. For adults, the keyword combination of *"existential stress"* OR *"meaning in life"* OR *"purpose in life"* AND *adults* in the title yielded 78 documents.

Similarly, these search criteria were applied within the Web of Science database. Employing the keyword combination of *existential stress* or *meaning in life* OR *purpose in life* in the title yielded 415 documents. Further refinement included the use of *"existential stress"* OR *"meaning in life"* OR *"purpose in life"* in the title which located 295 documents. Employing the search terms *"existential stress"* OR *"meaning in life"* OR *"purpose in life"* AND *adolescent* OR *adolescence* OR *teenagers* yielded 15 documents which were further reduced to one when looking at *education special, educational psychology*. For adults, the search terms *"existential stress "*OR *"meaning in life"* OR *"purpose in life"* AND *adults,* yielded 25 documents. From the advanced search option 'social science interdisciplinary' category was selected, resulting in one document.

Using ProQuest ERIC and the same keywords of *existential stress* OR *meaning in life* or *purpose in life* resulted in 158 documents. Employing the keyword combination of *"existential stress* OR "meaning in life" OR *"purpose in life"* yielded 94 documents. Further refinement of the search terms to *"existential stress"* OR *"meaning in life"* OR *"purpose in life"* AND *adolescent* OR *adolescence* OR *teenagers*, yielded 53 documents. For adults, the search terms *"existential stress"* OR *"meaning in life"* OR *"purpose in life"* AND *adults*, yielded 50 documents.

Using the advanced search in Google Scholar the keywords of *existential stress* as an exact phrase were employed together with *adolescents, adolescence, teenagers* in the parameter of *with at least one of the words* (both in title) resulted in one article in 0.06 seconds. Employing the keywords of *"meaning in life"* AND *adolescents,* adolescence, *teenagers* in the title resulted in 38 articles. The keywords *"purpose in life"* AND *adolescents, adolescence, teenagers* in title resulted into 25 articles.

With adults, *"purpose in life"* AND *adults* yielded 54 articles; *"meaning in life"* and *adults* identified 145 articles; *"existential stress"* AND *adults* returned no articles.

For existential stress a total of 468 studies were located; 101 in Scopus, 2 in Web of Science; 103 in ProQuest ERIC and 262 in Google Scholar, yet when duplicates were removed 289 studies remained. Both the titles and abstracts were then manually screened, yielding 52 studies for adolescents and 33 for adults. At this stage studies that did not relate to education, psychology, social sciences and behavioural sciences were excluded. The full text was read and 57 were included. These studies were empirical studies that met the inclusion criteria of exploring existential stress or meaning/purpose in life independently or in relation to role stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Thirty-seven of these explored adults and 20 involved adolescents. Studies that related to age groups other than adolescents and adults were excluded and those that explored the relationship between meaning/purpose in life and wellbeing were included. Studies that involved hopelessness, life satisfaction, religious meaning in life, spirituality, and not existential stress or meaning/purpose in life, were excluded as they were outside of the scope of the current study. References of these articles were scanned to locate seminal studies and other relevant studies resulting in 37 involving adult participants and 20 with an adolescent sample.

2.3 Understanding Adolescents

Adolescence is considered the healthiest period in one's life (Patton et al., 2016) however it is marked by rapid and potentially tumultuous transitions (Brockman, 2018; Cook & Furstenberg, 2002); biologically where changes are externally manifested (Moksnes et al., 2016; Seifert & Hoffnung, 2000), and psychosocially where maturity from childhood to adulthood occurs (Debnam et al., 2016; Erikson, 1968; Willemen et al., 2009). While the transition through adolescence can arguably be seamless for many young people, for others, the speed and magnitude of these changes can elevate stress levels, a point well documented in the literature (Gallagher & Vella-Brodrick, 2008; Marcia, 1966; Moksnes et al., 2016; Moksnes et al., 2013; Noble-Carr et al., 2013; Rose & Bond, 2008). As the current study focuses on adolescents, gaining a deeper understanding of how they navigate their lives by capturing their lived experiences is critical. To begin, a critical examination of the term 'adolescent' and the literature exploring the period of adolescence is presented, followed by different theoretical perspectives that have been applied to understand adolescence.

2.3.1 Who are adolescents?

Currently, terms such as youth, young people, young adults and adolescents are used interchangeably in literature, yet they have been defined differently across countries and contexts. For example, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) defines a child as "every human being below the age of 18 years" (p. 3). Although most adolescents are included in this age-based definition, the World Health Organisation (WHO) defines adolescents as being aged between 10 and 19 years.

After the United Nation's first International Youth Year in 1985, the term 'youth', which often overlaps with adolescence, became more commonly used and referred to people between 15-24 years of age (UN DESA, 2013). Bonnie et al. (2015) and Patton et al. (2016) more recently introduced 'young adulthood' and 'emerging adulthood' as ranging from 18-26 years of age. 'Young people' is a term used by WHO to combine adolescence and youth between 10-24 years of age. While these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, they can be distinguished based on the age range covered and the context from which they emerged.

The differences between national organisations, such as the WHO and the UN, and academic research is, according to Sawyer et al. (2018), problematic with key differences emerging due to the difficulty in assessing the overlap between the ages of childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Furthermore, these developmental terms appear to differ globally, in Spain, for example, adolescents are anyone aged 10-24 years, in US and India it is 10-19 years, while in Australia adolescents are aged between 13-19 years.

Historically, the term 'adolescence' comes from the Latin word *'adolescere'* which means "to grow" or "to grow to maturity" (Sawyer et al., 2018, p. 5). Adolescence emerged as a separate developmental stage at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution when laws against child labour were passed and an increased demand for prolonged education emerged (Patton et al., 2016). A foundational assessment of the description and use of the term 'adolescence' was first provided by Hanawalt (1992), in which he defined adolescence as "the liminal period (that is on the threshold of leaving one stage and entering another) between childhood and adulthood" (p. 343).

Vadeboncoeur and Padilla-Petry (2019) explored the modern meaning of adolescence, noting that the sociocultural framing of the term was based on three key themes: adolescence as a time when one becomes an individual and recognises adulthood; the shaping of adolescence based on school and family relationships; and the development of knowledge as an adolescent. A sociocultural perspective

directly counters universal definitions of individuals of a specific age such as Hall's (1904) description of adolescence as a period of "storm and stress", instead accentuated differences in sociocultural growth of an individual (p. 1).

Adolescence is commonly viewed as not only a transitional period but an important developmental stage which is accompanied by biological, social and psychological development. Adolescent development depends on the way in which an individual perceives the world, feels about it and chooses to cope with it (Andersen & Teicher, 2008). Therefore, the age of adolescence holds a significant place in numerous seminal human development theories which distinguish adolescence from childhood and youth, while considering it as a transitional and crucial stage of development (Erikson, 1968; Hall, 1904; Havighurst, 1972; Piaget, 1936).

2.3.2 Theoretical approaches to understanding adolescents

As adolescence is recognised as a time of significant change, many researchers have explored this stage of development (e.g., Erikson, 1968; Freud, 1910; Piaget, 1936; Vygotsky, 1978). They employed different theoretical approaches to understand adolescents. As the focus of the current study is centred on adolescence, it is important to gain insights into the research and theories that have emerged.

Recognising the importance of sequential developmental stages, Hall (1844-1924), known as the "father of the scientific study of adolescence", introduced the concept of "storm and stress" which played a vital role in restructuring thinking about adolescents (Santrock, 2006, p. 15). Freud (1856-1939) expanded on this work and was considered the founder of psychological human development stages (Santrock, 2006). With his Psychosexual Theory, Freud (1910) argued that an individual's psychological response and behaviour reflects their biological instinctive drives. He identified puberty as a genital stage where individuals develop an interest in the opposite sex. Successful development at this stage, he argued, resulted in a well-balanced person. He further argued that the adolescents' psychological disturbances are biologically based and culturally universal (Freud, 1910), a view that has since been disputed (Bronfenbrenner, 1960, 1979; Erikson, 1968; Piaget, 1936; Vygotsky, 1978).

Freud's (1910) theory has been criticised for its lack of emphasis on biological instinctual urges (Berk, 2007), failing to consider the impact of social interactions on adolescent development (Webster, 2013). Freud's (1910) theory was strongly criticised because of its emphasis on human

sexuality and one's sexual desires as opposed to highlighting changes in cognitive development; one such critic was Piaget (1936).

Focussing on mental structures and processes, Piaget (1936) highlighted adolescence as a period where individuals acquire important cognitive skills and mature in their reasoning and problem-solving, shifting from concrete to formal operations or abstract thinking. Yet, while Piaget's theory has been well cited, it has been criticised for not paying attention to an individual's environment, sociology and culture and the impact these have on development (Ingleby, 1983). Instead, Piaget (1936) identified discrete stages of human development based on a child's ability to acquire knowledge. Combining adolescence and adulthood, rather than clearly defining adolescents as those aged between 13-19 years, caused further criticism as there was argued to be no opportunity to explore issues pertaining to adolescence alone. Both Freud's (1910) and Piaget's (1936) theoretical approaches paid little attention to the impact that others have on an individual's development. Therefore, both were criticised on the grounds that they ignored the role of essential cognitive social construction (Ingleby, 1983); something Vygotsky (1978) addressed.

Vygotsky's (1978) Social Development Theory reported functions of human psychology on a social and psychological front, with an emphasis on social interactions for complete cognitive development. In advancing human development theory, Vygotsky (1978), a pioneer of Socio-cultural Theory, maintained that children are active learners who construct their own knowledge. Based on Piaget's (1936) Cognitive Development Theory, Vygotsky developed the concept of social constructivism, where he emphasised the importance of adolescents' social learning (Marginson, 2016). However, he challenged Piaget's (1936) proposal that progression through identified cognitive stages was natural and invariant, rather he believed that human development was the result of interactions between people and their social environment (Ingleby, 1983). Sometimes such interactions can cause stress and particularly role stress which involves a dissatisfaction in relationships (Kahn & Quinn, 1970). Although Vygotsky highlighted the importance of social learning and an individual's culture in cognitive development, he, like others, failed to focus on adolescence.

While the above theories have shed light on development during adolescence, it is Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory that focussed on the dichotomy between identity formation and role fulfilment. This seemingly aligns with the aims of the current study as some adolescents experience stress from their relationships (De Bruyn, 2005; Fenzel, 1989) and/or purpose in life (Fitzgerald, 2005).

2.3.2.1 Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory

Further expansion and modification of Freud's (1910) Psychosexual Theory was evidenced with the emergence of Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory. The major difference between Freud's and Erikson's theories was that Erikson emphasised psychosocial correlates through eight stages of human development where individuals experience psychosocial conflicts, whereas Freud focussed on biological factors (Schultz & Schultz, 2005). For Erikson, both biological maturation and cognitive development occurs parallel to psychosocial development (Pittman et al., 2011). In Erikson's theory, each stage is reliant and builds on the previous stage (Erikson, 1968). Erikson (1968) argued that as a child grows towards adulthood, they enter the adolescent phase where they grapple with their identity and confusion about their role in life, claiming that:

> [a]s they transition from childhood to adulthood, teens may begin to feel confused or insecure about themselves and how they fit into society. As they seek to establish a sense of self, teens may experiment with different roles, activities, and behaviours. (p. 64)

Erikson (1968) further argued that during this period adolescents widen their social interactions and relationships while developing their identity and learning their societal roles. He purports that success in this stage (Stage 5) can lead to the virtue of fidelity which involves accepting others and their ideas despite different ideological beliefs (Erikson, 1968). Conversely, Erikson argued that failure to achieve this stage can result in a psychosocial crisis such as role versus identity confusion (Erikson, 1968). Therefore, it is contended that adolescents are potentially at risk of experiencing role stress (feeling unhappy with relationships within an individual's environment such as relationship with their family, friends, peers, school and teachers) (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) and/or existential stress (lack of purpose in life) (Schulenberg et al., 2011).

Unlike other theorists, Erikson (1968) proposed a lifespan approach to understanding human development. He emphasised development from within both psychological and social contexts, arguing that psychosocial crisis was based on the interactions between psychological development and societal demands, highlighting the need to further understand an adolescents' psychosocial development in terms of role stress and existential stress. To further understand adolescent wellbeing in relation to existential stress and role stress, this thesis explored the adolescents' interaction with their environment and the potential impact this had on their personal and social development. Therefore, the use of Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory supported an exploration of self-development, identity and relationships, and how these may be influenced by the social context (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2013, p. 115).

Erikson's stages of development

Erikson (1968) identified eight stages of development across an individual's life (refer Table 2.1 below). These stages reportedly occur and correspond to a series of crises or psychosocial conflicts that a person may face as they develop and mature from infancy through to childhood and adulthood (Erikson, 1968).

Table 2. 1 Stages of Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory

Psychosocial crisis	Age level	Interaction in social relationships	Existential questions
Stage 1 - Trust versus Mistrust	Infant-1year	Parents	Can I trust the world?
Stage 2 - Autonomy versus Shame	2-3 years	Family members, siblings	Is it ok to be me?
Stage 3 - Initiative versus Guilt	4-6 years	School, teachers	Is it ok for me to do, move, and act?
Stage 4 - Industry versus Inferiority	7-12 years	Parents, family, school, teachers, friends, peers	Can I make it in the world of people and things?
Stage 5 - Role versus Identity Confusion	13-19 years	Parents, family, school, teachers, friends, peers, siblings, wider community	Who am I? Why I am here? What is the meaning or purpose of my life?
Stage 6 - Intimation versus Isolation	20-39 years	Parents, family, school, teachers, friends, peers, siblings, wider community, partner, colleagues	Can I love?
Stage 7 - Generativity versus Stagnation	40-59 years	Parents, family, school, teachers, friends, peers, siblings, wider community, partner, colleagues	Can I make my life count?
Stage 8 - Ego Integrity versus Despair	60 and above	Parents, family, school, teachers, friends, peers, siblings, wider community, partner, colleagues	Is it ok to have been me?

According to Erikson (1968), each crisis has its own boundaries and every stage lays the foundation for future stages. For instance, children who develop a sense of trust and security in the first 24 months of their life feel free to explore the world and are well positioned to develop autonomy in the following stage (2-3 years of age). Those who do not develop this sense of trust and security may experience feelings of shame. It is at this stage, aged 2-3 years, when children are at risk of developing low self-esteem due to limited opportunities to gain independence. This freedom and autonomy encourage children to take initiatives in activities which play a vital role in the development of their interpersonal and communication skills at the next stage, aged 4-6 years. Success in such interactions and communications are important for children's confidence and sense of competence in their fourth stage, 7-12 years of age, where their main interaction is with their peers and teachers. Without this, children may acquire an inferiority complex and lack confidence in their abilities, which negatively affects their sense of identity and self-awareness. This then has an impact on the fifth stage, 13-19

years of age, which Erikson calls role versus identity confusion, potentially resulting in feelings of confusion between their personal identity and social roles. Adolescents in this stage explore the world around them and become independent to contemplate their career paths, family and social relationships. These social experiences can potentially lead to role and/or existential stress for some adolescents. Those who develop a cogent self-concept in their fifth stage are more likely to be able to share intimate and happy relationships in the sixth stage, 20-39 years of age. Conversely, individuals who do not successfully develop a positive sense of self may face isolation and depression in the sixth stage because of a lack of commitment and security in relationships. Consequently, these individuals may develop feelings of stagnation and being a burden on society during their seventh stage, 40-59 years of age, when individuals seek to generate and give back to society. Finally, at the eighth and final stage, after the age of 60, individuals look back on their life and measure their past, potentially leading to feelings of being unproductive, depression, isolation and guilt, or conversely feeling productive, content and complete with a sense of purpose in life.

While Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory has been widely adopted within the fields of psychology and education, it has been criticised by behavioural theorists for determining behavioural changes in terms of age and stages. Highlighting the need to hear individual voices, Shaffer (2009) also criticised Erikson's (1968) descriptive nature of psychosocial analysis for not exploring the "how" and "why" of developmental stages, thus ignoring the individual experiences that helped to develop a stable identity during adolescence. Furthermore, Erikson's theory has been argued to focus intently on the psychological and social aspects of human development with very little attention given to the emotional aspect (Fleming, 2004; Schultz & Schultz, 2005). Erikson's (1968) theory has primarily focused on defining development through fixed stages where transition from one stage to the next is not explained (Wastell, 1996) and negative connotations of the different crisis has been argued to be overemphasised (Pelaez et al., 2008). Pelaez et al. (2008) proposed that a psychosocial crisis is not always negative, rather it can be positive in terms of ego qualities (a mental state that led an individual to life events) and negative in terms of core pathologies (forces which guide one to negative behaviour).

Despite these criticisms, Erikson's (1968) theory has been widely used by contemporary researchers to explore human development during adolescence. For instance, Hacker (1994) argued that Erikson viewed adolescents "as a whole being who not only exists in the here and now but is inextricably linked to a past childhood leading imperceptibly to a future adulthood" (p. 302). Supporting this, Hoover (2004) identified Erikson's theory as more comprehensive, realistic and empirically translatable when compared to others. He further explained that Erikson's theory attempted to elaborate on the developmental issues faced by adolescents within the boundaries of their own ego

and social or cultural environment; something he argued was missing in other psychosocial theories (Hoover, 2004).

As previously reported, adolescence has been characterised as a period of rapid and potentially tumultuous transition (Cook & Furstenberg, 2002) where social expectations can contradict an individual's perceptions (Erikson, 1968). Using Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory, Brockman (2018) found identity formation to be a main psychosocial objective of adolescence where physical changes in one's body and development of ideological behaviour occur simultaneously. Batra (2013) contended that Erikson's theory continues to provide opportunities to learn about potential crises of adolescence which he argued are universal in nature. In support, Rogers (2018) suggested that overemphasis of an individual's psyche in contemporary times restricts the understanding of the role of one's social environment in an individual's wellbeing, therefore, Erikson's concept of psychosocial development is important to examine adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress.

In addition, Erikson's (1968) theory highlights the importance of the period of adolescence and offers a psychosocial theoretical approach to examine role versus identity confusion and the potential influence this has on role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing. The seminal work of Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory continues to provide a lens to explore today's adolescents as it sheds light on the ways their social lives are marked by building relationships and identity formation and their endeavour to successfully navigate through this stage of life (McLeod, 2018). Conversely, when adolescents fail to make personally endorsed commitments, they may risk experiencing a state of role and identity confusion, characterised by uncertainty and aimlessness (Batra, 2013) which may result in role stress and/or existential stress, emotional discomfort and poor wellbeing.

2.3.2.2 How Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory has informed the current study

While this thesis primarily focused on Erikson's (1968) fifth stage, role versus identity confusion, the cross-over with other stages was also considered. During this stage, adolescents begin to consider questions related to their self-identity, their existence, meaning in life and their changing role of authority (Maxwell & Gayle, 2013), thus potentially tapping into role stress and existential stress.

Most studies employing Erikson's (1968) theory as a framework have explored the link between stage 5 (*role versus identity confusion*) and stage 6 (*intimacy versus isolation*) and found that unresolved issues related to identity may leave adolescents feeling isolated, threatened, or dissatisfied with their

relationships (Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2010; Pittman et al., 2011; Montgomery, 2005). For example, Montgomery (2005) explored patterns of behaviour, affective involvement and psychosocial functioning in relationships among 473 adolescents and young adults aged 12-24 years in the United States (US) and found that those with a clear sense of identity reported greater willingness to share intimacy. Supporting this, Beyers and Seiffge-Krenke (2010) surveyed and interviewed 93 adolescents from Germany (52 females and 41 males with a mean age of 15.3 years) in their 10-year longitudinal study to explore whether identity preceded intimacy. Results illustrated a direct link between identity development in middle adolescence (15 years of age) and intimacy in emerging adulthood (25 years of age). Beyers and Seiffge-Krenke (2010) argued that the findings "confirmed Erikson's old ideas on the developmental ordering of identity and intimacy for youngsters in the 21st century" (p. 388).

Studies have proposed a link between role versus identity confusion, and behavioural and/or emotional disorders (Carter et al., 2013; Finzi-Dottan et al., 2011; Flanagan et al., 2011; Rose & Bond, 2008). One of the first to propose this link was Erikson (1968), who suggested that "role or identity confusion may result in an intrapsychic war within the individual that may be externalized as a war with others and society in general" (p. 219). Using Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory, Rose and Bond (2008) examined the relationship between identity status, life experiences, stress and substance abuse among 179 young adults aged 18-24 years in metropolitan Adelaide, South Australia. They found that both negative life experiences and psychological stress were positively associated with substance use and identity diffusion. Further exemplifying Erikson's (1968) description of role versus identity confusion, Rose and Bond (2008) compared adolescents experiencing an existential crisis with a chrysalises: a butterfly or a moth at the stage between being a larva and an adult, expressing "who while being encased in its cocoon is neither caterpillar nor butterfly" (p. 3). They suggested that adolescents are like chrysalises "who separate themselves from their identity as a child of their mother and father, have not yet discovered their individual identity" (Rose & Bond, 2008, p. 3).

Finzi-Dotton et al. (2011) argued that identity diffusion was a strong predictor of poor emotional behaviour among 119 adolescents aged 13-19 years in the former Soviet Union. Findings highlighted that a lack of positive parenting moderated between identity diffusion, behavioural issues and conduct disorder. Moon (2005) conducted research with 251 high school students aged 13-17 years (152 females and 99 males) in Korea to explore the relationship between commitment to life goals, roles, values and psychological wellbeing. They found that adolescents who were not committed to their life goals, roles and values had significantly lower self-esteem, a finding that was evidenced across both genders (Moon, 2005). Similarly, Carter et al. (2013) explored associations between exploration

and commitment related to identity, existential anxiety and peer aggression with adolescents aged 15-19 years in a public school in Florida. Findings showed that existential anxiety was positively correlated with all types of peer aggression but negatively correlated with identity commitment, highlighting a link between role stress and existential stress, although this was not explicitly investigated.

As highlighted through the above studies, Erikson's (1968) theory is pertinent to exploring adolescent stress, however it is important to recognise that adolescence is a time of increasing environmental experiences. Explorations into an adolescents' experiences of role and existential stress therefore also require a holistic view that considers the individual and their interactions others. Employing Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory was deemed an appropriate vehicle to explore an individual's ecology and the role this played in adolescents' role and existential stress (refer Section 2.7), thus providing insights into adolescents' interconnected relationships, starting from them and broadening to wider environmental and societal influences.

2.3.3 Navigating adolescence

While adolescence is, for some, a time of opportunities and wonderful experiences, the number of changes and challenges leaves others feeling vulnerable to problematic behaviours. The sequence of many of these changes are seemingly universal, however their timing and the speed they occur varies among and within individuals (Adeyemo & Adeleye, 2008). For example, many biological changes occur during this period leading to hormonal changes which affect how adolescents interact with others (Teunissen et al., 2011). Adolescents think and react emotionally before considering the consequences because at this age the neurological maturation occurs from the back of the brain to the front leaving "regions of the brain responsible for survival and emotion [to] develop prior to those responsible for logic and moral reasoning" (Nagel et al., 2005, p. 69). Such individual differences in adolescents signifies the importance of obtaining in-depth understanding of their role and existential stress.

Being at the juncture between childhood and adulthood means that adolescents attract special attention as this crucial time which sees them evolve as critical citizens who can act effectively in and on the world (Pendergast, 2015). As noted, the period of adolescence between 13-19 years is considered a period of transition which occurs alongside changes in their environment, including home and school. These changes can have a positive or negative impact on adolescents' wellbeing and behaviour as some will perceive these positively and adapt to them successfully, while others

may experience difficulty (Erikson, 1968; Patton et al., 2016; Sawyer et al., 2018). Patton et al. (2016) proposed three perspectives that differentiate adolescence from other age groups:

> Firstly, health and wellbeing underpin the crucial developmental tasks of adolescence including the acquisition of the emotional and cognitive abilities for independence, completion of education and transition to employment, civic engagement, and formation of lifelong relationships. Secondly, adolescence and young adulthood can be seen as the years for laying down the foundations for health that determine health trajectories across the life course. Lastly, adolescents are the next generation to parent; these same health reserves do much to determine the healthy start to life they provide for their children (Patton et al., 2016, p. 2426).

Adolescents do experience biological and neurological changes, as well as issues involving their physical growth, social network and relationship building and personal identity (Wright et al., 2008). During this period, adolescents also develop a desire to be part of the adult world and begin to question their role and purpose in life (Rudzinskas, 2008, p. 25) which is stressful for some.

2.3.3.1 Positive navigation of adolescence

Adolescence is a time of change with increased cognitive and emotional maturity helping individuals navigate the challenges associated with such changes. There is no doubt that such changes and challenges may give rise to behavioural problems, yet for many it is a time to build social capital (WHO, 2019), achieve human potential where interactions with the social environment shape the capabilities they take into adult life (Patton et al., 2016).

Several studies have highlighted the importance of social support (Van Harmelen et al., 2016; Ronen et al., 2016) and social connectedness (Arslan, 2018; Jose et al., 2012) for positive navigation of life. For example, Jose et al. (2012) conducted a longitudinal study from 2006-2008 to investigate the relationship between social connectedness and psychological wellbeing in 1,774 adolescents aged 10-15 years from New Zealand. They found that those adolescents who reported higher levels of social connectedness also reported higher levels of life satisfaction, confidence, positive affect and aspirations. Family connectedness was measured using FACES-II instrument developed by Olson et al. (1982), school connectedness employed six items adapted from the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (Goodenow, 1993), and the School Connectedness Scale (Blum et al., 2004). Peer connectedness used seven items examining relationship with peers, happiness with close friends and support from friends, and to measure community connectedness, items were adapted from the Sense of Community Index (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999). The results identified a positive association between

social connectedness and wellbeing, and social connectedness and life satisfaction, highlighting the important role that an adolescents' social environment plays on their wellbeing.

Van Harmelen et al. (2016) also conducted a three-year longitudinal study to explore the relationship between: peer relationships (measured by the self-report Peer Victimisation Questionnaire, developed by Van Harmelen et al., 2016); family support (measured by McMaster Family Assessment Advice-General Functioning Scale, Epstein et al., 1983); perceived quality of friendships (measured by Cambridge Friendships Questionnaire, Goodyer et al., 1989); family adversity (Cambridge Early Experiences Interview, Dunn et al., 2011); and depressive symptoms (33-item self-report Mood and Feelings Questionnaire, Angold et al., 1995) in 771 adolescents aged 14 years from 18 secondary schools in the UK. Data was collected when participants were aged 14 years and again when they were 17 years of age with results highlighting that negative experiences within the family environment and/or peer bullying was negatively associated with adolescent social support at age 14, and negatively associated with depressive symptoms at age 17. In addition, a positive family environment was found to be positively related to wellbeing in later life and appeared to act as a protective mechanism for adolescents considered to be at risk of depressive symptoms (Van Harmelen et al., 2016). Similarly, Ronen et al. (2016) examined the relationship between social support and subjective wellbeing in 380 adolescents aged between 13-17 years in Israel and found that social support predicted subjective wellbeing in these adolescents. Thus, it is argued that adolescents' social environment plays a significant role in navigating adolescence and promoting a positive sense of wellbeing.

In recent years, the emergence of positive educational psychology has promoted the study of emotional abilities that could impact on stress levels and wellbeing, such as emotional intelligence (Lopez-Zafra et al., 2019). Emotional intelligence covers the ability to appraise and express, regulate and effectively use emotions (Davies et al., 2010). Balluerka et al. (2013) conducted a cross-sectional study among 2,182 adolescents aged 12-18 years from 14 secondary schools in Spain and found that high levels of emotional intelligence were related to lower levels of depressive moods in these adolescents, arguing that emotional intelligence may reduce the duration of negative emotions. Similarly, Cejudo et al. (2018) conducted a study with 505 adolescents aged 12-18 years in Spain and found a negative association between emotional intelligence and social stress, highlighting that there might be negative relationship between role stress/existential stress and emotional intelligence of adolescents.

According to Salovey and Mayer (1990) there are individual differences in terms of emotional abilities in the patterns presented in an individual's life and how these patterns are used to solve

problems or manage stressful situations. Therefore, emotional intelligence seemingly plays a key role in supporting a positive navigation through adolescence. Exploring what, if any, relationship exists between stressors and emotional intelligence will shed further light on adolescence while also providing insights on potential supports; a gap the current study addressed.

2.3.3.2 Challenges in navigating adolescence

Despite being a period of good health and enhanced psychological abilities for some adolescents, studies have revealed that others find it challenging in navigating this age of human development (Hanson & Holmes, 2014; Phelan et al., 1994). This can, for some, lead to heightened risky behaviours such as substance use, self-harm, suicidal ideation and socially disruptive behaviour (Scott-Parker et al., 2009; Steinberg, 2008). Negative effects on health and wellbeing have been found to be a predictor of stress in adulthood (Reinherz et al., 1989; Sendzik et al., 2017; UN DESA, 2013), especially if it is diagnosed in combination with anxiety and substance use (Copeland et al., 2009). One quarter of adults with major depressive disorders reported onset during childhood or adolescence (Patton et al., 2016; UN DESA, 2013) highlighting the need to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of adolescents.

More contemporary assessments of risky behaviours have included negative interactions with parents, peers, and other influential relationships (EI Kazdouh et al., 2018; McDonough et al., 2016). For instance, EI Kazdouh et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study to understand the potential factors that influence risky behaviour, such as substance use, in 56 adolescents aged 14-16 years in Morocco. Thematic analysis resulted in six factors among which family and peer influences were considered major contributing factors. The results highlighted that adolescents in this study who used substances came from families where parents and siblings were also substance users. Further, "neglectful parenting (neither warmth nor strictness) and authoritarian parenting (strictness but not warmth) were associated with high levels of substance use in adolescents" (EI Kazdouh et al., 2018, p. 10).

McDonough et al. (2016) highlighted peer pressure as another important risk factor in adolescents. They conducted a longitudinal study with 1,940 adolescents aged 10-15 years in New Zealand to examine the impact of negative peer influence and peer connectedness on an adolescents' alcohol, cigarette and drug use. Results showed that negative peer influence predicted an increased use of all substances, whereas peer connectedness diminished the frequency of substance use, highlighting that feeling connected to one's peers may act as a protective mechanism. Similarly, Cole et al., (2014) identified a relationship between peer victimisation and development of depressive symptoms in 214 adolescents with mean age 12.2 years from the US. Peer victimisation was measured by Peer Victimization Self-Report (PVSR) and the Peer Victimization Parent Report (PVPR; Cole et al.,

2010) and depressed mood was measured by the Short Mood and Feelings Questionnaire (SMFQ; Angold et al., 1995). Results revealed that depressive symptoms were significantly positively related to peer victimisation. Effects are stronger for verbal victimisation compared to physical victimisation

Furthermore, Hessler and Katz (2010) examined the association between emotional competence (which included awareness, regulation and the ability to express) and risky behaviour in 76 adolescents with mean age 16.15 years. Results suggested poor emotional regulation and expression difficulties in adolescents was associated with greater behavioural adjustment problems, therefore emotional competence in adolescents serves as a useful point of intervention to decrease risky behaviour in adolescence, which may in turn help them to navigate through this age successfully. Likewise, Kong et al. (2012) conducted study among 489 adolescents aged 17-23 years in China. They asserted that adolescents with sound emotional regulation were more likely to successfully cope with challenges in life. Findings suggested that adolescents with high emotional abilities tend to perceive greater social support and reported more satisfaction with their lives. Although no significant gender differences were found in emotional intelligence, males tended to have higher emotional intelligence than females (Kong et al., 2012). (Studies related to emotional intelligence in adolescents will be discussed further in the section 2.5).

In summary, the characteristics of adolescence differ from a period of storm and stress to one of positive navigation, "as some evidently do not experience it at all" (Arnett, 1999, p. 322). According to Patton et al. (2016), "investments in adolescent health and wellbeing bring benefits today, for decades to come, and for the next generation" (p. 2423). Therefore, identifying role stress and existential stress in adolescents and the potential interaction these have with emotional intelligence and wellbeing may support adolescents' learning and wellbeing, leading to potential implications for education policy and practice.

2.4 Stress

Researchers from different disciplines including, but not limited to, health, psychology, organisational psychology, biological psychology and psychoneurosis immunology have strived to learn more about stress since the 1950s. During this time numerous definitions have been proposed therefore it is important to discuss how stress has been defined as a construct and its consequences for individuals.

Experimenting on laboratory rats, Selye (1956) developed a model of stress, known as the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). In this model, Selye (1956) described stress as a dependent variable

where a physiologically based response pattern led to three stages: alarm, resistance and exhaustion. The GAS model was limited in its focus on an individual's physical state and overlooked the potential risks of psychological factors (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Focussing on the cause or the events that led to the stimulation, rather than the effects or the response, Holmes and Rahe (1967) introduced the concept of a stimulus and identified stress as a major life change or event that required a response, adjustment, and/or adaptation. Additionally, the concept of a stimulus evolved into a dynamic process of assigning meaning based on an individual's transactions with their environment (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Lazarus' (1966) comprehensive theory on stress underwent various revisions before being developed into 'stress theory' (1991), also known as Lazarus' Theory or Relational Theory. Differing from Selye and Holmes and Rahe's work, Lazarus (1966) described stress as the result of a transaction, rather than a response to a stimulus, emphasising an individual's appraisal of the stressor as a determining factor. Building on this, Folkman and Lazarus (1985) defined stress as "a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as relevant to his or her well-being and in which the person's resources are taxed or exceeded" (p. 152). Other than Lazarus' idea of the concepts related to stress, the idea of positive and negative interpretations of life events by the individual were introduced. Rahe and Arthur (1978) suggested that an individual's interpretations of life events or changes resulted in positive or negative experiences. This aligned with Selye's (1974) description of stress which identified an individual's response resulting in positive stress (eustress) or negative stress (distress) based on their cognitive interpretations. Selye (1974) considered positive stress to be a motivator, while negative stress could lead to mental and physical disruptions. In Selye's (1983) work, stress was mapped as an inverted u-shaped figure (∩) with the highest point being considered as an acceptable amount of stress, which is a source of motivation yet once this point is reached, if exposure to stress continues, it is harmful to the individual leading to physical or psychological problems.

2.4.1 Stress and adolescence

Due to the significant changes that occur during adolescence, Divecha (2019) argued that "stress and adolescence can make a perfect storm" (p. 20). Kefelas (2019) has suggested that stress is a normal part of life for adolescents and can be caused by different issues, including family relationships, social interactions, expectations, pressure to perform and life challenges related to education and employment. Therefore, gaining insights into adolescents' experiences of stress will inform practices that can support them.

As discussed in section 2.3 above, adolescence is a crucial period that leaves some individuals vulnerable to various stressors. The transition from childhood to adulthood involves psychosocial changes in which existential concerns can become prominent as social interactions become wider and adolescents begin to separate themselves from their parents and elders (Berman et al., 2006; Erikson, 1968; Fitzgerald, 2005; Marcia, 1980; Maxwell & Gayle, 2013). These transitions potentially carry new risks while also presenting opportunities (Schulenberg et al., 1997). For instance, an adolescent may set career goals and feel excited while working hard to achieve them. This future-oriented focus improves wellbeing while acting as a buffer to stress (Gan et al., 2007).

Due to the highly unpredictable nature of adolescence, an individual may experience elevated stress which often negatively impacts on their wellbeing (Bennett & Holloway, 2014; King et al., 2014). Adolescent substance use, self-harm, suicide, and delinquency are widespread problems in most economically advanced societies and are of growing concern in developing countries (Bennett & Holloway, 2014; King et al., 2014; Sigfusdottir et al., 2017). According to a recent report by the WHO, 50% of mental health conditions start at 14 years of age with most being left undetected and untreated (WHO, 2020). Reports on mental health determinants have revealed that living conditions, exclusion, isolation, poor relationships, or lack of quality support were recognised as risk factors for adolescents' mental health (AIHW, 2020; WHO, 2020).

In Australia, stress is a serious health concern for young people with Mission Australia (2017) finding that almost 40% of individuals aged 15-19-years were concerned about their ability to cope with stress. Following this, Mission Australia and the Black Dog Institute (2020) reported that psychological distress in adolescents had increased by 5.5% in the past seven years. A recent study conducted by the Black Dog Institute and the University of New South Wales (2020) indicated that although mental health problems due to COVID-19 were reported across all ages, it was most severe for adolescents, thus emphasising the important role that social connectedness plays in adolescents' lives. The survey revealed significantly elevated rates of psychological stress among adolescents aged 12-18 years, and those who previously reported stress were among the worst affected. These adolescents reported negative impacts on their social relationships, uncertainty about their future, and a reduced sense of wellbeing. Headspace (2020) conducted a national telephone survey between 25 May and 21 June 2020 with 1,035 Australian youth aged 12-25 years and found that one in three (32%) Australian young people reported high or very high levels of stress. They further reported that rates of high/very high stress have risen among young people aged 15-17 years (from 20% in 2018 to 29% in 2020), but remain stable among all other groups (Headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey, 2020, p. 2). The results also revealed that 83.2% of adolescents reported experiencing stress, while 59.25% reported feeling hopeless or worthless. These statistics are worrying and provide a

strong rationale for exploring role stress and existential stress and their potential relationship with emotional intelligence and wellbeing during this critical period of adolescence.

2.4.2 Role stress

Role stress, uncertainty about one's role in life, has often been studied among adults, yet little is known about its impact on adolescents. The following discusses the conceptualisation of the term role and role stress before considering its impact on adolescents.

2.4.2.1 The concept of role

Kahn et al. (1964) first investigated organisational stress among 53 participants aged 23-40 years in the US at various supervisory and executive levels in several industrial locations. They examined the effects of organisational demands on an individual's role and stated that "conditions of role stress are not merely irritating; in persistent and extreme forms they are identity destroying" (p. 6).

While Kahn et al. (1964) defined the term 'role' as an expected mode of behaviour, others expanded this to include an individual's behaviour within an organisation (Kartz & Kahn, 1978; Pareek, 1993). For instance, Kartz and Kahn (1978) defined 'role' as the interaction between the role sender and the role incumbent in the workplace, where the role sender articulates expectations to the role incumbent who has a specific position within the organisation. According to Pareek (1993), each role is part of a system which consists of the role occupant with those who have a direct relationship with them being the role senders who hold certain expectations of the role occupant. As the role occupant also has expectations of their role, they are a role sender for them self. Thus, a role is not defined without the expectations of the role sender, including the self-expectations of the role occupant being considered.

According to Kartz and Kahn (1978), there are three types of roles: the expected role; the perceived role; and the actual role. The expected role incorporates what others expect from the individual, while the perceived role refers to how the individual thinks they should behave in order to fulfil the expected role, and the actual role determines how the person behaves within the organisation. In exploring an individual's role behaviour within the workplace or organisation, Pareek (1993) highlighted that the "role is a set of obligations generated by the 'significant others' and the individual occupying a position" (p. 20).

The above studies focussed on the workplace and adult participants, and it was not until Bronfenbrenner's (1979) research that consideration was given to life outside of the workplace. At

this time, Bronfenbrenner (1979) provided a more general definition of the concept of the 'role', where he referred to it as a "set of activities and relations expected of a person occupying a particular position in society" (p. 85). Bronfenbrenner's ideas on the generalisation of roles were further supported by Pearlin (1983) and Fenzel (1989), who also emphasised the importance of people's roles within society and relationships.

Pearlin (1983) explored sources of stress that emerged because of social roles, emphasising the importance of role demands with respect to interpersonal relationships (where most roles exist within society). Fenzel (1989), on the other hand, divided roles into two categories: 'general roles' which referred to people's gender, age, race, ethnicity and socio-economic status; and 'specific roles' involving relationships with friends, peers, siblings, or being part of a team. Fenzel (1989) identified the implications of roles not only for adults but also for adolescents by arguing that roles are embedded in the 'role set' of the adolescent which might include the relationships they have with their teacher, principal, parents and peers (Fenzel, 1989).

A role is also a set of performances in response to other's expectations (Kartz & Kahn, 1978). A conflict between one's expectations and those of others, whether due to ambiguity or other factors, can potentially lead to role stress (Kartz & Kahn, 1978). Whenever there is a conflict between the self, the role in question and other roles the person occupies, or where there is incompatibility between the expectations of the individual and those of significant others, there is the potential for role stress (Kahn et al., 1964).

2.4.2.2 Conceptualisation of role stress

As noted, early studies into role and role stress were grounded in workplace literature. In their pioneering study on organisational stress, Kahn et al. (1964) postulated that the quest for identity is a central concern for many individuals, potentially leading to role stress. They defined role stress as the "pressure that individuals face when they are unable to learn or understand the relevant rights and obligations related to their work and to perform their roles well" (Kahn et al., 1964, p. 85). Building on Kahn et al.'s (1964) research, Kahn and Quinn (1970) argued that role stress is any aspect of a role that is connected to role strain, that is, physiological or psychological conditions that cause the role occupant to view the role indifferently.

While role stress and role strain are often used interchangeably in literature, Goode (1960) and Pearlin (1983) defined role strain as difficulties that an individual experiences when fulfilling role demands. They further argued that a collection of role-related challenges were together considered as role strain

and, when these were continuous, they could result in role stress which is associated with negative consequences for the individual and their environment (Goode, 1960; Pearlin, 1983). House and Rizzo (1972) brought attention to two more variables: role conflict and role ambiguity. They defined role conflict "as the degree of incongruity or incompatibility of expectations associated with the role" and role ambiguity "as the lack of clarity and predictability of the outcomes of one's behaviour" (House & Rizzo, 1972, p. 474).

The concept of organisational role stress was used until Wheaton (1990) emphasised the general concept of role stress as a "continuous and persistent condition in the social environment resulting in a problematic level of demand on the individual's capacity to perform adequately in social roles" (p. 210). Similarly, Agnew (1992) identified role stress as "stress emanating from various undesirable circumstances encountered in an individual's social roles" (p. 26). Kaplan (1986) also defined role stress as "failure to realise ideal or desired role demands or expectations" (p. 54). As noted, most of the above definitions of role stress and its sources have been derived from studies with adult populations in work-family conflict or occupational and organisational stress, highlighting a need to understand role stress in adolescents.

2.4.2.3 Role stress in adults

Role stress in adults has been explored by many researchers (Adiningsih et al., 2020; Arrindell, 2005; Eisler & Skidmore, 1987; Gallagher & Parrott, 2011; Liu & Kaplan, 2004; Lou et al., 2007; Singh & Singh, 2008) with terms such as role overload, role conflict, role ambiguity, organisational role stress and occupational role stress emerging (Coetzer, 2016; Daga & Husain, 2001; Garland et al., 2013; Lambert et al., 2009; Rai & Kumar, 2012; Scheib, 2003; Singh & Singh, 2008). There are some studies which investigated role stress as stress emanating from different role relationships including one's family, workplace, colleagues and romantic relationships (Liu & Kaplan, 2004; Lou et al., 2007). Others considered gender-related role stress, that is, experiences of stress as a result of not meeting society's expectations for traditional gender role norms (Adiningsih et al., 2020; Arrindell, 2005; Eisler & Skidmore, 1987; Gallagher & Parrott, 2011; Harrington et al., 2020; Kargin et al., 2021; McCreary et al., 1996; McDermott & Lopez, 2013; Vincent et al., 2011).

Organisational role stress in adults

As studies have focussed on the workplace it may reflect a belief that adults are more formally tied to roles and participate in more roles than adolescents (Coetzer, 2016; Daga & Husain, 2001; Garland et al., 2013; Lambert et al., 2009; Rai & Kumar, 2012; Scheib, 2003; Singh & Singh, 2008). For example, Daga and Husain (2001), in their study of the relationship between social support, social

and family role stress among 300 professional women aged 23-45 years in India, they found that social support acted as a buffer against stress. Rai and Kumar (2012) investigated 204 males aged 22-60 years who were working at a middle management level in public and private sectors in India. Findings revealed a positive relationship between neuroticism (one dimension of personality) and role stress, and a negative relationship between extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness with their roles. This study highlighted an overall association between an individual's personality traits and role stress in working adults. Agrawal and Chahar (2007) examined role stress in terms of role overload, role stagnation and role distance among 90 engineering and management students with a mean age of 19.93 years in India. In this study, male students reported higher role stress than females, however no age differences were found on any of the dimensions of role stress.

Pecino et al. (2019) conducted a quantitative cross-sectional study to investigate the relationship between organisational climate, role stress and employee wellbeing (burnout and job satisfaction) in 442 employees, aged 35-60 years, in public organisations in Spain. Findings showed that role stress was negatively correlated with organisational climate and job satisfaction but was positively associated with burnout. This study highlighted that a positive organisational climate could lead to workers who were less stressed or burnt-out and more satisfied with improved wellbeing. Similarly, Jones et al. (2010) examined the relationship between role stress and psychological wellbeing among 5,380 professionals from accounting firms across the US and found a significant negative association between role stress and psychological wellbeing. These results also revealed that a healthy lifestyle mitigated the negative effects of role stress on participants' psychological wellbeing. Similar findings were reported by Wu et al. (2019) in their study which investigated the influence of role stress on job burnout and job performance with 191 construction project managers (mean age of 34.2 years) in China. The results indicated that role stress had a negative and significant effect on job burnout and job performance for these workers.

Ho et al. (2009) investigated the effect of role stress on job satisfaction and organisational commitment among females working in Taiwan and found that role stress negatively affected both job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Coetzer (2016) investigated the mediating effect of time management between deficiency of attention and role stress in 117 adults from the US who were business graduates in active employment. Results revealed the partial mediation of time management between attention deficit of adults and their role stress, which successfully highlighted the importance of time management in managing role stress at work. Lambert et al. (2009) used 272 survey responses of correctional staff with a mean age of 43 years in the US to examine the relationship between one's work environment and their role stress. They found a strong and negative association between employees' level of role stress and their participation in decision making and perceptions of their

supervisor. Similarly, investigating 160 correctional staff with a mean age of 35.77 years in the US, Garland et al. (2013) suggested employee satisfaction, an employee-friendly work environment, and more control by employees over their job reduced role stress.

Studies have also investigated role stress in teachers (Conley & Woosley, 2000; Conley & You, 2009; Merida-Lopez et al., 2017; Sharma et al., 2018; Scheib, 2003; Yang et al., 2018). For instance, in a study involving four music teachers from a high school in the US, Scheib (2003) found that role overload, role conflict, underutilisation of skills and inadequate resources were the main sources of role stress when compared to role ambiguity and non-participation. Conley and You (2009) investigated the relationship between teachers' perceptions of role stress, commitment, satisfaction and intentions to leave their school with 178 teachers of all ages (some younger than 35 years and others above 50 years), in four high schools in California, US. They found a significant negative correlation between role stress and satisfaction and role stress and commitment, yet role stress was positively correlated with an intention to leave the school. Similarly, using the Spanish version of the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Scale (MSCEIT; Extremera et al., 2006) Merida-Lopez et al. (2017) examined the relationship between emotional regulation, role stress and teacher's mental health with 336 teachers with a mean age 43 years from Malaga, Southern Spain. To measure participant's mental health Merida-Lopez et al. (2017) employed the Spanish version of the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) and the Spanish version of the Role Stress Scale (Merida-Lopez et al., 2017) and found a positive relationship between role stress and teachers' mental health, particularly depression and anxiety, while there was negative correlation between emotional regulation and teachers' scores on depression, anxiety and stress. These results also revealed that when role stress persists it had a detrimental effect on an individual's wellbeing, including a significant risk of psychological disorders, leading to absenteeism, organisational dysfunction, decreased work productivity and increased likelihood of voluntarily leaving their employment (Merida-Lopez et al., 2017).

Role stress in adults emanating from multiple social relationships

Studies on adults also investigated role stress emanating from different role relationships. For example, Lou et al. (2007) conducted a quantitative study to understand the relationship between role stress emanating from society, colleagues and patients, organisational commitment, and intentions to leave their employment among 91 male nurses aged 20-35 years in Taiwan. These participants reported experiencing medium to high levels of role stress with the highest source being patients, followed by colleagues. In this study, role stress from society was the least significant yet a significant positive correlation was found between role stress and an intention to resign. Results of the study also revealed that 30 to 35 year old participants reported the highest levels of role stress. Vergara (1999)

investigated multiple role stress in 80 female counsellors aged 20-40 years from the Philippines. Multiple role stress emanated from different social relationships including work and family where priority roles were explored. The number of hours per week devoted to work and family roles; subjective estimates of the frequency of stress experienced in relation to balancing work and family were measured using a 5-point Likert scale. Findings highlighted that married counsellors experienced multiple role stress more often than those who were single. These counsellors reported more family-related concerns such as spending less time at home and experiencing pressures from their roles as a wife and mother. In contrast, Nordenmark (2004) investigated the relationship between multiple social roles and individual wellbeing among 9,000 randomly selected participants aged 16-76 years in Sweden and found that the number of roles and any increase in social roles were negatively correlated with the risk of experiencing insomnia and a lingering illness; that is, having multiple social roles increases individual wellbeing. While results have been inconsistent in terms of role stress emanating from multiple social relationships, the serious consequences resulting from role stress in adults has been consistent across studies.

Based on the conceptualisations of stress by Wheaton (1990), Agnew (1992) and Kaplan (1996) (refer Section 2.4.2.2), Liu and Kaplan (2004) developed the Role Stress Scale to explore aggressive responses to severe role stress by young adults and the relationship with gender and history of aggression with 3,107 adults aged 19-21 years in the US. Findings identified that those who reported aggressive behaviours in the past were significantly more likely to develop role stress emanating from parents, friends, and romantic relationships which resulted in feelings of neglect in adulthood. Moreover, females reported comparatively higher role stress and depressive symptoms than their male counterparts. Liu and Kaplan (2004) also found that experiences of role stress significantly predicted abuse of illicit drugs for both male and female participants. The results of these studies have highlighted the need to investigate role stress emanating from different social relationships in adolescents as this developmental stage is considered to be characterised by role confusion. (Erikson, 1968).

Gender role stress in adults

As indicated in section 2.2.1, a number of studies have focussed on gender role stress, some of which have been included in this section to provide a comprehensive understanding of the literature on role stress. In the literature, gender role stress refers to stress that is caused by not following society's gender norms (Adiningsih et al., 2020; Eisler & Skidmore, 1987; Harington et al., 2020; McDermott & Lopez, 2013; Vincent et al., 2011). Differential gender-oriented stressors and individuals' different ways of coping based on their gender have been considered an integral part of psychosocial development (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987). Arrindell (2005) reported that concepts of gender roles and

society's notion of being masculine and feminine are the driving factors effecting an individual's (either male or female) mental health. Masculine gender role stress has been linked to significant negative mental health problems such as hostility and depression. For instance, Near (2007) examined 53 adults aged 25-60 years with one or more sons who were at least 5 years of age in the US and found that fathers who reported high gender role stress engaged in harsher punishments with their son(s), however no correlation between father-son relationship quality and gender role stress was found. Gender role stress emerged as a mediating factor in Mahalik et al.'s (2005) study which explored insecure attachment and controlling behaviours in 143 men aged 19-64 years from the US who were attending an intervention program. Gender role stress was measured by the Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale (MGRSS; Eisler & Skidmore, 1987). Insecure attachment was measured by The Relationship Questionnaire (RQ; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), and controlling behaviour was measured by the Controlling Behavior Index (CBI; Dobash et al., 1998). They found that insecure attachment significantly predicted gender role stress and controlling behaviour. Also, gender role stress partially mediated the relationship between fearful attachment (a type of insecure attachment) and controlling behaviour in men. More specifically, findings indicated that "fearful attachment resulted in higher levels of controlling female partners by contributing to men's stress when they failed to live up to masculine ideals" (p. 625)

Gallagher and Parrott (2011) investigated 338 men with a mean age of 20.36 years from the US to identify whether hegemonic masculine gender role norms (status, toughness, antifemininity) and masculine gender role stress influenced men's behaviour towards women. Findings revealed that, men's attachment with hegemonic masculinity is directly (or indirectly through masculine gender role stress) and positively related to their hostile behaviour towards women. Men's violent behaviour towards women, particularly in intimate or dating relationships, has been the main area of inquiry in adults (Adiningsih et al., 2020; Harrington et al., 2020; McDermott & Lopez, 2013). McDermott and Lopez (2013) recruited 419 undergraduate men with a mean age of 22.29 years from the US, to investigate the role of adult attachment and masculine gender role stress in predicting intimate partner violence and found a mediating role between adult attachment and intimate partner violence. Adiningsih et al. (2020) explored masculine gender role stress among 310 male students aged 18-25 years from Indonesia. Masculine gender role stress did not predict intimate partner violence for these participants, however masculine ideology with traditional and rigid masculine values were found to predict dating violence.

Harrington et al. (2020) also highlighted the relationship between masculine gender role stress and men's aggression in their two-part study of 223 men with a mean age of 33.59 years and 191 men with the mean age 35.30 years. They found that men who reported high masculine gender role stress

were more physically aggressive towards their partners than others, highlighting that men may become more aggressive when their identity is threatened. In contrast, self-esteem was reported by Kargin et al. (2021) as being negatively related to gender role stress in 898 college students with a mean age of 20.55 years from Turkey. Results highlighted that higher self-esteem led to lower gender-related role stress; however, no significant difference was found between self-esteem and gender. A similar differentiation was found by Arrindell et al. (2013) in their study of 6,420 undergraduate students aged 20-25 years across 13 countries including Australia. Results suggested masculine gender role stress was a significant predictor of physical health regardless of origin. Furthermore, findings revealed that societies with a dominant masculine ideology (called 'tough societies'), where gender roles were more fixed and distinct, resulted in higher masculine gender role stress, and negative mental and physical health outcomes when compared to the 'soft societies' or 'feminine societies' where gender roles overlapped.

The above studies have explored role stress in adults. Many of the findings are relatable to adolescence thus highlighting the need to gain a deeper understanding of this type of stress from an adolescent perspective. As discussed in section 2.3, Erikson defined adolescence as the age in which one grapples with role versus identity confusion. It is in this stage that adolescents are confronted with dilemmas related to their roles in various relationships which can sometimes lead to confusion, causing role stress for some. Therefore, the current study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of role stress in adolescents aged 13-19 years in Australia.

2.4.2.4 Role stress in adolescents

Children experience physical, psychological, cognitive and emotional growth during transition from adolescence to adult (Stangor & Walinga, 2014). As adolescents develop there is development in their sense of self, their own identities and interaction with people other than their parents. (Erikson, 1968; Kroger 2004; Strasburger et al., 2009). For some, adolescence can be stressful as it involves new emotions, the need to widen their social relationships and increase in responsibilities along with independence (Kroger, 2004; Strasburger et al., 2009). Some of the most significant changes that occur during adolescence involve moving increasingly away from parents towards wider social interactions with peers, friends and the community (Hazel et al., 2014; Seiffge-Krenke, 2013) which, for some, can cause dissatisfaction with their relationships, potentially leading to role stress.

Gender role stress in adolescents

Naditch and Morrissey (1976) identified the relationship between gender role stress, psychopathology and personality among 115 immigrant adolescents with a mean age of 19.4 years from high schools

and junior colleges in Miami, Florida. Results showed that ambiguity regarding evaluations of performance in dating was more consistently related to depression, anxiety and maladjustment. Further, Hill and Lynch (1983) highlighted that "intensification in gender-related role expectations occurs during adolescence", specifically for girls (p. 201). These findings supported other researchers (Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979) who found that gender-differential pressures of society intensifies during puberty for girls who report being subjected to more restrictions and protections.

Priess et al. (2009) explored gender roles and their relationship with depressive symptoms in 410 adolescents (210 females and 200 males) with a mean age of 11.52 years from Grade 5, 13.53 years from Grade 7, and 15.5 years from Grade 9, in the US. The aim of this longitudinal study was to determine what influence family had on gender-role identities and depression. Participants were asked to complete questionnaires on gender-role identities, depressive symptoms and negative life events. Females reported more femininity, but no gender differences were found in masculinity reported by the males and females. Priess et al. (2009) also found a positive relationship between gender role stress for both male and female participants and lower depressive symptoms.

Kulis et al. (2010) identified gender role stress among 151 adolescents aged 15-16 years in the US. Correlational analysis revealed that gender role stress was significantly correlated with internalising and externalising problems which resulted in higher alcohol use. Reidy et al. (2015) investigated the relationship between masculine role stress, teen dating violence and sexual violence among 589 adolescent males from 13 middle and high schools in Michigan. Information related to participants' age range is not provided. According to Reidy et al. (2015) "males are affected by gender role expectations which require them to demonstrate attributes of strength, toughness, and dominance" (p. 619), therefore they argued that masculine role stress occurs when males are unable to live up to society's gender norms. Results of the study revealed that adolescent males who failed to live up to these gender role expectations reported psychological distress which in turn increased their risk of engaging in physically and sexually violent behaviours; something that was also evident in studies with adults.

Studies related to role strain in early adolescents

As mentioned in section 2.4.2.2, the concepts of role stress and role strain are often used interchangeably, however researchers distinguish them by arguing that when role strain (role- related challenges) continues it could result in role stress (feeling of stress from multiple social relationships) (Goode, 1960; Liu & Kaplan, 2004; Pearlin, 1983; Wheaton, 1990) suggesting a continuum where each are at opposite ends. Moreover, while searching articles related to role stress in adolescents,

there were some that focused on role strain, therefore these are discussed below as they shed light on adolescents who may be at risk of role stress.

Exploring role strain, Fenzel (1989) conducted a quantitative study with 120 early adolescents with a mean age of 11 years in a school in New York State and found that the transition from elementary school to middle school was a period when role strain was elevated. Role strain for Fenzel (1989) referred to the demands faced by adolescents in their everyday roles where such demands are placed on them by their parents, peers, teachers and other role senders at school. Such expectations in roles are addressed by Fenzel (1989) as sometimes difficult and contradictory and, when extreme, result in stress (p. 13). Fenzel (1989) argues that adolescents are the first to confront role strain and eventually role stress if strain persists.

Developing the Role Strain Inventory in which items were categorised into two scales, peer strain and family strain, Bird and Harris (1990) examined role strain in 203 eighth grade students aged 11-13 years from two schools in the US. Quantitative analysis revealed significant differences between males and females with respect to their levels of role stress in relation to family members and social support. Females reported experiencing significantly greater family role strain than their male counterparts, with young female adolescents using social support more often than males. Similarly, De Bruyn (2005), using the 'Early Adolescent Role Strain Inventory' developed by Fenzel (1989), conducted a quantitative study to explore the relationship between role strain and academic achievement following transition to secondary school. The sample consisted of 749 students in their first year of secondary school in the US with a mean age of 13.05 years. Role strain that emanated from family, peers, teachers and school were investigated with findings highlighting that role strain stemming from parents and teachers were negatively associated with academic achievement.

The above studies have documented the prevalence of role strain among adolescents (mainly early adolescents aged 10-13 years) (Bird & Harris, 1990; De Bruyn, 2005; Fenzel, 1989), and gender role stress in adolescents (Priess et al., 2009), highlighting that adolescents are potentially at risk of experiencing role stress. However, there has been little empirical work examining role stress as a stress due to absence of satisfactory role relationships with family, peers, friends, teachers, school and community (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) among adolescents aged 13-19 years, thus the current study will address this gap in literature. Similar to role stress, adolescents are susceptible to existential stress too. This proneness of adolescents accentuates the need of deep exploration into adolescents' experiences of existential stress, and the interrelationship between these potential stressors.

2.4.3 Existential stress

Like role stress, most of the research on existential aspects of human life has focused on adults and the elderly, yet several recent arguments have been made for the centrality of existential issues in adolescents' lives (Brassai et al., 2013; Damon et al., 2003; Fitzgerald, 2005; Hacker, 1994; Shumaker, 2012). Commencing with a discussion of existentialism and a conceptualisation of existential stress, discussions will turn to how this may have an impact on adolescents.

2.4.3.1 Existentialism

The emergence of existential views can be traced back to the ancient philosopher, Socrates (470-399 BC), who famously remarked "the unexamined life is not worth living" (cited in Brickhouse & Smith, 1994, p. 201). Kierkegaard (1849) extended this view and was considered the first existentialist philosopher, proposing that individuals are solely responsible for giving meaning to life and living life passionately and sincerely. Sartre's (1948) claim that "existence precedes essence"; that is, human beings exist first and then define themselves later (p. 118), saw the emergence of existentialism. Sartre (1948) emphasised on the individual choice to find own reality and develop own meaning in life. According to Sartre & Becker (1965), all beings are born for no reason, live through weakness, and die for no reason, and life is meaningless; that is, we are born meaningless and we die meaningless. He further argued that an individual experiences existential issues upon realising this. Developing Sartre's work, Solomon (1976) described how an individual's starting point is characterised by what has been called existential stress, or a sense of confusion and anxiety in the face of an apparently meaningless world. With the above context in mind, it is important to explore the link between existential stress and role stress in relation to the research question posed for this thesis. This link will be explored below.

2.4.3.2 Concept of Existential stress

Existential stress is hypothesised to be a core human issue in many theoretical and philosophical writings (Frankl; 1966; Keirkegaard, 1843, 1849; Sartre, 1965; Yalom, 1980). According to Sartre (1948), individual's feeling of being a part of this meaningless world give rise to existential stress. Somewhat in accordance with Sartre, Frankl (1955) introduced a psychotherapeutic technique known as 'Logotherapy' which refers to humans "basically striving to find and fulfill meaning and purpose in life" (p. 17). He referred to this phenomenon as an individual's "will to meaning" (p. 18). According to Frankl (1958), the "will to meaning" is the essence of human motivation, as when meaning is not found, the individual becomes "existentially void" resulting in existential stress (p. 252). To substantiate Frankl's concept of existential stress, Crumbaugh and Maholick (1964)

developed the Purpose in Life test that measured perceived meaning and purpose in life (p. 201). According to Schulenberg et al. (2011) "logotherapy was a guiding theoretical framework for the instrument's development, emphasizing perceived meaning and purpose in life and how these constructs relate to wellbeing" (p. 861).

In his study on 'existential psychotherapy', Yalom (1980) defined the term existential stress as a "psychological dilemma" in which the individual has a feeling that life is inherently pointless, that their existence has no meaning or purpose because there are limits and boundaries on it, and that we all must die someday (p. 41). Yalom (1980) identified four existential experiences, death, freedom, isolation and meaninglessness, in which meaninglessness, the fourth ultimate existential concern, stems from the other three (Yalom, 1980). He concluded that meaning in life and purpose in life were synonyms.

Yalom's (1980) framework draws primarily upon the work of Frankl (1958), based on which Crumbaugh and Maholick (1964) developed a 20-item Purpose in Life test. Further, Schulenberg et al. (2011) developed the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (PIL-SF) which is a 4-item abbreviated version of Crumbaugh and Maholick's (1964) original scale. Based on a series of factor-analytic studies, the PIL-SF was designed to assess purpose in life as outlined by Frankl (1959) (Schulenberg & Melton, 2010; Schulenberg et al., 2011). The short form scale garnered compelling psychometric support in these studies and has since been used in research as a "pure" measure of meaning or purpose in life (Schulenberg et al., 2016, p. 1280). According to Schulenberg (2008), the importance of purpose in life as an existential concern has grown beyond logotherapy and psychotherapy to become a core component of positive psychology. Having a purpose in life is positively associated with hope, faith, love, health and happiness (Bronk et al., 2009; Melton & Schulenberg, 2007, 2008; Schulenberg, et al., 2008) and negatively associated with stress, depression, anxiety, drug/alcohol use, suicidal ideation and boredom (Damon, 2008; Melton & Schulenberg, 2007, 2008; Schulenberg et al., 2008).

Given the high cognition involved in confronting existential issues, most studies have involved adult populations to explore the causes and consequences of existential stress (Fry, 2001; Helm et al., 2019; Lockman & Servaty-Seib, 2016; Mascaro & Rosen, 2006; Tuck et al., 2006).

2.4.3.3 Existential stress in adults

Studies exploring existential stress have predominantly included adults, with many exploring purpose in life in terms of suicide, substance use and personality disorder. Some studies have focused on

positive psychology to explore the importance of meaning or purpose in life (Csabonyi & Phillips, 2020; Krause & Rainville, 2020; Lockman & Servaty-Seib, 2016; Machell et al., 2015; Mascaro & Rosen, 2006; Steger et al., 2009), while others explicitly investigated existential stress in terms of meaninglessness or absence or lack of meaning/purpose in life in adults.

Studies of adults have consistently reported the importance of meaning/purpose in life in coping with crises and difficulties and maintaining a satisfying lifestyle (Lockman & Servaty-Seib, 2016; Machell et al., 2015; Mascaro & Rosen, 2006). For example, Mascaro and Rosen (2006) explored the broad concept of meaning in life with 143 college undergraduate students with a mean age of 18.69 years, from the US. Using the revised Life Regard Index framework (LRI-R framework; Debats, 1998), they found that for these adults their perceptions of meaning in life had a significant impact on their depressive symptoms (measured by Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-depression; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). Results highlighted that existential meaning was inversely related to depression, and anxiety and positively related to hope.

Lockman and Servaty-Seib (2016) conducted a study with 165 college students aged 19-25 years in Indiana, US and found that the ability to find existential meaning, that is, making sense of death, love, freedom and purpose in life in connection with stressful life events may decrease suicide in adults. Presence of meaning in life was also found to be strongly associated with alcohol and drug abuse in Csabonyi and Phillips' (2020) study of 176 adults aged 18-30 years from Australia. The application of the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger et al., 2006) and the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT; Babor et al., 2001) revealed a negative relationship between presence of meaning and alcohol and drug use, however, a search for meaning had no impact on alcohol and drug use for these participants.

Lewis et al. (2017) examined the association between sense of purpose in life and cognitive functioning of adults aged 32-84 years from the US. Purpose in life was assessed using the seven-item version of Ryff's (1989) Scale of Psychological Wellbeing and cognitive functioning was measured using The Brief Test of Adult Cognition by Telephone (BTACT Tun & Lachman, 2006) and the Stop and Go Switch Task (SGST). The SGST was used to assess the time taken by the participants to respond, by saying "either stop or go to the associated cues of red and green" (Lewis et al., 2017, p. 665). Findings revealed an important and consistent role of purpose in life in cognitive functioning including memory, executive functioning and overall cognition of adults across all ages.

Also employing Ryff's (1989) Psychological Well-Being Scale, Hill and Turiano (2014) explored the effects of purpose in life and mortality in 6,163 adults aged 20-75 years in the US and found that

purposeful adults lived longer than others (the mean survival rate for decedents being 8.01 years), highlighting that purpose in life and commitment towards life goals positively affected wellbeing and predicted longevity.

Studies have also investigated the relationship between existential experiences and emotional states in adults (Ishida & Okada, 2006; Kitamura et al., 2004). Kitamura et al. (2004) conducted a study among 574 Japanese university students with a mean age of 20.1 years. The findings revealed that university students with a clear purpose in life had experienced positive events in their early life during childhood and adolescence, such as "elected as a class leader … the best academic achievement in the class … a good teacher in charge of the class" (p. 89). Similarly, Ishida and Okada (2006) conducted a study to examine the effects of having a clear purpose in life-on anxiety among 32 adults aged 22-47 years from Japan. They found that young adult males and females who scored high on the Purpose in Life Scale (developed by Crumbaugh and Maholic,1964) reported lower scores on the Manifest Anxiety Scale (MAS) (developed by Taylor,1953). They argued that "Firm purpose in life (FPIL), which develops by positive experiences in youth and adulthood, contributes to reducing the development of anxiety and relieving the excessive response of the autonomic nervous system to emotional stress" (Ishida & Okada, 2006, p. 275). Both studies provided unique interrelated findings where the variables, positive life experiences and purpose in life, were positively related to each other. Commonly, studies investigated the relationship between existential stress and wellbeing in adults. For instance, Fry (2001) in Southern Alberta, Canada, explored the contribution of factors related to one's existence in relation to adult psychological wellbeing (life satisfaction) with 101 widows and 87 widowers aged 65-87 years. Findings revealed that existential issues, or a sense of meaning in life, were strong contributing factors in psychological wellbeing after losing a spouse. Bundick (2011**)** explored the relationship between purpose in life and psychological wellbeing in 102 adult participants with a mean age 21.2 years from two higher education institutions in California, US, and found a direct relationship between purpose in life, goal directedness and satisfaction with life.

Studies also highlighted gender and age differences in meaning/purpose in life in adult populations. Steger et al. (2009) assessed the levels and correlates of both the presence and search for meaning in life in adults above 18 years of age in the US. Meaning of life was assessed using the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger et al., 2006) with 8,756 participants. Results found that adults in the later stages of life reported greater presence of meaning in life. Relationships between presence of meaning in life and wellbeing was similar across all life stages, whereas a search for meaning was strongly associated with wellbeing deficits at later life stages. A similar finding emerged in Krause and Rainville's (2020) study of adults aged 18 and over in the US, while examining the age differences in meaning in life. Based on Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory, Krause

and Rainville (2020) hypothesised that the relationship between age and meaning in life becomes progressively stronger as one ages (i.e., the relationship is nonlinear). Results revealed a nonlinear relationship between age and meaning in life suggesting that "the relationship between age and meaning in life is initially lower at young ages but becomes progressively larger beginning at about mid-life, with the strongest association emerging in late life" (p. 6). These results contradicted those of Karasawa et al. (2011) who explored age differences in purpose in life among midlife and older adults, 482 in Japan and 3032 in US, and found that as people progress from young adulthood to old age, their purpose in life declines due to losses of social roles and erosions of physical health and mobility. With regards to gender differences, Xi et al. (2018) explored gender differences in purpose in life with 1,207 adults aged 18- 92 years in the US and found that women reported a higher level of purpose in life, which they argued was due to higher levels of altruism and spirituality.

Highlighting the gap in the literature, studies proposed the importance of focusing on meaninglessness (existential stress) rather than meaning or meaningfulness to understand the conditions people find difficult and exhausting (Oakley, 2010; Helm et al., 2019; Steen et al., 2019). According to Oakley (2010), "when approaching this area, it is best to focus on meaninglessness rather than meaningfulness ... meaning may be a matter for jokes, but meaninglessness in life is no joke at all" (p. 106). He emphasised that "meaninglessness is a matter of considerable extra philosophical human importance since claims about meaninglessness are frequently made by people in considerable distress" (Oakley, 2010, p. 106). Helm et al. (2019) argued that existential isolation refers to the perception or sense of some gap or difference between oneself and others due to a lack of meaning or purpose in life. They selected 613 participants aged 19-25 years in the US to explore feelings of existential isolation and thoughts of death and found that existential isolation led to diminished identity, low self-esteem and a higher rate of thoughts about death for these participants. Similarly, Steen et al. (2019) determined the association between personality disorders and a lack of meaning, purpose and direction in life among 126 adults aged between 20-80 years and found a significant difference in lack of meaning, purpose or direction in life between those diagnosed with a personality disorder and those without. Yet lack of meaning was significantly associated with "difficulty setting and attaining goals" in both groups (p. 144).

As outlined in section 2.3.2, Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory has highlighted that due to multiple role interactions, adolescents experience existential issues, including questioning 'who am I?', 'why am I here?' and 'what is the meaning of my life?' Arguably, this places adolescents at risk of experiencing existential stress. As Fitzgerald (2005) reported, "It is commonly agreed that adolescence is a time filled with conflicts. A number of these conflicts closely resemble existential issues. Among these are an increase in freedom, choice, responsibility, and feeling awareness of

isolation. In addition, there is a search for meaning which may result in increased anxiety and a sense of personal emptiness" (p. 795). Therefore, research exploring existential stress and role stress in adolescence is important.

2.4.3.4 Existentialism and Adolescence

Although research related to existential stress has primarily focussed on adult samples, some researchers believe that adolescence is when many people first encounter existential challenges (Damon et al., 2003; Erikson, 1968; Fitzgerald, 2005; Hacker, 1994; Marcia, 1980; Shumaker, 2012). For example, as discussed in section 2.3, Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory suggests that adolescence is critical in the development of life goals and values as well as establishing a sense of purpose in life. Hacker's (1994) existential view of adolescence suggested that "adolescence is the time in which the young person's nascent abstract thinking capabilities focus on gaining a deeper and profound awareness of his or her existence in the world" (p. 320). He also argued that adolescents experience the same existential conditions that are experiences in other life stages. However, what differentiates adolescents from children or adults is the way they phenomenologically experience these conditions and how they cope with them (Hacker, 1994). Damon et al. (2003) further described the centrality of meaning and purpose in adolescents' lives, arguing that "young people who express purpose, in the sense of dedication to causes greater than the self, show high degrees of religiosity, consolidated identities, and deeper sense of meaning than those who do not experience purpose" (p. 126). Similarly, Fitzgerald (2005) provided a strong theoretical argument for researching adolescents' experiences of existential issues, suggesting that by "avoiding the use of existential ideas as they might apply to adolescents, because they are too young and not advanced enough to understand them, a disservice is being done" (p. 798).

2.4.3.5 Existential stress in adolescents

As discussed above, although a strong theoretical argument has been made by researchers to explore existential stress in adolescents, few have empirically explored this issue and those who have focused on prevalence and psychological symptoms. For instance, Berman et al. (2006) examined the prevalence of existential concerns, identity development and psychological symptoms in 139 from year level 9-12 students, aged 15-18 years from the US. Using the Existential Anxiety Questionnaire (Weems et al., 2004) and the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (Balistreri et al., 1995), both of which have demonstrated adequate reliability and validity (Berman et al., 2006), they found a high prevalence of existential anxiety among these adolescents which was strongly associated with identity issues and psychological symptoms such as depression, anxiety and somatisation.

Bronk et al. (2009) examined the relationship between purpose in life, hope and life satisfaction among 153 adolescents (mean age 14 years), 237 emerging adults (mean age 21 years), and 416 adults (mean age 35.5 years), where adolescents and emerging adults were invited from middle and high schools in the US. Three surveys were employed including: The Revised Youth Purpose Survey (Bundick et al., 2006) which assessed the prevalence of purpose in life among participants; the Trait Hope Scale (Synder et al., 1991) which assessed confidence in their ability to achieve their goals; and the Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985) which measured their mental judgement of life satisfaction. The results of this cross-sectional study revealed that searching for purpose in life was strongly associated with increased life satisfaction during adolescence. Brassai et al. (2013), in their psychological and parental multivariate analysis, investigated 1,944 adolescents aged 15-19 years in Romania, to explore the implications of achieving meaning in life on the psychological growth of adolescents. The Life Meaning subscale of the Brief Stress and Coping Inventory (BSCI; Rahe & Tolles, 2002), and The Measures of Perceived Social Support Scale (MPSS; Turner & Marino, 1994), were used to measure meaning in life and parental social support respectively. Feelings of positive support from parents were found to have a positive relationship with adolescents' meaning in life. It was further argued that fathers' active supervision or tendency to control impacted negatively on adolescent's sense of meaning in life.

The relationship between existential issues, such as 'purpose in life' and 'temptation to drink [alcohol]' was explored by Roos et al. (2015) in their longitudinal study of 1,726 adolescents aged 18 years in the US. The results revealed that purpose in life and temptation to drink were significantly associated across time; that is, a higher initial level of purpose in life and an increase in purpose in life over time were associated with lower initial levels of temptation to drink and a decrease in temptation to drink over time. Similarly, Abramoski et al. (2018) suggested about the protective behaviour, towards the substance use, of the adolescents with beyond-the-self purpose in life. Abramoski et al. (2018) investigated 408 adolescents in 9^{th} to 12^{th} grade with a mean age of 15.36 years in Michigan, US. Using the 17-item Identified Purpose Scale of the Revised Youth Purpose Survey (Bundick, 2006) they explored the relationship between purpose in life and use of alcohol and other drug use. Findings revealed that adolescents with *broad other-promoting* category of purpose in life, where they intend to improve the lives of others in the world, do not get attracted towards alcohol and drug use.

Schulenberg et al. (2016) assessed perceived purpose in life with 91 adolescents aged 11-18 years from Mississippi. The primary purpose of the study was to examine psychometric properties of the Purpose in Life-Short Form (PIL-SF; Schulenberg et al., 2011) and the ability of this scale to predict psychological outcomes in this American adolescent sample. The scale consists of 4 items and

participants responses were recorded on 7-point Likert scale. Therefore, scores range from 4-28, where lower values indicate lower purpose in life and high values indicates high purpose in life. They found significantly more purpose in life in female adolescents than males. In another study, Garcia-Alandete et al. (2018) reported significant age differences but not significant gender differences in meaning in life of 1,599 adolescents aged 12-19 years in Spain. Meaning in life was measured using a 10-item version of the original Purpose in Life test (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964) and it was found that meaning in life increased over time.

It is important to highlight that the above studies have focussed primarily on positive psychology (Steger & Kashdan, 2013; Steger et al., 2009), highlighting that meaning or purpose in life is a strength, which helps human beings to withstand pressure or diminish pathological behaviours. As discussed in section 2.4.3.3, the opposite occurs when there is no meaning or purpose in life. Individuals who regard their lives as meaningless lack the ability to realise worthy goals, or such purposes are no longer important to them (Vanhooren et al., 2017). According to Frankl (1955), "an existential vacuum is characterised by focusing on the present or the past, without being able to look to the future" (p. 17). A sense of pessimism increases the existential vacuum (Fahlman et al., 2009) resulting in existential stress. Therefore, the current study addressed the gap in literature by looking at adolescents' experiences of existential stress or absence of a satisfactory purpose in life (Schulenburg et al., 2010). The current study explored the interrelationship between adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress in relation to their emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

2.4.3.6 Interrelationship between existential stress and role stress

As highlighted above, limited studies have explored the concept of role stress and/or existential stress among adolescents. Studies related to role stress, existential stress, and their constructs have explored the interrelationships between these potential stressors in adults. However, Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory suggests that adolescence is an age of role versus identity confusion, which highlights the need to explore the relationship between these potential stressors in an adolescent sample.

Role stress and existential stress in adults

In an adult population aged 20-40 years, Vergara (1999) determined the difference between single and married female counsellors in terms of multiple role stress, burnout, purpose in life and the relationship between role stress and purpose in life among 80 counsellors in Manila. This cross-sectional quantitative study found a significant positive correlation between role stress and existential

stress in the sample. Multiple role stress was measured in terms of stress emanating from different social relationships: work and family; the number of hours per week devoted to work and family roles; and subjective estimates of the frequency of stress experienced in relation to balancing the demands of work and family roles based on a 5-point scale. Existential stress was measured using the Purpose in Life Scale (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964) with findings highlighting that married counsellors reported multiple role stress higher than their single counterparts. The results of the study revealed that there was no significant difference between single and married counsellors in terms of emotional exhaustion and purpose in life as both groups reported low emotional exhaustion and purpose in life.

Krause (2004) investigated the interrelationship between role stress as stress emanating from highly valued relationships (family and close friends), meaning in life and physical health in 1,103 household residents aged 65 years or older in the US. Results revealed that stress emanating from family and close friends in these participants had a negative impact on their health and older adults' sense of meaning in life. The findings of the study also revealed that emotional support helped older adults cope effectively with role stress by restoring their meaning in life. Kulik et al. (2015) examined the interrelationship between multiple roles, role stress and sense of meaning in life among 611 employed parents aged 22-66 years in Israel and found that the number of roles and the proportion of satisfying roles was directly related to a sense of meaning in life. Men showed a greater tendency than women to experience interference between work and family.

Ishida and Okada (2006) conducted a cross-sectional study on 32 adult males and females aged 22-47 years in Japan to explore the relationship between experiences with parents, teachers and friends (role stress) and purpose in life (existential stress). Results revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between adults' positive experiences with social relationships such as "being praised by teachers, parents and friends" (p. 279) and purpose in life. That is, the male and female adults in this study who scored high on positive experiences in life with teachers, parents, neighbours and friends also scored high on the Purpose in Life Scale (Crumbaugh & Maholic 1964). Furthermore, Kealy et al. (2020) examined the role of early parental support in facilitating meaning in life in 120 young adults aged 18-25 years in Canada. Early parental support was measured by the Early Parental Support Scale (EPS) (Shaw et al., 2004), and meaning in life was assessed by Meaning in the Life Questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006). They found that a greater degree of emotional support from parents was associated with more positive attitudes about the future and a robust commitment towards identity, both of which were linked strongly with a positive sense of meaning in life. Thus, studies that have identified an interrelationship between role stress and existential stress in adults have

highlighted a positive association between these two stressors with those experiencing role stress also experiencing existential stress. However, a need to understand this in adolescents remains.

Link between role stress and existential stress in adolescents

In adolescent samples, little empirical work has explored the interrelationship between role stress and existential stress. Previous studies have instead investigated social support, connectedness with family, peers, friends and meaning or purpose in life. For instance, in terms of social support and its impact on adolescents' purpose in life, research has shown a bi-directional effect (Blau et al., 2019). In their cross-sectional study, Blau et al. (2019) examined the association between purpose in life and social support in 193 secondary school students aged 14-18 years in Israel. Purpose in life was measured by part of the revised Youth Purpose Survey (Bundick et al., 2006) (e.g., "The purpose of my life is to help others", "The purpose of my life is to do the right thing") (p. 910). Social support, including parents, teachers, other school staff, classmates, and close friends, was measured with the Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale (Demaray & Malecki, 2002). Findings highlighted that greater support an adolescent received from parents and teachers was positively associated with purpose in life. Furthermore, the presence of purpose in life in adolescents was positively associated with greater support from parents, teachers, other school staff, classmates and close friends. They further reported that support from friends and classmates were also associated with purpose in life, however, these associations were weaker than the association between parent and teacher support and purpose in life.

Heng et al. (2020) compared meaning in life and social support in Singapore and Israel with 577 adolescents aged 15-16 years. Meaning in life was measured by the Meaning in Life Scale (Steger et al., 2006) to identify presence and search for meaning in life. Social support was measured by a multidimensional scale measuring perceived social support from five sources: teachers, classmates, close friends, parents and people in school (Demaray & Malecki, 2002). Findings revealed that parents' support, followed by teachers', positively related to the presence of meaning in life for this adolescent sample. Notably adolescents from Israel reported greater meaning in life and parental support than those from Singapore.

Evidence of the interrelationship of these potential stressors in adults has helped to propose the hypothesis that there is a positive association between role stress and existential stress in adolescents in the current study. There are individual differences among adolescents not only in the kind of stress they experience, but also how they cope. How adolescents cope with their stress levels primarily depends on their ability to manage stress in general which is strongly impacted by their emotional intelligence (Adeyemo & Adeleye, 2008; Gomez-Baya et al., 2017; Marikutty & Joseph, 2016).

Therefore, emotional intelligence is a crucial factor which influences these processes (Adeyemo & Adeleye, 2008; Gomez-Baya et al., 2017; Marikutty & Joseph, 2016; Poulou, 2017; Preeti, 2013). Thus, insight into the role of emotional intelligence in adolescents' lives is important.

2.5 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence refers to a set of skills that can be taught to help adolescents cope with stress and promote wellbeing (Fernandez-Berrocal & Extremera, 2016; Martins et al., 2010; Schutte et al., 2007). Positive association between emotional intelligence and adolescents' academic, social, psychological and career domains has been well-documented in the literature (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2014; Perera & DiGiacomo, 2015). Erikson (1968), in his Psychosocial Development Theory emphasised the importance of developing identity for an adolescent to lead successful transition to adulthood. However, lack of meaning in life potentially causes role confusion and identity diffusion for some adolescents (Erikson, 1968). The words "confusion" and "diffusion" suggest salient emotional upheaval in adolescence (Erikson, 1968, p. 212) which for some can result in role stress and/or existential stress, however this supposition has remained largely untested. The current study addressed this gap in the literature by focusing on the concept of emotional intelligence, defined as an ability to appraise, regulate and use emotions in problem solving (Davies et al., 2010). Therefore, knowing and understanding one's emotions and those of others may potentially act as a buffer against role stress and existential stress, thus positively impacting on wellbeing.

2.5.1 Conceptualisation of emotional intelligence

Attention to non-intellectual elements of human development was recognised as early as 1920 by Thorndike, who distinguished social intelligence from other forms of intelligence by defining it as "the ability to act wisely in human relations" (p. 228). Wechsler in 1943 then posed that in addition to intellective there are definite non-intellective factors that determine intelligent behaviour:

> The main question is whether non-intellective, that is, affective and conative abilities are admissible as factors in general intelligence … If the foregoing observations are correct, it follows that we cannot expect to measure total intelligence until our tests also include some measures of the non-intellective factors. (Wechsler, 1943, p. 103)

Interest in non-intellective factors was revived with Gardner's (1983) Theory of Multiple Intelligences which proposed that intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence were as important as intelligence measured by Intelligent Quotient tests. Intrigued by these findings, Salovey and Mayer

(1990) coined the term 'emotional intelligence' describing it as a "subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (p. 189).

Although the term emotional intelligence was introduced by Salovey and Mayer (1990) it was propelled into prominence by Goleman's (1995) bestselling book 'Emotional Intelligence'. Goleman (1995) identified emotional intelligence as a wide array of competencies and skills that drive leadership performance. He described it as "the way people interact with the world with emotionally intelligent people: being able to consider their own feelings and those of others; aware of their strengths and weaknesses; and reflective and self-assured" (p. 45). Mayer et al. (2004) criticised Goleman's conceptualisation of emotional intelligence by stating that it was more focussed on emotional competencies, rather than intelligence, and it included a wide range of personality variables that were not inherently based on either emotion or intelligence, therefore, he argued that Goleman did not appropriately define emotional intelligence.

Conceptualisations of emotional intelligence were soon followed by attempts to develop measures to assess the new construct (Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995; Mayer et al., 1999; Petrides & Furnham, 2000). Consequently, some measures were based on self-perceived abilities (Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995), whereas others attempted to measure actual emotionally-related abilities (Mayer et al., 1999). Due to inconsistent and contradictory findings from different measurement approaches, Petrides and Furnham (2000) proposed a distinction between emotional intelligence constructs and categorised these into two broad approaches: ability emotional intelligence (ability EI) and trait emotional intelligence (trait EI).

2.5.1.1 Approaches to conceptualise emotional intelligence: ability EI versus trait EI

Researchers emphasised that ability EI and trait EI are two different constructs conceptually, methodologically, and empirically, with low correlations between the two (O'Connor & Little, 2003; Warwick & Nettelbeck, 2004).

Initially emotional intelligence was conceived as "an ability to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to regulate emotions in the self and others so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (Mayer et al., 2004, p. 197). The ability model of emotional intelligence was first developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990). Mayer et al. (2004) argued that emotional intelligence is best conceptualised as an ability in the same way that cognitive intelligence is conceptualised. In this

conceptualisation, emotional intelligence abilities are divided into four factors: "the ability to (a) perceive emotions, (b) use emotions to facilitate thought, (c) understand emotions, and (d) manage emotions" (Mayer et al., 2004; p. 199). The ability model of EI emphasised the characteristics of EI; chances of improvement through training without depending upon the natural abilities; capability of controlling own and others' emotions and to build supportive network; and give flexibility to adjust with changes in social environment. (Davie et al., 2010; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Schutte et al., 2008).

Based on the Salovey and Mayer's (1990) conceptualisation of emotional intelligence as a composite set of abilities, Davies et al. (2010) developed a self-report measure, which is a short version of the Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 2008), known as the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS). The BEIS broadly supports the three distinct components proposed by Salovey and Mayer (1990): ability to appraise one's own and others' emotions; ability to regulate one's own and others' emotions; and ability to use emotions.

The trait EI approach was first introduced by Petrides and Furnham in 2000 who viewed emotional intelligence as a personality trait (Petrides & Furnham, 2000; Petrides et al., 2004) distinguishing it from ability-based emotional intelligence. They defined emotional intelligence as "a constellation of behavioural dispositions and self-perceptions concerning one's ability to recognise, process, and utilise emotion-laden information" (Petrides et al., 2004, p. 278). Unlike the ability model discussed above, trait EI is unrelated to human cognitive ability (Ferrando et al., 2011), instead, it encompasses various dispositions from the personality domain including empathy, impulsivity and assertiveness as well as elements of social and personal intelligence (Petrides et al., 2004). According to this approach, emotional intelligence is seen as an individual's self-perceptions of their emotional abilities, including behavioural and self-perceived abilities (Mavroveli et al., 2007). Therefore, the trait emotional intelligence framework aimed to provide a comprehensive coverage of personality facets relating to emotions (Petrides et al., 2004). However, researchers have criticised this model because emotional intelligence was considered as a personality trait rather than an ability trait (Ciarrochi et al., 2002; Davies et al., 2010; MacCann et al., 2011; Mayer et al., 2004; Mayer et al., 1999).

The current preferred model in the scientific study of emotional intelligence is the ability model proposed by Mayer et al. (1990). Ability EI does not encompass dispositions from the personality domain, which is the case with trait EI. This is because the attributes were, unrelated to the intelligence aspect, and completely distinct both conceptually and empirically (Mayer et al., 2004). Therefore, measures of emotional intelligence using an ability EI definition are likely to be correlated highly with one another, providing the researcher with confidence that it is emotional intelligence as

an ability that is being measured as opposed to another attribute (Mayer et al., 2004). Taking into consideration that emotional intelligence is distinct from other dimensions of personality, theorists have argued that Salovey and Mayer's (1990) ability-based model represents the most cohesive and comprehensive model of emotional intelligence (Davies et al., 2010; Ramos et al., 2007; Schutte et al., 1998). In more recent years, ability EI has become an important part of social science research which has strived to understand adolescents' lives (Ciarrochi et al., 2002; Davies et al., 2010; MacCann et al., 2011). Thus, to understand the association between adolescents' emotional abilities and their potential stressors, ability EI is argued to be an appropriate construct for the current study.

2.5.2 What role does emotional intelligence play in adolescent lives?

In recent decades, research has demonstrated the usefulness of the construct of emotional intelligence in adolescents. One of the challenges in terms of emotional intelligence in adolescents is when, where, and how to foster it (De Lazzari, 2000), with many arguing that this should happen at home (Kaur & Jaswal, 2005; Sonthalia & Dasgupta, 2012). Indeed, much of the emotional development in adolescents stems from their interactions at home with parents and siblings. However, it is also contested that during this period, adolescents become more independent and relationships with friends and peers become more important (De Goede et al., 2009; Hay & Ashman, 2003). Therefore, the whole ecological environment in which adolescents interact provides life skills within each of the aspects of emotional intelligence. Goleman (1995) stated that adolescents' transition into high school is in and of itself a challenge in the realm of emotions and a crucial point in their adjustment. He also points out that emotional intelligence is a key ingredient for facing these adjustments successfully.

The concept of emotional intelligence has been explored in adolescents by educational researchers because of its link with academic achievement. For example, Parker et al. (2004) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and the academic achievement of 667 high school students aged 14-18 years from Huntsville, Alabama. Emotional intelligence records were matched with the student's academic records for the year and an overall grade point average was calculated based on all courses taken over the year. It was observed that academic success was strongly associated with several dimensions of emotional intelligence: interpersonal skills, intrapersonal skills, adaptability, stress management, general mood and positive impression. Similarly, Petrides et al. (2004) investigated the role of trait EI (measured by the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, Petrides et al., 2004) in academic performance and deviant school behaviour (unauthorised absences and exclusion from school; data collected from school records) among 650 adolescents in year level 11 with a mean age of 16.5 years in British secondary education. Results revealed that adolescents with high emotional intelligence were less likely to engage in deviant behaviour at school.

Other studies have highlighted the importance of understanding emotional intelligence in adolescents. For instance, Qualter et al. (2007) explored the role of emotional intelligence in coping with the transition to high school with 169 adolescents aged 11-12 years from a high school in rural England. Results revealed that those with high and average levels of emotional intelligence coped better with the transition in terms of their grade point average, self-worth, school attendance and behaviour than those with low emotional intelligence. Siu (2009) investigated the relationship between trait EI and problem behaviour among 325 adolescents aged 13-18 years from five secondary schools in Hong Kong. A self-report Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) (Schutte et al., 1998) was used to collect data on emotional intelligence, while the Depression-Anxiety-Stress Scale (DASS-42, Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) was used to gather information on problem behaviours. The quantitative analysis highlighted that there was an inverse relationship between emotional intelligence and problem behaviour, with females scoring significantly higher on emotional intelligence than their male counterparts. These gender differences revealed by Siu (2009) were similar to those found in Katyal and Awasthi's (2005) study. Katyal and Awasthi (2005) specifically examined gender differences in emotional intelligence among 150 adolescents aged 13-19 years from different schools in Chandigarh, India. This study supported earlier findings that females had higher emotional intelligence than males. In contrast, Kaur (2010) examined gender differences in emotional intelligence among 198 Indian adolescents aged 16-19 years. A t-test analysis of gender differences revealed that males had higher emotional intelligence than females. As noted, results are inconsistent concerning gender differences in emotional intelligence which may be due to the wide variability in the conceptualisation and measurement of emotional intelligence.

Fernandez-Berrocal et al. (2006) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence, depression and anxiety among adolescents aged 14-19 years in a high school in Spain and found that emotional intelligence was negatively associated with depression and anxiety. Supporting these findings, Gomez-Baya et al. (2017) analysed the role of perceived emotional intelligence in depressive symptoms during adolescence. A total of 525 adolescents aged 12-15 years from 18 secondary schools in Andalusia, Spain were involved in the study. Descriptive statistics such as t-test analyses revealed gender differences in perceived emotional intelligence and depressive symptoms, with females showing a higher mean score for emotional intelligence and males reporting a higher mean score for depressive symptoms. Explaining these findings, a correlational analysis revealed that emotional attention i.e. "attention given to own emotional states" (Gomez-Baya et al., 2017, p. 304) was positively associated with depressive symptoms, whereas emotional clarity and emotional repair was positively associated with self-esteem. Similarly, Bartwal and Raj (2013) examined academic stress among adolescents aged 13-19 years in India in relation to their emotional intelligence. Results

revealed that both males and females reported the same amount of academic stress and high emotional intelligence levels, with the latter being argued to support participants to cope with academic stress.

The above studies have highlighted that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in an adolescent's academic performance and personal life experiences. Therefore, understanding potential stressors such as role stress and existential stress in adolescents can be advanced when considered in terms of their emotional intelligence.

2.5.3 Emotional intelligence, role stress and existential stress

In recent years, due to the emergence of positive psychology, educational psychology has seen an upsurge in research into emotional abilities such as emotional intelligence (Kristjansson, 2012). According to the ability model, all individuals are distinct in terms of their emotional intelligence levels and emotional patterns they use to reason, and solve their problems (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Thus, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of emotional intelligence in adolescents with high or lower levels of role stress and/or existential stress.

2.5.3.1 Links between emotional intelligence and role stress in adolescents

As emotions are recognised as both a product and process of social relationships, gaining insights into adolescents' emotional intelligence and its impact on role stress is important (Cole et al., 2014; Walden & Smith, 1997).

The influence of social relationships in the development of emotional abilities in adolescents is well documented in literature (Argyriou et al., 2016; Moksnes et al., 2010; Morris et al., 2007; Lopez-Zafra, 2019). For instance, Moksnes et al. (2010) examined the association between stress related to peer pressure, home life, school performance, adult responsibility and emotional instability (depression and anxiety) in 1,508 adolescents aged 13-18 years in Norway. A quantitative analysis revealed a significant association between increasing stress related to peer pressure, home life, school performance, adult responsibility and higher levels of emotional instability (Moksnes et al., 2010). They further found that adolescent scores on stress and emotional instability did not differ significantly by age (Moksnes et al., 2010). Lopez-Zafra et al. (2019) conducted a cross-sectional study with 1,227 adolescents with a mean age of 16.5 years from 26 schools in Morocco. Emotional intelligence was measured by the 16-item ability-based Emotional Intelligence Scale (Wong & Law, 2002) and social support (from family, friends and school) was assessed using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support-Arab American (MSPSS-AA) (Zimet et al., 1988). Results revealed a significant positive relationship between social support and emotional intelligence, where

family support was found to be the strongest correlate of emotional intelligence followed by school support and support from friends.

Similarly, Morris et al. (2007) described the role of different components of the family context in adolescents' emotional regulation and found that families played an important role in the social and emotional development of their children. Positive parenting consisted of having a positive attitude, creating psychological freedom and having positive control, which together created a positive emotional climate in the family resulting in strong emotional regulation in adolescents (Morris et al., 2007). These findings suggest that ability EI is highly dependent on an adolescents' social environment. Argyriou et al. (2016) examined the relationship between parenting style: permissiveness ("parents do not consider themselves as responsible for shaping their offspring's behavior and tend to yield to their child's demands uncritically"), authoritarianism ("parents exert control as well, but they discourage verbal interaction e.g., 'give and take', and value obedience") and authoritativeness ("parent exerts firm control, but in a supportive manner, by enhancing verbal interaction") (p. 43). Adolescents' perceptions of parental style were measured by the Parenting Authority Questionnaire [PAQ; Baumrind, (1971] and their emotional intelligence was measured by the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-short form (Petrides et al., 2006) in 127 adolescents aged 15-19 years in high schools in Greece. Descriptive statistics were employed to determine the relationship between variables, with a t-test analysis revealing statistical differences in gender in relation to emotional intelligence, with males scoring higher on trait EI (M= 4.95, SD= 0.69) than females (M= 4.63, SD= 0.76). A correlation analysis revealed that trait EI was positively correlated with authoritativeness (r= 0.43) and negatively correlated with authoritarianism (r= -0.31). No statistically significant relationship was found between trait EI and permissiveness (Argyriou et al., 2016). These studies have highlighted the potential influence parenting and parenting styles on adolescents' role stress.

Additionally, studies have highlighted the significant associations between problems or issues in social contexts and emotional intelligence (Argyriou et al., 2016; Cejudo et al., 2018; Lomas et al., 2012; Lopez-Zafra, 2019). For instance, Lomas et al. (2012) conducted a cross-sectional study to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence (measured by ability based Adolescent Swinburne University Emotional Intelligence TEST, Luebbers et al., 2007) and peer victimisation (Peer Relations Questionnaire, Rigby & Slee, 1993). The sample comprised of 68 adolescents aged 12-16 years from secondary colleges located in Melbourne, Australia. They found that lower scores on emotional intelligence were significantly associated with higher levels of self-reported peer victimisation, suggesting that emotional intelligence could act as a buffer for adolescents (Lomas et al., 2012).

Cejudo et al. (2018) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence (measured by Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-short form, Petrides et al., 2006), social stress (measured by Student Stress Inventory, Fimian et al., 1989) and social anxiety (Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A), La Greca et al., 1998) in 505 adolescents aged 12-18 years in Spain. The results revealed that emotional intelligence was negatively associated with social stress and social anxiety, however the relationship was stronger with social anxiety than with social stress. No gender or age differences were reported.

There are some suggestions that emotional intelligence in adolescents is beneficial in maintaining interpersonal relationships. However, there remains a need to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and role stress (stress due to the absence of satisfactory relationships with family, peers, friends, teachers, school, community) in adolescents in a single cross-sectional study. The current project addressed this gap in the literature by exploring the relationship between role stress and existential stress, and the potential relationship they have with emotional intelligence in adolescents.

2.5.3.2 Links between emotional intelligence and existential stress in adolescents

De Lazzari (2000) suggests that behavioural challenges in adolescents are linked to a lack of meaning or purpose in life, highlighting a need to address emotional health in adolescents. Although scant attention has been given to understanding the link between existential stress and emotional intelligence, there has been some research that has explored the interrelationship between some of the key components of existential stress and emotional intelligence in adolescents (Kong et al., 2012; Rey et al., 2011; Wols et al., 2015).

Rey et al. (2011) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence (Trait Meta Mood Scale, Salovey et al., 1995), self-esteem (Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, Rosenberg, 1979), and life satisfaction (Satisfaction with Life Scale, Diener et al., 1985) in a sample of 316 adolescents aged 14-18 years in Spain. Results highlighted a positive association between emotional intelligence, life satisfaction and self-esteem in these adolescents. Similarly, Wols et al. (2015) examined the relationship between loneliness and emotional intelligence in 196 adolescents aged 11-13 years from schools in England. The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence TEST-Youth Version (Mayer, 2005) and the Loneliness and Aloneness Scale for Children and Adolescents (Marcoen et al., 1987) were used to collect data. Prospective links between understanding and managing emotions and loneliness were found for both males and females. Cohen's *d* values showed that there were small differences between males and females in terms of emotional intelligence and loneliness, with those

reporting lower emotional intelligence showing an increase in loneliness; therefore, it would appear that emotional skills offer protection against loneliness.

Considering the benefits of emotional intelligence in various aspects of adolescents' lives, the current study hypothesised that there is an association between emotional intelligence and existential stress in adolescents aged 13-19 years from year level 8-12. Therefore, the current study will add to the existing body of knowledge by providing insights into adolescents' lives and the relationship between role stress, existential stress and emotional intelligence. Such results may provide valuable insights that can assist stakeholders to develop and enhance adolescents' wellbeing.

2.6 Wellbeing

As outlined in the previous sections, studies of role stress, existential stress and, to a degree, emotional intelligence have largely applied psychological and behavioural lenses to explore role and existential stress. This research aimed to contribute to this field by applying a wellbeing lens which has received increasing attention among researchers and policy makers in promoting positive health from a more holistic approach (Myers et al., 2000). Therefore, in applying a strengths-based and positive holistic approach to adolescent wellbeing to further contribute to the findings of predominantly psychological studies on adolescents' potential stressors, it was important to examine studies exploring positive aspects of their life, highlighting their emotional intelligence (refer Section 2.5) and wellbeing. This section commences by critically analysing the emerging wellbeing conceptualisations, then examines approaches to measuring wellbeing, and finally synthesises the adolescent wellbeing literature in relation to the potential contribution to further understanding adolescent role stress, existential stress and emotional intelligence.

2.6.1 Conceptualisation of wellbeing

Policymakers, researchers, government and non-government organisations have devoted considerable attention to wellbeing, a concept that Western and Tomaszewski (2016) refer to as one's capacity to live healthy, creative, and fulfilling lives. Despite wellbeing increasingly being widely acknowledged and prioritised in recent adolescent policy discourse, contention exists around the conceptualisation of wellbeing (Linton et al., 2016).

The WHO (1948) initially defined wellbeing as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity" (p. 1). However, until the past few decades, limited sustained empirical research has explored a more holistic conceptualisation of

wellbeing. This has given rise to more diverging conceptualisations, including that of Adams et al. (1997) who defined "wellbeing as perceived wellness, which includes consistent and balanced growth in the emotional, intellectual, physical, psychological, social and spiritual aspects of human existence" (p. 166). Supporting the WHO's viewpoint, Schilcker (2005) contended that "the term 'wellbeing' has a much wider meaning than health. The two terms are inter-related, but the former has many more domains, health generally applying to physical, and sometimes to mental domains" (p. 217). According to the federal Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, wellbeing was conceptualised as a "sustainable state of positive mood and attitude, resilience and satisfaction with self, relationships and experiences at school" (DEEWR, 2008, p. 2). Thereby conceptualisations began integrating individual factors as well external influences on one's wellbeing.

Dodge et al. (2012) further contested that previous wellbeing research had commonly focused on dimensions and descriptions without specifically defining wellbeing. Thereby they proposed wellbeing to be "the balance point between an individual's physical, psychological and social resource pool and the challenges faced" (p. 230). Similarly, according to South Australia: State of Wellbeing statement, wellbeing is a complex concept, which "is influenced by many factors - most of which are not under the control of individuals" (SA: State of Wellbeing – Final Report, 2016, p. 17). Further expanding these conceptualisations, Forgeard et al. (2011) identified other missing aspects of wellbeing, stating that:

> some researchers have preferred to ignore the multifaceted nature of wellbeing and equate it with one construct (often life satisfaction), leading to the unfortunate omission of other important aspects of wellbeing (p. 81).

Engaging with the critical discourse regarding defining wellbeing, Price and McCallum (2016) further proposed that

> wellbeing is diverse and fluid respecting individual, family and community beliefs, values, experiences, culture, opportunities and contexts across time and change. It is something we all aim for, underpinned by positive notions, yet is unique to each of us and provides us with a sense of who we are which needs to be respected … wellbeing encompasses intertwined individual, collective and environmental elements which continually interact across the lifespan. (p. 17)

Thus, in a broad sense, the conceptualisation of wellbeing has traversed discourses of a pathogenic paradigm oriented deficit health and medical notions, salutogenic paradigm or positive psychology where good functioning was more than the absence of illness or disease (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014), a multi-dimensional phenomenon (Adams et al., 1997; Dodge et al., 2012; Forgeard et al., 2011), and more holistic notions with potential ecological influences (Price & McCallum, 2016; McCallum et al., 2017). Thereby, in the context of this study exploring adolescent role and existential stress, critical examination of approaches to conceptualising wellbeing is important in potentially further supporting adolescent wellbeing given the increasing prevalence of adolescent stress as outlined in section 2.4.1.

2.6.2 Approaches to conceptualising wellbeing

The abovementioned conceptualisations of wellbeing include both external objective dimensions including economic resources (e.g., income, goods), political, health and literacy circumstances (Forgeard et al., 2011), and "subjective dimensions of wellbeing … encompass[ing] factors such as happiness, emotion, engagement, purpose, life satisfaction, social relationships, competence and accomplishment" (McCallum et al., 2017, p. 6). Building on subjective notions, Cooke et al.'s (2016) systematic literature review on wellbeing conceptualised four approaches: "hedonic, eudaimonia, quality of life, and wellness" (p. 731). Each of these approaches are discussed below.

2.6.2.1 Hedonic approach

Scholars influenced by the hedonic approach view wellbeing in terms of subjective happiness and the experience of pleasure as opposed to judgements about the good/bad elements of life; that is, focusing on happiness, pleasure, positive affect, low negative affect and satisfaction with life (Bradburn, 1969; Kahneman et al., 1999). A prominent tripartite model included satisfaction with life, the absence of negative affect and the presence of positive affect (Diener et al., 1985), while other researchers focused on individual components such as life satisfaction (Bradburn, 1969; Diener, 1984; Kahneman et al., 1999; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). Critiques of hedonic approaches include "how maladaptive behaviours (such as drug abuse) can change the amount of positive and negative affect that an individual experiences in the short-term and the judgements that they make about their life without improving their overall wellbeing" (Gregory & Brinkman, 2015, p.12). Also, further critique suggested that effects central to wellbeing were not being captured in these measures of subjective wellbeing (Gregory & Brinkman, 2015).

2.6.2.2 Eudemonic approach

In contrast, the eudemonic approach to wellbeing highlighted positive psychological functioning and human development and thereby criticised the hedonic approach for not making clear the distinction between positive and negative affect, as they are considered to be at opposite ends of a continuum (Rogers, 1995; Ryff, 1989; Waterrman, 1993). Rather than the focus on affect and life satisfaction in the hedonic models, eudemonic models focus on a larger number of life domains which vary significantly. For instance, one of the more prominent eudemonic models is the psychological wellbeing model (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995), suggesting that wellbeing consists of six elements: self-acceptance, positive relations, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. Ryan and Deci's (2001) model suggested that wellbeing is found in the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness. As Gregory and Brinkman (2015) contend, "the eudemonic concept of wellbeing helps to address limitations of the hedonic model highlighting that people need to satisfy a range of needs to achieve wellbeing beyond just the need to experience happiness and avoiding negative emotions" (p. 13). However, hedonic and eudemonic approaches to wellbeing have been further challenged with additional conceptualisations that are central to the current study's exploration of adolescent role and existential stress and relationship with emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

2.6.2.3 Quality of Life approach

The term quality of life (QoL) is often used interchangeably with wellbeing in the literature (Frisch et al., 1992; Statham & Chase, 2010), however those studying QoL generally conceptualise wellbeing more broadly than either the hedonic or eudemonic models, including physical, psychological and social aspects of functioning. This approach has often been applied in the context of biomedicine, psychology, sociology and medicine (Lent, 2004), but has expanded into other fields. The WHO defines QoL as a "individuals' perceptions of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns." (WHO, 1997, p. 1). They further stated that an individual's quality of life is "affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs and their relationship to their environment" (WHO, 1997, p. 1). Similarly, to the hedonic and eudemonic approaches, QoL approach has been critiqued for not focusing on overall wellness (Adams et al., 1997) and not taking into account ever-changing life events, coping abilities, or one's culture (Carr et al., 2001). However, QoL provides an important broader conceptual approach to consider in relation to adolescent experiences of role and existential stress, as well as other approaches including multi-dimensional conceptualisations (Adams et al., 1997; Diener, 2009; Seligman, 2011; Stiglitz et al., 2009).

2.6.2.4 Multi-dimensional approach

"Multi-dimensionality suggests that well-being incorporates a range of dimensions relating to different aspects of an individual's life" (Fraillon, 2004, p. 22). Ardell (1982) initially identified four wellbeing dimensions: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual, with subsequent variations emerging. These variations included the perceived wellness model (Adams et al., 1997) suggesting balancing and enhancing life in relation to physical, psychological, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual wellbeing. In advancing the positive psychology wellbeing conceptualisation, Seligman (2011) proposed five dimensions of wellbeing; Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement (PERMA). However, Kern et al. (2015) argued that Seligman's PERMA theory was developed with adults, therefore some constructs were not appropriate for measuring the wellbeing of children and adolescents. Thus, the Engagement, Perseverance, Optimism, Connectedness, and Happiness (EPOCH) measure of adolescent wellbeing was created to provide a developmentally appropriate instrument to expand on Seligman's (2011) PERMA theory constructs of wellbeing (Kern et al., 2015).

Notwithstanding, the broader conceptualisations of wellbeing presented above, the current study adopted Adams et al. (1997) Perceived Wellness Survey (PWS) construct. Developed within a positive psychology, Adams et al. (1997) proposed an holistic model of wellbeing, known as wellness mode, which includes six major dimensions: physical, emotional, social, psychological, intellectual, and spiritual. Adams et al. (1997) conceptualized wellness from a system approach where "each part of the system is both an essential subelement of a larger system and an independent system with its own subelements" (p. 209). Moreover, studies related to stress focus more of its influence on psychological wellbeing, however according to Strelhow et al. (2019) "researchers who propose integrative or multidimensional models have in common an integrated view of the human being, with their physical, psychological, psychosocial, social, moral and spiritual dimensions as inseparable factors" (p. 1442). Therefore, the current study is a stepping-stone to explore the influence of role stress and existential stress across different dimensions of wellbeing. Furthermore, to integrate more holistic notions of wellbeing into understanding adolescent experiences of role and/or existential stress, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory was also integrated into the conceptual framework (refer Section 2.7) providing a new conceptual approach to examining adolescent role and existential stress. Of note, the term wellness has sometimes been used interchangeably with wellbeing (Adams et al., 1997; Harari et al., 2005, Witmer & Sweeney, 1992), advancing conceptualisations that wellness and wellbeing is not just the absence of disease (Adams et al., 1997; Dunn, 1961), rather

holistic including multiple areas of health and functioning (Adams et al., 1997; Dunn, 1961; Harari et al., 2005; Myers et al., 2000).

The wellness approach of positive psychology, which considers different domains of wellbeing such as emotional, psychological, social, physical, intellectual and spiritual, has been identified as a holistic approach towards individual's wellbeing (Adams et al., 1997; Dunn, 1961; Forgeard et al., 2011; Harari et al., 2005). For instance, according to Dunn (1961) wellness is "an integrated method of functioning which is oriented toward maximising the potential of which the individual is capable" (p. 4). Adams et al. (2000) stated that many researchers have conceptualised and illustrated wellness based on Dunn's (1961) conceptualisation but "unfortunately these conceptual foundations and models have not been used to shape research questions or influence program development, nor have they been empirically evaluated" (p. 165). Therefore, he proposed a new wellness model that focused on the perceptions of an individual about their health and functioning. According to Adams et al. (2000), the perceived wellness model was unique and important for a number of reasons: subjective perceptions are valid indicators of future health; "perceptions serve as a filter" through which information must pass before they are interpreted; "perceptions precede physical responses and behaviours"; and various research findings support the importance of perceptions (p. 166).

Furthermore, Adams et al. (2000) claimed that the perceived wellness construct is supported by both "social support" and "stress" literature (p. 166). For instance, the social support literature indicates that perceived support rather than received support has the most powerful influence on health (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Cohen, 2004; Drolet & Arcand, 2013; Falci & McNeely, 2009), and similarly stress literature suggests that perceptions of internal resources enable individuals to survive and thrive under conditions of extreme stress (Antonovsky, 1987; Compton & Hoffman, 2019; Folkman et al., 1986; Lazarus & Lazarus, 1991). In addition to being perceptually focussed, the model was based on three key principles: "(a) multidimensionality, (b) balance among dimensions, and (c) salutogenesis (defined as causing health rather than illness)" (Adams et al., 2000; p. 166). Based on their wellness model, Adams et al. (1997) developed the Perceived Wellness Survey.

Due to the more expansive coverage of dimensions in this scale and its reported reliability and validity, the current study adopted Adams et al.'s (1997) Perceived Wellness Survey to measure adolescents' physical, psychological, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual wellbeing and thus expand the approach to examining adolescent role and existential stress. Thus, in the current study, wellbeing was defined as a "manner of living that permits the experience of consistent, balanced growth in the physical, spiritual, psychological, social, emotional, and intellectual dimensions of human existence" (Adams et al., 1997, p. 15).

The current study has taken into consideration the notion of interconnection between aspects of wellbeing. Therefore, an in-depth understanding about the relationship between adolescents' potential stressors and their physical, emotional, social, psychological, spiritual, and intellectual wellbeing is crucial. In addition, the consideration of the influence of adolescents' environment through incorporating Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory within the study's conceptual model (refer Section 2.7), would further assist to provide the insights into adolescents' wellbeing.

Dimensions of wellbeing

As outlined above, Adams et al.'s (1997) Perceived Wellness Survey was applied in the current study to explore adolescents' perception of their psychological, emotional, social, physical, spiritual and intellectual wellbeing. Adams et al. (1997), conducted survey among 558 individuals aged between 18-51 from different sites and universities in Austin to develop a scale to measure individual wellness perception. Results revealed all subscales such as physical, psychological, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual wellbeing are correlated with the PWS composite and with each other. They also reported that individuals who scored higher on the Perceived Wellness Survey were physically healthier, had a greater sense of meaning and purpose in life, expected positive things would occur in their lives, were more connected with family and friends, and were more secure, happy with who they are and intellectually vibrant, satisfying the notion of interconnection among different dimensions of wellbeing. Therefore, dimensions, whilst all described separately, have an interdependent relationship and, for Adams et al. (1997), need to be balanced in order to achieve wellbeing.

Physical wellbeing

Physical wellbeing is a state of mind and body that is absent of any disease (Horton & Snyder, 2009). According to Adams et al. (1997), the physical wellbeing dimension includes "a positive perception and expectation of physical health" (p. 72); that is, it is more about how an individual perceives their physical wellness. Physical wellbeing incorporates all aspects of lifestyle choices and a person can maintain their physical wellbeing based on the satisfaction and need of the human body and mind (Jakubiak & Feeney, 2017). Referring to a famous saying "healthy mind in a healthy body", Horton and Snyder (2009), suggested the importance of maintaining physical wellbeing along with mental wellbeing, as the brain works better if one is physically fit. In advocating for the interrelatedness of physical wellbeing with other dimensions of wellbeing, McMahon et al. (2017) conducted cross-sectional survey among 11,110 adolescents from ten European countries. They reported that physical wellbeing significantly influences adolescents' psychological wellbeing. They stated that adolescents

with poor physical wellbeing were more likely to experience poor psychological wellbeing such as depression, anxiety and mental health issues (McMohan et al., 2017). McPhie and Rawana (2015) examined the association between physical wellbeing and psychological wellbeing (depressive symptoms) among 90,000 adolescents from grade 7 to 12 in the US. Results of the study revealed that adolescents who engaged in higher frequencies of physical activity were more resilient than those that did not. Similar results have been reported by Babiss and Gangwisch (2009) and Jewett et al. (2014) where participation in physical activities were found to be associated with lower levels of depression and suicidal ideation and higher levels of social support, highlighting the need to explore all domains of wellbeing when considering physical wellbeing.

Psychological wellbeing

Psychological wellbeing is arguably the most pervasive construct in the stress literature and consistently referred to as one of the primary outcome measures of wellbeing (Glozah, 2013; Siddique & D'Arcy, 1984). For instance, Glozah (2013) identified the association between academic stress and psychological wellbeing among 226 adolescents aged 13-22 years from senior high schools in Ghana. The results indicated "perceived social support from family and friends buffered the effects of academic stress on psychological wellbeing" (Glozah, 2013, p. 143). Girls reported higher scores on perceived social support whereas males scored higher on psychological wellbeing, which Glozah (2013) suggested that it is "attributed partly to the socialisation role of gender" (p. 143).

Psychological wellbeing has been identified as wellbeing construct in its own and also a dimension of broader wellbeing constructs and models (Pollard & Lee, 2003). Ryff (1989) proposed the psychological wellbeing construct to include six related, yet distinct components based on the assumption that individuals strive to function fully and realise their unique talents. The six dimensions of psychological wellbeing encompass self-acceptance, environmental mastery, purpose in life, positive relations with others, personal growth and autonomy (Chen et al., 2003). In the current study psychological wellbeing was an important dimension to be included given it measures the "perception that one will experience positive outcomes to the events and circumstances of life", which provides insight into how optimistic adolescents are toward their life (Adams et al., 2000, p. 166). However, applying just the psychological wellbeing domain potentially compartmentalises a single aspect of adolescent development. Thus, psychological assessments of wellbeing, while important within adolescent role and existential stress studies, only provides a part of the picture of adolescent wellbeing, and there is a need to consider other dimensions of wellbeing.

Emotional wellbeing

In the current study, emotional wellbeing reflects "possession of secure self-identity and a positive sense of self-regard, both of which are facets of self-esteem" (Adams et al., 1997, p. 211). Due to an increase in stress levels in adolescents, fostering emotional wellbeing has become an increasingly popular approach (Galla, 2016). Additionally, researchers such as Bluth and Eisenlohr-Moul (2017) note that emotional wellbeing is a factor that is individualised but also intersects with domains of psychological, social, and physical wellbeing. Studies only assessing one aspect of wellbeing at a time limit the understanding of interrelatedness of multiple domains in contributing to an adolescents' wellbeing (Adams et al., 1997; Sarriera & Bedin, 2017). Therefore, in the current study, to gain deeper understanding of the influence of adolescents' potential stressors on their wellbeing, and also adolescents' perceptions on all the domains of wellbeing: physical, psychological, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual, were taken into consideration.

Social wellbeing

Studies typically refer to three major changes in an adolescents' life due to the transition from childhood to adulthood: that is, physical, psychological and social changes (Blakemore & Mills, 2014; Casey et al., 2010). Therefore, understanding psychological and physical domains of wellbeing without considering the social wellbeing of adolescents would provide an incomplete picture (Chervonsky & Hunt, 2018), particularly given the importance of an adolescents' social world. Adams et al. (1997) described social wellbeing as the "perception of an individual that support is available from social relationships in times of need and the perception of being a valued support provider" (p. 47). As Horton and Synder et al. (2009) contended, individuals can be "socially inept, or anywhere in between; an individual may have one or many friends who are close or superficial, and this social prowess impacts social wellness" (p. 221). Adolescence has been identified as a vital period for the development of social relations, with a shift in significant others from parents to peers (Rice & Mulkeen, 1995; Scharf et al., 2004). While this does not mean that family closeness has assumed less importance for the adolescent (Sasikala & Cecil, 2016), it is recognised that peers become more important in terms of trust, advice, and companionship (Wang et al., 2008). Times of transition are particularly challenging for the adolescent, for example, when needing to develop new social networks which, for some, may result in role stress and/or existential stress.

Like other dimensions of wellbeing, social wellbeing is also related with other aspects of individuals lives. For instance, Cheng et al. (2014) examined the association between social support and mental health among 2393 adolescents aged 15-19 years from five countries: US, India, Nigeria, South Africa, and China. They found that adolescents who perceived social support in families and

neighbourhood reported lower mental health issues such as depression and posttraumatic symptoms. To achieve maximum social wellbeing for adolescents, Horton and Synder (2009) does not suggest any recommended social time, rather emphasised the balancing of multiple domains of wellbeing. Therefore, in the context of this study, including the social wellbeing dimension of adolescents in addition to other domains of wellbeing was significant in exploring adolescent role and/or existential stress as well as the intellectual dimension.

Intellectual wellbeing

According to Horton and Snyder (2009) "reading books on unfamiliar topics, increasing one's personal vocabulary, or participating in educational pursuits via the local library, a lecture series, or a college course could all be viable ways to enhance intellectual wellness and promote lifelong learning that is useful both on a personal and professional level" (p. 220). On the other hand, Jutras and Lepage (2006) described intellectual wellbeing in the context of adolescence as "a measure of critical thinking, school-related performance, and activities that support the development of intellectual capacity" (p. 305). Similarly, Geary (2008) stated that adolescents' intellectual wellbeing reflects their active participation in scholastic, cultural and community activities. He further stated that although it is important to gain and maintain intellectual wellbeing to live a stimulating and successful life, this aspect of wellbeing is the least studied among adolescents (Geary, 2008). However, schools' significant influence over the intellectual wellbeing of their students is universally accepted. Further studies have highlighted the interrelatedness of intellectual wellbeing in adolescents with other dimensions of wellbeing (Jutras & Lepage, 2006; Preskitt et al., 2015). For example, Preskitt et al. (2015) identified that adolescents aged 12-17 years in the US who scored high on intellectual wellbeing also reported high psychological, social, physical and emotional wellness. They further revealed that older adolescents aged 15-17 years and males recorded lower scores on all dimensions of wellbeing. Therefore, the current study adds to the existing body of knowledge by exploring adolescent intellectual wellbeing and potential influence of role and/or existential stress.

Spiritual wellbeing

Some studies have also highlighted the importance of considering individuals' spiritual wellbeing (Horton & Synder, 2009; Myers & Williard, 2003; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). For instance, Witmer and Sweeney (1992) spoke of wellness with an emphasis on "wholeness in body, mind and spirit" (p. 1), highlighting the importance of understanding the spiritual wellbeing of an individual. Horton and Snyder (2009) suggest that "In order to more easily facilitate an understanding of and initiate steps toward wellness at an earlier point in one's life, it is important to understand the wellness dimensions beyond the ubiquitous physical dimension" (p. 219). Similarly, researchers identified that spirituality

is not so much a single aspect of wellbeing, therefore balance among different dimensions of wellbeing is necessary. (Chandler et al., 1992; Myers & Williard, 2003). The "association between spiritual wellbeing and religion has caused difficulties in defining spiritual wellbeing" (Burrows, 2006, p. 3). However, authors identified spirituality and religion as two separate concepts, for instance, Walker and Dixon (2002) view that "a person can have a deep sense of spirituality without any formal religious participation" (p. 108). Similarly, Zullig et al. (2006) stated that "religion has been defined as an organized belief system with set rituals and practices, which are acquired in places of worship, whereas spirituality has been conceptualized as a way of being (learned anywhere), which predetermines how individuals respond to life experiences" (p. 255). Adams et al. (1997) defined spiritual wellbeing as a "a belief in a unifying force between the mind and body or a positive perception of meaning and purpose in life" (p. 210). According to Adams et al. (2000), spirituality and religion are interrelated but are not synonymous, therefore, developing "spirituality can add meaning to the practice of religion, whereas practice of religion can deepen spirituality" (p. 166). Similarly, according to Spurr et al. (2012), spiritual wellbeing is separate from religious wellbeing and includes a sense of "right and wrong together with their personal values and beliefs" (p. 321).

Although research has commonly explored singular dimensions of wellbeing, there is a gap in considering adolescents' perspectives on wellbeing across their emotional, intellectual, physical, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions in relation to potential role and/or existential stress and emotional intelligence. Therefore, the current study explored an adolescents' own perspective of their physical, psychological, social, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual wellbeing by applying the validated Perceived Wellness Survey (Adams et al., 1997) as a useful construct to ascertain adolescent wellbeing in relation to role stress and existential stress. The importance of this study was directly informed by research reporting on increasing concerns in relation to adolescent wellbeing.

2.6.3 Adolescents' wellbeing

The following section specifically examines literature outlining the status of adolescent wellbeing and the significance of this study in addressing escalating wellbeing concerns. This is followed by critically analysing the limited wellbeing studies that specifically explore adolescent studies and the core constructs of this study; role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing. This is followed by proposing an ecological framework to contribute to the gap in research in a holistic approach to understanding adolescent role and/or existential stress.

In recent decades, the concept of wellbeing has been used by many organisations worldwide to address reports of poor physical and mental health, higher prevalence of suicidal ideation, anti-social

behaviour**,** and poor school attendance among adolescents (Sawyer et al., 2010), but still there is no consistent definition of wellbeing which can be used to study adolescents' development (Pollard & Lee, 2003). According to Pollard and Lee (2003), wellbeing has been defined in the studies related to multiple fields and cultures, and this variability and inconsistency in definitions complicated the process of comparing the findings.

Pollard and Lee (2003) in their systematic literature review on wellbeing argued that may studies suggested that most of the wellbeing and cognitive issues in an individual starts during adolescence, therefore, it is necessary to explore individual's wellbeing issues at an early age of adolescence. As significant levels of students' interaction with the social environment happens at schools, schools play a dominant role in mental and physical wellbeing of adolescents. In line, with the WHO (2014), the education sector was noted as playing a key role in adolescent wellbeing development.

Therefore, to gain deep understanding of the relationship between role stress and/or existential stress and adolescent wellbeing, critically examining the limited studies that have recently explored these potentially interrelated constructs is necessary.

2.6.3.1 Current status of adolescents' wellbeing

Aldridge and McChesney (2018) reviewed literature and highlighted that "despite the importance of mental health and wellbeing, all is not 'well' for adolescents" (p. 121). Both national and international data indicates significant levels of wellbeing issues in adolescents (Mission Australia, 2018; UNICEF, 2020; WHO, 2019). For instance, up to 20% of adolescents worldwide reported that mental health issues affect their everyday workings of life (World Health Organization, 2015). An increasing trend in suicide rates for children and youth aged 10-19 has been recorded, as well as a decline in religious participation, resulting in declines in the emotional/spiritual domain of wellbeing (Child and Youth Wellbeing Index, 2014). Tough et al. (2017) state that the physical and mental health of the young is important for a nation as they are the future. Yet, Australian research has highlighted that 44% of males and females experiencing mental health issues are below 15 years of age, with 36% of these needing additional support for a psychiatrist disorder (AIHW, 2020).

Adolescent's wellbeing has gone through changes over the time. Rees et al. (2010) noted lower subjective wellbeing in older adolescents which reportedly decreased with their growing age. Similarly, Gutman et al.'s (2010) study showed changes in wellbeing from mid-childhood (7.5 to 10.5 years) to the early adolescence (10.5 to 13.8 years). Nearly 50% of these participants reported stability in behavioral, emotional, school, and social wellbeing over time, with around half of the

remainder identifying an increase in wellbeing and half experiencing a decline (Gutman et al., 2010, p. 6). The pattern of school wellbeing is opposite, where fewer students experience stability and more experience decline. Further in this study, females are more likely to experience slightly lower levels of emotional wellbeing. Conversely, males have lower behavioural, school and social wellbeing (Gutman et al., 2010). Child-parent relationships appeared as one of the important predictive factors for sustaining and improving wellbeing; that is, "children who report positive relationships with their parents are significantly more likely to experience improvements in behavioural and social wellbeing and less likely to experience decline in subjective school wellbeing" (Gutman et al., 2010, p. 7).

These studies have informed the current study design in focusing on the perceptions of adolescents with the importance of considering adolescent wellbeing as a multidimensional construct, that-"(i) incorporates the views and perspectives of children and young people themselves, (ii) incorporates measures which take account of the context of children and young people's lives, (iii) pays attention to culture, gender, age and other personal characteristics and how these factors may influence feelings of wellbeing" (Statham & Chase, 2010, p. 15).

2.6.4 Wellbeing, role stress and existential stress

Within the educational context and emergence of positive psychology, wellbeing is a central aim and responsibility of education (Kristjansson, 2012). According to Wong (2011) "studying the positive can give us new knowledge about human flourishing, knowledge that would not be available to us if we simply studied the negative, no matter how comprehensively we did so" (p. 77). Therefore, in the current study understanding adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress incorporates exploring the relationship of potential stressors with adolescents' wellbeing. The following sub-sections critically discuss the findings of the limited studies that have been conducted across these constructs, thereby identifying the significant contribution of this study in explicitly examining adolescent role and existential stress within an ecological and holistic conceptualisation of wellbeing.

2.6.4.1 Link between wellbeing and role stress in adolescents

As identified in section 2.4.2.3, the concept of role stress has been predominantly studied with adults, therefore studies investigating the impact of role stress on wellbeing are commonly reporting on adult populations (Jones et al., 2010; Pecino et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2019). Thus, little is known about this relationship for adolescents as studies related to adolescents mainly concentrated on the relationship between social support or connectedness and adolescents' wellbeing (Bireda & Pillay, 2017; Jose et al., 2012; Sasikala & Cecil, 2016; Tian et al., 2016).

Social relationships and their influence on an individual's wellbeing have been well documented in the literature. For instance, Tian et al. (2016) conducted a cross-sectional study with 1476 adolescents aged 11-18 years from public schools located in southern China to examine the relationship between social support and subjective wellbeing. Social support from teachers and classmates was measured by the Chinese version of the Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale (CASSS) (Yang et al., 2010). Subjective wellbeing was measured using the adolescents' School-Related Subjective Well-Being Scale (ASRSWBS) (Tian, 2008). Both teacher and classmate support significantly related to school-related subjective wellbeing with significant gender differences reported. Females scored higher on the Social Support Scale as it was argued that females focussed more on interpersonal relationships and emotional connections (Tian et al., 2016). Significant age differences were also found in early (11-14 years of age) and middle years adolescents (15-18 years of age) in terms of subjective wellbeing (Tian et al., 2016). Tian et al. (2016) found that, an association of subjective wellbeing with teacher support was more strong in middle adolescents, as compared to early adolescents which reportedly could be due to increase in adolescents' sense of independence with growing age. No significant differences were found between early and middle adolescents in terms of social support.

Sasikala and Cecil's (2016) quantitative correlational analysis examined social support from parents and peers, and psychological wellbeing with 97 adolescents, mean age of 16.9, from state government schools in Chennai city, India. The Parental Bonding Instrument (Parker et al., 1979) was administered to assess parental care and parental protection as perceived by adolescents. Items in the Inventory of Parental and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg 1987) were used to assess peer attachment, and psychological wellbeing was measured using the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1972). Findings reported positive relationships between parental care and psychological wellbeing, and negative relationships between parental protection and psychological wellbeing. This was argued to be potentially due to parental care being recognised as key in helping adolescents to share and discuss their problems, whereas parental protection was perceived by some adolescents as being controlling and impacting on their independence and privacy (Sasikala & Cecil, 2016). Positive associations were found between peer attachment and psychological wellbeing, due to adolescents identifying themselves with their peers and feeling that they could discuss or share their problems with them (Sasikala & Cecil, 2016).

Similarly, Bireda and Pillay (2017) conducted a cross-sectional quantitative study among 809 adolescents from year levels 9-12 with a mean age of 16.9 from four different high schools in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to examine the relationship between social support from parents such as parental

involvement and wellbeing. Parents' involvement in their children's education was measured using a 10-item measure of perceived parental expectations of, and engagement with school support. Wellbeing was measured with four different scales: depression (children's depressive symptoms were measured using The Centre for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, Radloff, 1977), self-esteem (measured using the ten items of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale [RSES], Rosenberg, 1979); school adjustment (measured using children's grade point average [GPA], school conduct, and attitude towards school and school work); and substance use (self-developed scale consisted of nine items that measured adolescents' use and frequency of use of substances; Bireda & Pillay, 2017). Overall, findings revealed that perceived maternal involvement significantly higher in females than males, while adolescents in years 9 and 10 reported significantly lower levels of wellbeing with high scores on depression, and poor self-esteem, substance use, and poor school adjustment. That is, perceived maternal and paternal involvement significantly predicted wellbeing as measured by self-reported score of depression, substance use, and self-esteem. They further found that positive and open parent-child communication protected adolescents from depression, school adjustment problems, substance use, and low self-esteem. Most notably, females reported more positive and frequent interactions and communication with parents than males (Bireda & Pillay, 2017).

Further studies exploring adolescent wellbeing and role stress included Jose et al.'s (2012) quantitative longitudinal study that investigated whether social connectedness predicted psychological wellbeing over time. The sample included 1774 young people aged 10-15 years, in 78 schools in the North Island of New Zealand. Results revealed that social connectedness predicted wellbeing; that is, adolescents who reported higher levels of social connectedness subsequently reported higher wellbeing in terms of life satisfaction, confidence, positive affect and aspirations. Family connectedness had a particularly strong role to play in the wellbeing of these adolescents. Younger participants aged 10-11 years reported higher social connectedness and wellbeing than participants aged 12-13 years, and also older participants aged 14-15 years, indicating that connectedness and wellbeing declined with age. Further analysis revealed that females in this study reported a more significant decline in both variables than males. Although the above studies have highlighted the role of support (Bireda & Pillay, 2017; Sasikala & Cecil, 2016; Tian et al., 2016), and connectedness (Jose et al., 2012) in adolescents' wellbeing, limited studies have specifically focused on the interrelationship between role stress and wellbeing across all the dimensions within adolescents.

2.6.4.2 Link between wellbeing and existential stress in adolescents

As identified above in section 2.4.3.3, studies with adult participants have found that existential stress, a lack of meaning or purpose in life, negatively impacts on their wellbeing which was similarly reported in the few adolescent studies (Brassai et al., 2011; Bronk et al., 2009; Schulenberg et al., 2016). For instance, Schulenberg et al. (2016) conducted a cross-sectional quantitative study with 91 adolescents aged 11-18 years in Mississippi. This study aimed to examine the relationship between meaning in life and wellbeing and to examine psychometric properties of the Purpose in Life test-Short Form Scale (PIL-SF) and its ability to predict psychological outcomes. Data regarding purpose in life was collected with the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011). Wellbeing was measured in terms of self-efficacy, life satisfaction and resilience with General Self Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem,1995); Satisfaction with life Scale (Diener et al., 1985); and the Resilience Scale (Wagnild, 2009). Purpose in life was found to be positively associated with wellbeing (life satisfaction, self-efficacy, and resilience) with significant gender differences found in terms of purpose in life with females (M = 22.48, SD = 4.95) who reported significantly more purpose/meaning in life than males (M = 19.59, SD = 5.67).

Brassai et al.'s (2011) cross-sectional quantitative study with 2152 adolescents aged 15-19 years from secondary schools in the Middle Transylvanian Region, Romania, examined the role of meaning in life as a protective factor in enhancing adolescent wellbeing. Purpose in life was measured by the Purpose and Connections subscale of the Brief Stress and Coping Inventory (Rahe & Tolles, 2002), while adolescent wellbeing was measured using the frequency of positive and negative emotions over the past 12 months. Meaningfulness was found to be a protective factor that sustained and enhanced health, whereas meaninglessness was related to poor psychological wellbeing and poor quality of life. Lower levels of meaning in life in adolescents was associated with high levels of "drug use, sedative use, unsafe sex, lack of exercise, and lack of diet control" (Brassai et al., 2011, p. 47). Furthermore, males reported higher levels of poor psychological wellbeing and poorer quality of life than females.

Informed by Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory, Bronk et al. (2009) conducted a cross-sectional study with 153 adolescents aged 13-18 years in the US, to examine the relationship between purpose in life and psychological wellbeing. The Revised Youth Purpose Survey (Bundick et al., 2006), Trait Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), and Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985) were used to measure purpose, hope, and life satisfaction, respectively. The findings identified that purpose in life was strongly associated with high levels of wellbeing, that is, life satisfaction and hope during adolescence.

Similarly, Ho et al. (2010) examined the relationship between meaning in life and psychological wellbeing (life satisfaction) among 1807 adolescents aged 12-18 years in Hong Kong. Meaning in life was measured using the Personality Assessment Inventory (Cheung et al., 2008) and psychological wellbeing was measured through the Chinese Adolescents' Life Satisfaction Scale (CALSS; Cheung & Cheung, 2005). The findings highlighted the significant relationship between of meaning in life and psychological wellbeing. Ho et al. (2010) also reported that these adolescents tried to seek personal meaning from social relations, and they set goals that related to their families' and friends' values or expectations, thus achieving these goals brought satisfaction with family and friends.

Although the limited studies have identified a positive relationship between adolescent purpose in life and psychological wellbeing, little attention has been given to the relationship between existential stress and its relationship with other dimensions of wellbeing. Any stressor that adolescents encounter can have a detrimental effect on their wellbeing (Ciarrochi et al., 2001; Kaplan et al., 2005; Siddique & Arcy, 1984). Therefore, further research into adolescent existential and role stress is required and broadened to include emotional intelligence and multidimensional wellbeing.

2.6.5 Wellbeing and emotional intelligence in adolescents

An emerging body of research shows that emotional intelligence plays a key role in adolescent wellbeing (Adeyemo & Adeleye, 2008; Balluerka et al., 2016; Prado Gasco et al., 2018; Lopez-Zafra, 2019; Serrano & Andreu, 2016). Mayer and Salovey (1997) suggested that that those who have higher emotional intelligence reported greater capacity to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions in the self and others, which further promotes their wellbeing.

For instance, Balluerka et al. (2016) investigated whether gender, age, peer attachment, class-level and emotional intelligence (measured by The Basque Group Trait Meta-Mood Scale; Aritzeta et al., 2016) predicted adolescents' psychological wellbeing (measured by Positive dimension of Children Depression Scale [CDS]; Lang & Tisher, 1978). The study involved 2182 secondary school students aged between 12-18 years from Basque in Northern Spain. Results revealed an overall decrease in wellbeing with age. In addition, good peer attachment was found positively associated with higher levels of psychological wellbeing, and this association was strengthened with the presence of emotional intelligence (Balluerka et al., 2016). Balluerka et al. (2016) reported higher levels of psychological wellbeing in females and younger adolescents, reflecting age and gender differences. Similar gender differences were reported by Serrano and Andreu's (2016) study with 626 adolescents aged 13-18 years from the Castellon and Valencia provinces of Spain. To explore the link between

perceived emotional intelligence (measured by Trait Meda Mood Scale (TMMS-24), Fernandez-Berrocal et al., 2006), and perceived stress (by Perceived Stress Scale, Remor & Carroble, 2001), subjective wellbeing and academic engagement (measured by Utrecht Work Engagement Scale for Students, Agnst et al., 2009). Serrano and Andreu (2016) found gender differences in the variables under study. Females obtained higher scores in emotional attention, perceived stress, dedication, and achievement, while males scored higher in emotional repair and subjective wellbeing. Supporting previous studies, a positive correlation between perceived emotional intelligence and subjective wellbeing and academic engagement was found, whereas a negative correlation was found between perceived emotional intelligence and perceived stress.

In a similar study in the Valencian Community of Spain, Prado Gascó et al. (2018) examined the relationship between trait EI (measured by Trait Meta-Mood Scale, Salovey et al., 1995) and subjective wellbeing (measured by Scale of Positive and Negative Experiences (SPANE) by Diener et al., 2010; the Somatic Complaint List (SCL) by Rieffe et al., 2007; and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) by Diener et al., 1985). The study involved 1273 high school students aged 12-16 years, with findings that trait EI components: attention, clarity and repair were significantly associated with wellbeing. Results also suggested the "direct influence of emotional intelligence on the improvement of adolescent wellbeing" (Prado Gascó et al., 2018, p. 1).

Regarding psychological wellbeing, studies to date have reflected a strong relationship between emotional intelligence, adolescent depression, and strategies to cope with depressive states of wellbeing. Mavroveli et al. (2007) identified a relationship between emotional intelligence (measured by Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Adolescent Short Form developed by Petrides et al., 2006) and psychological wellbeing comprised of coping style (Dutch Measure of Coping Style in Adolescence, Bijstra et al., 1994), somatic complaints (Somatic Complaint List (SCL), Rieffe et al., 2007), and depression (Children Depression Inventory, Kovacs, 1985) in 282 adolescents, 11-15 years of age, from four Dutch state high schools. The results revealed that emotional intelligence was negatively correlated with depression, somatic complaints and maladaptive coping styles, and positively correlated with adaptive coping styles.

Adeyemo and Adeleye (2008) used stratified sampling to select 292 adolescents aged 13-20 years from 10 secondary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria, to investigate the role of emotional intelligence (Wong & Law Emotional Intelligence Scale, Wong & Law, 2002), religiosity, and self-efficacy (measured by General Efficacy Scale, Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) in predicting psychological wellbeing (Wellbeing Manifestation Measurement Scale, Masse et al., 1998). Emotional intelligence was found to be significantly related to psychological wellbeing. Adolescents who scored high in

emotional intelligence also scored high in psychological wellbeing, that is, "adolescents with high scores in emotional intelligence have a good knowledge of their emotions and this is characterised by self-awareness which is critical to self-acceptance which has been operationalised as a domain of psychological well-being" (Adeyemo & Adeleye, 2008, p. 13)

In another study in Morocco, North Africa, Lopez-Zafra et al. (2019) reported that emotional intelligence played an important role in handling depression and promoting wellbeing. Lopez-Zafra (2019) examined the protective role of psychosocial variables such as social support and emotional intelligence and their interaction on adolescents' wellbeing among 1277 adolescents from secondary/high school in Morocco with the mean age of 16.15 years. Emotional intelligence was measured using the 16-item Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (Wong & Law, 2002) and depression was measured using Beck Depression Inventory-II (Beck et al., 1996) and Social support was measured by Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support-Arab American (MSPSS-AA; Zimet et al., 1988). Results of the study identified a direct relationship between social support and adolescent wellbeing; a negative correlation between social support and depression; positive correlation between emotional intelligence and social support; and a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and wellbeing of adolescents (Lopez-Zafra et al., 2019).

Such studies have indicated that emotional intelligence is a potential target for various interventions aimed at reducing stress and enhancing wellbeing during adolescence. Therefore, the current study aimed to further examine the potential interconnectedness between adolescent emotional intelligence, wellbeing, role and existential stress, to add to initial studies and knowledge.

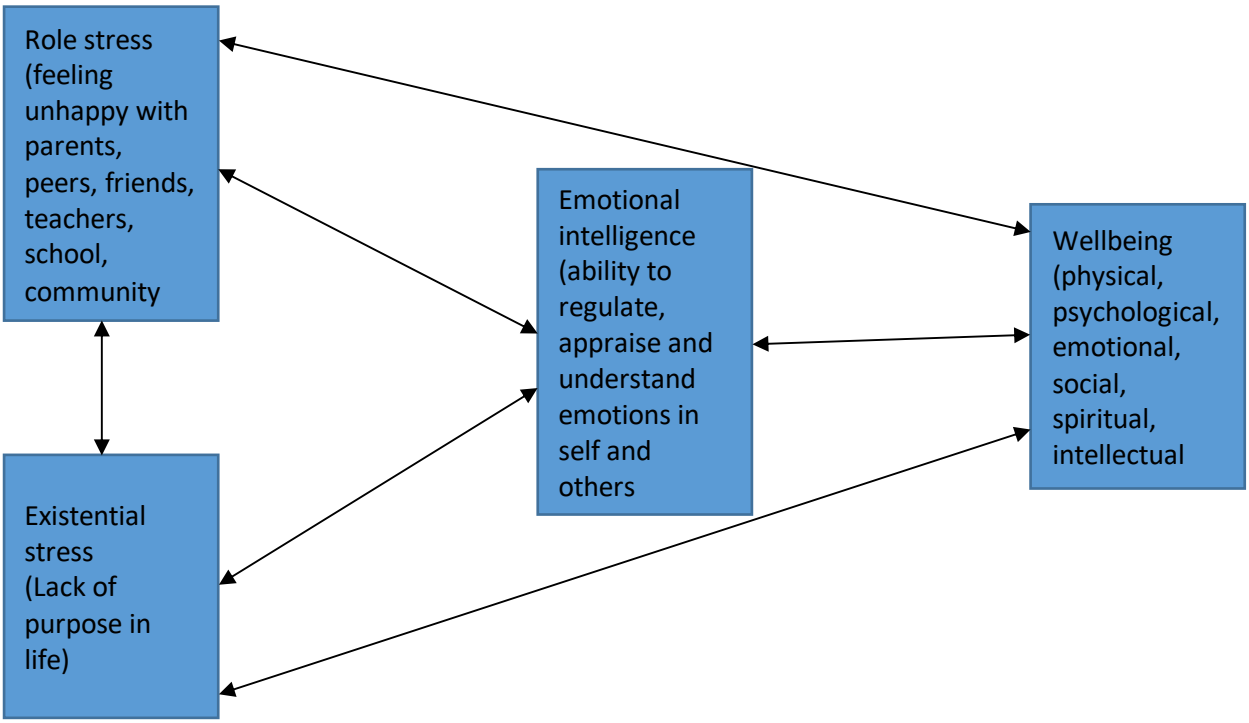
Summary

The limited studies reported within the scope of this chapter identified that adolescents continue to experience role and/or existential stress, with initial evidence that low role and/or existential stress is positively correlated with high emotional intelligence and/or wellbeing and conversely high role and/or existential stress being negatively correlated with low emotional intelligence and/or wellbeing. Thus, the scoping of the literature informed the research design and hypotheses as outlined in section 2.8.

In addition to this studies' contribution to the knowledge within the field of adolescent role and/or existential stress, the current study proposed an 'Adolescent wellbeing' model (refer Figure 2.1) to examine role stress, existential stress and relationship with emotional intelligence and wellbeing in

Australian adolescents, aged 13-19 years. In particular, this study explored potential relationships across the four constructs as depicted in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2. 1 Adolescent Wellbeing Model



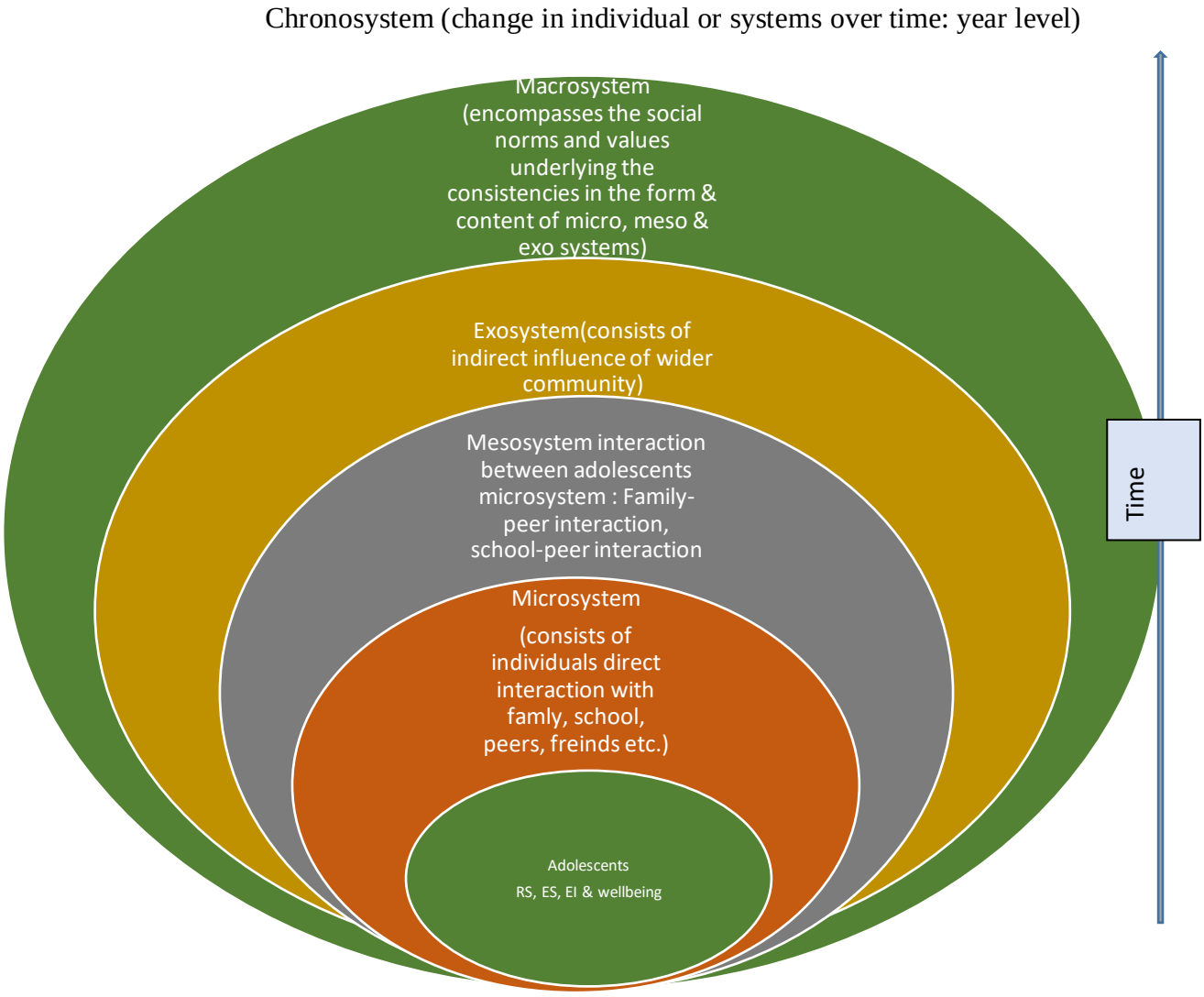
Given the predominant application of quantitative scales in the limited studies seeking adolescent perceptions of role stress and existential stress as presented in Chapter Two, the methodological contribution of this study thereby applies an explanatory sequential mixed-method research design mixed methods to extend quantitative studies in the field, as well as applying qualitative multiple case study methodology to gain in-depth understanding by hearing adolescent voices through capturing their lived experiences of role and/or existential stress (refer Section 3.8.2).

Drawing upon the conceptual approaches presented in this literature review, in the context of this study, Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory provides a rationale for exploring the psychosocial development during the period of adolescence to examine how adolescents navigate life experiences and potential stressors and identify how this aligns with their emotional intelligence and wellbeing. However, as adolescents do not develop in a vacuum, there was a gap in the studies in exploring the ecological influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) that potentially underpin role and/or existential stress, and how this may influence an adolescents' emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Therefore, to better understand adolescents' experiences, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory underpinned this study to critically analyse the adolescent role and/or existential stress across the nested ecological systems (refer Figure 2.2).

2.7 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Explaining the ecological interactions that influence an adolescents' development, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory draws on nested systems which place the individual at the centre. To provide insights into adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress one must consider their wider social interactions and the influence these may have. As noted, adolescents' experiences of role stress and/or existential stress are relational (Pelaez, et al., 2008; Shaffer, 2009) meaning that experiences do not exist within an individual or within the environment independently, rather they involve individual-environment interactions. Relying on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory where development is described as a function of an individual and their environment, the current study explored the interplay between role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing. It is therefore important to understand this phenomenon from a socio-psychological perspective, involving investigations of an adolescents' experiences of self, their life experiences, family, peers, friends, teachers, school and the wider community. Figure 2.2 illustrates the ecological environment in which an individual interacts:

Figure 2.2 Adapted from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Model



2.7.1 Individual

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), human development takes place in the way a person perceives and manages their environment (p. 3). Individuals differ in age, year level, gender and life goals therefore some either positively or negatively perceive their relationships and life which may result in role stress and/ or existential stress (Holmes, 2013). An adolescents' ecology comprises of their family, peers, teachers, school and the wider community, with values, regulations and support from each acting as important agents that contribute to their development (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). An adolescent's purpose in life is often associated with positive developmental outcomes (Seginer, 2003; Valois et al., 2009) where support from ecologies is considered vital in maintaining a purpose in life (Mariano et al., 2011). Therefore, role and/or existential stress in adolescents may either positively or negatively relate to their emotions, behaviour, and interactions, and subsequently, their emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

When considering gender, explorations of stressors that are related to academic performance, and interactions with teachers and others have found that females were more sensitive and more likely to display negative emotions than males (Byrne et al., 2007; Charbonneau et al., 2009; Thapar et al., 2012; Undheim & Sund, 2005). Gender differences in wellbeing have also been reported with most studies highlighting poorer wellbeing in females than males (Bergman & Scott, 2001; Block & Robins, 1993; Bolognini et al., 1996; Jordan, 1991). Similarly, other studies have found that both young adult males and females, who have positive life experiences, enjoy a positive parenting style, academic success, healthy school life and empathetic teachers, develop a purpose in life and experience less anxiety or psychiatric/depressive symptoms than others (Ishida & Okada, 2006; Kitmura et al., 2004).

2.7.2 Microsystem experiences

The microsystem encompasses the interactions or interrelationships between an individual and their immediate environment (family, friends, school, peers,and teachers) which directly influences an individual's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Such direct interactions between individuals and their immediate social relations can either positively or negatively impact on these relationships and life generally, which in turn may result in a person experiencing role stress and/or existential stress. Several studies have reported on the quality of the relationship between a parent and child, finding that a negative relationship may correlate with problem behaviours, depression, academic

achievement and grade point average (GPA) (Anderson & Henry, 1994; Greenberger et al., 2000; Marchant et al., 2001; Sandstrom & Coie, 1999).

Families have been reported to play an important role in positively or negatively influencing stress in adolescents (Mason et al., 2017). Specifically, studies that have investigated role stress among adolescents have reported that while perceived relationship difficulties with parents elevated stress (Seiffge-Krenke, 2013; Shin et al., 2016), adolescents who reported high stress in relationships also adopted significantly fewer coping strategies such as negotiating and seeking social support when experiencing parent-related stress than their counterparts (Mason et al., 2017; Seiffge-Krenke, 2013). Shin et al. (2016) examined the relationship between parental bonding and peer victimisation among 800 adolescents from year levels 7, 8 and 9 in South Korea reported that adolescents who lacked parental bonding had higher levels of parent-related stress and hopelessness which then placed them at a greater risk of peer victimisation (Shin et al., 2016). Further to this, studies that have examined the association between family experiences of adolescents and their adult life revealed that having negative experiences with their family resulted in lower perceived support from family and friends in young adulthood (Cook & Furstenberg, 2002; Gayman et al., 2011). Most notably, some studies reported that female adolescents reported significantly greater stress than males due to a lack of social support from their family (Bird & Harris, 1990; Seiffge-Krenke, 2013).

In identifying supportive mechanisms to reduce or minimise role stress, it was found that sharing information and other communications about one's experiences, such as activities with friends and other important elements of their life, with their parents was a good indicator of a positive parent-child relationship (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). While it has been widely cited that an adolescents' positive development is related to their relationship with their parents/caregivers it was also reported that, with increasing proximity with peers and friends, commonly there was a decrease in the adolescents' perception of the importance of their relationship with parents (Mounts & Steinberg, 1995; Muscara et al., 2018), something that is reported to naturally occur within adolescence.

Expanding on this, within the microsystem, studies have reported that peers and friends typically have a greater influence on adolescents than their parents or caregivers (Allen et al., 2003). For instance, Betancourt (2004) found a significant association between reducing internal mental health issues (measured by Youth Self Report, Achenbach, 1991) and increased peer connectedness (Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Zimet et al., 1988) in 184 adolescents aged between 11-18 years in Russia. In contrast, Shamai and Kimhi (2007) found no connection between stress symptoms and support from friends, among 353 adolescents aged 15-17 years in Israel. Although studies have found that peers play a more significant role in an adolescents' life than

parents, it is important to recognise that schools and teachers have also been found to play a significant role (Coburn & Nelson, 1989; Geary, 2008). For instance, Aldridge et al. (2016) using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, explored six aspects of school climate, including peers and school connectedness, teacher support, rule clarity, affirming diversity and help seeking, among 4067 adolescents aged between 12-17 years in Australia. Results revealed that adolescents who perceived a greater sense of school connectedness, ethnic identity and resilience were more likely to be satisfied with their life generally (Aldridge et al., 2016, p. 16). That is, all six aspects of school climate were directly and positively related to role stress, existential stress and wellbeing.

Microsystem experiences have been reported to play an important role in helping adolescents regulate and control their emotions, however, studies have identified that some adolescents are exposed to potentially stressful situations related to family relations, peer relations and academic success, sometimes resulting in negative or anti-social behaviours (Barrett & Turner, 2006; Rulison et al., 2019). Supporting this, Debnam et al.'s (2016) study with 5217 African American adolescents from year level 6-8 reported that various sources of stress, including peer relations, family relations and community, significantly associated with increased alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use among adolescents. Spiritual beliefs were also not found to moderate the relationship between stress and substance use.

Using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, Awang-Hashim, et al. (2015) examined links between life satisfaction, affect, purpose in life, and school engagement among 2,381 adolescents 12-15 years of age from 40 secondary schools in Malaysia. The findings revealed that all variables were positively related to school engagement, suggesting that poor social support such as lacking a sense of belonging or social exclusion may lead to poor wellbeing, reduced self-esteem, control and meaningful existence. Such negative outcomes potentially resulting in role and/or existential stress and the converse association of social support in positive association with sense of belonging, inclusion, positive wellbeing, self-esteem and meaningful existence; a finding that supports other studies (Gilman et al., 2013; McGraw et al., 2008). While it is recognised that microsystem experiences play an important role in an adolescents' development and an area for further study specifically in relation to role and existential stress, the interactions between these microsystems are also significant.

2.7.3 Mesosystem: The interactions between microsystems

The mesosystem consists of interactions or interrelationships between an individual's microsystems such as the interaction between parents and school or peers and friends (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Some studies have examined the intersections between adolescents' microsystems and the impact this has on academic achievement and wellbeing (Croson & Gneezy, 2009; Epstein, 2010; Sonnenschein et al., 2014). For example, Hampden-Thompson and Galindo (2017), based on the notions of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (that is, individuals' development is "affected by persons, processes, and institutions at all levels, from their family, to the school they attend, to society" (p. 248), conducted a longitudinal study to examine the role of school-family relationships, parents' school satisfaction and their association with educational attainment among 15,770 adolescents aged 13 and 14 years in the UK. Results revealed a positive association between school-family relationship and parents' satisfaction towards school that provided a boost for educational achievement and success in adolescents (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017). In addition, productive and positive involvement of teachers in an adolescents' life has been reported to support academic achievement, social interactions while ensuring adolescents feel safe (Hong & Eamon, 2012).

Aceves et al. (2010) investigated adolescents' relation to peer victimisation among 148 adolescents from a US high school and found that teachers who were approachable and helped adolescents resolve peer conflicts were considered a positive influence in their lives. While these findings highlight that parents, peers, friends, school, and teachers can influence an adolescents' development, the quality of these relationships determines whether the outcome is positive or negative.

2.7.4 Exosystem: The wider community

Exosystem experiences include social conditions in an individual's life that are beyond the immediate system, including the wider community (Espelage, 2014). These experiences can positively or negatively influence an individual's life, potentially leading to role and/or existential stress. Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000) suggested that relationships, institutional resources and norms are three key ways in which community can influence youth development. They further explained that relationships mainly refer to parent's support, norms or collective efficacy; and institutional resources including schools, medical and recreational facilities (Barajas-Gonzalez & Brooks-Gunn, 2014).

In the community, influencing and interpreting social roles, adolescents' experiences of identity and the quality of these experiences take centre stage in developing a sense of community (Evans, 2007;

Whitlock, 2007). These interactions play an important role in the development of personal and social identity, and psychological wellbeing (Christens & Dolan, 2011; Evans, 2007). Using data from over 700 African American adolescents aged 15-19 years, Stewart and Simons (2010) examined the relationship between a community's endorsement of violence, and violent delinquency and found that a poor community environment significantly predicted an increase in aggressive behaviour (p. 581), suggesting potential relationship between community participation and adolescent role stress and/or existential stress.

Similarly, Jennings et al. (2011) evaluated the quantitative relationship of community effects, individual-level effects and physically aggressive behaviour in 5,812 adolescents aged 15-19 from Chicago and found that community problems significantly predicted physical aggression even after adjusting for more immediate risk factors such as alcohol use, lack of parental supervision, and depression. Such problems highlight the importance of further exploring adolescents' situations related to their existence and how they perceive their roles as a part of the community and broader society.

Similar results were found among Italian adolescents when Albanesi et al. (2007) explored the relationship between sense of community, civic engagement and social wellbeing among 566 adolescents aged between 14 and 19 years. The results revealed that involvement in community groups was associated with increased civic engagement and social wellbeing. Increasing social wellbeing was also found to be significant in promoting prosocial behaviours in the community context. Therefore, not only the immediate environment influences an adolescents' development, exploring community involvement might help to gain further insight into the lives and experiences of adolescents' role and/or existential stress.

2.7.5 Macrosystem: Social norms and values

The macrosystem refers "to consistencies in the form and content of lower order systems (micro, meso and exo) that exist or could exist along with social norms and values underlying such consistencies" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). That is, the macrosystem is an integration of social norms and cultural values that indirectly positively or negatively influence an individual's development (p. 40). These norms and values of an individual's culture and society may cause dissatisfaction in their relationships and life, potentially leading to role stress and existential stress (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 40) as well as the converse effect. According to Ferguson et al. (2011):

> The most distal environmental influence is at macrosystem level, where broad ideological and institutional features of the nation or country set the context for the decisions and interactions that occur at lower-level systems… These influences ripple all the way down to the microsystem level, the most proximal level of influence that includes children's direct interactions with peers, parents, teachers and others in their immediate environment. (p. 649)

Ferguson et al. (2011) examined cross-national differences among 322 adolescents aged 13-19 years from the US, Denmark and South Korea regarding their school satisfaction, life satisfaction and autonomy. They found that the adolescents in Denmark reported the highest school satisfaction, life satisfaction and perceived autonomy, followed by adolescents in the US and then South Korea. It was further revealed that adolescents' perceptions of autonomy partially mediated the cross-national differences in school and life satisfaction (Ferguson et al., 2011).

2.7.6 Chronosystem: Impact of time

The chronosystem adds an important component of time to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological System Theory to reflect the way that individuals and their environment change and the impact this has on their development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The chronosystem considers time to be as important as the environment in which the human develops (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and as such the chronosystem represents the effect of time on behaviour and the context in which that behaviour occurs (Barboza et al., 2009). These behaviours may stem from the external environment including a sibling's birth, going to school, parental separation or it can occur within the developing individual's own organism such as entering puberty, secondary school entry or death/becoming ill (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The chronosystem demonstrates changes in all other systems over time and the influence these have on an individual's development, where each system demonstrates different roles, rules, social or cultural values which change over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These changes potentially positively or negatively influence an individual's development which may or may not result in role and/or existential stress (p. 41). According to Seginer (2003) "the chronosystem relates to the cumulative experiences of the child in relation to processes and events occurring in her or his setting, as well as the historical period in which the development under examination takes place" (p. 8). Upon this premise, the current study explores whether younger and older adolescents experience role stress and existential stress differently. For example, when an adolescent is in the early years of secondary school, they may encounter role and/or existential stress but over time this may become less prevalent.

This highlights the significance of time where interventions lead to the enhancement in welfare of individuals and their relationships which is impacted over time (Barboza, et al., 2009).

While research has been conducted to explore role stress and/or existential stress in adults, few studies have explored these stressors in adolescents. Studies among adolescents, particularly with role stress, focused on gender role stress and role strain, which highlighted that adolescents are at potential risk of role stress emanating from different social relationships (Liu & Kaplan, 2004). As identified in this review of literature, there is dearth of knowledge regarding adolescents' role stress in terms of stress or feeling of unhappiness with family, siblings, friends, peers, school, teacher and wider community. Regarding existential stress, although studies related to meaning in life and purpose in life highlighted the issue of existential stress in adolescents, there is lack of knowledge regarding adolescents' experiences of lack of purpose in life especially in relation to role stress, emotional intelligence and their overall wellbeing. Therefore, the current study employed the more holistic approach across the four constructs of role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing within an ecological systems conceptual framework. By considering the bi-directional relationship between an individual and their environment, insights into adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress can be further gained. Therefore, based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, the current study explored the experiences of life and relationships with parents, peers, friends, teacher, school and the wider community of adolescents with high and low role stress and existential stress. Furthermore, in light of the studies presented, it was also hypothesised that both adolescent groups may differ in their psychosocial functioning in relation to their role and/or existential stress and emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

2.8 Conclusion

The literature review has scoped and evaluated studies examining adolescence, role stress, existential stress, wellbeing, and emotional intelligence. It revealed that emotional intelligence and wellbeing are documented in the holistic development of adolescents (Rueger et al., 2010; Schneider et al., 2013), yet little attention has been given to exploring the relationship of role stress and existential stress with emotional intelligence and wellbeing for this age group. Moreover, predominantly role stress was studied as role overload, role ambiguity, lack of relationship quality or a lack of social support (Chang, & Hancock, 2003; Licitra-Kleckler & Waas, 1993; Wenz-Gross et al., 1997), whereas the concept of existential stress was defined as a lack of hope, poor self-concept and self-esteem (Bronk et al., 2010; Ho et al., 2010). Few studies have explored the perceptions of adolescents experiencing role stress; that is, the feeling of dissatisfaction with their relationships (Liu & Kaplan, 2004), and existential stress, the feeling of dissatisfaction with life due to lack of meaning or purpose

in life (Schulenberg et al., 2011; Vanhooren et al., 2017). Moreover, cross-sectional studies that simultaneously assess role stress and existential stress in adolescents in relation to their emotional intelligence and wellbeing are lacking. Therefore, this investigation is significant in addressing the increasing wellbeing concerns reported by adolescents, through contributing to the limited body of knowledge in this field, and providing opportunity for the 'voice' of adolescents about their own lives and their experiences of role stress and/or existential stress to be captured across ecological systems. In doing so, the current study will address this methodological gap by employing a mixed method approach to provide an in-depth understanding of role stress and existential stress in adolescents and the potential relationship these stressors have with emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Informed by the current literature, Chapter 3 provides the detail and rationale for the research paradigm, research design, recruitment of participants, validation, and ethical considerations adopted to address the key research question which emerged from this review of the literature.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

As presented in Chapter Two, literature review, adults experience wider social interactions than adolescents therefore most research into role stress (Liu & Kaplan, 2004; Lou et al., 2007) and existential stress (Fry, 2001; Mascaro & Rosen, 2006) has focussed on them, leaving a gap in the literature on role stress and existential stress in adolescents. A growing body of empirical and theoretical support has started to emerge suggesting that role stress (De Bruyn, 2005; Hazel et al., 2014) and existential stress (Fitzgerald, 2005; Roos et al., 2015; Shumaker, 2012) are experienced during adolescence. There is a need for more research that considers adolescents' experiences of these stressors and their relationship with emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Chapter Two also provided a rationale for adopting elements of Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory to inform the theoretical framework for this study.

The preceding review of literature further evidenced that, despite global priorities to enhance adolescents' wellbeing, stress in some adolescents continues to escalate (Colizzi et al., 2020; Mission Australia, 2018; World Health Organisation, 2020). Thus, this investigation contributes to the body of knowledge in this field by gaining insight into the lived experiences of adolescents and, as such, provides a deeper understanding of their role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

Chapter 3 presents the methodological decisions that underpin the current study, the rationale for adopting a pragmatic research paradigm, an explanation of how the theoretical framework informs and underpins the methodology, and a description of how the adolescent wellbeing model has been applied. Building on Chapter Two, this chapter provides the background and rationale for adopting an explanatory sequential mixed-method research design to address the research questions. Further, this chapter discusses the pilot study and presents an overview of the main study, including the quantitative and qualitative methods and data analysis employed, before concluding with a critical discussion of the ethical considerations of the study.

3.2 Research Questions

The current study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach comprising of a cross-sectional quantitative survey followed by qualitative multiple, instrumental case studies. This

approach aimed to "tell the full story" (Hall, 1981, p.127) of participants' experiences while responding to the following research questions:

- What are adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress and what are the potential relationships of these stressors with their emotional intelligence and wellbeing?

    - What are adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress?
    - What, if any, relationship is there between adolescents' role stress and existential stress?
    - What, if any, relationship does role stress and/or existential stress have on adolescents' emotional intelligence?
    - What, if any, relationship does role stress and existential stress have on adolescents' wellbeing?
    - What, if any, relationship is there between emotional intelligence and adolescents' wellbeing?

3.3 Research Paradigms

The term paradigm is often referred to in social science research as the basic beliefs that guide one's actions or philosophical assumptions, thus defining the researcher's worldview (Lincoln et al., 2011). Patton (2002) stated that "a paradigm is a worldview - a way of thinking about and making sense of the complexities of the real world" (p. 69), therefore a research paradigm refers to the researcher's way of seeing the world (Lather, 1986). There are four key paradigms used in educational research: positivism, constructivism, critical and pragmatism (Rahi, 2017; Mingers, 2004). To clarify the rationale used in the current study for adopting a pragmatic paradigm, which is a combination of positivism and constructivism, all paradigms will initially be discussed.

3.3.1 Positivist paradigm

Quantitative research centres on the philosophy that facts and feelings can be separated and that there is a single objective or truth (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2012; Ponterotto, 2005). Data is collected using statistical tools to highlight behaviour, trends and associations among variables in numerical terms (Creswell & Clark, 2017). According to Newman and Ridenour (1998), "during the 1940s and 50s, the quantitative paradigm dominated the social science and the educational research scene. Behaviourists and organisational theorists utilized empirical fact gathering and hypothesis testing almost exclusively in studying educational and social phenomena" (p. 5). Quantitative researchers

commonly advocate that numerical measurement is the preferred method of establishing relationships between variables, thus justifying the preference for quantitative methods of research (Creswell, 2011; Fraenkal et al., 2012; Ponterotto, 2005). For example, Ponterotto (2005) emphasised that the participant and topic can be studied without bias, while Creswell (2011) argued that a quantitative approach can successfully test a hypothesis to establish relationships between variables. Thereby, in the context of the current study, a quantitative paradigm was central in identifying potential relationships between role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing in adolescents. Brannen (2017) proposed that "quantitative research readily allows the researcher to establish relationships among variables but is often weak when it comes to exploring the reasons for those relationships" (p. 61). Therefore, qualitative research allows the researcher to explain the underlying factors behind the relationships established in quantitative study (Brannen, 2017)

3.3.2 Constructivist paradigm

A qualitative paradigm is based on the constructivist understanding that there are multiple subjective realities with no single truth (Silverstein et al., 2006). Qualitative explorations are reported to predominantly focus on "why" and how" people experience events, rather than what they experience (Silverstein et al., 2006, p. 349). Qualitative research includes approaches such as focus group interviews, participant observations and semi-structured interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In the current study, to gain an in-depth understanding of the participant's lived experiences, qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with those who either reported high or low role stress and existential stress in the quantitative online survey.

A qualitative exploration is often employed in cases where the phenomenon under exploration is complex, or where the field of study is new and unexplored, or where the researcher aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic (Silverstein et al., 2006). In the context of the current study, adolescent wellbeing is complex, specifically when role stress, existential stress and emotional intelligence were examined. Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed to understand the phenomenon under study. The relationship between and among variables was explored which was then complemented by capturing the lived experiences of adolescents.

3.3.3 Critical paradigm

A critical paradigm centres on social and political issues such as empowerment and oppression (Ponterotto, 2005). This approach addresses these issues while studying power imbalances in society and politics (Rahi, 2017). A critical paradigm is argued to be in contrast to a positivist paradigm in

terms of objectivity, with critics of the critical paradigm arguing that social science cannot be truly objective (Horkheimer, 1982; Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998). The critical paradigm is suitable for qualitative studies and primarily relies on "dialogic methods; methods combining observation and interviewing with approaches that foster conversation and reflection … allows the researcher and participant to question the 'natural' state and challenge the mechanisms for order maintenance" (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, p. 1). Similarly, Hussain et al. (2013) argued that "critical researchers may use qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods, but they are more inclined towards qualitative research designs" (p. 2379). However, Asghar (2013) highlighted that "the major difference here between critical and constructive research is the innate reformative drives in the former" (p. 3124). That is, a critical paradigm does not intend only to explore "social factors that cause oppressive and powerful groups to dominate the suppressed and repressed section of society, but it also strives for a social setup based on equality for all the members" (Asghar, 2013, p. 3123).

A critical paradigm does not support a mixed-method design in which both quantitative and qualitative data is required to provide a complete understanding of role stress and existential stress in adolescents in relation to their emotional intelligence and wellbeing Therefore, one can apply the pragmatic paradigm to provide a philosophical justification for the mixed-method research approach (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2011; Denscombe, 2008; Johnson et al., 2007).

3.3.4 Pragmatic paradigm

As previously described, paradigms reflect one's "belief about what reality is (ontology), what counts as knowledge (epistemology), how we gain knowledge (methodology), and the values we hold (axiology)" (Giddings & Grant, 2009, p. 120). The mixed-method paradigm employed in the current study was underpinned by a pragmatic paradigm (Creswell & Clark, 2017) as it supports the application of both quantitative and qualitative approaches in the same study (Bryman, 2008; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Providing a choice for researchers to use any of the philosophical or methodological perspective or combination of both the perspectives, to address their research problem, is the fundamental idea of pragmatism (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). As pragmatism justifies the approach of combining the quantitative method of research with qualitative method, Johnson et al. (2007) addressed it as an advanced philosophy, which also carry a provision of epistemology. Similarly, Denscombe (2008) stated that pragmatism is "the philosophical partner" of mixed method research as its underlying assumptions provide the essence for mixing research methods (p. 273). "Pragmatism as a research paradigm refuses to get involved in contentious metaphysical concepts such as truth and reality.

Instead, it accepts that there can be single or multiple realities that are open to empirical inquiry" (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019, p. 4), thus making it appropriate for the current study.

Considering the methods of inquiry, pragmatism seemingly stands in the middle of both positivism and constructivism. Positivism and constructivist paradigms support quantitative methods and qualitative methods respectively, but the pragmatic paradigm "embraces the two extremes and offers a flexible and more reflexive approach to research design" (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019, p. 6). In adopting this view, the pragmatist researcher selects the research design and methodology that most appropriately addresses their research question. Thus, the assumptions underpinning a paradigmatic approach include:

- "One data source alone is insufficient
- Results need to be explained
- Exploratory results need to be further examined
- A study needs to be enhanced through adding a second method
- A theoretical stance needs to be advanced through the use of both types of methods
- A problem needs to be studied through multiple phases of research that include multiple types of methods"

(Creswell & Clark, 2017, p. 60-61)

Two important and widely used paradigms adopted in research include: a positivist paradigm, that relies on a single objective or truth (Ponterotto, 2005); and a constructivist paradigm, whereby researchers argue that there is no one single truth (Silverstein et al., 2006). Arguably, these paradigms have been viewed as incompatible, yet Creswell and Clark (2017) contend that both paradigms provide the foundation for world exploration and underpin the phenomena from divergent outlooks. This magnifies the importance of a pragmatic paradigm which combines both the positivist and constructivist paradigm. Moreover, Bryman (2008) argued that by combining both quantitative and qualitative methods of research the researcher can deeply analyse the unique characteristics of relationships in contrast to providing measurements and classifications. Thus, to gain a deeper understanding of adolescent's role and/or existential stress, a mixed-method research design employing a pragmatist paradigm was deemed appropriate.

3.4 Theoretical Frameworks

As noted in Chapter Two, Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory highlighted adolescence as a significant period of role versus identity confusion, thus this theoretical approach

provided an appropriate lens from which to explore how adolescents navigate this period, with a particular focus on the influence of potential stressors. In recognising the influences of both individual factors and broader ecological factors on an adolescent's development, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory was also adopted to explore the potential bi-directional impact of others, external systems and time on an adolescent's stress. These theories were critical in providing two discrete and yet complementary ways of exploring the lives and relationships of adolescents aged 13-19 years who self-reported experiencing high or low role and/or existential stress. Understanding the lives of adolescents through their lived experiences enabled an understanding of what was happening in their lives at the time that might provide insights into role and existential stress.

3.4.1 Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory

As highlighted in Chapter Two, section 2.3.2.1, Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory considers psychosocial conflicts during an individual's development. More specifically, Erikson (1968) suggested that the period of adolescence predominantly aligns with role versus identity confusion, where existential questions begin to emerge, such as: Who am I? Why I am here? What is the purpose in my life? (Stone, 2014). Such questions can, for some adolescents, place them at risk of experiencing role stress (Ragelienė, 2016) and/or existential stress (Fitzgerald, 2005).

Despite being criticised for placing too much emphasis on the stages of development (Fleming, 2004; Hacker, 1994; Kroger, 2004; Schultz & Schultz, 2005) and overemphasising negative implications of potential crises (Pelaez et al., 2008; Shaffer, 2009), Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory continues to be employed in education and social sciences to explore psychosocial issues encountered in adolescence (Hoare, 2013; Schachter et al., 2018; Rogers, 2018). The psychosocial element of Erikson's (1968) theory represents the interplay of the self and society to explain how personality and behaviour develop in people. According to Rogers (2018), Erikson's theory "provided a paradigm to understand and examine how such societal shifts in the "communal culture" are inextricably tied to the identity processes of individuals and vice versa" (p. 284). Therefore, it is argued that Erikson's (1968) theoretical perspective provides an appropriate rationale to further understand the association between role stress and existential stress in adolescents, and the potential relationship these stressors have with an individual's emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

While Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory employed an individual approach to development, it is important to note that adolescents do not develop in a vacuum, highlighting a need to consider how experiences in an individual's local context and environment shape their development. Therefore Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory was employed to

consider the ecological influences and particularly the role that social contexts play in shaping human development (refer Section 2.6) and their potential impact on adolescent's stressors.

3.4.2 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Adolescents' experiences of role stress and/or existential stress are relational (Pelaez et al., 2008; Shaffer, 2009), thus such experiences do not exist in isolation or within the environment independently, rather they involve individual-environment interactions (Pelaez et al., 2008; Shaffer, 2009). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory places the individual at the centre and considers the interrelationship between the nested systems and the individual, as well as the impact that these interrelations have on the individual and their behaviour over time.

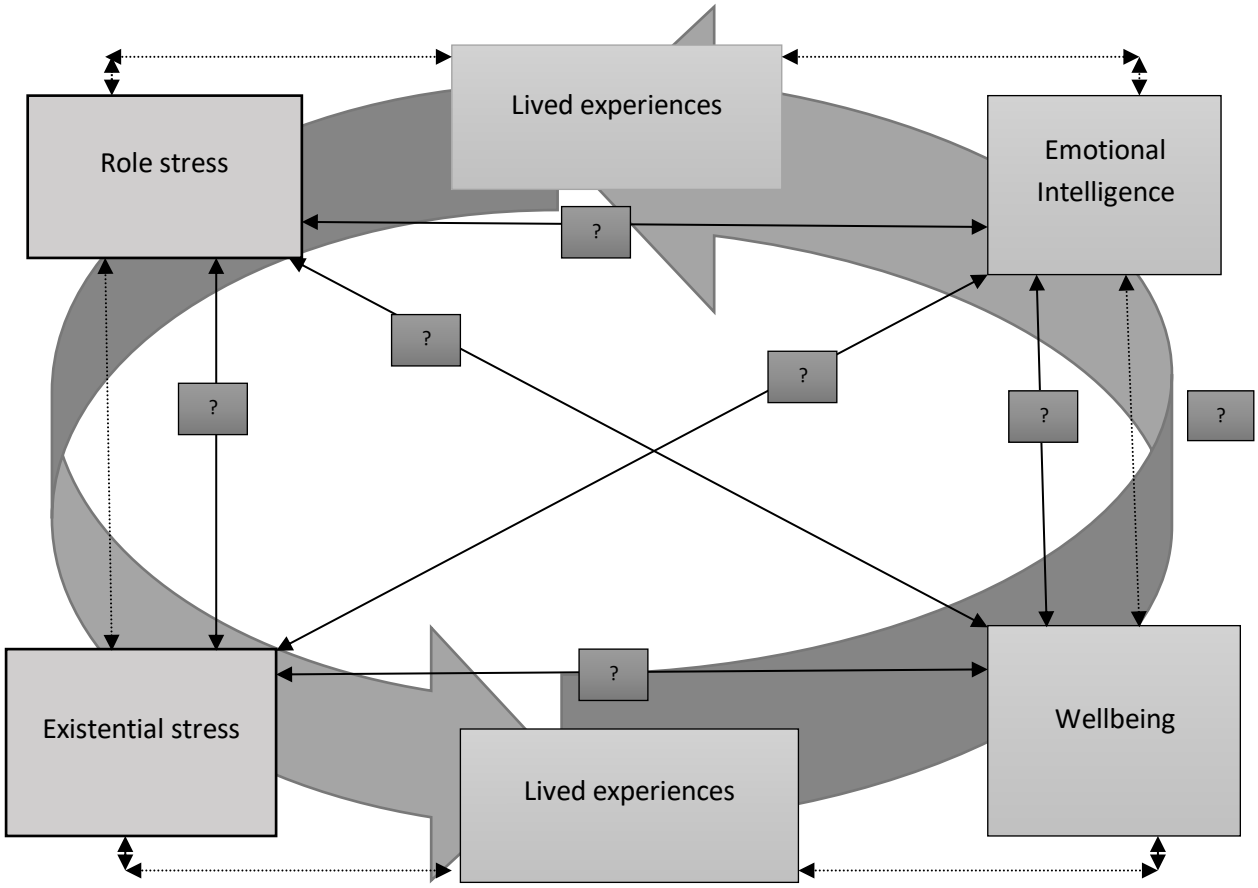
As highlighted in Chapter Two, section, 2.7, despite being criticised for placing too much emphasis on contexts with little concern on the role that an individual play in their development (Tudge et al., 2009), Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems Theory highlights the need to focus on various intimate and remote contexts in addition to the individual and argues that every detail of an individual's environment potentially plays a role in their development. This theory, therefore, provides opportunities for a more holistic view to be applied. Furthermore, feelings of dissatisfaction with relationships and/or life, a key element of role stress, are often a consequence of complex interactions between an individual and their environment (Cappeliez & O'Rourke, 2002; Fry, 2001; Kaplan et al., 2005). Therefore, to gain an in-depth understanding of role stress and existential stress in adolescents, and the potential relationship these have with their emotional intelligence and wellbeing, and to understand why some adolescents report higher role stress and/or existential stress than others, it was important to gain insights into the complex ecological environments in which they develop, for which Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory provides an appropriate framework. It is therefore argued that this theory, in conjunction with Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory, provides a holistic, multi-faceted approach to exploring adolescent role and existential stress as well as their emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

3.5 Applying an Adolescent Wellbeing model

Having examined literature aligned to the constructs of role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing, Chapter Two presented a model that informed the methodological design of the current study (refer Section 2.7). Expanding on that, Figure 3.1 below was developed to reflect the purpose of the current study and the mixed-methods approach employed to gain an in-depth

understanding of role stress and existential stress in adolescents in relation to their emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

Figure 3. 1 Adolescent Wellbeing Model



Erikson (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory ←——→

Bronfenbrenner (1979) Ecological systems Theory ←·····→

The current study explores adolescents' potential stressors specifically role stress and existential stress and the influence these stressors have on their emotional intelligence and wellbeing. The above model (refer Figure 3.1) describes Adolescent wellbeing model employed in the current study, facilitating mixed-method approach adopted in the current study. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was initially used to examine the relationship between role stress and existential stress in adolescents and the potential relationship that these stressors have with emotional intelligence and wellbeing. To achieve this, relationships (presented as a question mark in Figure 3.1) between role stress and existential stress; role stress and emotional intelligence; role stress and wellbeing;

existential stress and emotional intelligence; and existential stress and wellbeing were explored in the quantitative phase of the study. In phase two, qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participant's lived experiences of role stress and existential stress and what they reveal about their emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory informed and guided each phase of this study.

3.6 An Explanatory Sequential Mixed-method Research Design

Mixed-method studies include both quantitative and qualitative research methods within one broad viewpoint or paradigm (Giddings & Grant, 2009). Creswell (2012) describes a mixed-method design as "a procedure of collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study or a series of studies to understand a research problem" (p. 535). Creswell et al. (2011) argue that using both quantitative and qualitative methods together provides a clear and thorough understanding of the problem under exploration while enabling participants' voices to explain what numbers alone cannot. Thus, the mixed-method approaches help to identify similarities and/or differences in participants' perceptions and experiences about the phenomenon under inquiry which potentially remains unclear when employing a single method (Peters et al., 1986).

Migiro and Magangi (2011) identified the following strengths of mixed-method research:

i) "Mixed-method research can answer a broader and more complete range of research questions because the researcher is not confined to a single method or approach.
ii) A researcher can use the strengths of an additional method to overcome the weaknesses in another method by using both in a research study.
iii) Mixed-method research can provide stronger evidence for a conclusion through convergence and corroboration of findings.
iv) Mixed-method research can add insight and understanding that might be missed when only a single method is used.
v) Mixed-method research can be used to increase the generalisability of the results.
vi) Qualitative and quantitative research used together produces more complete knowledge necessary to inform theory and practice.
vii) Researchers can generate and test a grounded theory
viii) Words, pictures and narratives can be used to add meaning to numbers.
ix) Numbers can be used to add precision to words, pictures and narrative" (p. 3763).

Mixed-method approaches have been consistently employed in behavioural and social sciences (Berk et al., 2015; Brewer & Hunter, 2006; Creswell et al., 2004) with data collection and analysis in both numerical and textual forms being argued to lead to a merging of findings and inferences drawn in a single or multiphase study (Creswell et al., 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). However, Terry (2012) cautions that mixed-method studies "will require the researcher to accurately interpret conflicting results that are generated … can be more time consuming than use of quantitative research or qualitative research alone" (p. 105).

The current study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-method design by collecting quantitative and qualitative data to explore the phenomenon under investigation while providing a deeper understanding that may not be possible with one form of data alone (Brewer & Hunter, 1989; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The quantitative stage of the research collected adolescent survey responses which were then analysed to explore a potential relationship between the variables under investigation. This stage of the study was also employed to identify potential participants for follow-up qualitative case studies. To gain an in-depth understanding of the potential impact of stress on adolescents' social relationships (role stress), purpose in life (existential stress), emotional regulation (emotional intelligence) and overall wellbeing, these qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants.

Greene et al. (2001) proposed further considerations that are applied to mixed method research design, that is, there is need to address methodological bias within this design and weightage given to each method and paradigm. Due to a number of challenges regarding adopting the mixed method research, researchers have provided some useful suggestions to overcome those challenges, such as: articulating the rationale for selecting a type of mixed-method approach to investigate the phenomenon under study; a clear description of the order in which each method is going to be employed, that is, simultaneously or sequentially; and clearly discussing the decision-making process undertaken when designing and conducting a mixed-method study (Creswell, 2011; Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Therefore, subsequent sections in this chapter will address the above-mentioned issues. Overall, the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods can be more effectively and methodologically utilised through a mixed method research design. as it provides ample opportunities to broaden the depth and scope throughout the research design, which enables thorough investigation of the variables. (Creswell et al., 2011; Greene & Caracelli, 1997). Adopting an explanatory sequential

approach in the current mixed-method study facilitated rigorous and comprehensive investigation and discussion of the research findings.

3.6.1 Rationale for adopting an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach

An explanatory sequential mixed method involves equal weighting being given to both quantitative and qualitative research (Creswell et al., 2004). In the current study, quantitative data collection and analysis were followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data. Subsequently, both quantitative and qualitative results were integrated in the interpretation and discussion of the study (Creswell et al., 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) thus providing an in-depth understanding of adolescent's experiences of role and existential stress.

According to Creswell et al. (2003) the explanatory sequential mixed-method design "is the most straightforward … easy to implement because the steps fall into clear separate stages" (p. 178), thus providing a clear rationale for adopting this approach in the current study. In the context of the current study, two distinct phases, quantitative online survey and qualitative semi-structured interviews, contributed to a clear understanding of the phenomenon under investigation as it enabled potential relationships among variables to be explored while gaining an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of those reporting high or low role stress and existential stress.

The explanatory sequential mixed-method approach enables the researcher to gain in-depth understanding of what, how and why about phenomenon under study. Informed by previous studies, the current study comprised of two phases as outlined in Table 3.1 below. Phase 1, the quantitative study, employed an online survey which comprised of four existing scales: Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004); Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011); Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010); and Perceived Wellbeing Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997). These scales aimed to identify potential relationships between role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing of adolescents in years 8-12 (aged 13-19 years) in Australia. Employing a multiple and instrumental case-study approach (refer Section 3.8.2.1), phase 2, the qualitative study, comprised of follow-up semi-structured interviews with nine adolescents who reported experiencing high or low role and existential stress in phase 1. This two-phase approach enabled a statistical relationship to be explored before capturing the lived experiences underpinning these results.

3.6.2 An explanatory sequential mixed-method research design: an overview

The current research included a pilot and main study. The pilot study enabled the researcher to pre-test the data collection scales and identify concerns thereby identifying suitable changes and refinements (refer Section 3.7). Following this, the main study involved two phases: phase 1, quantitative data collection, and phase 2, qualitative data collection. Table 3.1 provides an overview of this research design.

Table 3. 1 Overview of research design

Pilot study			
Eleven adolescents in year levels 8-12, aged 13-19 years were recruited for the pilot study to determine the suitability and appropriateness of data collection scales.			
Main study			
Phases	**Data collection**	**Scales Used**	**Data analysis**
Phase 1: QUANTITATIVE STUDY	Online survey (375 participants year levels 8-12)	Existing Measurement Scales • 8-item Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) • 4-item Purpose in life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) • 10-item Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010)	Quantitative analysis using SPSS involves • Correlational analysis • t-test analysis • ANOVA Analysis • Exploratory Factor Analysis
Phase 2: QUALITATIVE STUDY	Semi-structured interviews (9 participants from year levels 8, 10 &12)	Adolescents reporting high role stress and/or existential stress or low/no role stress and existential stress	Qualitative Analysis Cross case analysis involves • Descriptive coding • Topic coding • Analytical coding

3.7 The Pilot Study

The importance of pilot studies in research has been well documented (Connelly, 2008; De Vaus, 1993; Hassan et al., 2006; Van Teijlingen et al., 2002), particularly where sensitive issues are explored. The pilot study in the current research enabled the researcher to assess the research scales: Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004), Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011), Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010), Perceived Wellness Survey Scale

(Adams et al., 1997) (refer Table 3.1). The quantitative online survey was comprised of these four scales. The survey was conducted through the online survey tool Qualtrics. Thus, to avoid risk and identify measures to manage risks in the main study, a pilot study was conducted (De Vaus, 1993). The pilot study provided the following information about the online survey (refer Appendix I: Quantitative online survey instrument) and semi-structured interviews (refer Appendix J: Semi-structured interview schedule):

- time taken by participants to complete the online survey and semi-structured interviews,
- age-appropriateness of the data collection scales; and
- appropriateness of the wording used in the online survey and interview questions.

3.7.1 Recruitment of participants for the pilot study

Written approval was sought from the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee prior to participants being invited to take part in the pilot study (refer Appendix K). Employing convenience sampling techniques, eleven adolescents (five males and six females) aged 13-19 years of age were approached through the researcher's contacts and social interactions for quantitative online survey and qualitative semi-structured interviews. Convenience sampling techniques are often used in pilot studies and involve the researcher recruiting a small number of participants who meet the selection criteria and are readily available to take part in the study (Crossman, 2019).

Participants and their parents/caregivers were provided with information sheets (refer Appendix A: Participant information sheet for pilot study) describing the nature and purpose of the pilot study and their role in the study. Participants were advised that their participation was voluntary, and consent forms (refer Appendix B: Consent form for pilot study) were signed by both the participant and their parent/caregiver.

3.7.2 Findings and implications of pilot study

Findings from the pilot study demonstrated that the proposed research was feasible, and the scales were appropriate for collecting data regarding role stress and existential stress in adolescents. The average duration of the quantitative online survey was 10-15 minutes and the semi-structured interview was 20-30 minutes. Participants reported no problems with the content or language of the questions or challenges answering the online survey or semi-structured interviews. However, some reported that survey questions were missed if they pressed the 'next button' in error, highlighting that

there needed to be a ‘back button’. Thus a ‘back button’ was added to the online survey for the main study.

The pilot study demonstrated the appropriateness of the research scales which were then implemented in the main study. It further provided the researcher with an opportunity to develop and refine the necessary skills to conduct and manage semi-structured interviews, thus increasing their confidence and enhancing the success of data collection.

3.8 The Main Study

Comprising of two phases, the main study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the relationship between adolescent role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing. The following will discuss each phase in turn.

3.8.1 Phase 1- Quantitative study

Quantitative research is used to quantify behaviours, opinions, attitudes and other variables and to make generalisations from a larger population (Creswell, 2012). It allows the researcher to describe the current status of a variable or phenomenon as well as establishing a statistical relationship between variables (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2012). Quantitative online surveys are useful when the researcher is concerned about “what the distribution is” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 396) or wishes to describe the characteristics of a large population which ensures a more accurate picture is gained from which to draw conclusions (Wyse, 2012). The current quantitative study involved a cross-sectional online survey aimed at collecting data regarding role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing among adolescents from year levels 8-12 in Australia.

Unlike longitudinal surveys that look at an individual over time, cross-sectional surveys collect data from individuals belonging to different age groups or year levels at a point in time (Creswell, 2011). This approach is best suited when data is accumulated from several groups or categories of people over a focussed timeframe, for example, males and females, different socio-economic status or multiple age ranges, and subjects with diverse characteristics, achievements and abilities (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 403). A sample drawn from a pre-determined population is used to collect information for a cross-sectional survey (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) “a cross-sectional survey collects information from a sample that has been drawn from a predetermined population” (p. 394)

Thus, a cross-sectional survey facilitated the collection and analysis of quantitative data to measure adolescent's role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing to ultimately reveal the strength and nature of the relationships between these variables. Participants volunteered to take part in the online quantitative survey (refer Appendix I) which comprised of four existing scales:

- Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004);
- Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011);
- Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010); and
- Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997).

The survey measured the current status of variables such as role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing among adolescents aged 13-19 years of age and identified the quantitative relationship among these variables. Identifying demographic information about adolescents such as their name, age, gender, year level and contact details was required during the quantitative survey to ensure that invitations to participate in qualitative interviews could be sent. The original information regarding participant identification was kept secure using a password-protected computer (refer Section 3.9 ethical consideration). Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) statistical analysis was employed to analyse data which was further unpacked through the qualitative study. While the main aim of the quantitative phase of the study was to determine potential relationships between variables it also provided a recruitment method for the qualitative semi-structured interview phase of the study.

3.8.1.1 Recruitment of participants

Snowballing techniques were employed whereby contact was made with adolescents in year levels 8-12 through different methods, including personal contacts, flyer distribution, School of Education (now Education Futures), University of South Australia, social networking sites, website of Gifted and Talented Students' Association (GTSA) and schools. Snowballing sampling techniques "yield a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest" (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981, p. 141). In the current study the researcher's contacts, distribution of flyers, social networking and engaging stakeholders were used.

When the study commenced in 2016, the researcher aimed to involve one private school (either Catholic or independent) and one government school to explore the potential relationship between role stress and existential stress with adolescent's emotional intelligence, wellbeing and academic achievement. A further aim was to collect continuous data over one year regarding a participant's

wellbeing, stress levels and academic achievement, by tracking their responses through a mobile application, surveys, and interviews. However, having pursued many high schools in the designated area it was realised that this form of data collection was not going to be possible due to schools' busy schedules. As a result, snowballing techniques were employed to recruit participants which enabled the reach to be broadened and to increase the diversity of potential participants. Therefore, the University of South Australia's Human Ethics Committee was approached and approved an amendment to invite participants through the researcher's personal contacts, flyer distribution and the School of Education (now Education Futures), University of South Australia (refer Appendix M: Human Research Ethics Committee protocol amendment approval 2). To further increase the scope and scale of the study, approval was sought to recruit participants through social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and organisations that were willing to place an invitation to the research on their websites (refer Appendix N: Human Research Ethics Committee protocol amendment approval 3).

a) Personal contacts:

Social relationships and personal contacts were vital resources in leveraging and enhancing participant recruitment. While approaching personal contacts, the researcher briefly described the purpose of the study and prospective participants with a flyer (refer Appendix G) outlining the study so they could make an informed a conversant decision about their participation. Those who agreed to take part in the study signed the online consent form before completing the online survey.

b) Flyer distribution:

Flyers (refer appendix G) conveying information related to the study were distributed in public spaces and their surrounding areas including community libraries, University of South Australia's Magill and Mawson Lakes campuses, Relationships South Australia, Child and Adolescents Mental Health Services, Sports centres and Northern Sound System Youth Development Colleges across South Australia. Flyers were also distributed at various community schools, Education Development Centres, Anglicare SA (an organisation that supports people in need including parenting, youth, foster care, financial literacy, new arrivals, Aboriginal services, disability care, emergency assistance, homelessness, and aged care) and Headspace (an organisation that provides tailored and holistic mental health support to individuals aged 12-25 years of age). Participants were asked to scan the QR code provided in the flyer in order to access the survey page and complete the online consent form and participate in the online survey.

c) School of Education (now Education Futures), University of South Australia:

After obtaining permission from the then Head of School, a recruitment email was sent to all students enrolled in the former School of Education, now Education Futures, inviting them to participate in the study (refer Appendix P).

d) Social networking:

Social networking websites including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn were also employed (Kraut et al., 2002). Approval was given to include these platforms from the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee. Posting the same flyer as discussed in point (b) to these social media platforms, participants were invited to take part in the study.

e) Website of Gifted and Talented Students' Association:

Snowballing techniques broaden the horizon of recruiting participants, therefore different organisations and associations were approached to display the flyer. The Gifted and Talented Students' Association agreed to display the flyer at their office and on their website. This association was selected due to its active participation in the lives of adolescents. They have numerous adolescent visitors and interact with students across Australia, therefore broadening the scope of potential participants. Invitations were posted on the Gifted and Talented Students' Association website inviting participants to participate in the study. In that invitation participants were asked to scan the QR code provided in the flyer, complete the online consent form and participate in the online survey.

f) Schools:

Although schools were no longer the central means of recruiting participants, they were approached to help in the overall recruitment of participants. Parents/caregivers and adolescents were asked to forward the flyers and emails that contained the researcher's contact details, QR code and link to the survey to their contacts (refer Appendix G: Flyer to recruit participant) (refer Section 3.10). Attempts were made to include all participants who were interested in participating and were from year levels 8-12 and aged between 13-19 years of age.

Using the QR code participants proceeded to the online survey where they were asked a series of prompts before they could access the online survey as outlined above:

- If you do not wish to participate or your parent/caregiver does not consent to your participation, please decline participation by clicking on the disagree button
- You are aged between 13-19 (agree or disagree)
- You are in year levels 8-12 (agree or disagree)

- You and your parent/caregiver have read the above information (agree or disagree)
- Your parent/caregiver consents to your participation and you want to participate (agree or disagree).

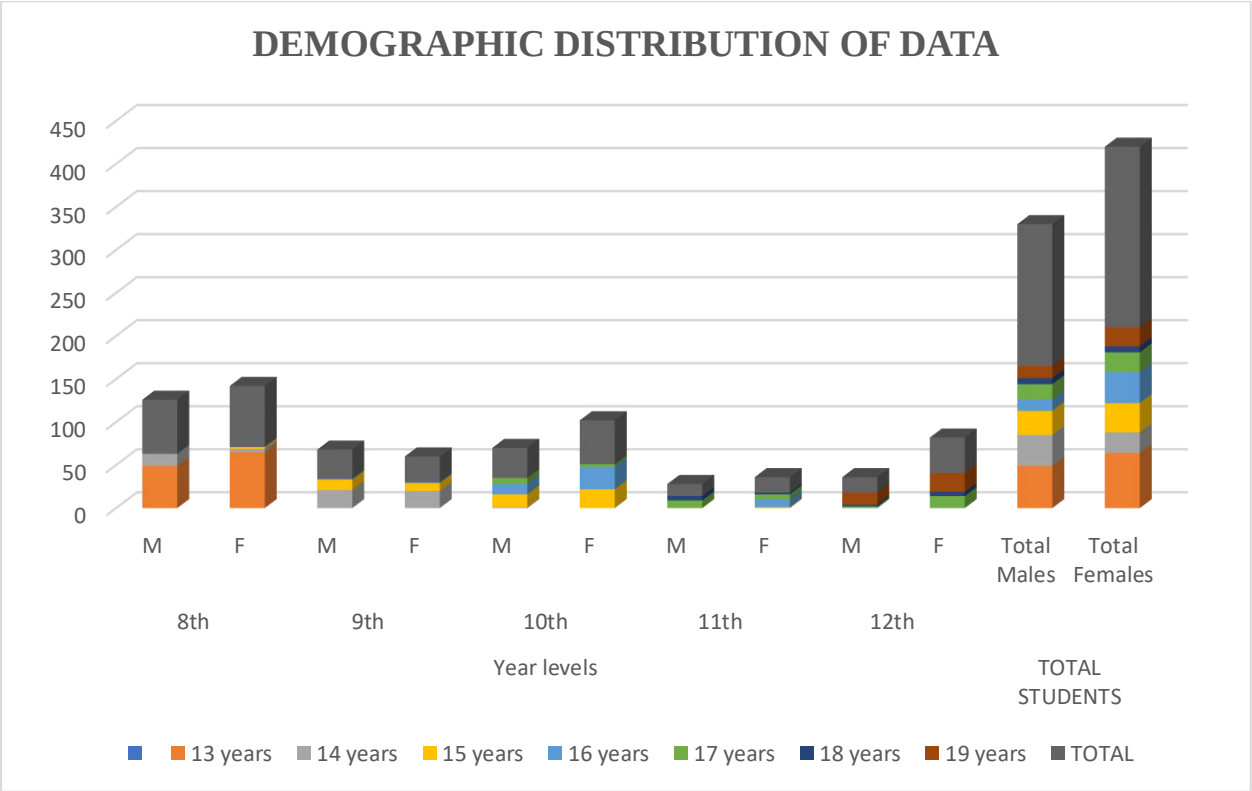
Both males and females from year levels 8-12 with informed consent from parents/caregivers were recruited to complete the quantitative cross-sectional survey. In total, 165 males and 210 females in year levels 8-12 participated in the online quantitative survey. Table 3.2 and Figure 3.2 provide the demographic distribution of participants for phase one, the quantitative study.

Table 3. 2 Demographic distribution of data for quantitative study

DEMOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF DATA												
Session 2018-19	**Year levels**										**TOTAL STUDENTS**	
	8		**9**		**10**		**11**		**12**			
Age	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**Total Males**	**Total Females**
13 years	49	65	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**49**	**64**
14 years	14	4	21	20	1	0	0	0	0	0	**36**	**24**
15 years	0	2	12	9	15	22	0	1	0	0	**28**	**34**
16 years	0	0	1	1	12	26	0	9	0	0	**13**	**36**
17 years	0	0	0	0	7	3	9	6	2	14	**18**	**23**
18 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2	2	5	**7**	**7**
19 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	22	**14**	**22**
TOTAL	**63**	**71**	**34**	**30**	**35**	**51**	**14**	**18**	**18**	**41**	**165**	**210**

M = Males F = Females

Figure 3. 2 Demographic distribution of data for quantitative study



3.8.1.2 The scales

To explore role stress and existential stress in adolescents, and the potential relationship these stressors have with emotional intelligence and wellbeing, adolescents initially completed an online survey comprising of the following scales:

- Role Stress Scale (RS); (Liu & Kaplan, 2004)
- Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (PIL-SF) (Schulenberg et al., 2011)
- Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS) (Davies et al., 2010)
- Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (PWS) (Adams et al., 1997).

For possible comparisons of results on each scale used in the current study, categorizing scores into low, moderate, and high was based on a percentile range of scores. Scores below or equal to 25th percentile were low; between 25th and 75th percentiles were moderate, and above or equal to 75th percentile were high (Arriaga, 1998; Ayyamperumal, 2018). Table 3.3 provides further details of these scales.

Table 3. 3 Summary of scales employed for online quantitative survey

Variables	**Existing measurement scales (refer Appendix I)**	**Brief description of the measurement scales**
Role stress	Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004)	8-item self-report questionnaire: • Participants respond in general as to how happy they have been about the relationship; 1 = unhappy, 2 = neither happy nor unhappy, 3 = happy • Liu and Kaplan (2004) reported full scale internal consistency of $\alpha = 0.76$
Existential stress	Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al. 2011)	4-item self-report questionnaire: • Data regarding participants level of agreement regarding meaning/purpose in life collected, 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree • Schulenberg et al. (2011) reported full scale internal consistency of $\alpha = 0.86$ • Test-retest reliability scores ranged from 0.79 to 0.93 (Schulenberg et al., 2011)
Emotional intelligence	Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010) Dimensions: • Appraisal of own emotions • Appraisal of others' emotions • Regulation of own emotions • Regulation of others' emotions • Utilisation of emotions	10 item self-report questionnaire: • Participants respond on a five-point scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree • Davies et al. (2010) reported total internal consistency of $\alpha = 0.95$ • Test-retest reliability scores ranged from 89.2% to 96.4% within ±1 range
Wellbeing	Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997)	36 item self-report questionnaire:

	Dimensions: • Psychological wellbeing • Physical wellbeing • Social wellbeing • Spiritual wellbeing • Emotional wellbeing • Intellectual wellbeing	• Participants respond on a five-point scale 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree Adams et al. (1997) reported internal consistency of α = .91 • Test-retest reliability scores ranged from .88 to .93. within ±1 range

The Role Stress Scale (RS) (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) was designed to explore role stress among American young adults aged 19-21 years who experienced aggressive behaviour during adolescence. This scale includes eight items with questions exploring how happy you have been with your friendship networks, parents, family, school, work-related experiences, involvement or acceptance with other people, physical appearance and relationships with the opposite sex on three-point Likert scale: 1 for "feeling happy," 2 for "neither happy nor unhappy," and 3 for "feeling unhappy" (Liu & Kaplan, 2004, p. 90). Flexibility is a strength of this scale, as individual's experiences about their different social roles can be captured without affecting the reliability and validity of the scale (Liu & Kaplan 2004). Therefore, in the current study, adolescents were asked how happy, neither happy nor unhappy or unhappy they were with their friendship networks, parents, peers, siblings, teachers and school. This scale was originally intended for adults therefore, in adapting the Role Stress Scale to adolescents the current study replaced relationships with the opposite sex, work-related experiences and physical appearance with relationships with peers, siblings and teachers. While analysing the data, Liu and Kaplan (2004) recoded the responses from 3 point (1 for "feeling happy," 2 for "neither happy nor unhappy," and 3 for "feeling unhappy") to 2 point as 1 = "unhappy", and 0 = "else", "to obtain a measure reflected feelings of dissatisfaction with areas" (p. 90) among the adult sample, where score ranges from 0-8, 0 means adults are highly satisfied and 8 means they are highly dissatisfied with their social relationships. In the current study participant responses were obtained and analysed on original 3-point scale to consider their responses of 'feeling happy', feeling neither happy nor unhappy' and 'feeling unhappy'. Therefore, in the current study, scores of the scale ranged from 8-24, that is, low = ≤ 9, moderate = 10-15, high = ≥16, with high scores representing high role stress and lower scores indicating lower role stress (refer Chapter 4 for participant's responses). Liu and Kaplan (2004) originally reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.76 in measuring role stress in their adult sample. In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was 0.88, thus showing higher reliability when used with an adolescent sample. As the scale was adapted in terms of items and coding, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted to ensure that this adapted version retained its homogeneity, single-factor structure, reliability and validity. The result of the

Factor Loading and corrected item-total correlation supported the use of the adapted Role Stress Scale in investigating role stress in adolescents (refer Section 3.8.1.3.1 for the factor interpretation and internal consistency of this scale for the current sample).

The Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (PIL-SF*;* Schulenberg et al., 2011) was designed to assess the degree of personal fulfilment in one's existence (refer Section 2.4.3.2). It is a 4-item scale where participants were asked to rate their agreement on a 5-point Likert. The original 7-point scale was adapted to 5-point scale for the convenience of adolescence to avoid confusion of responding to different scales with different response rates. In their comprehensive literature review, Heggestad et al. (2019) suggested that small changes to the number of response options provided on a scale such as going from five point to six or seven point or six or seven point to five point or minor changes in the wording of the anchors (that defines the response continuum), such as maintaining an agreement scale, do not have impact on the reliability and validity of the scale. These suggestions supported the adaptations made to the scale in the current study, which is further evident from PCA and Cronbach alpha calculated for adapted scale, ensuring its validity and reliability. In the current study, all four items of the original scale: 'In life I have clear goals', 'My personal existence is meaningful', 'In achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfillment', 'I have full discovered a satisfying life purpose', were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree. Scores ranged from 4-20 (refer Appendix I), that is, low= ≤ 8, moderate= 9-12, high= ≥ 13. Lower scores on this scale indicated low existential stress and higher scores among adolescents highlighted high existential stress. The scale was initially developed, and the psychometric properties of the scale were tested, on American undergraduates aged 18-48 years with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.86, however recently Schulenburg et al. (2016) tested the psychometric properties of the scale with adolescents aged 11-18 years from Mississippi, America (refer Section 2.4.3.5). Higher internal consistency of the scale was indicated by the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89 showing that the scale was equally reliable with adolescents. According to Schulenberg et al. (2016), the short form scale of 4 items "garnered compelling psychometric support and has been used in research as a more "pure" measure of the meaning and purpose in life concept" (p. 1280). Moreover, the short form was important as four variables reduced the time commitment necessary to complete the scale. The scale yielded the same Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89 when used with adolescents in the current study. Also, initial PCA supported the use of the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale in investigating existential stress in adolescents within Australia (refer Section 3.8.1.3.1 for the results of factor analysis of this scale).

Davies et al.'s (2010) Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS), a self-report measure, was designed to evaluate emotional intelligence among 111 undergraduate athletes from a University in the United

Kingdom. Participants were aged 16-26 years and were assessed across five dimensions: appraisal of one's own emotions; appraisal of other's emotions; regulation of one's own emotions and regulation of other's emotions; and utilisation of emotions. The scale included 10 items (each dimension containing two items) and was measured using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated strongly disagree and 5 indicated strongly agree. Scores range from 10-50 (refer Appendix I), that is low = ≤ 36, moderate = 37-41, high = ≥ 42. High scores among adolescents indicated high emotional intelligence and lower scores indicated low emotional intelligence. In the current study, the BEIS was used without any adaptations. According to Davies et al. (2010) the brief version (10 item scale) of the original Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) (33 item scale) "demonstrates evidence of content validity, factorial validity, and test-retest reliability" (p. 206). In their quantitative study, Ciarrochi et al. (2001) identified reliability and validity of the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS 33-item scale) developed by Schutte et al. (1998) measuring emotional intelligence in adolescents aged 13-15 years, and found that emotional intelligence could be reliably measured in adolescents. Importantly, Ciarrochi et al. (2001) found that the scale had good psychometric properties including reliability and validity when used with adolescents in Australia. Moreover, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of EIS was 0.90 and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of BEIS was 0.95, illustrating that the shorter version of the scale was equally reliable. In the current study, the BEIS yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89 when used among these adolescent participants. Also, initial PCA supported the use of the BEIS in investigating emotional intelligence in adolescents within Australia (refer Section 3.8.1.3.3 for the results of actor analysis of this scale).

Adams et al.'s (1997) Perceived Wellness Survey Scale was designed to determine how an individual perceived their overall wellbeing (refer Chapter 2, Section 2.6.1.1). This six-dimension scale measures an individual's psychological, physical, social, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual wellbeing. As with the original conceptualisation of the tool, the current study argues that wellbeing cannot be measured by examining a single dimension, instead a more balanced and holistic perspective across multiple dimensions is needed. The scale includes 36 items (each dimension contains six items). In the current study, participants' responses were coded on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = nether agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5, strongly agree), as opposed to the original 6-point scale (1 = very strongly disagree to 6 = very strongly agree) to avoid confusion among adolescents, by maintaining consistency in the response options with one neutral option. Sachdev and Verma (2004) argued that a 5-point scale is most recommended because "it would reduce the frustration level of respondents and increase response rate and response quality" (p. 104), a view also supported by Babakus and Mangold (1992). Explaining about reduction in confusion and frustration level (Sachdev & Verma, 2004) stated that 5-point scale has adequate number of response options and also provides symmetry around a neutral point, thus considered to

be a balanced and appropriate response scale as opposed to a 6-point scale. Moreover, as reported by Heggestad et al. (2019) in their comprehensive review of literature that reliability and validity of the scale is not impacted with small changes to the number of response options and in the wording of the anchors (that defines the response continuum), such as maintaining an agreement scale. These suggestions supported the adaptations made to the scale in the current study, which is further evident from PCA and Cronbach alpha calculated for adapted scale, ensuring its validity and reliability. Scores of the scale ranging from 36-180 (refer Appendix I), that is low = ≤ 112, moderate = 113-137, high = ≥ 138. High scores among adolescents indicated high wellbeing and lower scores indicated low wellbeing. 36-items of scale included random 21 positive items and 15 negative items. Therefore, before analysing the data, scores were reversed for negative items to maintain consistency with the scoring of positive items or variables. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the original scale was 0.91, showing the high reliability. Although the scale was adapted in terms of coding and its original psychometric properties represented the sample of undergraduates and employees aged 17-41 years from a computer company in the US, yet the scale reported high reliability co-efficient of 0.89 for current sample of adolescents aged 13-19 years, showing that the scale was equally reliable when used with adolescents. Also, PCA was conducted to ensure that this adapted version retained homogeneity, single-factor structure, reliability and validity of original scale, the results of which supported the adaptation and use of the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale in investigating wellbeing in adolescents within Australia (refer Section 3.6.1.3.4).

In summary, section 3.8.1.2 has outlined how the existing scales were used in the current study to collect data regarding adolescent's role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing. While the scales employed in the current study were standardised and widely recognised, it was necessary to conduct PCA of each scale to ensure they were reliable with the participant sample within an Australian context (refer Section 3.8.1.3 below).

3.8.1.3 Factor interpretation and internal consistency

The sample size and strength of the relationship between variables are prerequisites to determining the appropriateness of factor analysis for the given data (Pallant, 2007). According to Pallant (2007), a sample size of at least five cases for each of the variables is appropriate for factor analysis. However, Field (2009) contested that a sample size of at least 300 provided a more stable factor analysis. Therefore, 375 participants were involved in the quantitative phase of the current study, thus generating an adequate sample size to undertake stable PCA.

Further assumptions to consider regarding the suitability of the data for factor analysis are the corrected item-total correlation, Barlett's (1951) test of Sphericity, and the Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin value. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) (Kaiser, 1970) value should be 0.6 or above to consider data adequate for factor analysis. Barlett's (1951) test of Sphericity should be significant, that is, $p < 0.001$, and to suggest that data are normally distributed. Corrected item-total correlation represents the coherence between an item and the other items in the scale (Zijlmans et al., 2019). Another important consideration was the factor loadings coefficients which showed how strong the relationship is between the variable and the factor (Costello & Osborne, 2005) (refer subsequent sections for factor loadings of each variable). Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) recommended that for individual items within the proposed factor structure, factor loadings with an absolute value of ± 0.32 were deemed to be of practical significance, equating to approximately 10% of the shared variance. Thus, in the current study, the PCA of all scales were calculated separately as four of the scales were designed for different purposes and one utilised a 3-point Likert scale as opposed to a 5-point scale.

Internal consistency, termed as Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability (Cohen et al., 2007) (refer Table 3.4) was determined to ascertain the reliability of the factors. Inter-item correlations (Cohen et al., 2007) were set where a minimal level of 0.67 in the current study:

Table 3. 4 Cronbach's alpha co-efficient of reliability

Cronbach's Alpha value range	Level of internal consistency (reliability)
>.90	very high
.80-.90	High
.70-.79	Reliable
.60-.69	Marginal
<.60	unacceptably low

The above parameters were considered as a base to interpret factor structures and the reliability of scale measures. Furthermore, conceptually and semantically based theoretical perspectives were concurrently considered for each of the variables. As the current study employed pre-existing scales it was important to determine the semantic and conceptual significance of each item as this provided the rationale for including items or not. For instance, if a factor loading of any item was less than 0.3 it was still included, based on the semantic and conceptual significance of that item. Factor analyses of each scale are provided in the subsections below.

Role Stress Scale

The 8-item Role Stress Scale (RS) (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) (refer Appendix I) was designed to measure an individual's general experiences across numerous social roles including friends, family, school, peers, parents and teachers. Bronfenbrenner (1979) recognised these as a "individual's immediate environment" with which he or she interacts, with development taking place over time due to these interactions or relationships (p. 3). According to Liu & Kaplan (2004) the importance broad coverage of sources of role stress because "individuals dissatisfied in multiple areas presumably experience more stress than those who are unhappy in only one area" (Liu & Kaplan, 2004, p. 90).

Initial Principal Component Analysis

The Role Stress Scale's 8-items were exposed to PCA utilising SPSS Version 25. Before performing PCA, the reasonableness of the information for factor analysis was evaluated. The KMO esteem was 0.78 over the base suggested estimation of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1970) while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1951) arrived at the factual criticalness of $p = < .01$, supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. To measure whether scores for the 8-item Role Stress Scale could be summarised by a smaller set of factor scores, item responses were intercorrelated and subjected to PCA. The underlying PCA uncovered the existence of a factor with an eigenvalue higher than 1, which represented 56 % percent of the complete score. The scree plot's investigation uncovered a reasonable break after the initial factor. Therefore, it was decided to retain one factor for further investigation. The extraction of a single factor resolution was achieved successfully and yielded a high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.88$). At the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.76 the Role Stress Scale was identified by Liu and Kaplan (2004) as yielding a superior internal consistency. Therefore, with the same coefficient of 0.88 in the current study, the scale's high internal consistency was visible. The corrected item-total correlation represents the correlation between an individual item and the overall tally minus that item (Henrysson, 1963). The results for the single factor loadings and corrected item-total correlation for the eight items are presented in Table 3.5.

Table 3. 5 Factor Loading and corrected item-total correlation of Role Stress Scale

Items	Loadings	Corrected item-total correlation
RS01	0.85	0.75
RS02	0.83	0.73
RS03	0.81	0.70
RS08	0.74	0.67
RS06	0.74	0.78
RS07	0.69	0.63
RS04	0.65	0.53
RS05	0.64	0.52

All items on the scale, as in the original scale, met the prerequisite of ± 0.32 loading and were retained in the current study. The results of this analysis thereby supported the use of the Role Stress Scale in investigating role stress in adolescents in Australia.

Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale

The 4-item Purpose in Life Test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) (refer Appendix I) included items designed to measure existential stress among adolescents. In the PIL-SF scale, adolescents were asked: 'In life I have clear goals and aims'; 'My personal existence is meaningful'; 'In achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfilment'; 'I have full discovered a satisfying life purpose' (Schulenberg et al., 2011).

Initial Principal Component Analysis

Prior to performing PCA, the suitability of data of the 4 items of the PIL-SF Scale for factor analysis were assessed using SPSS Version 25. The KMO value was 0.79, above the minimum recommended value of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1970) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1951) reached statistical significance (p = < .01), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. To measure whether scores for the 4 items in the PIL-SF could be summarised by a smaller set of factor scores, item responses were subjected to PCA. The initial PCA revealed the presence of one factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1 which accounted for 75 percent of the total score variance. An inspection of the scree plot revealed a clear break after the first factor. Therefore, it was decided to retain one factor for further investigation. The extraction of a single factor resolution was successfully achieved yielding a high internal consistency (α = 0.89). According to Schulenberg et al. (2011) the original testing of the PIL-SF had good internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.86. In

the current study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.89. The results for the single factor loadings and corrected item-total correlation for the four items are presented in Table 3.6.

Table 3. 6 Factor loadings and corrected item-total correlation of Purpose in Life test-Short Form Scale

Items	Loading	Corrected item-total correlation
PIL01	0.90	0.81
PIL03	0.90	0.80
PIL02	0.84	0.71
PIL04	0.82	0.70

As Table 3.6 illustrates all items on the scale, as in the original scale, met the prerequisite of ± 0.32 loading and were retained in the current study. The results of this analysis supported the use of The Existence: Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale in investigating existential stress in adolescents in Australia.

Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale

The 10-item Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS) (Davies et al., 2010) (refer Appendix I) included items designed to measure emotional intelligence in adolescents. In this scale each dimension (appraisal of own emotions, appraisal of others' emotions, regulation of own emotions, regulation of others' emotions, utilisation of emotions) involved two items.

Initial Principal Component Analysis

The 10-items of the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale were subjected to PCA using SPSS Version 25. Before performing PCA the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed. The KMO value was 0.84 above the minimum recommended value of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1970) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1951) reached statistical significance (p = < .01), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. To measure whether scores for the 10-item Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS) could be summarised by a smaller set of factor scores, item responses were subjected to PCA. The initial PCA revealed the presence of two factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1, which accounted for 53 percent of the total score variance. An inspection of the scree plot revealed a clear break after the first factor therefore it was decided to retain one factor for further investigation. The extraction of a single factor resolution was achieved successfully and yielded a high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.89$). According to Davies et al. (2010), the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale has good internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.95. In the current study, the

Cronbach alpha coefficient was 0.89. The corrected item-total correlation represents the correlation between an individual item and the overall tally minus that item (Henrysson, 1963). The results for the single factor loadings and corrected item-total correlation for the eight items are presented in Table 3.7.

Table 3. 7 Factor loadings and corrected item-total correlation of Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale

Items	Loading	Corrected item-total correlation
BEIS05	0.83	0.69
BEIS02	0.81	0.64
BEIS09	0.78	0.66
BEIS08	0.77	0.66
BEIS07	0.77	0.71
BEIS03	0.75	0.80
BEIS10	0.74	0.74
BEIS04	0.72	0.57
BEIS06	0.65	0.70
BEIS01	0.30	0.24

All items on the scale, as in the original scale, met the prerequisite of ± 0.32 loading, except one, BEIS01. This item was retained as it was semantically consistent with the construct of emotional intelligence and was investigated through the qualitative phase of the study. The results of this analysis support the use of the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale in investigating emotional intelligence in adolescents in Australia.

Perceived Wellness Survey Scale

The 36-item Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997) (refer Appendix I) was designed to measure multiple dimensions of wellbeing such as psychological, physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual wellbeing (Adams et al., 1997). Each dimension involved six items. The results for the single factor loadings for the 36-items are presented in Table 3.8.

Initial Principal Component Analysis

The 36-items of the Perceived Wellness Survey were subjected to PCA using SPSS Version 25. Prior to performing PCA, the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed. The KMO value was 0.84, above the minimum recommended value of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1970) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

(Bartlett, 1951) reached statistical significance (p = < .01), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix.

To measure whether scores for the 36-item Perceived Wellness Survey Scale could be summarised by a smaller set of factors item responses were subjected to PCA where it became apparent that a clear factor structure could not be obtained. Initial PCA indicated nine factors with an eigenvalue greater than one, which accounted for 25 percent of the total score variance. These nine factors failed to align with the postulated constructs of physical, emotional, psychological, social, spiritual and intellectual wellbeing. It was therefore decided to construct a total score by summing the 36 items based on their semantic and conceptual properties. The items were summed in positive directions indicating perceived wellness. This overall score yielded a high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.89$). The corrected item-total correlation represented the correlation between an individual item and the overall tally minus that item (Henrysson, 1963). The results for the single factor loadings and corrected item-total correlation for the 36 items are presented in Table 3.8 below.

Table 3. 8 Factor loadings and corrected item-total correlation of Perceived Wellness Survey Scale

Items	Loading	Corrected item-total correlation
PWS35	0.79	0.71
PWS23	0.76	0.65
PWS21	0.74	0.65
PWS26	0.74	0.60
PWS08	0.72	0.61
PWS01	0.72	0.63
PWS06	0.71	0.58
PWS33	0.67	0.59
PWS29	0.65	0.60
PWS14	0.61	0.63
PWS15	0.59	0.51
PWS03	0.59	0.54
PWS18	0.59	0.51
PWS13	0.58	0.46
PWS28	0.57	0.50
PWS05	0.56	0.43
PWS19	0.50	0.44
PWS31	0.48	0.41
PWS16	0.45	0.36
PWS34	0.45	0.46
PWS22	0.44	0.33
PWS17	0.44	0.49

PWS24	0.40	0.31
PWS10	0.40	0.28
PWS11	0.36	0.44
PWS20	0.30	0.36
PWS27	0.29	0.26
PWS12	0.24	0.35
PWS30	0.17	0.16
PWS04	0.15	0.22
PWS02	-0.14	-0.04
PWS25	0.13	0.23
PWS07	0.11	0.20
PWS32	-0.07	-0.08
PWS09	0.07	0.12
PWS36	0.02	0.06

Most items of the survey, as in the original survey, met the prerequisite of ± 0.32 loading, except for some items. Notwithstanding this, these items were retained as it was conceptually required and semantically consistent with the construct of Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Costello & Osbourne, 2005; Hayton et al., 2004). Moreover, these items aligned with questions that were posed in the qualitative interview and were crucial to gain insights into participant's wellbeing. The results of this analysis supported the use of the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale in investigating the wellbeing of adolescents in Australia.

3.8.1.4 Quantitative data analysis

A series of statistical and analytical procedures were employed to establish the nature of the relationships between the variables under exploration. Quantitative data were collected through 'Qualtrics' and then exported into SPSS version 25 where all personal identifiers were converted into pseudonyms (refer Section 3.10 for ethical considerations). Exporting data from Qualtrics to SPSS reduced the potential for data entry errors. All data transferred were checked and validated. Statistical procedures employed for the current study included:

- ***Descriptive analysis*** included mean and standard deviations of the four variables role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing of adolescents. This analysis enabled overall trends or tendencies in data to emerge providing a description and summary of data in a meaningful way, while providing insights into where one score stands in comparison to another (Creswell et al., 2011);

- ***Relational analysis*** included Pearson's correlation to determine whether there were correlations between role stress and emotional intelligence; role stress and wellbeing; role stress and existential

stress; existential stress and emotional intelligence; existential stress and wellbeing; and emotional intelligence and wellbeing;

- ***Inferential analysis*** included tests of statistical significance such as t-test and ANOVA analysis, which thereby enabled comparisons between groups or relationships between two or more variables to be determined. In the current study such inferential statistics were employed to identify gender and age differences on all four variables: role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing (refer Chapter 4 for details). These analyses enabled differences between group means for identified categories to be examined (Creswell et al., 2011). Scores were examined from a sample and results were used to draw inferences or make predictions about the population (p.187); and

- ***Determining effect size*** was employed in addition to determining whether the statistical test was significant or not which assisted with measuring the quality of the distinction between two averages or two variables. In this way, deciding the impact size pinpointed the quality of the results about the relationship among variables and group differences in a quantitative study (Creswell et al., 2011).

Subsequently, the initial quantitative study was followed by qualitative semi-structured interviews with nine participants. These in-depth case studies provided insights that were used to examine and explain the nuances underpinning the quantitative results. The following section provides an overview of the qualitative phase of the current study.

3.8.2 Phase 2- Qualitative study

In explaining qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argue that this approach implies an emphasis on processes and meanings which often provide deeper insights into quantitative measures. In this way, qualitative studies provide an opportunity to enhance understandings of the phenomenon under exploration where participants are selected based on their ability to best inform the research questions (Creswell, 2012).

The qualitative phase of the current study provided insights into the lived experiences of those who scored high or low on role stress and existential stress in the quantitative study, thus enhancing understandings of adolescents' experiences of role stress and/or existential stress. Critical analysis of the lived experiences of the nine adolescents who participated in the current study enabled commonalities to be identified, thus providing a more holistic picture (Creswell, 2012; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Participant's direct quotations were used to provide additional depth and richness to themes that emerged from their narratives (Smith et al., 2016).

3.8.2.1 Multiple Case Study Approach

There are five approaches within qualitative methodologies: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case studies (Creswell, 2007). The current study relied on case studies as they enabled a granular and detailed portrayal and examination of cases (Creswell, 2007), thereby providing opportunities to conduct in-depth probing of the phenomenon under investigation (Cohen et al., 2002).

Case studies are distinguished by the size of the case, that is, whether it involves a single case or multiple cases (Stake, 2006). Either type of case study can be intrinsic or instrumental depending on the purpose of the study (Stake, 2006). An intrinsic case study provides an understanding of a particular case while an instrumental case study enables an understanding to be gained about an issue. Given that the current study aimed to investigate the phenomenon or issue across several cases, a multiple and instrumental case study approach was appropriate (Stake, 2006). According to Stake (2006), a multiple case study approach refers to research in which several cases are selected to develop a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under exploration.

In the current study, it was, therefore, necessary to further explore cases that reported high and low role and existential stress to identify variations and differences between the cases and to use these cases collectively to enhance understandings of adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress. Studying these cases provided insights into each participant's environment and specific contexts under which they did or did not report experiencing role stress and/or existential stress, thereby facilitating an exploration into how these experiences were potentially related to their emotional disposition and wellbeing.

3.8.2.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

A case study approach involves numerous data collection techniques including "observations, in-depth interviews, open-ended questionnaires, documents, and audio-visual materials" (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 233). Interviews shed light on things cannot be observed (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003) which, according to Fontana and Frey (2000), are "one of the most powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings" (p. 645). They involve the researcher asking participants broad, general questions, thus capturing their lived experiences (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). It is important to let the silences happen to ensure that participants feel comfortable in sharing their experiences regarding a particular topic. Semi-structured interviews offer flexibility to cater for diversity among participants therefore they were the most appropriate choice of data collection for Phase 2 (Noor, 2008, p. 1604). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews have been evidenced to be

more suitable for studies that aim to achieve a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Goodman, 2001).

Statistical results identified from phase 1, the quantitative study, highlighted the need to know more about the lived experiences of adolescents who either reported high role and existential stress or low/no role and existential stress. Phase 2 employed semi-structured interviews which aimed to capture the lived experiences of these participants.

In the current study, semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face in naturalistic settings to:

- investigate holistic notions of four broad areas of role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing,
- explore the association between adolescent's emotional intelligence and wellbeing with their potential stressors that may have emerged and been influenced from their interactions with their ecological environment; and
- delve into the perceptions and experiences of adolescents regarding role stress and existential stress, to gain an in-depth understanding of the interrelationship of these stressors and their relationship with their emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

Using Semi-Structured Interviews to Empower Participants

Despite several benefits, there are some limitations of semi-structured interviews which the researcher needed to consider. Firstly, participant's potential reluctance to share personal topics such as issues relating to their family or school or sensitive issues between friends could create hurdles in adolescent's smooth engagement with the interviewer. When required, the researcher handled these by reminding participants that all responses were confidential, and they were able to withdraw from the interview at any time. Further, if a participant was shy and/or slow in providing a detailed response, probe questions along with extra time were given. Probing questions such as, "Tell me more about that" or "Can you give me an example of that", helped participants elaborate and feel more comfortable and willing to expand on their experiences (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 1990). Allowing silences to occur also provided the necessary time for participants to elaborate on their responses.

Secondly, a lack of "active listening" may be a further barrier in semi-structured interviews (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019, p. 6). Pearson et al. (2006) described active listening as listening with a purpose. Clarification questions were used in addition to the detail-oriented and elaborative probing questions (Louw et al., 2011). This method of probing was employed when more details were

needed or when interpretations needed to be checked (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 1990). The active listening strategies included in the current study were:

(a) paraphrasing: "so, you are saying…",
(b) interpretation: "It sounds like you are….",
(c) probing: "And then what happened….".

In addition, audio recordings (taken with the knowledge and permission of the participants) of the interviews assisted in checking both: interpretation and accuracy.

Controlling the interview process by directing the participant towards areas of discussion is another potential limitation of semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2007). As the current study involved questions about potentially sensitive issues, it was important that participants have some control over the process (NSW Commission for Children and Young People, 2005). Tammivaara and Enright (1986) noted that open-ended questions provided opportunities for participants to actively engage in dialogue about topics that they felt more familiar with or were of interest to them. To promote participants' sense of control the interview was started by asking "Tell me about yourself and your hobbies". Additionally, open-ended questions enabled participants to control what and how much information they chose to disclose while also providing descriptive insights, reflections, and examples in their responses.

Beyer (2019) stated that while creating an open and supportive environment the researcher needs to provide ample time for the participant to reflect on questions as this results in more insightful responses. This also enables "participants [to feel] more comfortable discussing future issues with the researcher" (Dixon 2015, p. 2073). To address this in the current study, adolescents were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews, at times and places that were mutually convenient. Most participants and their parents preferred to have the interview at their home in a quiet area while others chose a meeting room at the local library. In addition, the researcher arranged the place and seating on those days and times in a way that minimised possible disturbances due to the surroundings, whether at home or the library. Before the commencement of every interview, the researcher ensured the availability of drinking water and checked that participants were comfortable. Participants were reminded that they could refuse to answer any question or withdraw at any time from the study, including the interview itself (refer Appendix F).

3.8.2.3 Recruitment of Participants for Phase 2: Qualitative Study

Purposive sampling techniques were adopted to select participants for semi-structured interviews. In purposeful sampling the "researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who

can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge and experience" (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 2). Patton (1990) suggests that the "logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth" (p. 169). Moreover, purposive sampling enables researchers to make generalisations from the sample that was being studied, thus developing a rich, more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under exploration (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). In the quantitative online survey, participants were invited to participate in a follow-up interview of approximately 10-15 minutes (refer Appendix J) by providing their contact details at the conclusion of the online survey. Once the statistical analysis of the online survey had been completed, and potential participants for the interview stage identified, the information regarding an adolescent's willingness to participate in the interview was used for cross-checking purposes. Only those adolescents who scored either high or low on the role stress and existential stress variables and indicated their willingness to participate in the semi-structured interviews were contacted. Twenty of the 375 participants provided their contact details, and 11 of these were contacted based on their phase 1 results. Out of these 11 participants, nine adolescents aged 13-19 years accepted the invitation and along with their parent/caregiver gave consent to participate in a follow-up semi-structured interview. Of these nine participants, two reported high role and existential stress and seven reported low role and existential stress on the quantitative online survey (refer Table 3.9). Purposefully selecting extreme cases such as those at either end of the continuum provided an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of their lived experiences (Bryman, 2006; Stake, 2006). This comparison provided a deeper understanding about the differences and similarities in these adolescents' perceptions and experiences of role stress and existential stress, and the potential relationship if any, that these stressors had on their emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Table 3.9 provides details of participants recruited for phase 2, qualitative semi-structured interviews.

Table 3. 9 Distribution of participants: Phase two: qualitative semi-structured interview

Pseudonym	*Age*	*Gender*	*Year level*
Joanne	13	Female	8
Kelly	13	Female	8
John	13	Male	8
Jess	13	Female	8
Lisa	15	Female	10
Daryl	14	Male	10
Mandy	19	Female	12
Sam	19	Male	12
Helen	19	Female	12

Participant's original names were converted into pseudonyms to maintain anonymity, privacy and confidentiality (refer Section 3.10.2). Table 3.10 below details these participant's raw scores on all quantitative scales and their dimensions.

Table 3. 10 Showing scores of participants recruited for semi-structured interview on the four scales and their items/dimensions from the quantitative study

Scales	*Joanne*	*Kelly*	*John*	*Jess*	*Lisa*	*Daryl*	*Mandy*	*Helen*	*Sam*
Role Stress (TT)	24	19	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
1.The number of friends you have	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2.Kinds of friends you have	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
3.Being accepted or included by friends	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
4.Your relations with your parents	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
5.Your relationship with you siblings	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
6.Your experience at school	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
7.Your relationship with teachers	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
8.Your relationship with peers	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
PIL-SF (TT)	20	16	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
1.In life I have clear goals and aims	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2.My personal experience is meaningful	5	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
3.In achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfillment	5	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
4.I have fully discovered a satisfying life purpose	5	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
BEIS (TT)	20	26	43	43	46	50	45	50	45
Appraisal of own emotions	4	4	8	8	9	10	9	10	8
Appraisal of others' emotions	4	4	9	9	10	10	10	10	10
Regulation of own emotions	4	6	8	8	9	10	10	10	9

Regulation of others' emotions	4	5	8	8	9	10	7	10	8
Utilisation of emotions	4	7	10	10	9	10	9	10	10
PWS (TT)	76	84	153	153	155	161	163	143	153
Psychological wellbeing	10	14	26	26	25	24	28	21	26
Emotional wellbeing	14	11	20	20	25	26	29	22	20
Social wellbeing	12	12	23	23	25	27	29	24	23
Physical wellbeing	16	17	30	30	25	29	26	25	30
Spiritual wellbeing	11	14	30	30	29	28	27	26	30
Intellectual wellbeing	13	16	24	24	26	27	24	25	24

As evidenced in Table 3.10, Joanne and Kelly scored higher than other participants in the Role Stress Scale and the PIL-SF Scale resulting in high role stress and high existential stress. In addition to these high scores, Joanne and Kelly both scored 20 and 26 respectively on the BEIS, similarly they scored 76 and 84 respectively on the PWS, both of which are considerably lower than other participants. These scores place Joanne's self-reported emotional intelligence and wellbeing lower than Kelly's. All the other seven participants (John, Jess, Lisa, Daryl, Mandi, Helen, Sam) in phase 2, scored 8 on the Role Stress Scale and 4 on the PIL-SF Scale, indicating low role stress and existential stress. These participants scored well in the higher range on the BEIS (43-50) and PWS Scale (143-163) with little variation among them, which indicates that they have high levels of emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

3.8.2.4 Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

According to Miles et al. (2014) "we have to face the fact that numbers and words are both needed if we are to understand the world" (p. 55). Therefore, in the current study data was initially collected using an online survey followed by qualitative semi-structured interviews that provided insights into the nuances behind participant's quantitative results. Interviews were conducted face-to-face with nine adolescents from years 8, 10 and 12, aged 13- 19 years in Australia who reported either high role stress and/or existential stress or low role stress and/or existential stress in their quantitative responses.

In the qualitative phase of the current study, open-ended questions were employed to reduce single-word responses (Cohen et al., 2007) and encourage a more open discussion leading to richer data. Consequently, the analysis further helped to explain elements that were either increasing or reducing role stress and existential stress in these adolescents, for which Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory and Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory provided an appropriate framework. The semi-structured interview schedule was designed by considering the findings of

phase 1, the research questions, and literature in four key areas of role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing. The following details the design of the interview schedule.

Role Stress Interview Questions

In the current study, role stress refers to feelings of dissatisfaction with multiple social relationships (Liu & Kaplan, 2004). Using the Role Stress Scale (Lu & Kaplan, 2004) in an online quantitative survey 375 participants aged 13-19 years rated their relationships with their friends, parents, school, teachers and peers by marking 1 = happy, 2 = neither happy nor unhappy, or 3 = unhappy. The analysis of this scale enabled adolescents who reported high role stress and low role stress to be identified and invited to a follow-up semi-structured interview. To answer the research question 'what are adolescents' experiences of role stress?' both quantitative and qualitative data was needed. For instance, in the quantitative online survey 69.9% of adolescents reported feeling 'happy' with the relationships they have with their friends, 17.1% reported being 'neither happy nor happy' and 13% indicated they were unhappy. Similarly, for their relationships with their parents and siblings 75 % reported feeling happy while 25% of adolescents did not report feeling 'happy' with these relationships. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the nuances behind these statistics and better understand why some of these participants self-reported feeling 'happy' with their relationships while others did not. To capture these insights the following questions were designed:

- Tell me more about your family
- Describe your relationship with your friends
- Describe your relationship with your school
- Describe your relationship with your teachers

Positive relationships can often protect adolescents against stress. Times of transition have been well evidenced in literature as cause adolescent's role strain therefore it was important to gain insights into their relationships (Bird & Harris, 1990; Bruyn, 2005; Fenzel, 1989). These questions therefore provided a granular understanding of participant's social relationships and ecological transition as they could potentially be contributing to their high role stress or low role stress.

Drawing on literature, questions regarding participants' community involvement were considered important as previous studies have noted community involvement as important in the development of social relationships, personal and social identity and psychological wellbeing (Albanesi et al., 2007; Christens & Dolan, 2011; Evans, 2007). Jennings et al. (2011) found that a lack of sense of

community significantly predicted emotional problems in adolescents. These studies highlighted the potential impact that these mesosystem interactions may have on an adolescent's role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing; therefore, the following questions were asked:

- What community group are you involved in and why?
- How has community participation impacted on your life goals?
- What impact does community participation have on your emotions?
- How does community participation impact on your wellbeing?

Existential Stress Interview Questions

In the current study, existential stress refers to feeling a lack of purpose or meaning in life (Schulenberg et al., 2011. Employing the Purpose in Life test – Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) the quantitative survey explored participant's levels of existential stress by asking participants to rate their agreement using a five-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, or 5 = strongly disagree. Statements included: 'In life, I have clear goals'; 'My personal existence is meaningful'; 'in achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfilment'; and 'I have fully discovered a satisfying life purpose'. The quantitative results indicated that 15.2% of participants 'disagreed' with having clear goals in life while 9.1% 'disagreed' with having a meaningful personal existence and working towards life goals. Although these results highlighted differences among participants who reported experiencing high existential stress and low existential stress, there remained a need to capture their lived experiences so that a deeper understanding could be gleaned. The following questions were therefore designed:

- Tell me about your life goals
- What support do you need to achieve your life goals?
- What changes would you want in your life?

A quantitative correlation analysis was conducted in phase One (refer Chapter 4, Section 4.4.1) where a negative correlation between role stress and existential stress was found. To answer the research question 'what, if any, is the relationship between role stress and existential stress?' and further explore this relationship, the following questions were designed to examine how participant's social relationships supported or challenged them to achieve their purpose in life:

- How do you think family is important in achieving your life goals?

- How do you think friends are important in achieving your life goal?
- How do you think peers are important in achieving your life goals?
- How do you think school is important in achieving your life goals?
- How do you think teachers are important in achieving your life goals?
- How do you think community is important in achieving your life goals?

Recognising the important bi-directional role that systems play in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, questions were developed to explore participants' identities, how they perceived themselves and how this influenced their sense of purpose in life. The following question was therefore asked:

- Tell me about yourself as a friend, peer, student, son/daughter and/or community member

Emotional Intelligence Interview Questions

Emotional intelligence in the current study refers to one's ability to appraise and regulate emotions in self and others, and utilise emotions (Davies et al., 2010) respond flexibly to changes in one's social environment and foster supportive networks. Employing the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010) in the quantitative phase of the study, participants were asked to report on their emotional intelligence by indicating 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree to appraisal of one's own emotions; appraisal of other's emotions; regulation of one's own emotions; and regulation of others' emotions; and utilisation of one's own emotions (Davies et al., 2010). Quantitative findings indicated that 9.3% of adolescents 'disagreed' that they know when their emotions change and 8.3% disagreed to recognising emotions when they experience them suggesting that these adolescents experienced an inability to appraise their own emotions. Similar results were obtained on other dimensions of emotional intelligence with 12% of adolescents reporting it difficult to regulate their emotions and 7.2% feeling unable to use their emotions appropriately. To capture the lived experiences of these adolescents the following questions were asked:

- Describe your emotional disposition
- How do you manage your emotions?

In this way, it was possible to understand how adolescents with high role stress and existential stress differed from or were similar to adolescents who self-reported low role stress and existential stress in terms of their emotional intelligence.

Further questions were designed to address a gap in the literature regarding the interrelationship between emotional intelligence and role stress, emotional intelligence and existential stress. Participant's responses to these questions provided descriptive insights into the relationship between these variables (refer Chapter 4 for further details). For instance, studies with adults highlighted a significant negative association between role stress and emotional intelligence (Lou et al., 2007; Merida-Lopez et al., 2017), yet little, to date, is known about this interrelationship in adolescents (refer Chapter 2, Section 2.8). The quantitative study identified a negative association between role stress and emotional intelligence in adolescents, however, there remains a need to explore the voices and lived experiences of adolescents so that we can understand their emotional intelligence better and how this relates to role stress and existential stress. To capture these insights the following questions were asked:

- Tell me more about your family. What your family comprises of?
    - How do you describe your relationship with each of your family members?
    - Are there any challenges? (Give me an example of when you feel challenged? What did you do? How did you do it?)
    - What impact did this have on your emotions?

- Describe your relationship with your peers
    - Have you had any challenges with your peers (please give me an example)
    - What impact does it have on your emotions?

- Describe your relationship with your friends
    - Have you had any challenges with your friends (please give me an example)
    - What impact does it have on your emotions?

- Describe your relationship with your school. How do you feel at school? (What makes you feel that way? Are there times when you don't feel that way? What are the reasons behind that?)
    - What impact does it have on your emotions?

- Describe your relationship with your teachers (Give me an example of a positive or negative relationship) Are there any challenges?
    - What impact does it have on your emotions?

Studies have found a positive association between life satisfaction and emotional intelligence in adolescents (Kong et al., 2012; Rey et al., 2011; Wols et al., 2015), however little attention has been given to understanding the interrelationship between existential stress and emotional intelligence in adolescents. To address this gap in literature, quantitative findings were complemented with the

voice of adolescents to gain an in-depth understanding of the association between existential stress and emotional intelligence by asking:

- Tell me about your life goals
    - What support do you need to achieve this (what type of encouragement works for you)?
    - What changes would you want to make in your life?
    - How does having or not having life goals impact on your emotions?

Wellbeing Interview Questions

Wellbeing refers to living in a way that enables consistent, balanced growth in one's physical, psychological, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual dimensions of wellbeing (Adams et al., 1997). Employing the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997) in the quantitative phase of the study, participants were asked to report on their wellbeing by indicating 1= strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree to items on psychological, physical, social, spiritual, emotional and intellectual wellbeing (Adams et al., 1997). These findings highlighted that on average adolescents reported a moderate level of wellbeing (refer Chapter 4) which was further explored in the qualitative phase of the study by asking:

- How do you perceive your current wellbeing?

Participant's responses provided insights into how those with high role stress and existential stress differed or were similar to those reporting low role stress and existential stress in terms of their wellbeing.

Previous studies have identified a negative relationship between role stress and wellbeing in adults (Jones et al., 2010; Merida-Lopez et al., 2017), yet little is known about this interrelationship in adolescents. Those studies that have focussed on adolescent samples have indicated a significant positive association between social support and subjective wellbeing (Bireda & Pillay, 2017; Tian et al., 2016); social connectedness and psychological wellbeing (Jose et al., 2012), therefore it was hypothesised that there is a significant association between role stress and wellbeing (refer Chapter 2, Section 2.6.4.1). In the current study, quantitative findings revealed a negative association between role stress and all dimensions of wellbeing (psychological, physical, social, spiritual, emotional and intellectual) highlighting a need to further explore participant's lived experiences regarding the impact that their social relationships have on their wellbeing. Therefore, participants were asked to:

- Tell me more about your family. What your family comprised of?

- How do you describe your relationship with each of your family members?
- Are there any challenges? (Give me an example of when you feel that way? What did you do? How did you do?)
- How did this impact on your wellbeing?

- Describe your relationship with your peers.
  - Have you had any challenges with your peers (give me an example)
  - How did this impact on your wellbeing?

- Describe your relationship with your friends
  - Have you had any challenges with your friendships (give me an example)
  - How did this impact on your wellbeing?

- Describe your relationship with your school. How do you feel at school? What makes you feel that way? Are there times when you don't feel that way? What are the resons behind that?
  - How does that impact on your wellbeing?

- Describe your relationship with your teachers (Give me an example of positive or negative relationship) Are there any challenges ?
  - How does that impact on your wellbeing?

Quantitative studies have explored adolescent's meaning or purpose in life and wellbeing and found a relationship between them (Ho et al., 2009; Brassai et al., 2010; Bronk et al., 2009). For instance, Ho et al. (2009) identified a positive association between purpose in life and three aspects of wellbeing: self-efficacy, life satisfaction and resilience. Yet, few studies have explored the interrelationship between existential stress and psychological, physical, social, spiritual, emotional and intellectual dimensions of wellbeing (refer Section 2.8). Based on the findings of previous studies, it was hypothesised that there is a significant association between existential stress and wellbeing (refer Chapter 2, Section 2.6.4.2). The quantitative analysis in the current study provided information about the extent and nature of the relationship between these variables yet the lived experiences behind these statistics was needed. Therefore, participants were asked:

- Tell me about your life goals
  - What support you need to achieve it (what type of encouragement works for you)
  - What changes would you want in your life?
  - How does that (having/not having life goals) impact your wellbeing?

3.8.2.5 Qualitative Data Analysis

A crucial aspect of any research is data analysis (Basit, 2003). Within the context of phase 2 cross-case analysis was adopted which involved identifying patterns, examining themes, similarities and differences across cases by reading and re-reading the data (Richards, 2005; Stake, 2006). In this type of analysis "researchers accumulate case knowledge, compare and contrast cases, and in doing so,

produce new knowledge" (Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008, p. 1)., after collecting, coding and categorising data from the semi-structured interviews with nine participants, comparisons between participants lead to commonalities and differences being identified which results in the development of potential theories (Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008).

The semi-structured interviews were audiotaped to offer a permanent and complete record that could also be reviewed when analysing data. Each interview lasted between 20 and 30 minutes, depending on the participant's ability and/or willingness to articulate and share their experiences. Recordings were transcribed for analysis with audiotapes being numbered and labelled with a unique identifier. For example, if the participant's name was 'Sam Patrick' from year level 8 aged 13 years, the label was assigned as 'SP0813'. Participant's original information such as name, age, year level, the school name where appropriate, was collected and kept confidential as per ethical requirements, to enable their interview responses to be linked to their survey responses (refer Section 3.8).

On completion of the semi-structured interviews, audio-recorded transcripts were typed into a Microsoft Word document. Data was coded manually, because of relatively small number of interviews and for the researcher to gain a deeper connection with participant's responses (Basit, 2003; Bell, 2005) by reading and re-reading transcripts. Three types of coding were applied: 'descriptive', 'topic' and 'analytical' (Richards, 2015). As Richards (2015) explains, "descriptive" coding involves collating demographic data about the case being studied such as "age and gender" (p. 109). In the current study, "descriptive" coding was completed to organise participant's demographic details such as their name, age, gender and year level. Additionally, an initial framework was developed from the items in the interview template and this formed "topic" coding (Richards, 2005, p. 88) such as family, peers and teachers which highlighted text that was related to a particular topic. After describing the case (descriptive coding) and identifying topics (topic coding), analytical coding was conducted. According to Richards (2015) analytical coding "refers to coding that comes from interpretation and reflection on meaning" (p. 112). In the process of analytical coding for this study, 'common themes' emerged in numerous topics, highlighting a common response pattern. For example, one of the themes centred on the *role stress* therefore, in analytical coding, rather than merely storing demographic information or naming the topic, consideration was given to the meanings which enabled such categories to be formed (Richards, 2015). In this type of coding, the researcher continuously asks "is that interesting?... why is it interesting?... [and] 'why am I interested in that?" (Richards, 2015, p. 89).

These three levels of coding allowed analysis beyond merely reading and reviewing separate data records, as all information regarding a topic was gathered in one place for deeper analysis. Thus,

coding and interpretation of data, guided by theoretical perspectives, together with critical analysis of literature as presented in Chapter Two, helped to gain an in-depth understanding of adolescents' experiences of role and existential stress, whilst providing insights into the potential relationship that these stressors have with emotional intelligence and/or wellbeing.

To answer the research questions and capture participant's lived experiences, direct quotations were used to make their experiences more alive (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003) thus adding richness and clarity to the themes that emerged (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Smith et al., 2009). Cross-case analysis enabled an in-depth understanding of role and existential stress in adolescents to be gained, thus highlighting similarities and differences among and across cases from the participants' perspectives.

3.9 Validation

Historically, the idea of rigour has dominated discussions of quality in qualitative research (Giddings & Grant, 2009, p. 122). Within the field of positivist research, the terms reliability and validity are considered the same as rigour, which underpins generalisation (Patton, 2002). When mixed-methods are used to collect data, it is argued that this approach supports rigour (Giddings & Grant, 2009). To ensure high standards in mixed-method research, validating both the quantitative and qualitative elements. In the current study the term 'validation' is used as an umbrella concept instead of 'rigour' (Giddings & Grant, 2009). Giddings and Grant (2009) suggest that while designing and conducting a mixed-method study, not only the simple application of rigorous scientific standards is required but several other techniques need to be specified to ensure the overall validity of the study.

3.9.1 An explanatory sequential mixed-method approach: Developmental, Complementary, Triangulation and Completeness Functions

In the current study, employing an explanatory sequential mixed-method research design ensured developmental, complementarity, triangulation, and completeness of results, thus increasing the overall integrity and validity of the findings (Bryman, 2008; Greene & Caracelli, 1997). The developmental function of the explanatory mixed-methods approach enables results from one method to inform or develop another (Greene et al., 2001). Specifically, the phase one quantitative analysis informed the categorisation of participants and thus informed the selection of participants for phase 2 semi-structured interviews.

The complementary function of the explanatory sequential mixed-method approach seeks to clarify and enhance results from one method with those obtained from another (Creswell et al., 2011; Greene et al., 1989). The two phases of the current study complemented each other and enabled a deeper exploration of the same phenomenon (Bryman, 2008).

"Triangulation refers to the designed use of multiple methods, with offsetting or counteracting biases, in investigations of the same phenomenon to strengthen the validity of inquiry results" (Greene et al., 1989, p. 256). Triangulation in an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach supports the use of two or more methods that are conducted independently to investigate the same phenomenon (Bryman, 2008). Methodological triangulation was evident in the current study as both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to validate and advance the findings. Further, collecting evidence through multiple case studies enabled data to be triangulated across cases, thus validating the findings (Miles et al., 2014).

The underlying premise of completeness, also known as 'thick description', refers to a complete picture of the phenomenon being obtained by employing both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study (Bryman, 2008). Thereby in the current study, data from the interviews helped to explain the findings from the quantitative data, therefore providing a greater understanding and insight into the phenomenon under exploration. To enable an understanding of the rigour undertaken for the explanatory sequential mixed-method design of this study, it was more appropriate to address rigour for quantitative and qualitative studies separately (Giddings & Grant, 2009) as outlined below.

3.9.2 Rigour in Phase 1: Quantitative study

Ensuring the reliability and validity of the quantitative research enabled the researcher to draw significant inferences from the outcomes. This involved ensuring that the scales were adopted, adapted, or constructed in a reliable and valid way in the study (Giddings & Grant, 2009). Therefore, the rigour of phase 1 was addressed by using valid and reliable pre-existing scales for collecting data regarding role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing (refer Section 3.8.1.2 for detailed information on scales). In addition to validity and reliability, due consideration was given to how the scales were developed, what the scales measured, what populations the scales had been designed for and how the scales had been administered (Rudestam, & Newton, 2007) (refer Chapter 2, for a detailed discussion). Validation, internal consistency and reliability of the quantitative data were also addressed through statistical and analytical processes and procedures (refer Section 3.8.1.3).

A number of checks were carried out to ensure validity and reliability in the quantitative phase of the research. For instance, all scales were assessed based on the sample in the current study where Principal Component Analysis was performed to test the construct validity when used with adolescents aged 13-19 years in Australia. The decision regarding retaining the number of factors in the process of factor analysis was based on the Kaiser criterion (eigenvalue greater than 1), the scree test and semantical and conceptual meaningfulness of the item as per the original scales (Costello & Osbourne, 2005). Based on Worthington and Whittmaker's (2006) recommendation, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used to assess the suitability of the sample for factor analysis through principal component analysis. Also, Cronbach's coefficient alpha, which was above 0.60 for each scale, was determined by performing an internal consistency analysis (reliability), thus ensuring that the scales were highly reliable when used with adolescents aged 13-19 years in Australia.

3.9.3 Rigour in Phase 2: Qualitative study

To ensure the rigour in the qualitative study, it was vital that the information reported by the participants, as well as the researcher's interpretation of that information, provided valid and trustworthy findings (Giddings & Grant, 2009). Giddings and Grant (2009) purport that by employing more than one of the strategies such as, clear articulation of the research questions, triangulation, auditability, expert critique, member checking, reliability, negative case, relevance or transferability, one can ensure the validity of qualitative research. The section below outlines how some of these strategies were employed in the current study.

Giddings and Grant (2009) argue that the clear articulation of the research questions is the foremost strategy to ensure the validity in qualitative research. According to them, it is important to clearly articulate the research questions "as it guides the data collection and analysis process and is expected to be answered by the findings" (Giddings & Grant, 2009, p. 126). For the current study, the research questions focussed on gaining an in-depth understanding of role stress and existential stress in adolescents in relation to their emotional intelligence and wellbeing (refer Section 3.2).

Furthermore, to maximise the credibility of results, triangulation of data was employed. As discussed in section 3.9.1, the findings generated from phase 2 of the study were triangulated with those generated from phase 1. Therefore, the breadth of understanding that was afforded by the quantitative study (n = 375) complemented the depth of understanding gleaned by the qualitative study (n = 9) increasing generalisability or transferability (external validity) while ensuring quality/trustworthiness (internal validity). This in turn helped to support the integrity of the research (Lawrence et al., 2015).

Transferability is another important measure that demonstrates rigour in qualitative research (Maher et al., 2018). Maher et al. (2018) purport that "because qualitative research is specific to a particular context, it is important a 'thick description' of the particular research context is provided allowing the reader to assess whether it is transferable to their situation or not" (p. 3). In the current study, a detailed description was provided regarding how the statistical quantitative analysis informed: the quantitative results and selection of participants for qualitative interviews; the interview template; the inclusion of participant's voices through quotations which enabled the reader to decide whether findings could be transferred to their context "because of shared characteristics" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 32).

Applying a cross-case analysis to the development of themes is inherently validating (Creswell, 2012), with themes and categories continually undergoing revision, through regular meetings with supervisors to discuss coding and interpretations. The process of independently coding, reflecting on these codes before meeting to discuss them enabled codes and interpretation to be refined (refer Appendix P for description of codes with an example quote from the data). As such, the evolutionary process of theme development contributed to increased accuracy in the way the data was identified and represented in the emerging and final themes.

3.10 Ethical Consideration

The term "ethics" refers to questions of right or wrong (Fraenkal & Wallen, 2003, p. 55). It is the researcher's responsibility to carefully evaluate and address any ethical concerns to minimise the chance of any harm to participants, either physically or psychologically, is addressed (Fraenkal & Wallen, 2003). In the current study, due consideration was given to the ethical conduct of the study which includes two themes: "the risk and benefits of research, and participants' consent" as mentioned in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007, 2018, p. 8). Due consideration to these themes ensures the application of values and principles of ethical conduct … [such as] respect for human beings, research merit and integrity, justice and beneficence' (p.11). Thus, the following sub-sections provide detailed discussion regarding addressing ethical conduct in the current research.

3.10.1 Protection of participants

Research studies involving sensitive issues challenge researchers and participants, leading many researchers to exclude children or young people with mental health challenges as they consider them

to be vulnerable or sensitive, thus depriving them of the benefit of being involved in research (Lloyd-Richardson et al., 2015). Yet such sensitivity and vulnerability should not be an obstacle and instead be viewed as an opportunity for researchers to explore and understand more about adolescent's mental health and wellbeing. For instance, Lloyd-Richardson et al. (2015) conducted research with adolescents who engaged in non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) and found that they did not report any significant changes in NSSI behaviour or urges by responding to NSSI questions (p. 14). Whitelock and Pietrusza (2013) examined the experiences of adolescents who took part in studies related to mental health problems and reported the benefits of participating in such studies, such as providing opportunities for self-reflection, disclosure and help-seeking intentions. Similarly, Muehlenkamp et al. (2015) reported that participants felt they were positively contributing to society by participating in such studies regarding their mental state.

Ethical considerations in the current study included the involvement of adolescents aged between 13-19 years, a group often considered vulnerable (Richardson et al., 2015), and exploring sensitive issues such as role stress and existential stress. The study therefore closely adhered to the ethical protocols set forward by the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (ACRCR, Australia, 2018) and University of South Australia Human Research Ethics (UniSA HRE). Written approval was sought from the University of South Australia Human Research Ethics Committee and, where necessary, the Department of Education and Children's Services (now Department for Education) prior to participants being approached. Approval for the current study from the University of South Australia Human Research Ethics Committee was granted on 27th November 2017 (refer Appendix K: UniSA Human Research Ethics Committee Approval) and from the Department for Education on 22nd March 2018 (refer Appendix O: Department for Education and Child Development approval). Contact details of the researcher, supervisors and mental health organisations such as Headspace and Beyond Blue were provided on each page of the online survey. Participants were advised that they could discontinue or postpone the survey or interview at any time if necessary, without any penalty.

3.10.2 Confidentiality, Privacy, and Anonymity

Participant's confidentiality was maintained and assured throughout the study. In the main study, information regarding a participant's name, age, year level, gender and contact details were required in order to send invitations for the semi-structured interviews. However, original information regarding the student's name was converted into a pseudonym which was used to maintain their confidentiality and anonymity. Other than providing the web link to participants that gave access to the online survey, a QR code was provided to the participants to gain an easy access, that is, participants would be able to reach website directly by just scanning the QR code.

Original and identifying information was stored securely and separately from other data in a lockable filing cabinet in G4-06, Mawson Lakes campus, University of South Australia. The University of South Australia's guidelines were adhered to and data was guarded and stored under strictly controlled measures, password protected for electronic storage, or in locked filing cabinets in secured rooms. All electronic data will be securely stored for a period of seven years on a password-protected computer and on the University of South Australia's secure server. No data about participants was shared with anyone other than the researcher's supervisors, and any non-essential data has been destroyed.

3.10.3 Informed and voluntary consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants in accordance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (Australian Research Council 2007, 2018). Participants were fully informed about the purpose, procedures, risks and benefits of being involved in the research. According to Lloyd-Richardson et al. (2015), research involving mental health issues must include the following explanation: "that the research is separate from any care or treatment the participant might be experiencing… that engaging in research has absolutely no impact on participant ability to receive clinical care or on the quality of this care" (p. 14). Participants were advised that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Informed consent was signed once the participant agreed to take part in the study. Participants were advised that they could decline to answer a question or discuss a topic if they wanted. Information relating to the timing and contact details of the researcher and her supervisors was made also available.

Where the participant was under 18 years of age, informed consent was sought from their parents/caregivers. Once consent was obtained, if applicable, assent was obtained from the minor (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 136). Moreover, informed consent was obtained separately at each stage of recruitment including the pilot study, online survey and semi-structured interviews. Thus, ethical issues were considered and employed throughout the current study.

3.11 Conclusion

Chapter Three has argued for the appropriateness of employing a mixed-method approach through the pragmatist orientation, to facilitate the explanatory investigation into the phenomenon under study, in particular, gaining insights into role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing in adolescents. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory together with

Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory provided a theoretical lens that underpinned the study.

The Adolescent Wellbeing model used to answer the research questions was presented in this chapter (refer Section 3.5) and highlighted the rigour and appropriateness of the study. The quantitative online survey was utilised to identify the level of role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing in adolescents; to measure and determine what, if any, relationship existed among these key variables; and to identify gender and year level differences across variables. The qualitative semi-structured interviews were employed to gain further insights into the lived experiences of adolescents who reported either high role and existential stress or low/no role and existential stress, thus providing an in-depth understanding of their experiences.

Thus, the current chapter provided detailed information about the research design, recruitment of participants, research tools, data analysis and ethical considerations. The following chapters will provide the quantitative (refer Chapter 4) and qualitative findings (refer Chapter 5 and 6) before culminating in a discussion of the findings and implications these have on future policy and practice (refer Chapter 7).

Chapter 4. Quantitative Analysis: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

Using the explanatory sequential mixed method research design described in Chapter3, this chapter presents Phase One of the study: the quantitative analysis that aimed to ascertain self-reported levels of role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing for adolescents across year levels 8 to 12, and to identify any potential relationships between these constructs. Specifically, Chapter Four examined the descriptive statistics for individual adolescent self-reports across the four constructs and critically analysed the direction and strength of any identified relationships between: role stress and existential stress; role stress and emotional intelligence; role stress and wellbeing; existential stress and emotional intelligence; existential stress and wellbeing; and emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Further investigation explored potential gender and year level differences in role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and/or wellbeing among adolescents.

A total of 375 adolescents across year levels 8 to 12 from metropolitan Adelaide, South Australia participated in a 58-item quantitative online survey, comprised of four existing scales as described in Chapter 3, Section 3.8.1.2. These included the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004); Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011); Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010); and the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997), to measure the variables role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing, respectively. The survey was conducted through the 'Qualtrics survey tool' as outlined in Chapter 3, Section 3.8.1. In keeping with the explanatory sequential mixed method research design and pragmatist paradigm, the findings of the quantitative survey also enabled participant identification and recruitment for Phase Two of the study, the qualitative semi-structured follow-up interviews. The nine case studies presented in Chapters 5 and 6 provide deeper insight and analysis of the unique characteristics of identified self-reports of role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing, as well as the relationships between these constructs, beyond the quantitative measurements (Bryman, 2008). Identification and critical analysis of ecological influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and psychosocial elements (Erikson, 1968) potentially influencing adolescent self-report scores of role stress and existential stress, and relationship with emotional intelligence and/or wellbeing was integrated into Phase One. Informed by the theoretical and empirical background presented in Chapter Two, this phase begins by examining adolescent self-reports of experiences of role stress and existential stress, followed by correlational analysis to identify any potential association between the constructs of role

stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and/or wellbeing. In detail, this chapter examines the following research question, sub questions and hypotheses.

4.2 Research Questions

- What are adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress and what are the potential relationships of these stressors with their emotional intelligence and wellbeing?

    - What are adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress?
    - What, if any, relationship is there between adolescents' role stress and existential stress?
    - What, if any, relationship does role stress and/or existential stress have on adolescents' emotional intelligence?
    - What, if any, relationship does role stress and existential stress have on adolescents' wellbeing?
    - What, if any, relationship is there between emotional intelligence and adolescents' wellbeing?

As identified in Chapter Two (refer Section 2.4), positive stress can be a motivating factor, however continued exposure to stress can have a harmful impact physically and/or psychologically (Seyle, 1974; 1983), on adolescents' lives. However, little attention has been given to exploring whether adolescents experience the specific stressors of role and/or existential stress and, if so, to what degree. Not has much attention been given to identifying any relationship between role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and/or wellbeing. Therefore, the following research hypotheses were tested to inform the above-mentioned research questions:

- There is significant association between adolescents' role stress and existential stress.
- There is significant association between adolescents' role stress and emotional intelligence.
- There is significant association between adolescents' role stress and wellbeing.
- There is significant association between adolescents' existential stress and emotional intelligence.
- There is significant association between adolescents' existential stress and wellbeing.
- There is significant association between adolescents' emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

4.3 Descriptive Analysis

Presentation of data and then extraction of information from data is the most common form of descriptive analysis used in educational research (Soloman, 2010). Descriptive statistics describe "the midpoint of a spread of scores, usually referred to as the measure of central tendency, and the spread of scores known as the dispersion or variance" (Fisher & Marshall, 2009, p. 93). In this study, initial descriptive analysis including skewness and kurtosis were important values to ascertain whether the data satisfied the properties of normal distribution (Fisher & Marshall, 2009). Examination of the distribution of scores was required before deciding about further statistical analysis, including identification of any association among variables (refer Section 4.4); and choice of inferential analysis techniques (for gender and year level differences). Table 4.1 provides a summary of descriptive statistics for responses of the 375 adolescent participants across year levels 8 to 12, for the key variables: role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing.

Table 4. 1 Descriptive statistics and alpha coefficients of variables

Variables	*Scale name*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Range= (Min-Max)*	*Skewness*	*Kurtosis*	*α*
Role Stress	Role Stress	12.01	4.32	8-24	0.98	0.26	0.88
Existential stress	Purpose in Life test- Short Form	9.04	3.18	4-19	0.53	-0.24	0.89
Emotional intelligence	Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale	37.15	5.90	20-50	0.94	0.78	0.89
Wellbeing	Perceived Wellness Survey	124.35	15.12	76-163	-0.23	-0.39	0.89

Notes: (a) N = 375, SD = Standard Deviation, α = Alpha (shows internal consistency of scale)

As evidenced in Table 4.1, all four variables presented with acceptable levels of skewness and kurtosis for parametric analyses to proceed, that is, less than ± 1.0 (Curran et al., 1996). Furthermore, the value of Cronbach's alpha for the constructs of role stress (0.88), existential stress (0.89), emotional intelligence (0.89), and wellbeing (0.89) respectively, were within the range of acceptable values of alpha, that is, 0.70-0.95, indicating high reliability of all the scales (DeVellis, 2003).

4.3.1 Descriptive statistics for role stress

Experiences of role stress were initially sought through adolescent responses to the 8-item Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) survey items. As evident from Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1, the mean score for role stress was 12.01, with a standard deviation of 4.32. Precise comparisons with earlier research

were not possible due to differences in coding of scale items and also the original scale was used predominantly with an adult sample (refer Chapter 3, Section 3.8.1.2). For the participants in the current study, the mean value suggested that, on average, adolescents self-reported experiencing moderate role stress i.e., value of mean lies between 9-24 (low = ≤ 9, moderate = 10-15, high = ≥16) (refer Section 3.8.1.2). Cronbach's alpha of 0.88 identified that the scale had high reliability i.e., the items of the scale have high internal consistency (Hulin et al., 2001). The value of standard deviation (4.32), skewness (0.98) and kurtosis (0.26) further indicated that the distribution of role stress scores was near normal (refer Figure 4.1 and Table 4.1); i.e., the selected sample of 375 adolescent participants were representative of the population.

Figure 4. 1 Histogram for the variable role stress

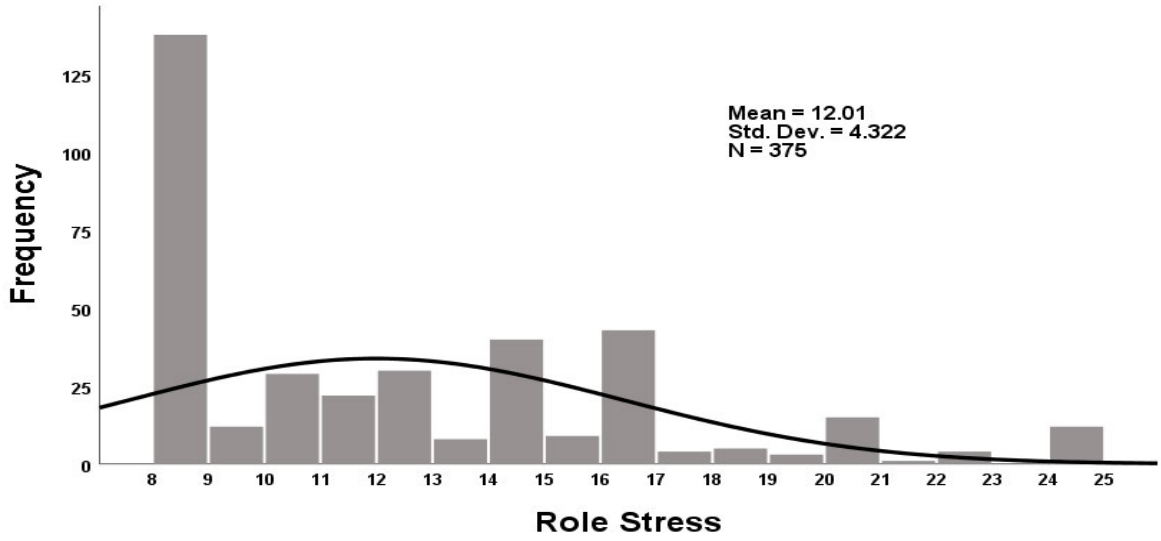


Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 provided the overall descriptive statistics of the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004). Outlined below, Table 4.2 provides the descriptive statistics such as mean, SD, and frequency for adolescent's responses to each of the eight Role Stress Scale items.

Table 4. 2 Descriptive statistics for variable Role Stress Scale items

Scale items	*Mean*	*SD*	*Range = (Min- Max)*	*Frequency*		
				Feeling happy (1)	*Neither happy nor unhappy (2)*	*Feeling unhappy (3)*
1.The number of friends you have	1.40	0.69	1-3	270 (72%)	60 (16%)	45 (12%)
2.Kinds of friends you have	1.42	0.71	1-3	262 (69.8%)	64 (17.1%)	49 (13.1%)
3.Being accepted or included by friends	1.44	0.71	1-3	257 (68.5%)	69 (18.4%)	49 (13.1%)
4.Your relationship with your parents	1.31	0.59	1-3	283 (75.5%)	67 (17.8%)	25 (6.7%)
5.Your relationship with you siblings	1.30	0.57	1-3	282 (75.2%)	72 (19.2%)	21 (5.6%)
6.Your experience at school	1.72	0.87	1-3	207 (55.2%)	66 (17.6%)	102 (27.2%)
7.Your relationship with teachers	1.81	0.88	1-3	187 (49.8%)	73 (19.5%)	115 (30.7%)
8.Your relationship with peers	1.61	0.81	1-3	224 (59.7%)	73 (19.5%)	78 (20.8%)

Notes: (a) *N* = 375, *SD*= Standard Deviation

As depicted in Table 4.2, for each of the eight items of the Role Stress Scale, participants were asked to state their level of happiness using the three responses: 1- feeling happy, 2- neither happy nor unhappy, or 3- feeling unhappy. A higher score for each item represents higher role stress. Adolescent responses (*N* = 375*)* reported a small variation across the eight items, with an SD ranging from 0.57 (item five) to 0.88 (item seven). Overall, family relationships reported in item four 'your relationship with your parents' and item five 'your relationship with your siblings', recorded the lowest mean scores (*M* = 1.31) and (*M* = 1.30) respectively, indicating slightly lower role stress on average in these areas. That is, over 75 % of adolescent participants reported being happy with their relationships with their parents and siblings. However, it is important to note the number of adolescents who reported being unhappy with their relations with parents 6.7% (*n* = 25) and siblings 5.6% (*n* = 21) or neither happy nor unhappy with parents 17.8% (*n* = 67) and siblings 19.2% (*n* = 72). That is, nearly one in four adolescents did not report being happy with their relationships with parents and/or siblings, a point for further consideration.

Adolescent responses in relation to friendships across the first three items: 'the number of friends you have'; 'kinds of friends you have'; 'being accepted or included by friends', reported slightly higher mean scores (*M* = 1.40), (*M* = 1.42) and (*M* =1.44) respectively. That is, on average, participants were

seemingly nether happy nor unhappy across these three items; while for item one 'the number of friends you have', 12% (*n* = 45), item two 'kinds of friends you have', 13.1% (*n* = 49), and item three 'being accepted or included by friends', 13.1% (*n* = 49), high role stress in relation to friendships was reported. While there were a significant number of adolescent participants feeling happy with their friendships, that is, 72% (*n* = 270) feeling happy with the 'number of friends', 69.8% (*n* = 262) feeling happy with their 'kinds of friends' and 68.5% (*n* = 257) feeling happy in 'being accepted or included by friends', 30.2% (*n* = 113) did not specifically report feeling happy with their 'kinds of friends', with 31.5% (*n* = 118) or 'being accepted or included by friends', and 28% (*n = 105)* or feeling happy with the 'number of friends'. These statistics therefore identified relationships with friends as a further area to consider as a potential influence on adolescent experiences of role stress.

Of note, school relationships across item six 'experience at school', item seven 'relationship with teachers' and item eight 'relationship with peers' with the mean values (*M* = 1.72), (*M* = 1.81) and (*M* = 1.61) respectively, recorded the highest reported mean scores for the Role Stress Scale, thus potentially indicating slightly higher role stress in school relationships compared to the other items for some adolescents. Across the scale, item seven recorded the highest mean score (*M* = 1.81), with 30.7% (*n* = 115) of the 375 participants reporting being unhappy with their 'relationship with teachers', therefore potentially experiencing high role stress. Overall, 50.2% (*n* = 188) of adolescent participants did not record that they were happy with their relationships with teachers, that is, over half of the sample. This finding somewhat supported Fenzel's (1989) and Bruyn's (2005) findings that school-related factors are significant contributors to high role strain for some adolescents, placing them at potential risk of role stress. Whilst these studies are not directly comparable as they ask specific questions within each domain of role strain, it is of note that the current study's role stress results slightly varied from Bruyn's (2005) US study investigating role strain among 749 adolescents with mean age of 13.05 years (refer Ch. 2, Section 2.4.2.4), whereby adolescents reported school role strain (*M* = 2.88) to be the most influential factor, followed by parent (*M* = 2.25), then teacher (*M* = 2.04) and peer (*M* = 1.64) factors. In the current study, adolescent reports of 'experience at school' yielded the second highest score for role stress, with 27.2% (*n* = 102) of participants reporting unhappiness and, overall, 44.8% (*n* = 168) not reporting being happy with their school experience. Similarly, the current study's findings are partially consistent with Fenzel (1989). In their quantitative study on role strain among 120 adolescents with average age 11 years, Fenzel (1989) revealed that the second highest source of role strain among adolescents was school demands (*M* = .35) after parent control (*M* = .39), whereas the least source of role strain was teacher relations (*M* = .22) followed by peer interaction (*M* = .33). Unhappiness with peers was reported as being the third highest item for high role stress in the current study with 20.8% (*n* = 78) reporting being unhappy with relationships with peers, and overall 40.3% (*n* = 151) not reporting being happy (including neither being happy or

unhappy) with their peer relationships. In contrast to Fenzel's (1989) findings of relationships with parents yielding the second highest score for role stress, in the current study, parents were ranked second lowest of the school environment items as previously reported, albeit with a reported high role stress factor for 6.7% (n = 25) adolescent participants. Rather, for participants in this study, 'relationship with teachers' were reported as the highest role stress item. In acknowledging these findings, it is important to note limitations in comparing role strain and roles stress as identified in Chapter Two, however given limited studies with adolescent participants within this field, some initial understanding can be gained of the significant number of adolescent participants who report being unhappy across all role stress items, and thus warrant deeper exploration.

In reviewing the frequency distributions of adolescents on each item, the highest percentage of adolescents reported that they were happy on each item: with relationship with parents (75.5%), relationship with siblings (75.2%), number of friends (72%), kinds of friends (69.8%), being accepted or included by friends (68.5%), relationship with teachers (49.8%) relationship with peers (59.7%) and experiences at school (55.2%). On average, participants in this study, reported experiencing moderate role stress, however, a significant number of adolescents reported being neither happy nor unhappy across items, with some participants reporting being unhappy, thus potentially experiencing high role stress. These descriptive statistics provide an overall snapshot of participants' initial reports of role stress, and the potential relationships with existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing will be analysed later in this chapter. Multiple case studies in Chapters 5 and 6 provide deeper analysis of the broad items within the Role Stress Scale and of other emerging factors from the perspective of participants reporting high role stress and existential stress and those reporting low role and existential stress. Therefore, descriptive analysis of adolescent participants' self-reports of existential stress follows.

4.3.2 Descriptive statistics for existential stress

Adolescent participants' experience of existential stress was initially sought through their responses to the 4-item Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (PIL-SF; Schulenberg et al., 2011), as part of the overall survey design presented in Chapter 3 (refer Section 3.8.1.2). PIL-SF scores ranged from 4 to 20 as recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, with higher scores suggesting potentially lower perceived purpose in life and higher existential stress, and lower scores suggesting potentially higher perceived purpose in life and lower existential stress. As evidenced for the existential stress variable in the current study in Figure 4.2 and Table 4.1, the mean value (M = 9.04) and standard deviation 3.18 suggested that overall, on average, adolescents reported experiencing moderate existential stress (low= $\leq$ 8, moderate= 9-12, high= $\geq$13) (refer Section 3.8.1.2). This finding varied slightly to

Schulenberg et al.'s (2016) findings from the US study of 91 adolescents aged 12-18 years, reporting on average a high level of purpose in life (*M* = 21.34) on a 7-point Likert scale (refer Section 2.4.3.5). The Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 in the current study supported the scale's high level of reliability, which was reflective of the reliability of 0.89 when the scale was applied in Schulenberg et al.'s (2016) study. In the current study, the value of standard deviation (3.18), skewness (0.53) and Kurtosis (-0.24) indicated that the distribution was near normal, which indicated that the selected sample was representative of the population.

Figure 4. 2 Histogram for the variable existential stress



Table 4.3 provides the descriptive statistics for the variable existential stress, reported by adolescent participants in response to the 4-item Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2010). These include the mean, SD, and frequency on each scale item across a 5-point Likert scale; 1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= disagree, or 5= strongly disagree.

Table 4. 3 Descriptive statistics for the variable existential stress

Items	*M*	*SD*	*Range = (Min-Max)*	*Frequency*				
				Strongly agree (1)	*Agree (2)*	*Neither agree nor disagree (3)*	*Disagree (4)*	*Strongly disagree (5)*
1.In life I have clear goals and aims	2.27	0.97	1-5	93 (24.8%)	132 (35.2%)	107 (28.5%)	42 (11.2%)	1 (0.3%)
2.My personal experience is meaningful	2.22	0.87	1-5	69 (18.4%)	193 (51.5%)	79 (21%)	30 (8%)	4 (1.1%)
3.In achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfillment	2.16	0.87	1-5	82 (21.9%)	188 (50.1%)	71 (18.9%)	33 (8.8%)	1 (0.3%)
4.I have fully discovered a satisfying life purpose	2.39	0.97	1-5	75 (20%)	134 (35.7%)	113 (30.1%)	51 (13.6%)	2 (0.6%)

Notes: (a) *N* = 375, *SD*= Standard Deviation

As depicted in Table 4.3, on average, adolescent participants (*N* = 375) revealed limited variation across the four items, with mean values ranging from 2.16 to 2.39. This was evidenced by descriptive analysis for participant responses either strongly agreeing or agreeing across the items as follows: item three, 'in achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfillment' (*M*= 2.16), 72% (*n* = 270); item two, 'my personal experience is meaningful' (*M* = 2.22), 69.9% (*n* = 262); item one, 'in life I have clear goals and aim' (*M* = 2.27), 60% (*n* = 225); and item four, 'I have fully discovered a satisfying life purpose' (*M* = 2.39), 55.7% (*n* = 209). Initial analysis seemingly indicated that on average many adolescent participants agreed with these statements, thereby potentially self-reporting experiencing lower existential stress.

On deeper analysis, however, a considerable number of participants reported moderate to high existential stress with a total of 14.2% (*n* = 53) either disagreeing (13.6%, *n* = 51) or strongly disagreeing (0.6%, *n* = 2) with item four, 'I have fully discovered a satisfying life purpose'. A further 30.1% (*n* = 113) neither agreed nor disagreed, thereby a total of 44.3% (*n* = 166) adolescent participants did not report agreement in discovering a satisfying life purpose. Similar moderate to high existential stress levels were reported by some adolescents in relation to item one, 'In life I have clear goals and aims', with a total of 11.5% (*n* = 43) either disagreeing (11.2%, *n* = 42) or strongly disagreeing (0.3%, *n* = 1). A further 28.5% (*n* = 107) neither agreed nor disagreed, thereby a total of 40% (*n* = 150) adolescent participants did not report agreement in having clear life goals and aim. Moderate to high existential stress was also reported by some adolescents in relation to item two, 'my personal experience is meaningful' with a total of 9.1% (*n* = 34) either disagreeing (8%, *n* = 30) or strongly disagreeing (1.1%, *n* = 4). A further 21% (*n* = 79) neither agreed nor disagreed, thereby a

total of 30.1% (*n* = 113) of adolescent participants did not report agreement in having personal meaningful experiences in life. In relation to item three 'in achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfillment', moderate to high existential stress was also reported by some adolescents, with a total of 9.1% (*n* = 34) either disagreeing (8.8%, *n* = 33) or strongly disagreeing (0.3%, *n* = 1). A further 18.9% (*n* = 71) neither agreed nor disagreed, thereby a total of 28% (*n* = 105) of adolescent participants did not report having personal meaningful experiences in life.

In analysing the frequency distribution of responses to the 4-item Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011), on average adolescents reported experiencing moderate existential stress with an overall mean of 9.04. On all the four individual items, on average adolescents recorded relatively low to moderate existential stress. However, while a significant number reported having purpose in life, the initial descriptive analysis identified a significant number of adolescents who did not report developing purpose in life, therefore potentially exposing them to the risk of experiencing moderate to high existential stress. These findings align with adolescent participants' reports of role stress (refer Section 4.3.1), and the findings of previous studies addressing this period of adolescence whereby many first encounter existential challenges (Damon et al., 2003; Erikson, 1968; Hacker, 1994). Within the context of this study, the significant number of adolescent participants neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the purpose in life items may be still be working through Erikson's (1968) psychosocial developmental stage of role versus identity confusion; that is, engaging in natural existential questioning including 'who am I?' 'why am I here?' and 'what is the meaning of my life?' as outlined in section 2.3.2.1.

In relation to Hacker's (1994) existential view of adolescence, as these participants are experiencing existential conditions and everyday life events, how they cope with this is significant in their ability to gain "a deeper and profound awareness of his or her existence in the world" (p. 320). Whilst many participants in this study seemingly reported low existential stress, a significant number reported high existential stress, and were potentially challenged in establishing a clear and meaningful purpose in life. Thereby in Chapters 5 and 6 a deeper examination of both the adolescent participants with self-reports of high and low existential stress will be presented in relation to identifying the existential life conditions and potential influences. This examination is important in contributing to further understanding adolescents' ability to achieve a clear purpose in life. Damon et al. (2003) argue that "young people who express purpose, in the sense of dedication to causes greater than the self, show high degrees of religiosity, consolidated identities, and deeper sense of meaning than those who do not experience purpose" (p. 126). Further to this, purpose in life was posited to help individuals withstand pressure (Steger & Kashdan, 2013; Steger et al., 2009) and potentially safeguard against

adolescents regarding their lives as meaningless and feeling challenged in their ability to realise worthy goals (Vanhooren et al., 2015).

Therefore, as outlined in Chapter One, given the escalating adolescent stress concerns and the global priority to invest in the wellbeing of adolescents as they are our future (AIHW, 2020; Mission Australia, 2018; WHO, 2019) (refer to Section 1.1), further understanding of adolescent emotional intelligence and wellbeing and the relationships with role stress and/or existential stress is necessary. Furthermore, the multiple case studies in Chapters 5 and 6 allow for deeper examination of the influences on adolescents who self-reported experiencing high existential stress and those reporting low existential stress within the initial descriptive statistics presented in this chapter, to ascertain the implications for educational policy and practice. In further understanding adolescent experiences of role stress and existential stress, it was important to determine their perceptions of their emotional intelligence.

4.3.3 Descriptive statistics for emotional intelligence

In addition to identifying adolescents' reported role and existential stress, the self-reported perception of participants' emotional intelligence was initially sought through their responses to the 10-item Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010) with scores ranging from 10 to 50 as recorded on a 5-point Likert scale. As evident from Figure 4.3 and Table 4.1, the value of mean and standard deviation for the construct emotional intelligence was 37.15 and 5.90, respectively, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89. The mean value suggested that, on average, adolescents in the current study self-reported having moderate level of emotional intelligence (low= ≤ 36, moderate= 37-41, high= ≥ 42) (refer Section 3.8.1.2). Thus, the current findings were similar to those reported in previous research with adult samples. For example, Balakrishnan and Saklofske (2015) examined the psychometric properties of the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale among 269 undergraduate students in Canada with the mean age of 18.70 years. Participants reported moderate to high emotional intelligence (M = 37.89), relatively similar with findings of the current study. In the context of the current study, the value of standard deviation (5.90), skewness (0.94) and Kurtosis (0.78) indicated that the distribution was near normal. Therefore, the selected sample was representative of the population.

Figure 4. 3 Histogram for the variable emotional intelligence

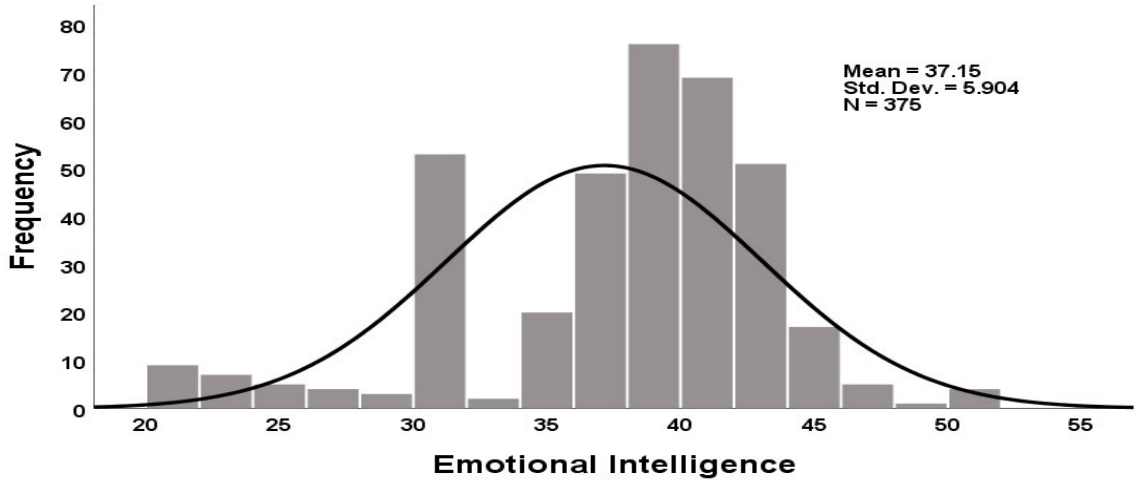


Table 4.1 and Figure 4.3 provide the detail of overall descriptive statistics for the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS) (Davies et al., 2010) which was used to measure emotional intelligence in adolescents. The scale included 10 items addressing the five dimensions: appraisal of own emotions, appraisal of others' emotions, regulation of own emotions, regulation of others' emotions, and utilisation of own emotions. Table 4.4 provides the descriptive statistics for each item including the mean, SD, and frequency on each dimension/item of the scale.

Table 4. 4 Descriptive statistics for the variable emotional intelligence

Dimensions/Items	*M*	*SD*	*Range= (Min-Max)*	*Frequency*				
				Strongly disagree (1)	*Disagree (2)*	*Neither agree nor disagree (3)*	*Agree (4)*	*Strongly agree (5)*
I. Appraisal of own emotions (TT)	7.44	1.50	4-10	-	-	-	-	-
1. I know why my emotions change	3.74	0.88	2-5	0 (0%)	35 (9.3%)	103 (27.5%)	163 (43.5%)	74 (19.7%)
2. I easily recognise my emotions as I experience them	3.70	0.81	2-5	0 (0%)	31 (8.3%)	103 (27.5%)	188 (50.1%)	53 (14.1%)
II. Appraisal of others' emotions (TT)	7.49	1.59	3-10	-	-	-	-	-
3. I can tell how people are feeling by listening to the tone of their voice	3.75	0.82	1-5	1 (0.3%)	29 (7.7%)	92 (24.5%)	193 (51.5%)	60 (16%)
4. By looking at the facial expression, I recognise the emotions people are experiencing	3.74	0.88	2-5	0 (0%)	34 (9.1%)	105 (28%)	161 (42.9%)	75 (20%)
III. Regulation of own emotions (TT)	7.38	1.35	3-10	-	-	-	-	-
5. I seek out activities that make me happy	3.93	0.82	1-5	1 (0.3%)	23 (6.1%)	66 (17.6%)	197 (52.5%)	88 (23.5%)
6. I have control over my emotions	3.45	0.83	2-5	0	45 (12%)	155 (41.3%)	137 (36.6%)	38 (10.1%)
IV. Regulation of others' emotions (TT)	7.20	1.34	4-10	-	-	-	-	-
7. I arrange events others enjoy	3.31	0.91	1-5	24 (6.4%)	21 (5.6%)	165 (44%)	145 (38.7%)	20 (5.3%)
8. I help other people when they are down	3.89	0.81	2-5	0 (0%)	22 (5.9%)	81 (21.6%)	189 (50.4%)	83 (22.1%)
V. Utilization of emotions (TT)	7.65	1.42	4-10	-	-	-	-	-
9. When I am in a positive mood, I am able to come up with new ideas	3.89	0.75	2-5	0 (0%)	18 (4.8%)	73 (19.5%)	215 (57.3%)	69 (18.4%)
10. I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles	3.76	0.79	2-5	0 (0%)	27 (7.2%)	93 (24.8%)	199 (53.1%)	56 (14.9%)

Notes: (a) *N* = 375, (b) *SD*= Standard Deviation, (c) TT = Total

As depicted in Table 4.4, for each of these 10 items of the BEIS, participants were asked to select their level of agreement using the five responses: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, or 5= strongly agree. A higher score of each item represented perceived higher

emotional intelligence. Adolescent participants (N = 375) reported little variation across the dimensions/items of the scale, with the SD ranging from 0.79 (item nine) to 0.91 (item seven). Overall, dimension five 'Utilisation of emotions' recorded the highest mean score (M = 7.65), indicating slightly higher emotional intelligence on average in this area. Specifically, 75.7% (n = 284) of adolescent participants agreed or strongly agreed in response to item nine that 'When I am in a positive mood I am able to come up with new ideas' (agree 57.3%, n = 215; strongly agree 18.4%, n = 69) and item ten, 'I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles' (agree 53.1%, n = 199; strongly agree 14.9%, n = 56). A significant number of adolescents also self-reported neither agreeing or disagreeing with item nine 19.5% (n = 73) and item ten 24.8% (n = 93). While there were no participants who strongly disagreed with these two items, 4.8% (n = 18) disagreed with item nine, and 7.2% (n = 27) disagreed with item ten. That is, while nearly 76% of the adolescents self-reported moderate to high emotional intelligence in utilising their emotions, there were some adolescents self-reporting low emotional intelligence in this dimension, a point for further consideration.

The next highest dimension of emotional intelligence was dimension two, 'appraisal of others' emotions' (M = 7.49). The descriptive analysis of items in this dimension in this study found that 67.5 % (n = 253) of adolescent participants self-reported either strongly agreeing (16%, n = 60) or agreeing (51.5%, n =193) with item three 'I can tell how people are feeling by listening to the tone of their voice' and 62.9% (n = 236) either strongly agreeing (20%, n = 75) or agreeing (42.9%, n = 161) with item four 'By looking at the facial expression, I recognise the emotions people are experiencing'. Initial analysis seemingly indicated that, on average, participants self-reported high emotional intelligence in 'appraising others' emotions', however on deeper analysis, a significant number reported low to moderate emotional intelligence with one participant strongly disagreeing, and 7.7% (n = 29) disagreeing, with item three 'I can tell how people are feeling by listening to the tone of their voice'. While no participants strongly disagreed with item four 'By looking at the facial expression, I recognise the emotions people are experiencing', 9.1 % (n = 34) disagreed. This finding reflects that approximately 10% of adolescent participants in this study self-reported low emotional intelligence for appraising others' emotions, a significant proportion for further consideration.

The third highest dimension of emotional intelligence was dimension one 'appraisal of own emotions' (M = 7.44). A total of 63.2% (n = 237) adolescents self-reported either agreeing (43.5%, n = 163) or strongly agreeing (19.7%, n = 74) to item one that 'I know when my emotions change', and 64.2 % (n = 241) either agreed (50.1%, n = 188) or strongly agreed (14.1%, n = 53) with item two 'I easily recognise my emotions as I experience them'. Initial descriptive analysis seemingly indicated that, on average, adolescents self-reported high emotional intelligence in terms of 'appraisal of own

emotions'. However, on deeper analysis a number of participants reported low to moderate emotional intelligence with 9.3% (*n* = 35) adolescents disagreeing with item one 'I know when my emotions change' and 8.3% (*n* = 31) adolescents disagreeing with item two 'I easily recognise my emotions as I experience them'. Of note, no participants strongly disagreed with these items. The results also reflected that approximately 10% of adolescent participants self-reported low emotional intelligence for 'appraising own emotions', which is similar to their response on dimension two 'appraisal of others' emotions'. Further almost a quarter of participants i.e., 27.5% (*n* = 103) for item one and for item four neither agreed nor disagreed, thereby a total of 36.8% (*n* = 138) for item one and 35.8% (*n* = 134) for item two did not report ability to appraise others' emotions.

Dimension three 'regulation of own emotions' (*M* = 7.38) and dimension four 'regulation of others' emotions' (*M* = 7.20) yielded the lowest means of the five dimensions however only minimally so. The descriptive analysis of items in dimension three found that 76% (n = 285) of the adolescents self-reported either strongly agreeing (23.5%, *n* = 88) or agreeing (52.5%, *n* = 197) with item five 'I seek out activities that make me happy' and 46.7% (n = 175) adolescent participants either strongly agreeing (10%, n = 38) or agreeing (36.6%, n = 137) with item six 'I have control over my emotions'. Initial analysis seemingly indicated that, compared to other dimensions, a significant number of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the items in this dimension, thus reported high emotional intelligence for 'regulation of own emotions'. However, a number of adolescent participants also reported low to moderate emotional intelligence with one participant strongly disagreeing, and 6.1% (n = 23) disagreeing with item five 'I seek out activities that make me happy'. While no participant strongly disagreed, 12% (n = 45) disagreed with item six 'I have control over my emotions'. Furthermore, 17.6% (n = 66) for item five and 41.3% (n = 155) for item six neither agreed nor disagreed, providing a total of 24% (n = 90) for item five and 53.3% (n = 200) for item six of adolescent participants who did not report regulating their own emotions.

Overall, dimension four 'regulation of others' emotions' marginally recorded the lowest mean score (*M* = 7.20). A total of 44% (*n* = 165) of participants either strongly agreed (37.7%, *n* = 145) or agreed (5.3%, *n* = 20) with item seven 'I arrange events others enjoy' and 72.5% (*n* = 272) either strongly agreed (22.1%, *n* = 83) or agreed (50.4%, *n* = 189) with item eight 'I help other people when they are down'. A significant number of participants self-reported neither agreeing or disagreeing with item seven (44%, *n* = 165) or item eight (21.6%, *n* = 81). Notably, 6.4% (*n* = 24) strongly disagreed and 5.6% (*n* = 21) disagreed with item seven, and no participant strongly disagreed and 5.9% (*n* = 22) disagreed with item eight. That is, a total of 56% (n = 210) for item seven and 27.5% (*n* = 103) adolescent participants did not report emotional intelligence in terms of ability to regulate others' emotions.

These descriptive analyses provide an overall insight into participants' self-reports of emotional intelligence, and similar reveal overall moderate levels of emotional intelligence as compared with Balakrishnan and Saklofske's (2015) adolescent study reporting moderate to high emotional intelligence. Applying Davies et al.'s (2010) BEIS also provided an opportunity to identify a considerable proportion of adolescents who self-reported lower emotional intelligence in being able to appraise, regulate and use emotions in problem solving. Therefore, in the context of this study, deeper analysis (refer Chapter 5 and 6) of emotional intelligence of participants reporting high role stress and existential stress, and those reporting low role stress and existential stress, may potentially further contribute to understanding the influence of knowing and understanding one's emotions and those of others. In addition, such in-depth examination may also help to understand that whether the ability of knowing own and others' emotions may act as a buffer against role stress and/or existential stress. As Davies et al. (2010) contended (refer Chapter 2, Section 2.5.1.1), high emotional intelligence and ability to control and use one's own emotions, as well as those of others, assists in being responsive and flexible to changes in the social environment and ability to potentially build supportive networks. Conversely, those with lower emotional intelligence may be potentially at a higher risk for role and/or existential stress. Therefore, in contributing to the research field of role and existential adolescent study methodology, self-reported wellbeing was also explored for a more holistic understanding of the adolescent participants.

4.3.4 Descriptive statistics for wellbeing

Adolescent participants' self-reported perception of their wellbeing was initially sought through their responses to the 36-item Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997). As evident from Figure 4.4 and Table 4.1, the mean and standard deviation for the wellbeing construct were 124.35 and 15.12 respectively, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89. The mean scores for the PWS were slightly lower in the current sample than for previous research on adult populations (Adams et al., 1997, refer Chapter 2, Section 2.6.2.4). For the participants in this study, the mean score (M = 124.35) reflected that, on average, adolescents reported a moderate level of wellbeing (low= $\leq$ 112, moderate= 113-137, high= $\geq$ 138) (refer Chapter 3 Section 3.8.1.2). The value of standard deviation (15.12), skewness (-0.23) and Kurtosis (-0.39) indicated that the distribution was near normal. Therefore, the selected sample was representative of the population.

Figure 4. 4 Histogram for the variable wellbeing

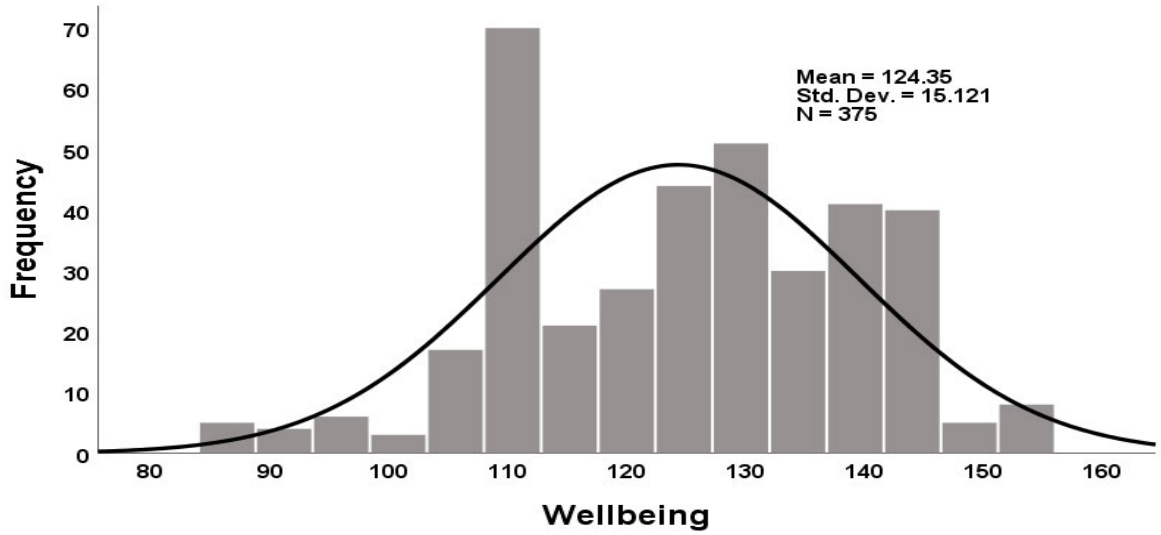


Table 4.1 and Figure 4.4 provides the detail of descriptive statistics of the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997), which was used to measure wellbeing in adolescents. The scale included 36 items and Table 4.5 provides descriptive statistics such as mean, SD, and frequency for each of the scale dimensions and items.

Table 4. 5 Descriptive statistics for the variable wellbeing

Dimensions/items	*M*	*SD*	*Range = (Min-Max)*	*Frequency*				
				Strongly disagree (1)	*Disagree (2)*	*Neither agree nor disagree (3)*	*Agree (4)*	*Strongly agree (5)*
I. Psychological wellbeing (TT)	19.58	2.83	10-28	-	-	-	-	-
1. I am always optimistic about my future.	3.65	0.91	2-5	0 (0%)	48 (12.8%)	98 (26.1%)	166 (44.3%)	63 (16.8%)
2. I rarely count on good things happening to me	2.68	1.00	1-5	13 (3.5%)	57 (15.2%)	149 (39.7%)	108 (28.8%)	48 (12.8%)
3. I always look on the bright side of things.	3.44	0.82	1-5	4 (1.1%)	34 (9.1%)	164 (43.7%)	138 (36.8%)	35 (9.3%)
4. In the past, I have expected the best.	3.78	0.79	1-5	2 (0.5%)	17 (4.6%)	104 (28%)	189 (50.4%)	62 (16.5%)
5. In the past, I hardly ever expected things to go my way.	2.80	0.94	1-5	11 (2.9%)	77 (20.5%)	139 (37.1%)	123 (32.8%)	25 (6.7%)

6. Things will not work out the way I want them to in the future.	3.23	0.96	1-5	49 (13%)	73 (19.5%)	174 (46.4%)	73 (19.5%)	6 (1.6%)
II. Emotional wellbeing (TT)	19.60	3.14	10-29	-	-	-		-
7. There have been times when I felt inferior to most of the people I knew.	2.58	0.88	1-5	2 (0.5%)	54 (14.4%)	143 (38.1%)	138 (36.8%)	38 (10.2%)
8. In general, I feel confident about my abilities.	3.69	0.80	1-5	1 (0.3%)	31 (8.3%)	99 (26.4%)	198 (52.8%)	46 (12.2%)
9. I sometimes think I am a worthless individual.	3.34	1.08	1-5	70 (18.7%)	79 (21.1%)	146 (38.9%)	66 (17.6%)	14 (3.7%)
10. I am uncertain about my ability to do things well in the future.	3.05	1.17	1-5	50 (13.3)	87 (23.2)	103 (27.5)	104 (27.7)	31 (8.3)
11. I will always be secure with who I am.	3.68	0.92	1-5	4 (1.1%)	33 (8.8%)	114 (30.4%)	151 (40.2%)	73 (19.5%)
12. In the past, I have felt sure of myself among strangers.	3.26	.79	1-5	17 (4.5%)	22 (5.9%)	188 (50.1%)	141 (37.6%)	7 (1.9%)
III. Social wellbeing (TT)	21.61	3.61	11-29	-	-	-	-	-
13. Members of my family come to me for support.	3.81	0.85	1-5	3 (0.8%)	22 (5.9%)	93 (24.8%)	181 (48.3%)	76 (20.2%)
14. Sometimes I wonder if my family will really be there for me when I am in need.	3.15	1.27	1-5	59 (15.7%)	105 (28%)	93 (24.8%)	68 (18.1%)	50 (13.4%)
15. My friends know they can always confide in me and ask for advice	3.79	0.89	1-5	5 (1.3%)	29 (7.7%)	79 (21.1%)	189 (50.4%)	73 (19.5%)
16. My family has been available to support me in the past.	3.98	0.90	1-5	4 (1.1%)	17 (4.5%)	80 (21.3%)	155 (41.3%)	119 (31.8%)
17. In the past, I have not always had friends with whom I could share my joys and sorrows.	3.08	1.11	1-5	57 (15.2%)	57 (15.2%)	140 (37.3%)	102 (27.2%)	19 (5.1%)
18. My friends will be there for me when I need help.	3.81	1.06	1-5	12 (3.2%)	33 (8.8%)	80 (21.3%)	139 (37.1%)	111 (29.6%)
IV. Physical wellbeing (TT)	21.58	3.34	10-30	-	-	-	-	-
19. My physical health has restricted me in the past	3.11	1.04	1-5	10 (2.7%)	126 (33.6%)	83 (22.1%)	126 (33.6%)	30 (8.0%)
20. My body seems to resist physical illness very well	3.53	0.94	1-5	9 (2.4%)	33 (8.8%)	145 (38.7%)	129 (34.4%)	59 (15.7%)
21. My physical health is excellent.	3.75	0.78	1-5	5 (1.3%)	8 (2.2%)	117 (31.2%)	191 (50.9%)	54 (14.4%)

22. Compared to people I know; my past physical health has been excellent.	3.69	0.93	1-5	5 (1.3%)	29 (7.7%)	118 (31.5%)	147 (39.2%)	76 (20.3%)
23. I expect always to be physically healthy.	3.88	0.86	1-5	4 (1.1%)	18 (4.8%)	84 (22.4%)	181 (48.2%)	88 (23.5%)
24. I expect my physical health to get worse.	3.61	0.98	1-5	73 (19.5%)	137 (36.5%)	118 (31.5%)	39 (10.4%)	8 (2.1%)
V. Spiritual wellbeing (TT)	21.65	4.12	9-30	-	-	-	-	-
25. I believe there is a real purpose for my life.	4.53	1.47	1-5	4 (1.1%)	28 (7.5%)	111 (29.6%)	91 (24.2%)	141 (37.6%)
26. I have felt in the past that my life was meaningless.	3.38	1.00	1-5	50 (13.3%)	123 (32.8%)	128 (34.1%)	66 (17.6%)	8 (2.2%)
27. Life does not hold much future promise for me.	3.22	1.01	1-5	50 (13.3%)	75 (20%)	174 (46.4%)	60 (16%)	16 (4.3%)
28. Sometimes I do not understand what life all is about.	2.99	1.05	1-5	40 (10.7%)	61 (16.3%)	154 (41%)	96 (25.6%)	24 (6.4%)
29. I feel a sense of mission about my future.	3.78	0.92	1-5	3 (0.8%)	22 (5.8%)	124 (33.1%)	132 (35.2%)	94 (25.1%)
30. It seems that my life has always had purpose.	3.76	.94	1-5	7 (1.9%)	23 (6.1%)	110 (29.3%)	148 (39.5%)	87 (23.2%)
VI. Intellectual wellbeing (TT)	20.37	2.50	13-28	-	-	-	-	-
31. I seek out activities that challenge me to think and reason	3.72	0.74	1-5	1 (0.3%)	21 (5.6%)	102 (27.2%)	210 (56%)	41 (10.9%)
32. I avoid activities which require me to concentrate.	3.19	1.1	1-5	44 (11.7%)	107 (28.5%)	128 (34.1%)	71 (19%)	25 (6.7%)
33. Generally, I feel pleased with the amount of intellectual stimulation I receive in my daily life.	3.59	0.75	1-5	3 (0.8%)	18 (4.8%)	142 (37.9%)	178 (47.5%)	34 (9%)
34. The amount of information that I process in a typical day is just about right for me (i.e., not too much and not too little).	3.49	0.72	2-5	0 (0%)	23 (6.1%)	174 (46.4%)	150 (40%)	28 (7.5%)
35. In the past, I have generally found intellectual challenges to be vital to my overall well-being.	3.42	0.84	1-5	14 (3.7%)	28 (7.5%)	137 (36.5%)	179 (47.8%)	17 (4.5%)
36. My life has often seemed void of positive mental stimulation.	2.95	0.72	1-5	9 (2.4%)	75 (20%)	189 (50.4%)	94 (25.1%)	8 (2.1%)

Notes: (a) *N* = 375, (b) *SD*= Standard Deviation, (c) TT = Total

As depicted in Table 4.5, for each of the 36-items of Perceived Wellness Survey Scale participants were asked to state their level of agreement using the five responses: 1= *strongly disagree*, 2=

disagree, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *agree*, or 5 = *strongly agree*. The higher PWS score indicated a higher level of self-reported wellbeing. As noted, results revealed limited variation in the scores on all the six dimensions of wellbeing. The highest mean scores were reported for dimension five 'spiritual wellbeing' (M = 21.65), dimension three 'social wellbeing' (M = 21.61), dimension four 'physical wellbeing' (M = 21.58), and then dimension six 'intellectual wellbeing' (M = 20.37). Slightly lower mean scores for dimension two 'emotional wellbeing' (M = 19.60) and dimension one 'psychological wellbeing' (M = 19.58) were reported. Thus, on average participants self-reported moderate levels of wellbeing on all the dimensions, supporting the notion of the interconnectedness of different dimensions on an individual's overall wellbeing (Adams et al., 1997; Jewett et al., 2014; Mayer et al., 2000). The results confirmed Strelhow et al.'s (2019) argument that multidimensional approaches to wellbeing integrate "physical, psychological, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual dimensions as inseparable factors" (p. 1442). To some degree, overall findings were consistent with Preskitt et al.'s (2015) quantitative study that examined wellness among adolescents aged 12 to 17 years with a National Survey of Children's Health conducted in 2011-12 in the US. They found on average most of the adolescents reported moderate to high scores on the overall wellness scale and across individual dimensions of wellness such as physical, emotional, intellectual, and social wellbeing. However, Preskitt et al.'s (2015) findings reported adolescents scored highest on physical wellness (M = 6.57) and lowest on social wellness (M = 3.14), while the current study scored highest on spiritual, then social wellbeing dimensions and lowest for psychological wellbeing. The variances between the current study and that of Preskitt et al. (2015) include different scales applied and the spiritual and psychological dimensions integrated within the current study. The application of the six dimensions of the PWS (Adams et al., 1997) in the current study thereby potentially enabled deeper examination of individual wellbeing sub-dimensions, with components of role stress (social wellbeing) and existential stress (emotional and psychological wellbeing) embedded within these. Further critical analysis of the wellbeing data in the current study revealed considerable variations in the scores of adolescents in relation with different sub-dimensions of wellness.

As identified above, overall, dimension five 'spiritual wellbeing' recorded the highest mean score (M = 21.65) indicating slightly higher wellbeing on average in this area. Approximately 62% of adolescent participants either agreed or strongly agreed in response to item twenty-five 'I believe there is a real purpose for my life' (agree 24.2%, n = 91; strongly agree 37.6%, n = 141); item twenty-nine 'I feel a sense of mission about my future' (agree 35.2%, n = 132; strongly agree 25.1%, n = 94) and item thirty 'It seems that my life has always had purpose' (agree 39.5%, n = 148; strongly agree 23.2%, n = 87). While not directly comparable in the previously reported existential stress scale, 55.7% (n = 209) either strongly agreed or agreed with item four 'I have fully discovered a satisfying life purpose' (refer Section 4.3.2), slightly lower than the 62% response to item twenty-five 'I believe

there is a real purpose for my life' in the spiritual dimension. To some degree, this suggests that while many adolescents in this study reported experiencing low existential stress, the overall mean on average reported moderate existential stress, with a considerable number reported as not perceiving purpose in life, thereby at risk of higher existential stress. That is, a significant number of adolescents reported neither agreeing or disagreeing with the PWS item twenty-five 29.6% (*n* = 111); item twenty-nine 33.1% (*n* = 124); and item thirty 29.3% (*n* = 110). Further to this, approximately 30% of adolescent participants reported either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with these three items. Thereby, elements of spiritual wellbeing and potentially existential stress were jeopardised. For negative items reverse scoring aimed to maintain consistency of scoring of the responses on every item i.e., high value indicates high spiritual wellbeing, and low wellbeing indicated low spiritual wellbeing on every item (refer Section 3.8.1.2). Nearly 40% of adolescent participants did not report agreement in response to item twenty-six 'I have felt in the past that my life was meaningless'; item twenty-seven 'Life does not hold much future promise for me' and for item twenty-eight 'Sometimes I do not understand what life all is about'. The importance of spiritual wellbeing as reported in Chapter Two (refer Section 2.6.2.4.1) aligns with being a necessary overarching or central component to balance other wellbeing dimensions (Chandler et al., 1992; Myers & Williard, 2003). Thus, the initial findings identify interconnections between exploring spiritual wellbeing and existential stress in further detail within the case studies.

Dimension three 'Social wellbeing' recorded the second highest mean (*M* = 21.65). The descriptive analysis of items found that approximately 70% of adolescent participants either agreed or strongly agreed with item thirteen 'Members of my family come to me for support'(agree = 48.3%, *n* = 181; strongly agree 20.2%, *n* = 76), item fifteen 'My friends know they can always confide in me and ask for advice' (agree = 50.4%, *n* = 189; strongly agree 19.5%, *n* = 73), item sixteen 'My family has been available to support me in the past' (agree = 41.3%, *n* = 155; strongly agree 31.8%, *n* = 119), and item eighteen 'My friends will be there for me when I need help' (agree= 37.1%, *n* = 139; strongly agree 29.6%, *n* = 111). A significant number of adolescents reported neither agreeing nor disagreeing with item thirteen 24.8% (*n* = 93); item fifteen 21.1% (*n* = 79); item sixteen 21.3% (*n* = 80); and item eighteen 21.3% (*n* = 80). Further to this, approximately 30% of adolescent participants reported either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with these three items with 12% (*n* = 45) participants either disagreeing (8.8%, *n* = 33) or strongly disagreeing (3.2%, *n* = 12) with item eighteen. Less than 10% of adolescent participants reported either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with item thirteen (disagree = 5.9%, *n* = 22; strongly disagree 0.8%, *n* = 3), item fifteen (disagree = 7.7%, *n* = 29; strongly disagree 1.3%, *n* = 5), and item sixteen (disagree = 4.5%, n = 17; strongly disagree 1.1%, *n* = 4).

The third highest mean score was 'Physical wellbeing' (*M* = 21.58). Specifically, 50.1% (*n* = 188) adolescent participants agreed or strongly agreed in response to item twenty 'My body seems to resist physical illness very well' (agree = 34.4%, *n* = 129; strongly agree= 15.7%, *n* = 59) and 65.3% (*n* = 245) either agreed or disagreed with item twenty-one 'My physical health is excellent' (agree= 50.9%, *n* = 191; strongly agree, 14.4%, *n* = 54). A total of 59.3% (*n* = 223) reported either agreeing or strongly agreeing with item twenty-two 'Compared to people I know; my past physical health has been excellent' (agree= 39.2%, *n* = 147; strongly agree= 20.3%, *n* = 76). Similarly, 71.1% (*n* = 269) adolescents reported agreeing or strongly agreeing with item twenty-three 'I expect always to be physically healthy' (agree= 48.2%, *n* = 181; strongly agree= 23.5%, *n* = 88). While these results seemingly indicated high levels of physical wellbeing among these adolescents, deeper analysis revealed a considerable number who scored lower on these items, thus reported lower physical wellbeing. A total of 49.9% (*n* = 187) did not agree to item twenty, similarly 34.7% (*n* = 130) for item twenty-one; 40.5% (*n* = 152) for item twenty-two, and 28.3% (*n* = 106) for item twenty-three.

Adolescents scored moderate 'Intellectual wellbeing' for dimension six (*M* = 20.75) with: 66.9% (*n* = 251) self-reporting either strongly agreeing (10.9%, n = 41) or agreeing (56%, n = 210) with item thirty-one 'I seek out activities that challenge me to think and reason'; 56.5% (2012) either strongly agree (9%, *n* = 34) or agree (47.5%, *n* = 178) with item thirty-three 'Generally, I feel pleased with the amount of intellectual stimulation I receive in my daily life'; 52.3% (*n* = 196) either strongly agreed (4.5%, *n* = 17) or agreed (47.8%, *n* = 179) with item thirty-five 'In the past, I have generally found intellectual challenges to be vital to my overall well-being'; followed by item thirty-four 'The amount of information that I process in a typical day is just about right for me (i.e., not too much and not too little)' with 47.5% (*n* = 178) either strongly agreeing (7.5%, *n* = 28) or agreeing (40%, *n* = 150). Initial analysis seemingly indicated that, on average, participants self-reported relatively high intellectual wellbeing in some individual items; however, on deeper analysis, a significant number reported low to moderate emotional intelligence. That is, nearly 6% of adolescent participants either strongly disagreed or disagreed with item thirty-one (strongly disagree= 0.3%, *n* = 1; disagree= 5.6%, *n* = 21) and item thirty-three (strongly disagree, 0.8%, *n* = 3; disagree, 4.8%, *n* = 18). While no participant strongly disagreed with item thirty-four, 52.5% (*n* =197) did not agree with this item; i.e., 6.1% (*n* = 23) disagreed, 46.4% (*n* = 174) neither agreed nor disagreed to this item. For item thirty-five, 11.2% (*n* = 42) of adolescents either strongly disagreed (3.7%, *n* = 14) or disagreed (7.5%, *n* = 28) and 36.5% (*n* = 137) neither agreed nor disagreed. As Geary (2014) outlined, intellectual wellbeing is the least dimension studied among adolescents yet has been linked to experiencing a stimulating and successful life and interconnectedness with other dimensions. Preskitt et al. (2015) identified that adolescents aged 12-17 years in US who scored high on intellectual wellbeing also

reported high psychological, social, physical and emotional wellness, an area to further explore with the case studies in Chapters 5 and 6.

Participants' psychological and emotional wellbeing mean scores were similar, with emotional wellbeing (*M* = 19.60) marginally higher than psychological wellbeing (*M*= 19.58). Descriptive analysis of items in dimension two, i.e. 'emotional wellbeing', revealed that a significant number of adolescent participants self-reported relatively high emotional wellbeing for items, particularly item eight 'In general I feel confident about my abilities', with 65% (*n* = 244) reported either strongly agreeing (12.2%, *n* = 46) or agreeing (52.8%, *n* = 198), and item 11 'I will always be secure with who I am', with 59.7% (*n* = 224) either strongly agreeing (19.5%, *n* = 73) or agreeing (40.2%, *n* = 151). Chase (2013) reported on UK Department of Health data aimed at examining young people's emotional wellbeing through qualitative interviews of 54 people aged 11-23 years. In support of the findings in the current study, Chase (2013) reported that a sense of a secure future, or the way individual perceives oneself in the future, emerged as the key elements determining their emotional wellbeing. However, in the current study there were many adolescents who reported low emotional wellbeing, particularly for item 12 where more than 50% of adolescent participants did not report 'In the past, I have felt sure of myself among strangers' With item seven 38.1% did not report agreement with 'There have been times when I felt inferior to most of the people I knew', and 27.5% of adolescent participants did not report agreement with item 10 'I am uncertain about my ability to do things well in the future'. For these adolescents, their self-concept and self-esteem may be at risk; that is, their internal image of the self and how much they value themselves (Adams et al., 1997), thereby potentially impacting on other wellbeing dimensions, given their reported interconnectedness and multidimensionality (Bluth et al., 2017).

Overall, dimension one 'Psychological wellbeing' recorded the lowest mean score (*M* = 19.58), however high psychological wellbeing was self-reported across all six items for a significant number of participants. For example, item four 'In the past, I have expected the best' with 66.9% (*n* = 251) adolescents either strongly agreeing (16.5%, *n* = 62) or agreeing (50.4%, *n* = 189) and item one 'I am always optimistic about my future', with 61.1% (*n* = 229) either strongly agreeing (16.8%, *n* = 63) or agreeing (44.3%, *n* = 166), followed by the scores on item three 'I always look on the bright side of things', where 46.1% (*n* = 173) either agreed (36.8%, *n* = 138) or strongly agreed (9.3%, *n* = 35). A further 39.5% (*n* = 148) did not agree with item five 'In the past, I hardly ever expected things to go my way'. Thus, the initial analysis seemingly indicated that, on average, adolescents self-reported relatively high psychological wellbeing and relatively optimistic perceptions. These findings seemingly support findings suggested by previous psychological wellbeing studies (Duy & Yildiz, 2019; Krok & Telka, 2019). For example, Krok and Telka (2019) examined 205 adolescents aged 16-20 years in Poland and found that high levels of optimism significantly increased the psychological

and subjective wellbeing of adolescents, thereby acting as a mediating effect between meaning in life and the wellbeing of adolescents. This further suggests the complex interconnectedness between existential stress, and spiritual and psychological wellbeing dimensions. Similar findings have emerged in the study conducted by Duy and Yildiz (2019) in their study of 384 young people in Turkey with the mean age of 18.57 years, identifying a significant association between optimism and subjective wellbeing.

However, on deeper analysis of reverse scored items, a significant number of adolescent participants reported low to moderate psychological wellbeing. For example, while no participant strongly disagreed with item one 'I am always optimistic about my future', 12.8% (n = 48) disagreed, less than 5% strongly disagreed with item three and four, while 9.1% (n = 34) disagreed with item three, and 4.6% (n = 17) disagreed with item four. Of note, 41.6% (n = 156) of participants reported lower psychological wellbeing for: item two 'I rarely count on good things happening to me', with 12.8% (n = 48) strongly agreeing and 28.8% (n = 108) agreeing; item five 'In the past, I hardly ever expected things to go my way' with 6.7% (n = 25) strongly agreeing and 32.8% (n = 123) agreeing; and item six 'Things will not work out the way I want them to in the future' with 1.6% (n = 6) strongly agreeing and 19.5% (n = 73) agreeing. There was also a significant number of participants who self-reported neither agreeing or disagreeing with item one (26.1%, n = 98), two (39.7%, n = 149), three (43.7%, n = 167), four (28%, n = 104), five 37.1%, n = 139) and six (46.4%, n = 174). Such perceptions of a significant number of these adolescents highlight the importance of this study, given evidence of the connection between psychological wellbeing and an individual's; self-acceptance, environmental mastery, purpose in life (existential stress), positive relations with others (role stress), personal growth, self-determination, and autonomy (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

4.3.5 Summary of Descriptive analysis

As mentioned above, descriptive statistical analyses provided an initial summary to understand the adolescent participants' self-reports for the variables: role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing. The mean scores revealed that, overall, the adolescent sample self-reported on average moderate role stress (M = 12.01), existential stress (M = 9.04), emotional intelligence (M = 37.15) and wellbeing (M = 124.35) A significant number of adolescents reported lower role and/or existential stress and higher emotional intelligence and/or wellbeing. However, deeper analysis of individual items identified that while, on average, many adolescents are navigating life purposefully, with meaningful relationships, there were a considerable number of adolescents reporting moderate to high levels of role and or existential stress and, for some, lower levels of emotional intelligence and wellbeing. This reinforces the significance of this study and its

contribution to understanding adolescent role stress, existential stress, and their potential connection with emotional wellbeing and wellbeing. Descriptive statistics provided meaningful understanding about adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential by highlighting the levels, patterns of variations of these potential stressors in adolescents aged 13-19 years. However, descriptive statistics are based on self-report measures, and thus limit the responses of participants to certain choices, thereby not providing in-depth and illustrative information about adolescents' experiences of these potential stressors (Almeida, 2017). Therefore, deeper analysis, through capturing the voice of those with high and low role and existential stress in Chapters 5 and 6, can further contribute to deeper exploration of these constructs, to further inform the knowledge in this field. Descriptive statistics such as skewness and kurtosis in the initial descriptive analysis indicated that the variables were normally distributed which ensured the suitability of data for further analysis such as correlational and inferential analysis. Therefore, to gain detailed insight into potential relationships among the variables: role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing, correlational analysis was undertaken.

4.4 Correlational Analysis

Further to the initial descriptive statistics for each of the four constructs, correlational analysis was applied to explore what, if any, relationships existed among the key variables at the focus of the current study. Pearson product-moment correlations were used to conduct bivariate associations between the variables: role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing (Puth et al., 2014). The Pearson correlation coefficient can take a range of values from +1 to -1 (Kovacs, 2018). The measure provides the direction of the relationship between variables (as positive or negative numbers), as well as the strength of the relationship between variables (0 indicates no association between two variables, 1 is perfect correlation). Table 4.6 reports the guidelines for the direction and strength of association when using the Pearson correlation analysis (Laerd Statistics, 2020):

Table 4. 6 Pearson correlation strength of association guidelines

Strength of association	*Coefficient r*	
	Positive	*Negative*
Small/Weak	0.1 to 0.3	-0.1 to -0.3
Medium/Moderate	0.3 to 0.5	-0.3 to -0.5
Large/Strong	0.5 to 1.0	-0.5 to -1.0

As indicated in Table 4.6, with Pearson coefficient of correlation, any value greater than 0 indicates a positive association between variables, which means that as the value of one variable increases, the value of other variable also increases. In contrast, any value less than 0 indicates a negative correlation between two variables, which means that as the value of one variable increases, the value of other variable decreases (Kovacs, 2018). To measure the strength of the relationship, it is important to examine how closely the value of coefficient *r* is to +1 or -1. The stronger the association of the variables, the closer the Pearson correlation coefficient will be to +1 and -1; the closer to +1, the more positive, the closer to -1, the more negative (Laerd Statistics, 2020). The correlational analysis between the key variables of this study is depicted below in Table 4.7.

Table 4. 7 Correlations among all the variables

Variables	*Role stress*	*Existential stress*	*Emotional intelligence*	*Wellbeing*
Role stress	1	-	-	-
Existential stress	.64**	1	-	-
Emotional intelligence	-.69**	-.76**	1	-
Wellbeing	-.65 **	-.68**	.67**	1

Notes: (a) $N = 375$, (b) ** $p < .05$.

In summary, the research hypotheses 1-6 presented in Section 4.2 were examined by correlational analysis between the variables: role stress and existential stress; role stress and emotional intelligence; role stress and wellbeing; existential stress and emotional intelligence; existential stress and wellbeing; and emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Thereby each research hypothesis was examined integrating critical analysis of findings in relation to empirical and theoretical underpinnings presented in Chapter Two.

4.4.1 Research hypothesis 1: There is significant positive association between role stress and existential stress

To find out statistically if there was a significant positive correlation between role stress and existential stress, Pearson product-moment '*r*' was computed as shown below in Table 4.8. A Pearson Product-Moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between the level of role stress ($M = 12.01$, $SD = 4.32$) and existential stress ($M = 9.04$, $SD = 3.18$) among 375 adolescents of year level 8-12, aged 13-19 years. As hypothesised, the Pearson's '*r*' data analysis revealed a statistically significant strong positive correlation between role stress and existential stress r (375) =

.64, $p < .05$, indicating that it is more likely that increased role stress is accompanied by high existential stress. However, the significant relationship warrants careful consideration in exploring the case studies (refer Chapter 5 and 6). This relationship between role stress and existential stress aligns with Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory, whereby the period of adolescence includes working through the complexities of relationships and identity as outlined in the role versus identity confusion stage. This might be influenced by performing multiple roles in society and establishing purpose in life, with some adolescents questioning with existential questions such as who am I?, why am I here?, what is purpose of my life? (Stone, 2014). The relationship between role stress and existential stress has been evidenced, however examining the potential factors that influence this relationship is an area that the qualitative methodology aimed to explore for deeper understanding of adolescent experiences of role stress and existential stress. Table 4.8 provides the correlation analysis between each item of the role stress and existential stress variable.

Table 4. 8 Correlations among role stress and existential stress

Variables/ Dimensions/ Items	***Role stress** (TT)*	*The number of friends you have*	*Kinds of friends you have*	*Being accepted or included by friends*	*Your relationship with your parents*	*Your relationship with you siblings*	*Your experience at school*	*Your relationship with teachers*	*Your relationship with peers*
Existential stress (TT)	.64	.60	.57	.50	.33	.31	.52	.44	.55
In life I have clear goals and aims	.56	.52	.51	.41	.28	.23	.47	.42	.49
My personal experience is meaningful	.61	.59	.56	.55	.36	.34	.41	.37	.54
In achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfillment	.57	.53	.49	.42	.35	.34	.48	.37	.47
I have fully discovered a satisfying life purpose	.46	.40	.40	.31	.17	.21	.44	.38	.42

Notes: (a) $N = 375$, (b) ** $p < .05$, (c) TT= Total

As reported in Table 4.8, a significant positive correlation was found between all role stress and existential stress items, further supporting the significant strong positive correlation between these constructs. Specifically, role stress evidenced a strong positive correlation with 'lack of clear goals and aims' r (375) = .56, $p < .05$, 'personal existence is meaningful' r (375) = .61, $p < .05$, 'progressing to achieve life goals' r (375) = .57, $p < .05$, and a moderate positive relationship with 'fully discovered life purpose' r (375) = .46, $p < .05$. To some degree, the current findings support the findings of Ishida

and Okada's (2006) quantitative study among 32 adults aged 22-47 years in Japan. They reported a strong positive relationship between role stress emanating from multiple relationships and lack of purpose in life. The findings in the current study, albeit focused on an adolescent sample, reported a moderate to strong positive correlation between lack of purpose in life and number of friends r (375) = .60, $p < .05$; kinds of friends r (375) = .57, $p < .05$; accepted or included by friends r (375) = .50, $p < .05$; relationship with peers r (375) = .55, $p < .05$; relationship with teachers r (375) = .44, $p < .05$; experience at school r (375) = .52, $p < .05$. These correlations are partially consistent with Blau et al.'s (2019) study conducted among 193 adolescents aged 14-18 years in Israel, as they reported a strong association between teachers' support and purpose in life among adolescents as well as a correlation between friends and peer support and adolescents' purpose in life, however this was a weak positive correlation in contrast to the moderate to strong positive correlation between these items in the current study.

Of note, some role stress and existential stress items were not strongly correlated, that is, there was a weak positive correlation between feeling unhappy with parents and lack of clear goals and aims r (375) = .28, $p < .05$; and feeling unhappy with siblings and lack of clear goals and aims r (375) = .23, $p < .05$. Similarly, a weak positive correlation was found between lack of fully discovered life purpose and feeling unhappy with parents r (375) = .17, $p < .05$ and siblings r (375) = .21, $p < .05$. This may be interpreted as a small increase in role stress emanating from family (parents and siblings) microsystem influences may be associated with a small increase in existential stress in terms of feeling lack of clear goals and aims and fully discovered life purpose. Although there were weak correlations between these items, they were positively correlated, that is as one increases, the other also increases. The results varied slightly to the reported findings of a quantitative study by Blau et al. (2019), conducted among 193 adolescents aged 14-18 years in Israel, which found a strong positive association between parent and teacher support and adolescents' purpose in life. Similarly, Heng et al.'s (2020) comparison of meaning in life and social support with 577 adolescents aged 15-16 years in Singapore and Israel reported that parent support followed by teachers' support, positively correlated with participants' meaning in life. Thus, this current study contributes to the limited empirical studies that have explored the interrelationship between role stress and existential stress with adolescent participants as outlined in Chapter Two and may have significant implications for the field in recognising this positive relationship between role and existential stress in efforts to support their relationships and purpose in life (refer to Section 2.4.3.6).

The descriptive statistics and positive correlations of role stress and existential stress for the adolescent participants in this study identified potential ecological influences within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory. Adolescent microsystems outside the home

setting, such as the school environment and mesosystem interactions with friends, peers, teachers, and school were found to have comparatively stronger relationships with adolescents' self-reports of existential stress, raising questions as to the directionality of these relationship, an area for further consideration. Whilst still positively correlated, relationships with parents and siblings in the microsystem of an adolescent's home were found to have a weaker relationship with adolescents' existential stress. Therefore, the research hypothesis 1 was supported that there was a significant positive association between role stress and existential stress, with the slight variances of the strength of the relationships requiring deeper exploration through the qualitative case studies.

4.4.2 Research hypothesis 2: There is a significant negative association between role stress and emotional intelligence

To find out statistically if there was a significant negative correlation between role stress (as measured by the Role Stress Scale, Liu & Kaplan, 2004) and emotional intelligence (as measured by the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale, Davies et al., 2010)), Pearson product-moment '*r*' were computed as shown in Table 4.9. A Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between the level of role stress (M = 12.01, SD = 4.32) and emotional intelligence (M = 37.15, SD = 5.90) among 375 adolescents of year level 8-12, aged 13-19. The Pearson's '*r*' data analysis revealed a statistically significant strong negative correlation between role stress and emotional intelligence, r (375) = -.69, $p < .05$. Therefore, high levels of role stress for many of these adolescents were associated with lower levels of emotional intelligence, supporting the notion that individuals' microsystem relationships have an influence on their development, particularly interaction within their family, school and broader friendship societal microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The current results are consistent and provide support for Erikson' Psychosocial Development Theory, whereby stressful social interactions and experiences as an adolescent can cause emotional disturbances. The current results also support the findings of Cejudo et al.'s (2018) quantitative study that examined the relationship between social stress and emotional intelligence in 505 adolescents aged 12-18 years in Spain and reported a negative correlation between social stress and the emotional intelligence of adolescents.

Table 4. 9 Correlations among role stress and emotional intelligence

Variables/ Dimensions/Items	***Role stress*** (TT)	*The number of friends you have*	*Kinds of friends you have*	*Being accepted or included by friends*	*Your relationship with your parents*	*Your relationship with you siblings*	*Your experience at school*	*Your relationship with teachers*	*Your relationship with peers*
Emotional intelligence (TT)	-.69	-.63	-.55	-.58	-.43	-.44	-.53	-.48	-.60
Appraisal of own emotions	-.68	-.61	-.54	-.56	-.37	-.40	-.55	-.46	-.60
Appraisal of others' emotions	-.53	-.53	-.43	-.53	-.22	-.25	-.42	-.40	-.40
Regulation of own emotions	-.70	-.61	-.57	-.61	-.39	-.44	-.60	-.48	-.53
Regulations of others' emotions	-.40	-.32	-.24	-.20	-.39	-.33	-.20	-.22	-.39
Utilisation of emotions	-.59	-.51	-.47	-.46	-.42	-.42	-.42	-.38	-.51

Notes: (a) N = 375, (b) ** $p < .05$, (c) TT= Total

A key contribution of this study with an adolescent sample is that it was one of few investigations that has examined the relationship between role stress and associated eight items with emotional intelligence and associated five items. Table 4.9 provides an overview of this correlational analysis. Notably, all the correlations were negative and statistically significant. Therefore, the emotional intelligence of the adolescent participants overall was negatively and significantly associated with their role stress in their multiple social relationships. That is, as role stress increased due to feeling unhappy with number of friends, kinds of friends, being accepted by friends, relationship with parents, relationship with siblings, experience at school, relationship with teachers, and/or relationship with peers, there was a corresponding decrease in their emotional intelligence and ability to appraise own and others' emotions, regulate own and others' emotions, and/or utilise emotions. This significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and the experience of role stress was similarly reported in adult studies. For example, Merida-Lopez et al.'s (2017) quantitative study examined the relationship between role stress and emotional intelligence among 336 teachers with a mean age of 43 years in Spain and similarly reported a negative correlation between teachers' role stress and their ability to regulate their emotions.

The relative strength of these negative correlations- ranged from weak to strong across the individual items for emotional intelligence and role stress. Some weak negative correlations were found between regulation of others' emotions and feeling unhappy with kinds of friends r (375) = -.24, $p < .05$;

regulation of others' emotions and feeling unhappy with accepted by friends r (375) = -.20, p < .05; regulation of others' emotions and feeling unhappy with experience at school r (375) = -.20, p < .05; regulation of others' emotions and feeling unhappy with relation with teachers r (375) = -.22, p < .05. Similarly, weak negative correlations were found between appraisal of others' emotions and feeling unhappy with parents r (375) = -.22, p < .05 and siblings r (375) = -.25, p < .05. Therefore, it can be interpreted that for some participants, as their level of regulation of others' emotions increases, there may be a corresponding decrease, although a lower likelihood, in their level of feeling unhappy with kinds of friends, acceptance by friends, relationships with teachers/experience at school. Similarly, there was slightly less likelihood of a decrease in feeling unhappy with relationships with parents and siblings due to an increase in levels of ability to appraise others' emotions, however a significant correlation was reported. Thereby, overall emotional intelligence variables intrinsic to the adolescent, such as appraisal, regulating and utilising own emotion were slightly more associated with lower reports of role stress, and are an area to note for further exploration.

Whilst overall there was a strong negative correlation between role stress and emotional intelligence supporting hypothesis 2, on deeper analysis, the results of the current study reported the strongest negative correlations were 'role stress (TT)' and 'regulation of own emotions' (r = -.70), followed by 'role stress (TT)' and 'emotional intelligence (TT)' (r = -.69) and 'role stress (TT)' and 'appraisal of own emotions' (r = -. 68). Within the domains of role stress, the strongest negative correlation was found between the 'number of friends' and 'emotional intelligence (TT)' (r = -.63). These slightly varied from Libbey et al.'s (2002) quantitative study among in-school youth in the US, which reported the strongest negative association between emotional distress and family connectedness, followed by school, neighbourhood, and peer connectedness.

Overall, the current findings revealed a slightly stronger negative correlation for items that are more intrinsic to the adolescent participant; that is, factors they can influence about regulating their own emotions, rather than others. Despite slight variances in the strength of correlations, the current study highlighted the significant association of adolescents' social relationships with their overall emotional intelligence within their ecological microsystems i.e. both within and outside the home environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Thereby, the findings suggest that prioritising support for adolescent development of emotional intelligence, combined with strengthening relationships with significant others, may be potential factors in reducing adolescents' experiences of role stress.

4.4.3 Research hypothesis 3: There is significant negative association between role stress and wellbeing

To examine statistically if there was a significant negative correlation between role stress (as measured by the Role Stress Scale) and wellbeing (as measured by the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale), Pearson product-moment '*r*' is computed as shown in Table 4.10. A Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between the level of role stress (M = 12.01, SD = 4.32) and wellbeing (M = 124.35, SD = 15.12) among 375 adolescents of year level 8-12, aged 13-19. As expected, the Pearson's 'r' data analysis revealed a statistically significant strong negative correlation between role stress and wellbeing r (375) = -.65, $p < .05$. This finding is consistent with previous findings in adults (Pecino et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2010). The results of the current study showed that levels of role stress negatively correlated with levels of wellbeing in adolescents aged 13-19 years. Pecino et al. (2019) in their quantitative study among 442 employees aged 35-60 years working in an organisation in Spain identified the positive relationship between role stress and emotional wellbeing of employees. Similary, Jones et al. (2010) investigated the quantitative relationship between role stress and psychological wellbeing among 5,380 professionals from accounting firms across the US. The results of study highlighted a negative and significant relationship between role stress and psychological wellbeing.

Table 4. 10 Correlations among role stress and wellbeing

Variables/ Dimensions /Items	***Role stress (TT)***	*The number of friends you have*	*Kinds of friends you have*	*Being accepted or included by friends*	*Your relationship with your parents*	*Your relationship with you siblings*	*Your experience at school*	*Your relationship with teachers*	*Your relationship with peers*
Wellbeing (TT)	-.65	-.59	-.57	-.51	-.40	-.39	-.51	-.40	-.55
Psychological wellbeing	-.52	-.47	-.47	-.42	-.26	-.22	-.45	-.35	-.44
Emotional wellbeing	-.47	-.42	-.42	-.38	-.25	-.28	-.37	-.29	-.40
Social wellbeing	-.57	-.53	-.48	-.47	-.41	-.39	-.41	-.38	-.45
Physical wellbeing	-.41	-.34	-.28	-.35	-.26	-.29	-.39	-.26	-.27
Spiritual wellbeing	-.62	-.57	-.57	-.46	-.35	-.32	-.52	-.38	-.54
Intellectual wellbeing	-.42	-.39	-.38	-.23	-.30	-.27	-.30	-.23	-.42

Notes: (a) N = 375, (b) ** $p < .05$, (c) TT= Total

The findings presented in Table 4.10 report statistical significance, with a negative correlation between role stress and eight items and six dimensions of wellbeing for these adolescent participants. The findings were consistent with McGraw et al.'s (2008) quantitative study among 204 adolescents from year level 12 in Australia, in which they investigated the interrelationship between adolescents' social environment and wellbeing. They reported that perceived social connectedness with family, peers, and school was inversely related with poor wellbeing such as symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress.

Correlational analysis of the current study reported predominantly moderate to strong relationships for each item, however there were some weak negative correlations between feeling unhappy with parents and psychological wellbeing r (375) = -.26, $p < .05$, emotional wellbeing r (375) = -.25, $p < .05$, and physical wellbeing r (375) = -.26, $p < .05$. While there was a significant relationship, it may be interpreted that as role stress from relationship with parents increases (or decreases), there is less likelihood of the psychological, emotional and physical wellbeing decreasing (or increasing). A similar relationship was evidenced between feeling unhappy with siblings and psychological wellbeing r (375) = -.22, $p < .05$, emotional wellbeing r (375) = -.28, $p < .05$, physical wellbeing r (375) = -.29, $p < .05$, and intellectual wellbeing r (375) = -.27, $p < .05$. Also, a weak negative correlation was found between feeling unhappy with teachers and intellectual wellbeing r (375) = -.69, $p < .05$ and physical wellbeing r (375) = -.69, $p < .05$. A weak negative correlation was also found between feeling unhappy with peers and physical wellbeing r (375) = -.69, $p < .05$.

Hypothesis 3, however, was supported with a strong negative correlation recorded between role stress (TT) and most of the dimensions of wellbeing. A strong negative correlation was found between wellbeing (TT) and feeling unhappy with their number of friends r (375) = -.59, $p < .05$, kinds of friends r (375) = -.57, $p < .05$, relation with peers r (375) = -.55, $p < .05$, acceptance by friends r (375) = -.51, $p < .05$ and experience at school r (375) = -.51, $p < .05$. A moderate negative correlation was reported for feeling unhappy with relation with parents r (375) = -.40, $p < .05$ and teachers r (375) = -.40, $p < .05$ and for relation with siblings r (375) = -.39, $p < .05$. Notably, similar correlational results were highlighted for emotional intelligence (TT) and domains of role stress. This study is thereby significant given the report in Chapter Two (refer Section 2.6.4.1) of the few studies that have explored the relationship between adolescent role stress emanating from multiple social relationships with the holistic multidimensional wellbeing construct. While the negative relationship between role stress and adolescent wellbeing was consistent across these studies, slight variations in the strength of relationships were reported. For instance, Jose et al. (2012), in their quantitative study among 1774 adolescents aged 10-15 years in New Zealand, reported that social connectedness (low role stress) was positively associated with adolescent's wellbeing, however the relative sizes of correlation

indicated that there was also a strong positive correlation between connectedness with family and school and adolescents' wellbeing.

4.4.4 Research hypothesis 4: There is significant negative association between existential stress and emotional intelligence

To find out statistically if there was a significant negative correlation between existential stress (as measured by the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale) and emotional intelligence (as measured by the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale), various statistics, i.e., mean, standard deviation and Pearson product-moment '*r*' were computed as shown in Table 4.11. A Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between the level of existential stress (M = 9.04, SD = 3.18) and emotional intelligence (M = 37.15, SD = 5.90) among 375 adolescents of year level 8-12, aged 13-19 years. The Pearson's '*r*' data analysis revealed a statistically significant strong negative correlation between existential stress and emotional intelligence, r (375) = -.76, $p < .05$. Therefore, high levels of existential stress were associated with lower levels of emotional intelligence.

Table 4. 11 Correlations among existential stress and emotional intelligence

Variables/ Dimensions/Items	***Existential stress (TT)***	*In life I have clear goals and aims*	*My personal existence is meaningful*	*In achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfillment*	*I have fully discovered a satisfying life purpose*
Emotional intelligence (TT)	-.76	-.64	-.74	-.74	-.53
Appraisal of own emotions	-.62	-.55	-.61	-.61	-.41
Appraisal of others' emotions	-.64	-.53	-.62	-.67	-.40
Regulation of own emotions	-.72	-.52	-.66	-.67	-.55
Regulations of others' emotions	-.49	-.40	-.49	-.51	-.31
Utilization of emotions	-.65	-.53	-.66	-.59	-.49

Notes: (a) N = 375, (b) ** $p < .05$, (c) TT= Total

As reported in Table 4.11, there was a significant negative correlation between adolescent participants' self-reported existential stress and the four items, with emotional intelligence including each of the five dimensions. In supporting hypothesis 4, all correlations were negative, moderate to

strong, and all were statistically significant. Therefore, the emotional intelligence of adolescent participants overall was negatively and significantly associated with their existential stress.

The findings suggest that as there is an increase in existential stress experienced by these adolescents due to lack of clear goals and aims, meaningful personal existence, progress in achieving life goals, and fully discovered life purpose, there is a corresponding decrease in their emotional intelligence; that is, ability to appraise own and others' emotions, regulate own and others' emotions, and utilise emotions. As outlined in Chapter Two (refer Section 2.4.3.3), previous research studies with adult participants are consistent with reporting significant negative relationships between existential stress and emotional intelligence (Ishida & Okada, 2006; Kitamura et al., 2004). In relation to the few studies exploring this relationship among adolescents, De Lazzari (2000), in their quantitative study among 168 adolescents from year level 9 and 12 in the UK, reported a significant positive association between purpose in life and the emotional intelligence of adolescents. Therefore, by the implication of these findings, there may be a negative association between an increase in adolescents' existential stress and a corresponding decrease in emotional intelligence. The finding provides support for the Erikson's (1968) developmental period of adolescence, and the importance in finding purpose in life to successfully navigate through this stage.

4.4.5 Research hypothesis 5: There is significant negative association between existential stress and wellbeing

To find out statistically if there was a significant negative correlation between existential stress (as measured by the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale) and wellbeing (as measured by the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale), various statistics, i.e., mean, standard deviation and Pearson product-moment '*r*' were computed as shown in Table 4.12. A Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between the level of existential stress (M = 9.04, SD = 3.18) and wellbeing (M = 124.35, SD = 15.12) among 375 adolescents of year level 8-12, aged 13-19 years. As expected, statistically a significant strong negative correlation between existential stress and wellbeing was found, r (375) = -.68, $p < .05$. Therefore, as existential stress in adolescents increases there is strong possibility of a decrease in their wellbeing.

Table 4. 12 Correlations among existential stress and wellbeing

Variables/ Dimension/Items	***Existential stress (TT)***	*In life I have clear goals and aims*	*My personal existence is meaningful*	*In achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfillment*	*I have fully discovered a satisfying life purpose*
Wellbeing (TT)	-.68	-.68	-.71	-.67	-.57
Psychological wellbeing	-.65	-.60	-.59	-.54	-.55
Emotional wellbeing	-.59	-.53	-.54	-.49	-.51
Social wellbeing	-.55	-.52	-.57	-.51	-.30
Physical wellbeing	-.42	-.36	-.41	-.41	-.30
Spiritual wellbeing	-.79	-.68	-.70	-.72	-.65
Intellectual wellbeing	-.56	-.52	-.52	-.48	-.39

Notes: (a) N = 375, (b) ** p < .05, (c) TT= Total

Examining the correlations between adolescent participants' self-reports of existential stress and its four items with wellbeing and its six dimensions, all reported moderate to strong negative correlations and all were statistically significant. That is, as existential stress increases due to lack of clear goals and aims, meaningful personal existence, progressing inn achieving life goals, and/or fully discovered life purpose, there is a high possibility of a corresponding decrease in adolescent participants' self-reports of psychological, emotional, social, physical, spiritual, and/or intellectual wellbeing. However, the item 'personal existence is meaningful' strongly and negatively correlated with wellbeing (TT) (r = -.71) and all of its dimensions, whereas a weak negative correlation was found between the item 'I have fully discovered a satisfying life purpose social wellbeing (r = -.30) and physical wellbeing (r = -.30). The findings of the current study are consistent with the few previous studies that have explored the association between meaning/purpose in life and wellbeing. For instance, Brassai et al. (2011) identified the quantitative association between meaning in life and psychological wellbeing among 1,944 adolescents aged 15-19 years in US and revealed that meaning in life is strongly and positively associated with purpose in life. Similarly, Bronk et al. (2009) conducted a quantitative study to examine the relationship between purpose in life and psychological wellbeing among 153 adolescents with a mean age of 14 years in the US and found a strong positive association between purpose in life and psychological wellbeing in adolescents.

4.4.6 Research hypothesis 6: There is significant negative association between emotional intelligence and wellbeing

To find out statistically if there was a significant positive association between emotional intelligence (as measured by the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale, Davies et al., 2010) and wellbeing (as measured by the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale, Adams et al., 1997), various statistics, i.e., mean, standard deviation and Pearson product-moment '*r*' were computed as shown in Table 4.13. A Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between the level of emotional intelligence (M = 37.15, SD = 5.90) and wellbeing (M = 124.35, SD = 15.12) among 375 adolescents in years 8-12, aged 13-19 years.

Table 4. 13 Correlations among emotional intelligence and wellbeing

Variables/ Dimensions/Items	***Emotional intelligence (TT)***	*Appraisal of own emotions*	*Appraisal of others' emotions*	*Regulation of own emotions*	*Regulations of others' emotions*	*Utilization of emotions*
Wellbeing (TT)	.67	.61	.53	.63	.39	.59
Psychological wellbeing	.53	.43	.34	.53	.40	.49
Emotional wellbeing	.40	.47	.33	.41	.16	.25
Social wellbeing	.58	.51	.50	.52	.32	.51
Physical wellbeing	.45	.38	.45	.44	.19	.38
Spiritual wellbeing	.67	.61	.50	.61	.41	.60
Intellectual wellbeing	.50	.43	.37	.45	.38	.45

Notes: (a) N = 375, (b) ** $p < .05$, (c) TT= Total

As hypothesised, a significant strong positive correlation between emotional intelligence and wellbeing was found r (375) = .67, $p < .05$. That is, as the emotional intelligence of adolescent participants increases, there is strong possibility that there will be a corresponding increase in their wellbeing. These findings are consistent Balluerka et al.'s (2016) quantitative study among 2182 adolescents aged 12-18 years that investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing and reported that adolescents with greater emotional intelligence show significantly higher levels of psychological wellbeing. They further suggested that emotional

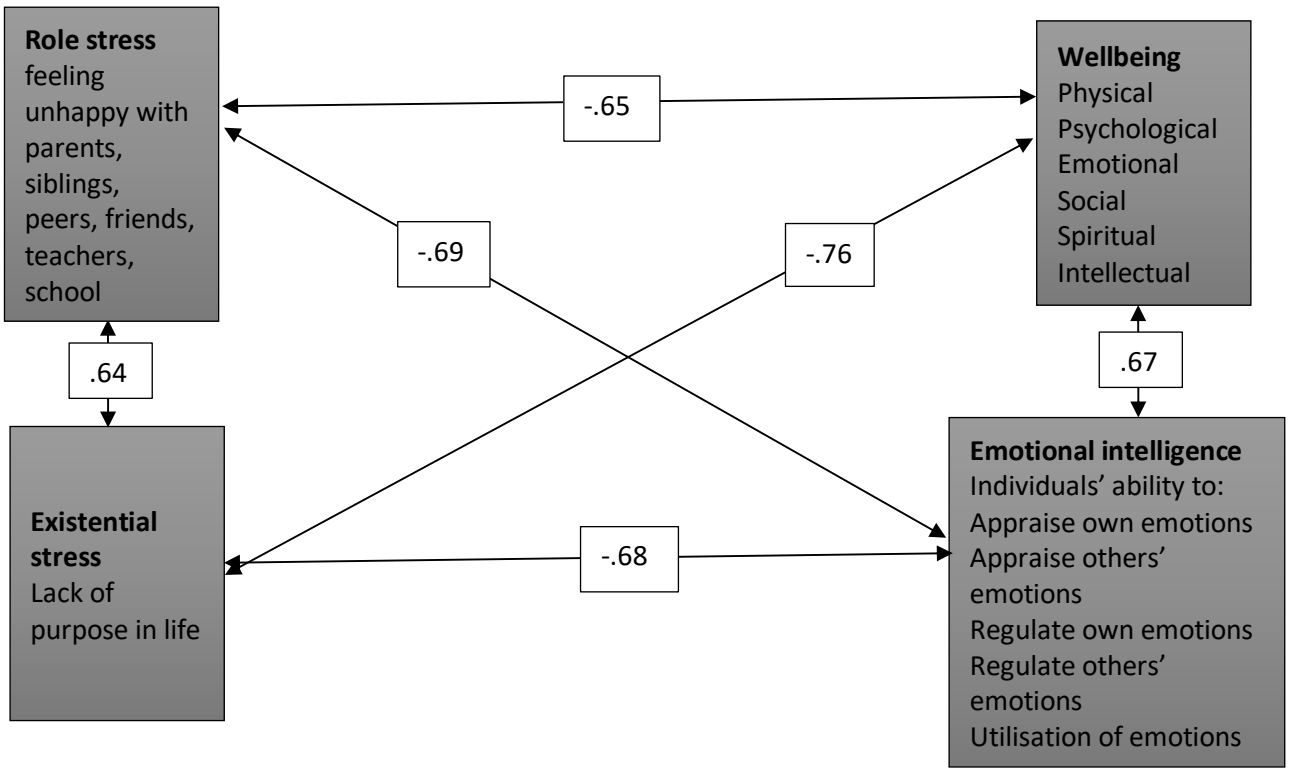
intelligence strengthened the relationship between peer attachment and psychological wellbeing, suggesting interconnectedness with role stress components.

Table 4.13 reports the relationship of adolescent participants' self-reports of emotional intelligence and its five items, with wellbeing and the six dimensions. The majority of correlations were positive, moderate to strong and statistically significant, thereby with an increase in any emotional intelligence item, there is a moderate to high probability of an increase in most of the wellbeing dimensions. This finding supports the argument made by Mayer and Salovey (1997) that individuals with higher emotional abilities possess a greater capacity to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions in themselves and with others, which facilitates wellbeing. However, a weak positive correlation was found between emotional wellbeing and regulation of other' emotions r (375) = .16, p < .05; and emotional wellbeing and utilisation of emotions r (375) = .25, p < .05. Similar weak positive correlation was found between physical wellbeing and regulation of others' emotions; however, the correlation was significant.

4.4.7 Summary of Correlation analysis

The Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) Version 25 was used to conduct correlation analysis. The results of the analysis are summarised graphically in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4. 5 Adolescent Wellbeing Model: Results of the correlation analysis



These results provide evidence to support the hypothesised 'Adolescent wellbeing model' as proposed in Chapter Two (refer Section 2.6.5) regarding interconnections and correlations between the variables under study. Pearson's correlation coefficients (*r*) were considered statistically significant at the .05 level. In summary, for the adolescent sample at the focus of this study, a significant positive correlation was reported between their perceived role stress and existential stress (*r* = .64); and emotional intelligence and wellbeing (r = .67). A significant negative correlation was found between role stress and emotional intelligence (*r* = -.69) and between role stress and wellbeing (*r* = -.65). Similarly, a significant negative correlation was found between existential stress and emotional intelligence (*r* = -.68) and between existential stress and wellbeing (*r*= -.76). To test for the possibility of gender and age differences, inferential analyses such as *t*-test and ANOVA analysis were conducted, respectively.

4.5 Inferential Analysis: Gender and Year Level Differences

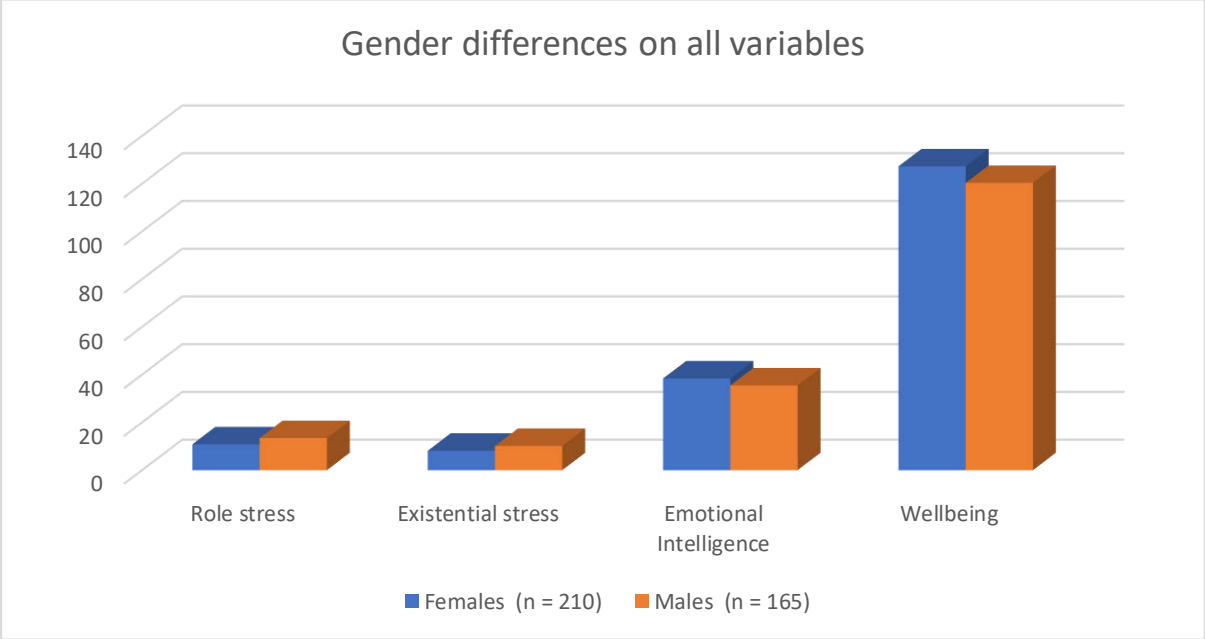
As a post hoc examination (additional analyses), the current study conducted an inferential analysis to examine the gender and year level differences on all the variables. A post hoc examination "involves looking at the data after a study has been concluded and trying to find patterns that were not primary objectives of the study … conducted as 'additional' analyses" (Nikam, 2016, p.1). As mentioned above in Section 4.3, descriptive analysis involves numbers that summarise the data with the purpose of describing the basic features of the data in the study. In contrast, inferential analysis involves numbers that allow the researcher to determine whether there are differences between two or more groups and whether these differences are likely to be present in the population of interest (Thompson, 2009). The descriptive analysis of the current study reported that the population data represents a normal distribution for all the variables (refer Section 4.3). Therefore, inferential analysis in the current study involved *t*-test for gender differences and *F* ratio/ANOVA analysis to examine year level differences.

4.5.1 t-test for gender differences on all the variables

The study applied *t*-test analysis as a type of inferential analysis to identify if there was statistical difference between two groups (Sthle & Wold, 1989); that is, to explore whether there were any significant gender differences in adolescent participants' report levels of role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing. Independent sample *t*-tests were conducted to find out any significant differences between two groups of adolescents, males (*n* = 210) and females (*n* = 165) on

role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing in terms of mean scores. Figure 4.6 provides the graphic representation of gender differences on all four constructs.

Figure 4. 6 Graph showing gender differences on all four variables



A summary of descriptive statistics and gender differences on all the variables is provided in Table 4.14 below.

Table 4. 14 Statistical comparisons of females and males on scores for all the variables

Variables	*Females (n = 210)*	*Males (n = 165)*	*t-value*	*Df*	*P*	*d*
Role stress	10.86 (3.74)	13.47 (4.58)	6.06	373	0.001	0.62
Existential stress	8.16 (2.90)	10.17 (3.18)	6.40	373	0.001	0.66
Emotional Intelligence	38.43 (5.24)	35.51 (6.30)	4.91	373	0.001	0.5
Wellbeing	127.30 (13.97)	120.35 (15.87)	3.91	373	0.001	0.38

Notes. (a) The second and third columns represent means and standard deviations *M* (*SD*). (b) ** $p < .05$, (d) *df*= degree of freedom, (e) *d*= effect size (weak effect size= 0.2; moderate= 0.5, and strong= 0.8) (Cohen (1988)

4.5.1.1 Gender differences in the way in which adolescents report levels of role stress

To compare the level of role stress between females (n = 210) and males (n = 165) of year level 8-12, aged 13-19, an independent samples t-test was computed. This test was found to be statistically significant, t (373) = 6.06, $p < .05$, d = 0.62. The effect size shows that gender differences in role

stress were moderate to strong. Thus, the results indicated that adolescent females experienced lower role stress (*M* = 10.86, *SD* = 3.74) than was experienced by adolescent males (*M* = 13.47, *SD* = 4.58) (refer Table 4.15). The current findings are in contrast to the results Liu and Kaplan (2004) investigated role stress in a sample of 3,107 adults aged 19-21 years in the US, finding that females reported comparatively higher role stress and depressive symptoms than their male counterparts. However, in contrast to findings of the current study and previous other studies, Rai and Kumar (2012) examined role stress in university students with a mean age of 19.93 years and found that male students reported higher role stress than females. Care in interpreting these differences is needed due to variances in the participant populations, age ranges, different measures of constructs, and the conceptualisation of role stress and role strain (refer Chapter 2 for more detail about these studies). In the current study, results of *t*-test analysis reported that male and female groups of adolescents differed significantly for each item of role stress (refer Table 4.15).

Table 4. 15 Statistical comparisons of females and males on scores for role stress

Variables	*Females (n = 210)*	*Males (n = 165)*	*t-value*	*Df*	*P*	*D*
Role stress (TT)	10.86 (3.74)	13.47 (4.58)	6.06	373	0.001	0.62
The number of friends you have	1.22 (0.52)	1.62 (0.81)	5.78	373	0.001	0.59
Kinds of friends you have	1.24 (0.54)	1.68 (0.82)	6.23	373	0.001	0.63
Being accepted or included by friends	1.32 (0.61)	1.60 (0.80)	3.78	373	0.001	0.39
Your relationship with your parents	1.29 (0.56)	1.35 (0.63)	0.97	373	0.001	0.10
Your relationship with you siblings	1.27 (0.52)	1.35 (0.62)	1.43	373	0.001	0.14
Your experience at school	1.47 (0.75)	2.04 (0.90)	6.63	373	0.001	0.69
Your relationship with teachers	1.56 (0.78)	2.13 (0.90)	6.59	373	0.001	0.68
Your relationship with peers	1.47 (0.71)	1.79 (0.89)	3.96	373	0.001	0.40

Notes: (a) *M* (*SD*), (b) ** $p < .05$, (c) TT= Total, (d) *df*= degree of freedom, (e) *d*= effect size

As evidenced in Table 4.15, females and males differ significantly on the role stress items; number of friends t (373) = 5.78, $p < .05$; kinds of friends t (373) = 6.23, $p < .05$; accepted by friends t (373) = 3.78, $p < .05$; relation with parents t (373) = 0.97, $p < .05$; relation with siblings t (373) = 1.43, $p < .05$; experience at school t (373) = 6.63, $p < .05$; relation with teacher t (373) = 6.59, $p < .05$; relation with peer t (373) = 3.96, $p < .05$. For all role stress items, the male adolescents scored significantly higher in terms of their mean score than their female counterparts. However, the effect size recorded that gender differences in relation with parents (*d*= .10) and siblings (*d*= .14) were small to moderate,

whereas it was moderate for feeling of acceptance by friends (d = .39) and relation with peers (d = .40), and moderate to strong for the number of friends (d = .59), kinds of friends (d = .63), experience at school (d = .69) and relation with teachers (d = .68). The results are in contrast with Bird and Harris' (1990) report that female adolescents experienced more family role strain than males, with the authors reasoning that female adolescents may feel the strain of "getting along with siblings, desiring more parental attention, and conflict over the completion of the chores", relative to their male counterparts (Bird & Harris, 1990, p. 152-153).

The present study thereby contributes to further understanding gender differences in relation to multiple sources of role stress for adolescents, given the limited existing studies. The mean values indicate higher role stress in males on all the domains of role stress as compared to females, an area to further explore in the case studies. Another point of note in the current study was that both males and females reported higher role stress emanating from relations with school, teachers, and peers. These findings are somehow in contrast with Jose et al.'s (2012) findings in which they reported that males and females differ in terms of their level of connectedness with various social domains, with males reporting higher levels of family connectedness and females reported higher levels of peer connectedness.

4.5.1.2 Gender differences in the way in which adolescents report levels of existential stress

Results also recorded significant variances for female and male groups of adolescents on existential stress t (373) = 6.40, p < .001, d = 0.66. The effect size reports that the gender differences in existential stress were moderate to strong. Thus, the results indicate that adolescent females experienced lower existential stress (M = 8.16, SD = 2.90) than was experienced by adolescent males (M = 10.17, SD = 3.18) (refer Table 4.16). Similar results were also found by Brassai et al. (2013) and Schulenberg et al. (2016). For instance, Brassai et al. (2013), in their quantitative study among 1,944 adolescents aged 15-19 years in US, highlighted that adolescent females scored higher on meaning or purpose in life than adolescent males. Similarly, Schulenberg et al. (2016) examined purpose in life among 91 adolescents aged 12-18 years in the US and found that female adolescents (M = 22.48) reported significantly more meaning in life than male adolescents (M = 19.59). Further, results of the current study's t-test analysis identified that male and female adolescents differed significantly on each item of existential stress (refer Table 4.16).

Table 4. 16 Statistical comparisons of females and males on scores for existential stress

Variables/Items	*Females (n = 210)*	*Males (n = 165)*	*t-value*	*df*	*P*	*d*
Existential stress (TT)	8.16 (2.90)	10.17 (3.18)	6.40	373	0.001	0.66
In life I have clear goals and aims	1.99 (0.90)	2.62 (0.93)	6.65	373	0.001	0.69
My personal experience is meaningful	2.08 (0.73)	2.39 (1.00)	3.49	373	0.001	0.35
In achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfillment	1.93 (0.76)	2.44 (0.93)	5.77	373	0.001	0.60
I have fully discovered a satisfying life purpose	2.13 (0.92)	2.72 (0.94)	6.02	373	0.001	0.63

Notes: (a) *M* (*SD*), (b) ** $p < .05$, (c) TT= Total, (d) *df*= degree of freedom, (e) *d*= effect size

As depicted in Table 4.16, females and males differed significantly on their level of agreement in relation to having clear goals and aims t (373) = 6.65, $p < .05$; personal existence is meaningful t (373) = 3.49, $p < .05$; progressing to achieve life goals t (373) = 5.77, $p < .05$; and fully discovered life purpose t (373) = 6.02, $p < .05$. Findings also identified that on all existential stress items, male adolescents scored significantly higher in terms of their mean score than their female counterparts. However, the strength of difference was small to moderate for perceiving personal existential meaningful (d = 0.35), whereby for the other items strength of differences were moderate to strong. Of note, examining the mean values within each group, both males and females reported high levels of existential stress in terms of lack of fully discovered life purpose. These results provide support for the existing literature regarding adolescent development discussed in Chapter Two (refer Section 2.3), specifically how purpose in life has been reported to support successful navigation through the adolescent phase (Rudzinskas, 2008). Findings are also in line with Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory, in which purpose plays an important role during vital phase of adolescent's identity development.

4.5.1.3 Gender differences in the way in which adolescents report levels of emotional intelligence

To find out statistically if there was a significant difference in the level of emotional intelligence between females (n = 210) and males (n = 165) in year levels 8-12, aged 13-19, an independent samples t-test was computed as shown in Table 4.17. This test was found to be statistically significant, t (373) = 4.91, $p < .05$, d =.50. The effect size shows that the gender differences in emotional intelligence were moderate. Thus, the results indicate that adolescent females have higher emotional

intelligence (*M* = 38.43, *SD* = 5.24) than adolescent males (*M* = 35.51, *SD* = 6.30) (refer Table 4.17) in the current study. This supports earlier findings by Katyal and Awasthi (2005). In a quantitative study conducted among 150 adolescents from year level 10 in India, they reported significant gender differences among adolescents in their level of emotional intelligence, where females reported higher emotional intelligence than males (Katyal & Awasthi, 2005). Similarly, Downey et al. (2008) examined gender differences in emotional intelligence among 209 adolescents aged 12-17 years in Australia and found significant gender differences, whereby females reported higher emotional intelligence than males. In contrast, Kaur (2010) examined gender differences in emotional intelligence among 198 adolescents aged 16-19 years in India and found that males reported higher emotional intelligence than females. As noted, results are inconsistent concerning gender differences in emotional intelligence which may be due to the wide variability in the conceptualisation and measurement of emotional intelligence and/or participant context including socio-cultural backgrounds (Roberts et al., 2001).

Table 4. 17 Statistical comparisons of females and males on scores for emotional intelligence

Variables/Dimensions	*Females (n = 210)*	*Males (n = 165)*	*t-value*	*df*	*P*	*d*
Emotional intelligence (TT)	38.43 (5.24)	35.51 (6.30)	4.91	373	0.001	0.50
Appraisal of own emotions	7.81 (1.25)	6.96 (1.64)	5.65	373	0.001	0.58
Appraisal of others' emotions	7.76 (1.50)	7.14 (1.64)	3.78	373	0.001	0.39
Regulation of own emotions	7.76 (1.23)	6.88 (1.34)	6.58	373	0.001	0.68
Regulations of others' emotions	7.27 (1.46)	7.10 (1.17)	1.21	373	0.001	0.13
Utilization of emotions	7.84 (1.27)	7.41 (1.56)	2.91	373	0.001	0.30

Notes: (a) *M* (*SD*), (b) ** $p < .05$, (c) TT= Total, (d) *df*= degree of freedom, (e) *d*= effect size

The *t*-test analysis reports that the male and female groups of adolescents differ significantly on all the dimensions of emotional intelligence: appraisal of own emotions t (373) = 5.65, $p < .05$; appraisal of others' emotions *t* (373) = 3.78, $p < .05$; regulation of own emotions, *t* (373) = 6.58, $p < .05$; regulations of others' emotions *t* (373) = 6.58, $p < .05$; and utilisation of emotions *t* (373) = 2.91, $p < .05$. However, the findings also report that on all the dimensions of emotional intelligence, females scored significantly higher in terms of mean score than their male counterparts. The effect size was

small to moderate for regulation of emotions (d = .13) and utilisation of emotions (d= .30) and was nearly moderate for appraisal of others' emotions (d = .39), while moderate to strong for appraisal of own emotions (d = .58) and regulation of own emotions (d = .68). It may be interpreted from this analysis that males and females are strongly divergent for appraising and regulating their own emotions, with females reporting higher levels of these abilities as compared to their male counterparts (Ciarrochi et al., 2001). The results are in line with Ciarrochi et al.'s (2001) quantitative study that examined emotional intelligence in 131 adolescents aged 13-15 years in Australia. They employed the 33-item 'Emotional Intelligence Scale' (Schutte et al., 1998) to collect data regarding adolescents' emotional intelligence and found that females reported higher overall emotional intelligence than males. In addition, females also reported higher on all the dimensions of emotional intelligence such as regulating own and others' emotions, ability to utilise emotions, and ability to perceive emotions. Consistency of results can be attributed to the use of scales to collect the data regarding emotional intelligence. In the current study, the brief version of Schutte et al.'s (1998) 'Emotional Intelligence Scale' (which was developed by Davies et al., 2010) was used to collect data regarding emotional intelligence of adolescents.

Comparing the mean values within each group in this study highlighted that both females (M = 7.84) and males (M = 7.41) have high ability to utilise their emotions as compared to other abilities of emotional intelligence. These results diverge from Singh and Singh's (2008) study conducted with an adult sample of 312 participants with a mean age of 36.48 years for females and 40.28 years for males, which reported that "there is no significant difference either on individual dimension of emotional intelligence or on total emotional intelligence scale" (p. 388).

4.5.1.4 Gender differences in the way in which adolescents report levels of wellbeing

Finally, gender differences were also reported for the female and male groups of adolescents for their perceived overall wellbeing, t (373) = 3.63, $p < .05$, d=.38. This test was found to be statistically significant, with the effect size identifying that the gender differences in wellbeing were weak to moderate. Thus, the results revealed that females scored higher on the wellbeing scale (M = 127.30, SD = 15.87) than males (M = 120.35, SD = 13.97) (refer Table 4.18). These findings are in contrast with the results of studies reported by Bolognini et al. (1996) and Bergman and Scott (2001). Bergman and Scott (2001), in their quantitative longitudinal study, identified significant gender differences in adolescents' wellbeing among 773 adolescents aged 11-15 years. Males reported high wellbeing, i.e., "higher positive self-esteem, lower negative self-efficacy, less unhappiness, and fewer past worries" (p. 190) as compared to females. Similar results were reported by Bolognini et al. (1996) in their quantitative longitudinal study among 219 adolescents aged 12-14 in Switzerland. Results revealed

that females tend to have poor wellbeing when compared to males. Females reported lower self-esteem and rated themselves lower in the areas of conduct and social relations than their male counterparts.

Table 4. 18 Statistical comparisons of females and males on scores for wellbeing

Variables/Dimensions	*Females (n = 210)*	*Males (n = 165)*	*t-value*	*df*	*P*	*d*
Wellbeing (TT)	127.30 (13.97)	120.35 (15.87)	3.91	373	0.001	0.38
Psychological wellbeing	20.06 (2.83)	18.98 (2.71)	3.73	373	0.001	0.39
Emotional wellbeing	20.30 (3.30)	18.70 (2.67)	5.02	373	0.001	0.53
Social wellbeing	22.43 (3.55)	20.57 (3.41)	5.11	373	0.001	0.53
Physical wellbeing	21.20 (2.88)	22.06 (3.79)	2.47	373	0.014	0.25
Spiritual wellbeing	22.53 (3.46)	20.54 (4.61)	4.76	373	0.001	0.49
Intellectual wellbeing	20.69 (2.58)	19.96 (2.33)	2.83	373	0.005	0.30

Notes: (a) *M* (*SD*), (b) ** $p < .05$, (c) TT= Total, (d) *df*= degree of freedom, (e) *d*= effect size

Results of the *t*-test analysis further report that the male and female groups of adolescents differed significantly on all the dimensions of wellbeing, that is: psychological wellbeing t (373) = 3.73, $p < .05$; emotional wellbeing t (373) = 5.02, $p < .05$; social wellbeing t (373) = 5.11, $p < .05$; physical wellbeing t (373) = 2.47, $p < .05$; spiritual wellbeing t (373) = 4.76, $p < .05$; and intellectual wellbeing t (373) = 2.83, $p < .05$. Notably, upon examining the effect sizes, females differed strongly from males in terms of having high levels of emotional wellbeing (d= .53), social wellbeing (d = .53) and spiritual wellbeing (d = .49). The effect size was small to moderate for physical wellbeing (d = .25), intellectual wellbeing (d = .30) and psychological wellbeing (d = .39). In addition, the findings also identified that, with the exception of physical wellbeing, across all the dimensions of wellbeing (psychological, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual) female adolescents scored significantly higher than male adolescents. Results are partially consistent with Burke and Weir's (1978) quantitative study in which they compared 181 female and 93 male adolescents from three high schools in Canada in terms of emotional and physical wellbeing and revealed that females reported significantly poorer emotional and physical wellbeing than males.

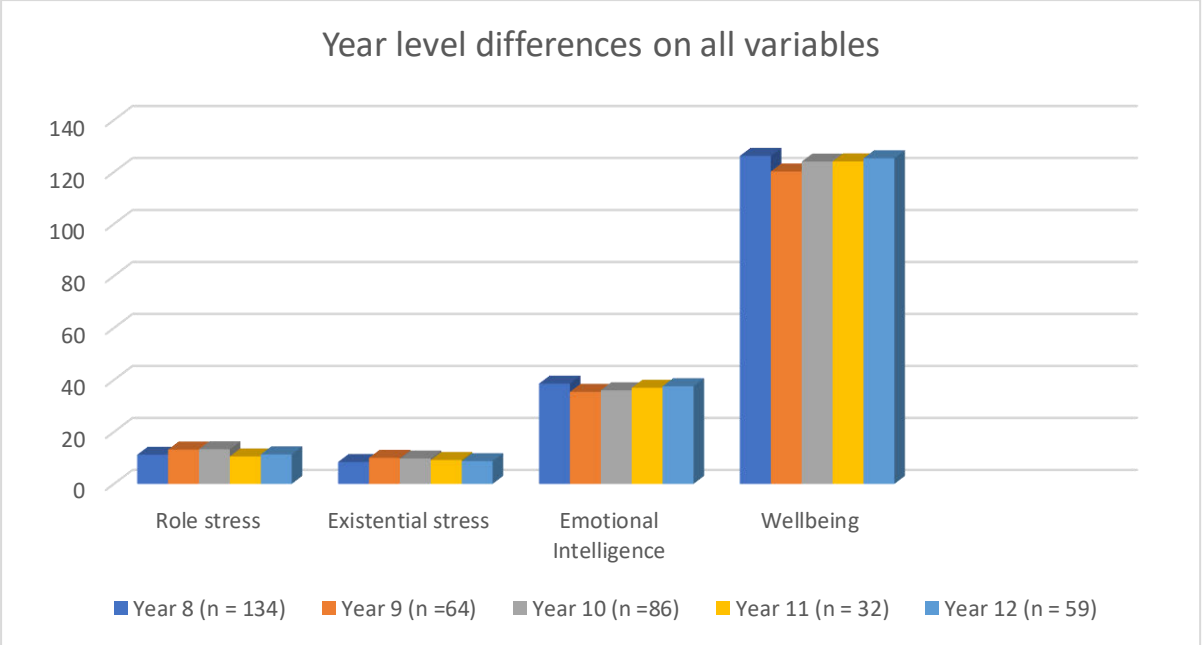
Thus, *t*-test analysis highlighted significant gender differences on all the variables under study. Therefore, analysis of the year level of participants was deemed necessary to ascertain any potential

developmental, or age-related relationships with role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing. To calculate year level differences Analysis of Variance or *F* test (ANOVA) was determined as more appropriate (Sahu, 2010) to analyse any significant difference among means of year level 8-12 adolescents, on the variables: role, stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Year level analysis is therefore presented in the subsequent sections.

4.5.2 F-test or ANOVA analysis

As mentioned previously, *t*-test is deemed the most suitable inferential analysis to examine significant differences between two groups, whereas to compare the means of more than two independent groups and quantify the difference among them, *F*-test or one way ANOVA is a more accurate inferential analysis (Sthle & Wold, 1989).

Figure 4. 7 Graph showing year level differences on all four variables



A summary of descriptive statistics and year level differences on all the variables is provided in Table 4.19 below.

Table 4. 19 Statistical comparisons adolescents aged 13-19 of year level 8-12 on aggregated scores for all the variables

Variables	*Year 8 (n = 134)*	*Year 9 (n =64)*	*Year 10 (n =86)*	*Year 11 (n = 32)*	*Year 12 (n = 59)*	*F ratio*	*df*	*p*
Role stress	11.21 (4.13)	13.22 (4.37)	13.34 (4.29)	10.56 (3.84)	11.36 (4.30)	5.97	4, 370	0.001
Existential stress	08.41 (3.13)	10.03 (3.50)	09.78 (2.76)	09.21 (2.37)	08.76 (3.60)	3.57	4, 370	0.007
Emotional intelligence	38.55 (6.10)	35.41 (6.97)	36.03 (5.26)	36.97 (5.06)	37.58 (4.77)	4.26	4, 370	0.002
Wellbeing	126.21 (14.33)	120.18 (17.73)	124.00 (14.07)	124.08 (12.90)	125.29 (15.96)	1.81	4, 370	0.126

Notes. (a) The second and third columns represent means and standard deviations *M* (*SD*). (b) ** $p < .05$. (c) *df*= degree of freedom, (d) *d*= effect size

4.5.2.1 Year level differences in the way in which adolescents report levels of role stress

Findings revealed that there was significant difference in the level of role stress among adolescent students of year levels 8-12, $F(4,370) = 5.97$, $p < .05$. Small variations can be seen in the mean scores of adolescents from year level 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 on the role stress variable; however, adolescent students of year level 9 (M = 13.22, SD = 4.37) and year level 10 (M = 13.34, SD = 4.29) reported experiencing higher level of role stress followed by year level 12 adolescents (M = 11.36, SD = 4.30) and year level 8 adolescents (M = 11.21, SD = 4.13). Adolescents from year level 11 (M = 10.56, SD = 3.84) reported the lowest level of role stress as compared to their counterparts in other years (refer Table 4.20). These findings are a significant contribution to the field, given existing studies related to role strain have predominantly focused on year level 8 adolescents based on the rationale of year level 8 arguably being a higher risk for role stain due to ecological transition from primary school to secondary school (Fenzel, 1989; Bird & Harris, 1990; De Bryun, 2005). As indicated in Chapter Two (refer Section 2.4.2.4), very few studies have investigated role stress in adolescents aged 13-19 years from year level 8-12. Thus, the current findings contribute to the existing literature.

Table 4. 20 Statistical comparisons adolescents aged 13-19 of year level 8-12 on aggregated scores for role stress

Variables	*Year 8 (n = 134)*	*Year 9 (n = 64)*	*Year 10 (n = 86)*	*Year 11 (n = 32)*	*Year 12 (n = 59)*	*F ratio*	*df*	*p*
Role stress (TT)	11.21 (4.13)	13.22 (4.37)	13.34 (4.29)	10.56 (3.84)	11.36 (4.30)	5.97	4, 370	0.001
The number of friends you have	1.24 (0.58)	1.47 (0.73)	1.60 (0.74)	1.16 (0.45)	1.53 (0.82)	5.57	4, 370	0.001
Kinds of friends you have	1.22 (0.55)	1.73 (0.80)	1.57 (0.73)	1.22 (0.49)	1.51 (0.84)	8.22	4, 370	0.001
Being accepted or included by friends	1.23 (0.57)	1.55 (0.73)	1.71 (0.73)	1.28 (0.63)	1.53 (0.84)	7.35	4, 370	0.001
Your relationship with your parents	1.34 (0.64)	1.33 (0.57)	1.31 (0.56)	1.16 (0.45)	1.31 (0.62)	0.66	4, 370	0.619
Your relationship with you siblings	1.29 (0.60)	1.38 (0.58)	1.34 (0.57)	1.16 (0.45)	1.29 (0.56)	0.89	4, 370	0.471
Your experience at school	1.50 (0.81)	2.13 (0.86)	2.03 (0.80)	1.63 (0.87)	1.37 (0.76)	12.34	4, 370	0.001
Your relationship with teachers	1.78 (0.90)	2.00 (0.89	2.09 (0.79)	1.63 (0.87)	1.34 (0.73)	8.20	4, 370	0.001
Your relationship with peers	1.53 (0.80)	1.77 (0.87)	1.76 (0.81)	1.34 (0.70)	1.49 (0.77)	2.64	4, 370	0.033

Notes: (a) *M* (*SD*), (b) ** $p < .05$, (c) TT= Total, (d) *df*= degree of freedom, (e) *d*= effect size

Of note, many similarities and differences can be seen among these year levels in terms of their sources of role stress. For example, adolescents from year level 8 (*M* = 1.78) and year level 10 (M = 2.09) reported higher role stress emanating from relationships with their teacher. Year level 9 reported higher role stress emanating from experiences at school (*M* = 2.13). Year level 11 reported similar high role stress reported to emanate from teacher influences (*M* = 1.63) and experience at school (*M* = 1.63), as compared to other sources. Year level 12 adolescents reported a higher level of role stress due to feeling unhappy with their number of friends and being accepted or included by friends.

Thus, the current study reveals interesting results in terms of role stress across year level 8-12. There are significant year level differences in the way in which adolescents report levels of role stress. Year level 9 and 10 adolescents reported higher on all the domains of role stress when compared to other year levels. The most substantial source of role stress for year levels 8, 9, 10 and11 is the school microsystem, whereas for year level 12, it is friend microsystem.

4.5.2.2 Year level differences in the way in which adolescents report levels of existential stress

Significant difference in the level of existential stress among adolescent students of year level 8-12 was also revealed, F (4, 370) = 3.57, $p < .05$. Adolescent students of year level 9 (M = 10.03, SD = 3.50) and year level 10 (M = 9.78, SD = 2.76) self-reported experiencing a higher level of existential stress in comparison to year level 8 (M = 8.41, SD= 3.13), year level 11 (M = 9.21, SD = 2.37) and year level 12 adolescents (M = 8.76, SD = 3.60) (refer Table 4.21). That is, year level 9 adolescents recorded the highest level of existential stress and adolescents from year level 8 recorded the lowest level, compared to their counterparts in other year levels. Comparison of the current results with previous research is challenged because, to the researcher's knowledge, research into the year level difference, in existential stress across years 8-12 has not been located, thus this study contributes to the existing body of literature.

Table 4. 21 Statistical comparisons adolescents aged 13-19 of year level 8-12 on aggregated scores for existential stress

Variables	*Year 8 (n = 134)*	*Year 9 (n = 64)*	*Year 10 (n = 86)*	*Year 11 (n = 32)*	*Year 12 (n = 59)*	*F ratio*	*df*	*p*
Existential stress (TT)	8.41 (3.13)	10.03 (3.50)	9.78 (2.76)	9.21 (2.37)	8.76 (3.60)	3.57	4, 370	0.007
In life I have clear goals and aims	2.13 (0.97	2.59 (105)	2.28 (0.86)	2.53 (0.72)	2.08 (1.04)	3.76	4, 370	0.005
My personal experience is meaningful	2.07 (0.91)	2.23 (1.03)	2.34 (0.64)	2.28 (0.58)	2.32 (1.01)	1.57	4, 370	0.183
In achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfillment	1.96 (0.93)	2.48 (0.84)	2.24 (0.80)	2.25 (0.67)	2.05 (0.88)	4.60	4, 370	0.001
I have fully discovered a satisfying life purpose	2.25 (0.95)	2.72 (1.03)	2.40 (0.84)	2.72 (0.81)	2.17 (1.09)	4.39	4, 370	0.002

Notes: (a) M (SD), (b) ** $p < .05$, (c) TT= Total, (d) df= degree of freedom, (e) d= effect size

Of note, similar to findings for year level comparisons with role stress, adolescents of year level 9 and 10 reported higher levels of existential stress in the current study, supporting the potential strength of the interrelationship between role stress and existential stress reported in section 4.4.1. Table 4.21 also highlights the similarities and differences across year level in terms of adolescents' level of existential stress for each item. Year level 8 reported high existential stress for the item of not having clear goals and aims (M = 2.13) and adolescent participants from year level 9 (M = 2.72), year 10 (M = 2.40), year 12 (M = 2.72) reported higher existential stress in terms of not perceiving a fully discovered life purpose. Year level 12 reported higher existential stress by not agreeing that they perceived that their 'personal existence is meaningful'.

4.5.2.3 Year level differences in the way in which adolescents report levels of emotional intelligence

The findings of the current study also reported a significant difference between the level of emotional intelligence among adolescents and year levels 8-12, F (4,370) = 4.26, $p < .05$. As depicted in Table 4.22, all adolescents from year level 8-12 reported moderate emotional intelligence. Comparison of mean values revealed that adolescents from year level 9 (M= 35.41, SD = 6.97) and 10 (M = 36.03, SD = 5.26) reported lower levels of emotional intelligence compared to year level 8 (M = 38.55, SD = 6.10), year level 11 (M= 36.97, SD = 5.06) and year level 12 adolescents (M = 37.58, SD = 4.77). It was also found that adolescents from year level 8 reported the highest level of emotional intelligence compared to their counterparts in other year levels.

Table 4. 22 Statistical comparisons adolescents aged 13-19 of year level 8-12 on aggregated scores for emotional intelligence

Variables	*Year 8 (n = 134)*	*Year 9 (n = 64)*	*Year 10 (n = 86)*	*Year 11 (n = 32)*	*Year 12 (n = 59)*	*F ratio*	*df*	*p*
Emotional intelligence (TT)	38.55 (6.10)	35.41 (6.97)	36.03 (5.26)	36.97 (5.06)	37.58 (4.77)	4.26	4, 370	0.002
Appraisal of own emotions	7.73 (1.57)	6.86 (1.40)	7.29 (1.71)	7.56 (1.19)	7.54 (0.99)	4.15	4, 370	0.003
Appraisal of others' emotions	7.66 (1.54)	6.87 (1.79)	7.25 (1.35)	7.56 (1.22)	8.07 (1.74)	5.46	4, 370	0.001
Regulation of own emotions	7.92 (1.39)	6.92 (1.55)	6.94 (0.95)	7.03 (1.09)	7.44 (1.23	11.20	4, 370	0.001
Regulations of others' emotions	7.28 (1.33)	7.25 (1.54)	7.16 (1.14)	7.21 (1.16)	6.98 (1.49)	0.56	4, 370	0.695
Utilisation of emotions	7.95 (1.45)	7.50 (1.75)	7.38 (1.13)	7.59 (1.19)	7.54 (1.36)	2.63	4, 370	0.034

Notes: (a) M (SD), (b) ** $p < .05$, (c) TT= Total, (d) df= degree of freedom, (e) d= effect size

Table 4.22 indicates that adolescents from year levels 9 and 10 scored lower on overall emotional intelligence as well as on all the dimensions of emotional intelligence, suggesting that, many adolescents from year levels 8, 11, and 12 have further developed their emotional abilities to appraise and regulate their own and others' emotion as well as utilise their emotions. It is also important to note that, in comparison to their counterparts, adolescents from year level 8 reported lower levels of role stress (refer Section 4.5.2.1) and existential stress (refer Section 4.5.2.2), higher levels of emotional intelligence overall, and also scored higher on all dimensions of emotional intelligence, further supporting the strong negative relationship between role stress/existential stress and emotional

intelligence highlighted in the current study (refer Section 4.4). Examination of the mean values within each group revealed significant results, with adolescents from year level 8 (M = 7.95), 9 (M = 7.50), 10 (M = 7.59), and 11(M = 7.54) reporting a higher level of emotional intelligence in terms of their ability to utilise own emotions, whereas adolescents from year level 12 reported a higher level of emotional intelligence in terms of their ability to appraise other' emotions (M= 8.07).

As identified in Chapter Two, previous studies have highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence in educational settings. Gardner and Lambert's (2019) quantitative study examined potential relationships between participant age and self-reports of emotional intelligence in 334 adolescents aged 10-18 years from Jamaica. The results of their study revealed that younger adolescents (aged 10-14 years) reported higher overall emotional intelligence, lower depressive symptoms and higher self-esteem than older adolescents (aged 15-18 years). Therefore, their findings are consistent with the current study in that year level 8 adolescent participants reported higher emotional intelligence than adolescents of higher year level. One reason behind the consistency of these result might be that they all employed the 'Emotional Intelligence Scale' (developed by Schutte et al., 1998) to collect data regarding adolescents' emotional intelligence. In the current study, the brief version (Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale, Davies et al., 2010) of that scale was used to collect data regarding adolescents' emotional intelligence.

4.5.2.4 Year level differences in the way in which adolescents report levels of wellbeing

In addition, one-way ANOVA analysis was conducted to compare the level of wellbeing among adolescent students of year levels 8-12. No statistically significant differences were identified in the level of wellbeing among adolescent students of year levels 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12, F (4, 374) = 2.12, p > 0.05. As depicted in Table 4.23, overall, adolescents from year level 8-12 revealed moderate wellbeing. However, comparing mean scores revealed that adolescent students of year level 9 (M= 120.18, SD = 17.73) and year level 10 (M = 124.00, SD = 14.07) reported comparatively lower levels of wellbeing when compared to year level 8 (M = 126.21, SD = 14.33), year level 11 (M= 124.08, SD = 12.90) and year level 12 adolescents (M = 125.29, SD = 15.96). Therefore, the lowest level of wellbeing was self-reported by year level 9 adolescents (M = 120.18, SD = 17.73) and the highest level of wellbeing was self-reported by year level 8 adolescents (M = 126.21, SD = 14.33). (refer Table 4.23).

Table 4. 23 Statistical comparisons adolescents aged 13-19 of year level 8-12 on aggregated scores for wellbeing

Variables	*Year 8 (n = 134)*	*Year 9 (n =64)*	*Year 10 (n =86)*	*Year 11 (n = 32)*	*Year 12 (n = 59)*	*F ratio*	*df*	*p*
Wellbeing (TT)	126.21 (14.33)	120.18 (17.73)	124.00 (14.07)	124.08 (12.90)	125.29 (15.96)	1.81	4, 370	0.126
Psychological wellbeing	20.00 (2.78)	19.62 (3.77)	18.99 (1.92)	19.11 (2.13)	19.70 (3.09)	1.94	4, 370	0.103
Emotional wellbeing	19.39 (2.93)	18.60 (3.59)	19.89 (2.36)	19.99 (2.63)	20.49 (3.95)	3.34	4, 370	0.010
Social wellbeing	21.71 (3.03)	20.94 (3.94)	21.80 (4.18)	22.37 (3.66)	21.41 (3.49)	1.05	4, 370	0.380
Physical wellbeing	22.84 (3.50)	20.81 (2.71)	21.31 (3.43)	20.19 (3.34)	20.69 (2.48)	8.92	4, 370	0.001
Spiritual wellbeing	22.32 (4.04)	19.97 (4.81)	21.76 (3.53)	21.37 (3.55)	21.94 (4.21)	3.78	4, 370	0.005
Intellectual wellbeing	20.10 (2.61)	20.14 (2.87)	20.32 (1.99)	21.00 (2.17)	20.94 (2.56)	1.82	4, 370	0.124

Notes: (a) *M* (*SD*), (b) ** $p < .05$, (c) TT= Total, (d) *df*= degree of freedom, (e) *d*= effect size

Table 4.23 identifies many similarities and differences across year levels for the six dimensions of wellbeing. Psychological wellbeing scores were highest in year 8 (*M* = 20) and lowest in year 10 (*M* = 18.99). However, year 12 adolescents recorded the highest mean score for emotional wellbeing (*M* = 20.49), compared to the other year levels on this dimension. Year level 8 also reported higher spiritual wellbeing (*M* = 22.32), followed by year level 12 (*M* = 21.94), year level 10 (*M* = 21.76), and year level 11 (*M* = 21.37), whereas year level 9 (*M* = 19.97) reported lowest on spiritual wellbeing dimension.

Similar low-range variation was reported for the social wellbeing of adolescents, with year 11 adolescents (*M* = 22.37) reporting the highest mean score, and year level 9 (*M* = 20.94) reporting the lowest. Year 11 adolescents (*M* = 21) also reported higher intellectual wellbeing with year level 8 (*M* = 20.10) reporting the lowest, however year 8 adolescents scored highest in the dimensions of psychological (*M* = 20.00), physical (*M* = 22.84) and spiritual wellbeing (*M* = 22.32). With the exception of intellectual wellbeing, either year 9 or year 10 adolescents scored lowest for each dimension of wellbeing, except intellectual wellbeing. Initial analysis potentially identifies that adolescents from year levels 8, 11, and 12 have a comparatively higher perception of their wellbeing when compared to year levels 9 and 10. The findings were partially consistent with the findings of Preskitt et al.'s (2015) quantitative national survey among 34, 601 adolescents aged 12-17 years in the US. They reported a significant difference in overall wellness and all its dimensions, with younger

adolescents (12-14 years) reporting higher overall wellness scores and also for all subdimensions except emotional wellness than the older adolescents (15-17 years). Although not directly comparable with Preskitt et al.'s (2015) study due to differences in age /year level categories of adolescents and applying the four dimensions of intellectual, social, emotional and physical wellbeing, the findings of the current study provide support for the previously observed year level variations.

4.5.3 Summary of Inferential analysis

Inferential analysis, such as *t* test analysis and ANOVA analysis, enabled further inferences to be made regarding any potential gender and year level differences among the sample. As depicted in Table 4.14, *t*-test analysis revealed significant gender differences on all the four variables, whereby females reported lower levels of role and existential stress and higher levels of emotional intelligence and wellbeing when compared to males. Further, ANOVA analysis highlighted statistically significant year level differences on all the four variables as indicated in Table 4.19. Adolescents from year levels 9 and 10 reported higher levels of role and existential stress and lower levels of emotional intelligence and wellbeing when compared to adolescents from year levels 8, 10 and 12. While gender and year levels are not the central focus of this study, integrating these initial findings into the case study analysis was a point for consideration, with further studies required to further explore the gender and year level variations.

4.6 Conclusion

Chapter Four, the first phase of the explanatory sequential mixed method research design, provided quantitative analysis to identify self-reported levels of role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing for the adolescent participants across year levels 8 to 12, and sought to identify any potential relationships between these constructs. It was found that overall, on average, the adolescent participants in this study reported moderate role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Deeper analysis of items within the four constructs revealed that a significant number of adolescents reported experiencing lower role and/or existential stress and moderate to high emotional intelligence and/or wellbeing, however there were a considerable number of participants who self-reported moderate to high role stress and/or existential stress and lower emotional intelligence and/or wellbeing. Therefore, this quantitative phase of the study contributes to further understanding adolescent experiences of role and/or existential stress to inform the development of educational and health policy and practice that is responsive to those experiencing role stress and/or existential stress and identifies potential preventative factors from those who report low role and existential stress. For the adolescents in this study, their responses supported initial

identification of potential sources of role and existential stress within the variables embedded in each scale. This reinforces the increasing concern for some adolescents' wellbeing as reported in the literature in Chapters 1 and 2 (AIHW, 2019, Mission Australia, 2015, WHO, 2020). For instance, AIHW (2019) highlighted that 44% of adolescents below the age of 15 experience mental health issues.

In responding to the research questions, the six hypotheses were supported with significant positive correlations between adolescents'; role stress and existential stress, and emotional intelligence and wellbeing, and significant negative correlations between adolescent's; role stress and emotional intelligence, role stress and wellbeing, existential stress and emotional intelligence, and existential stress and wellbeing. The direction and strength of association among the variables and items under study were also ascertained, contributing to a deeper understanding of the potential sources of role and existential stress. This understanding can inform potential preventative measures to further support positive emotional intelligence and wellbeing. The inferential analysis also identified gender and year level differences on all the four constructs, an area that requires further research.

In interpreting the findings of the quantitative phase, it was important to acknowledge their limitations and recognise that the findings are specific to this adolescent participant group and therefore not generalisable to the adolescent population. In contributing to the limited number of adolescent studies exploring role stress and existential stress, caution in comparisons is important as variances in scales and Likert score ratings may influence the findings. While the sample population of 375 participants was appropriate for cross-sectional survey design of quantitative study (Delice, 2010), increasing the sample size would further support the rigour and validity of the findings. However, this initial quantitative analysis contributes to the relatively limited adolescent studies explicitly exploring role stress and existential stress and is unique in exploring the potential relationship with emotional intelligence and wellbeing. The initial emergence of ecological system influences on these constructs, particularly microsystem and mesosystem relationships, highlight that these adolescents' self-reports and perceptions of these constructs are intrinsic to an individual and potentially influenced by psychosocial development in navigating life events (Erikson, 1968), yet are also influenced by external ecological system influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Therefore, deeper exploration of Erikson's psychosocial development theory and microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem influences in the multiple case studies in the second phase of the research design is necessary.

Given the initial statistical relationships identified in Chapter Four, nine case studies were undertaken to provide a deeper understanding of adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress and

what, if any, potential relationships these stressors have with emotional intelligence and/or wellbeing. Informed by the quantitative findings in phase one, adolescents were assigned into two categories: those who reported high role and existential stress and secondly, and those who reported low role and existential stress. Within the scope of this research, the two extremes of role and existential stress were deemed as significant in providing depth of understanding of these stressors and to analyse the relationship with the quantitative data presented in Chapter Four.

Chapter Five presents case studies of Joanne and Kelly who self-reported with high role stress and existential stress and who volunteered in the second phase. Following, Chapter Six provides case studies of John, Jess, Lisa, Daryl, Mandy, Helen and Sam, who self-reported low role stress and existential stress. This in-depth understanding was captured by follow-up semi-structured interviews of the adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress and what their experiences revealed about the relationship these stressors have with their emotional intelligence and wellbeing. The research design prioritised the significant contribution of adolescent voice to further understand the commonalities and differences in the way these young people describe their life goals, emotional disposition, wellbeing, relationships with their parents, teachers, school, friends, peers, and wider community. These voices provide considerable insight into how these adolescents negotiate their pathways through their formative years in identity development and identify ecological influences that may be potential protective buffers or risk factors on their role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing.

Chapter 5. Lived experiences of adolescents self-reported high role and existential stress

5.1 Introduction

Chapters 1 and 2 shed light on increasing levels of stress reported by adolescents despite preventions and interventions developed and implemented globally (AIHW, 2019; Mission Australia, 2020; WHO, 2014). Findings from the quantitative phase of the current study reflected in Chapter Four highlighted that for the adolescents in this study there was a significant positive association between role stress and existential stress. These adolescents reported mild to moderate role stress and existential stress (refer Chapter 4, Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2) with 96 out of 375 reporting high role stress (i.e., ≤ 16 refer Chapter 4, Section 4.3.1) and 99 reporting high existential stress (i.e., ≤ 13 refer Chapter 4, Section 4.3.2). These findings contribute to the literature presented in Chapter Two; however, there remains a need to understand the lived experiences of these adolescents to explore the elements influencing their role stress and existential stress. Chapters 5 and 6 present findings that address the following broader question:

> What are adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress in relation with their emotional intelligence and wellbeing?

In total, nine adolescents (three males and six females) from years 8, 10 and 12, who reported high role stress and existential stress or low/no role stress and existential stress in the quantitative study, were invited to participate in qualitative semi-structured interviews. Capturing adolescents' voices and descriptions of environmental experiences contributed to a deeper understanding of the inter-relationship between role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing. Chapter Five presents the lived experiences of Joanne and Kelly who both reported high role and existential stress in the quantitative phase of the study.

5.2 Joanne's Story

Joanne, a 13-year-old girl in year 8 at a metropolitan school in Adelaide, South Australia, lived with her mother, father and 19-year-old brother. Joanne was open in her responses during the semi-structured interview, often candidly speaking about her life. Joanne scored 24 on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004), placing her above the overall mean of 12.01, the female mean of 10.86, and the year 8 mean of 11.21. Her score of 20 on the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) was also above the overall mean and female mean of 8.16, and the year 8 mean of 8.41.

Joanne's emotional intelligence score of 20 on the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010) was below the overall mean and the year 8 mean of 38.55, and the female mean of 38.43. Her score of 76 on Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997) was also below the overall mean score 124.35, the year 8 mean score of 126.21 and the female mean score of 127. Analysis of Joanne's results across these two scales suggests that she is experiencing high role stress and existential stress and lower levels of emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Table 5.1. below provides a breakdown of her scores.

Table 5. 1 Joanne's scores on role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing

Variables	*Overall mean scores*	*Joanne's scores*	*Year 8 mean scores*	*Females mean scores*
Role stress	12.01	24	11.21	10.86
Existential stress	8.16	20	8.41	8.16
Emotional intelligence	38.55	20	38.55	38.43
Wellbeing	124.35	76	126.21	127

To further explore Joanne's role stress and existential stress and the potential relationship they have with wellbeing and emotional intelligence, a semi-structured interview was conducted. Joanne's responses suggested that significant influences from her family, and challenges with friendships, peer relationships, connectedness to school, particularly with her teachers, and community engagement underpinned her high scores. These elements, as reported by Joanne, seemingly reflected some confusion in terms of her role and life goals, as well as having a negative impact on her wellbeing with considerable reference to experiencing anger, anxiety, emotional disturbance and feeling *sometimes depressed*. Joanne explained that:

> *I feel I am different, sometimes depressed … I am like just angry I was like, why would you go for something that stops you from doing so many things? … I find that difficult to understand, like why I cannot do that like everyone else in the world can do this, what is wrong with this? … Like, I cannot go that way, but I cannot go that way either … different from all the kids in the class … I do not look up to my teachers… I wish I was born richer, like, most of the time I jealous.*

5.2.1 Experiences of role stress

As depicted previously in Table 5.1, Joanne scored high on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) in the quantitative online survey; her score of 24 was almost double the average score of 12.01. Joanne's willingness to participate in a semi-structured interview provided insights into her lived experiences of role stress. Her experiences with family, peers, friends, school, teachers, and wider community are presented below.

5.2.1.1 Family relationships

> *I do not know how I should feel. Sometimes I feel I am different, sometimes depressed, today like I want to eat something, and dad said you cannot eat this, you are going to church. I am like just angry I was like, why would you go for something that stops you from doing so many things? It's like, you have to live like, personally, I didn't see what they get out of religion.*

Joanne explained that her sometimes difficult relationship with her family had an emotional impact on her. She consistently described challenges with feeling connected with her parents at times, explaining that *when I was younger and I was depressed, I didn't talk to my parents for a long time ... I've never had the daughter-father relationship*, something that was reflected in her score of 3= Unhappy on the item 'your relationship with your parents' in the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) (refer Chapter 3, Table 3.9). In relation to this, Joanne added, *when I made friends I started talking to my parents, and that was how I go out of depression* (refer Section 5.2.1.2 for a more detailed discussion). However, this lack of connectedness with her family, particularly her limited communication with her parents, seemingly stemmed from their differing views, beliefs, and perceptions, which appeared to contribute to Joanne's high role stress scores. This finding is consistent with Libbey et al. (2002) who examined the association between social connectedness with family, friends, school, neighbourhood, and emotional distress among in-school youth in the US. In this quantitative longitudinal study, they found that family connectedness had the strongest inverse relationship with emotional distress when compared to the other areas, thus highlighting the importance of these relationships in adolescents' lives. For Joanne, this relationship was seemingly negative, which influenced her emotional distress and connectedness with her family.

Joanne reported clashes in her family microsystem and the wider cultural and religious macrosystem, supporting Bronfenbrenner's (1979) argument that macrosystem experiences influence an individual's microsystem experiences. This is further evidenced in Joanne's case when she questions the restrictive nature of her family's religion saying, *why would you go for something that stops you from doing so many things*? Conflicts between her own views and those of her parents were expressed through comments such as:

> *It is like a big difference; my parents have different view than me. I could not relate to my parents; they are very traditional and religious. I feel I am different from all the kids in the class. So, like, I am like, in between, like, I can't go that way. But I can't go that way either.*

In Joanne's family microsystem, her parents appeared to adopt an authoritarian parenting style which is typically characterised with "strictness but not warmth" (EI Kazdouh et al., 2018, p.10). Joanne reflected that *today like I want to eat something, and dad said you could not eat this; you are going to church. I was like just angry, I was like why would you go for something that stops you from doing so many things?* suggesting there was little discussion and more direction. However, it is also possible that this comment reflects a family ritual of not eating prior to going to church. Despite the reason behind this, it seemingly left Joanne feeling *angry* and *different*.

These comments also reflect how Joanne's macrosystem experiences influenced her role stress within her family microsystem, supporting Bronfenbrenner's (1979) notion that multiple social contexts work together to influence an individual's development. For instance, in her response, Joanne expressed feeling emotionally upset about the differing perspectives and questioned why she was not allowed to be like others:

> *Sometime*[s] *like they* [parents] *are very traditional I am just like, why can't I do this? I find that difficult to understand, like why I can't do this why I can't do that like everyone else in the world can do this. What's wrong with this?*

When asked about an example of her parents being traditional, Joanne replied *like, I can wear a dress like a school dress, but I can't buy a skirt, which is the same size of that dress or may be lower than my knee … I'm wearing a dress I'm wearing that just because I want a skirt. I already have the skirt. What's the difference? I don't understand that*.

Although Joanne scored 3= 'Unhappy' when asked about her relationship with her sibling on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) (refer Chapter 3, Table 3.9), she shared very little about her brother except that they shared similar values when it came to religion and traditions.

> *I am not into religion like my family is religious, me and my brother are not. My dad's like to my brother, like, 'why don't you pray, you will get good grades in your exams'. My brother is in Year 12, and my brother is like, 'is that going to change anything? I'd rather spend that time studying than praying to some God'*.

In describing her lived experiences, Joanne seemingly exhibited role stress in terms of the inter-relationship between her experiences, her family's expectations (the microsystem), and the wider cultural experiences and expectations (the macrosystem). These were then further influenced by differing social norms and values, particularly from her family and their religious and cultural perspectives, further prompting her to ask existential questions such as *why I can't do this why I can't*

do that like everyone else in the world can do this. What's wrong with this? As a result, Joanne expressed that she found herself unable to understand why her parents were putting restrictions on her movements and placing restrictions on eating habits. Raising these kinds of existential questions can be explained by Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory which suggests that an adolescent's search for identity is influenced by the crisis between psychological needs and social expectations; something that is evident in Joanne's life.

Additionally, Joanne highlighted challenges in her mesosystem experiences where there were difficulties between interactions with her family and how this potentially influenced her interactions with her peers and friends. The emotional expressions of feeling upset, and lacking understanding were potentially contributing to her high role stress score of 24, as evidenced in Chapter Four. Such challenges across Joanne's ecological systems appeared to contribute to some degree to her role confusion which she described as further affecting her interactions with peers and friends as described below.

5.2.1.2 Interactions with friends

> *I have one or two friends, and* [I] *usually stick to my own friends and not talk much with* [those] *who are new to me. I do not like sugar-coating stuff, so I may come out as a bit of a harsh person.*

In the quantitative survey Joanne reported on being 'unhappy', score = 3, on the items 'How happy you are with the number of friends you have?' and 'being accepted and included by friends' on Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) (refer Chapter 3, Table 3.9), indicating that she is unhappy in both domains. Also, within the school environment, Joanne reported having *one or two friends and* [I] *usually stick to my own friends* suggesting that she either prefers intimate friendships or desires more friends than she has. Falci and McNeely (2009) studied 9,097 adolescents from 132 junior and high schools in the US and found that it is not necessarily the number of friends that a person has but the quality of these friendships that is important in terms of protecting adolescents from stress. Further they reported that depressive symptoms in adolescents was independent of the size of a person's friendship network. However, they found that an adolescent's perceptions of the support received from friends influences their level of depressive symptoms (Falci & McNeely, 2009). Joanne's above statement was partially justified by her preference to not interact with people *who are new to me*, potentially due to self-reports of sometimes being *a harsh person*. Either way, Joanne has reported being unhappy with the number of friends that she has, which seemingly indicates that she would like

more friends however this was not explored. Being aware that she does not like '*sugar-coating stuff so I may come out as a bit of a harsh person*' shows a level of self-awareness.

On the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) in the quantitative survey (Chapter 3, Table 3.9), Joanne reported feeling unhappy with the kinds of friend she has; however, in her interview, she explained that her friends acted as a protective buffer in times of depression: *'sometimes when I was younger, and I'm depressed, I didn't talk to my parents for a long time and when I made friends I started talking to my parents, and that was how I go out of depression'.* Like Joanne, the participants in the longitudinal study of Van Harmelen et al. (2016) found that friends played a significant role in reducing the impact of depressive symptoms in 771 adolescents aged 14-17 years in the UK who reported experiencing family adversities including negative family relationships, family discord, or lack of affection and engagement.

5.2.1.3 Interactions with peers

> *I feel I am different from all kids in the class, so like I am like in between, like I cannot go that way, but I cannot go that way either… I was just like bullied in class; I just could not concentrate. And I don't want to do this. It just like my brain went down … I had a counsellor for a while because I suffered from anxiety after that. I am a very delicate person*.

Joanne reports experiencing challenges in the classroom which seemingly contributed to her high role stress. She was quite frustrated when talking about her relationship with her peers, which supported her response on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) (refer Chapter 3, Table 3.9) where she responded 'Unhappy' to the question about 'your relationship with your peers'. For example, in her interview, Joanne said, *I was just like bullied in class* and *they were making fun of me* which appeared to affect her focus, cognitive capacity and motivation, leaving her feeling that *I was just like bullied in class; I just could not concentrate. And I don't want to do this. It just like my brain went down*. Joanne explained that she was bullied because of her perceived differences to her peers, creating potential identity challenges influenced by the social norms and beliefs inherent within her microsystem experiences with her parents and her wider macrosystem experiences. This perceived difference with her peers may have influenced her relationship with her family, potentially making her more resistant to their values, religion, expectations, and beliefs. While highlighting the significant role of different microsystems in development, Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that multiple social contexts work together to influence an adolescent's development and adjustment. For Joanne, this included feeling *different from all the kids in my class…as if I am a nerd and I am not the prettiest person*. This conflict between her and her social environment highlighted a psychosocial

crisis (Erikson, 1968), leaving Joanne feeling like a *nerd* and *different* from others, potentially contributing to her high scores in role stress and existential stress.

Joanne spoke of being bullied yet made no reference to any peer support despite mentioning that she has *one or two friends*. However, it is important to note that often bystanders of bullying do not intervene as they are afraid of being the next victim and may lack the appropriate skills to support the victim (Salmivali et al., 2011). Rather, Joanne sought counselling from the school counsellor due to feelings of being *delicate* which arguably had an impact on her role stress.

5.2.1.4 Schooling experiences

> *Initially I find it difficult to adjust in [the] new school and new environment like friends, teachers … I just started this school this year and we have different teacher for every subject, and we don't really see teachers around the school, and we don't really communicate with [inaudible] … I correct my teachers at times if they are wrong. I don't look up to my teachers … they are just annoying you like they are not teaching you, and they are just like 'do whatever you like', and then they are like coming to you like 'Oh, why you do this?' I am like I do not want their opinion.*

Teachers' productive and positive involvement plays an important role in the development of an adolescent's self-confidence, academic achievement and social interactions (Hong & Eamon, 2012); however, Joanne reported 'feeling unhappy' with the relationship she shared with her teachers on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004). Her high score on 'role stress emanating from the teacher' was further reflected in her interview when she reported, *I don't look up to my teachers … they are just annoying you like they are not teaching you.* Clarifying further why she feels that way she reported, *I just started this school this year and we have different teacher for every subject, and we don't really see teachers around the school, and we don't really communicate with [inaudible]*. Joanne's responses could be attributed to a stressful ecological transition (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), that is, transition from primary to secondary school, something that has been commonly cited as stressful for some adolescents and attributed to low emotional intelligence (Qualter et al., 2007). In their quantitative study Qualter et al. (2007) identified a relationship between the role of emotional intelligence and coping stress due to the transition from primary to secondary school among 169 adolescents aged 11-12 years in England. Their findings revealed that adolescents with high or average emotional intelligence coped well with the new school environment when compared to their counterparts. The result also supports Zeedyk et al.'s (2003) study which was conducted among 192 final year primary students and 128 first year secondary school students in the UK. Results revealed that 37% of these adolescents from secondary schools reported negative experiences such as bullying as the main concern, followed by fears of getting lost, increased workload and peer relationships (Zeedyk et al., 2003), reasons which are also evidenced in Joanne's case.

Joanne reported *no attachment* to her school, saying that *we* [peers] *do not really communicate with them* [teachers] *... I do not want their opinion.* It could be argued that Joanne is seeking the development of a positive self-identity through asserting her perceived knowledge, as *I correct my teachers at times if they are wrong* which is consistent with Aldridge et al.'s (2016) findings in their quantitative study. They studied the interrelationship between different aspects of school climate such as teacher support, peer connectedness, school connectedness, affirming diversity, rule clarity, and wellbeing in adolescents aged between 12-17 years in Australia. They found that lacking connectedness with one's school or teachers results in showing disrespect towards them (Aldridge et al., 2016). Joanne reports wanting more from her learning and explains that *like they are not teaching you, and they are just like 'do whatever you like', and then they are like coming to you like*.

When asked about her schooling experience, Joanne gave a slow shake of her head with her eyes closed and took a deep breath. Then she explained her expression by reporting a limited connection to her school saying, *I am not attached to the teachers or school or anything like this [inaudible] they help me the school is pretty much a school I have no attachment to it. I am changing next year*. Being connected to school and teachers provides a sense of belonging which promotes wellbeing and academic achievement (Osterman, 2000); something that appears to be lacking in Joanne's school life. In line with Joanne's description of her school-related role stress, challenges with relationships, and her lack of attachment to her school, seemingly leads to her decision to move to another school *next year*. It could be further argued that Joanne's limited sense of connectedness with the school may have led to a high score on role stress and a low score on the wellbeing variable (refer Table 5.1) (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). McGraw et al. (2008) investigated the association between connectedness with family, peers and school and emotional wellbeing among 204 adolescents from year 12 in Australia and found that a lack of school connectedness was associated with depression, anxiety, and stress in these adolescents.

5.2.1.5 Community participation

When asked about her community involvement or volunteering activities, Joanne replied, *I don't feel like to be involved in any such activities, not now and not in* [the] *future. I am not interested; it is just waste of time. I don't think I will get anything out of i*t. Community involvement provides a fulfilling purpose in life, and typically reduces existential stress (Erikson, 1968), yet for Joanne this does not appear to be a consideration now or in the future. Her comment about not being involved in the community and volunteering *not now and not in* [the] *future* raises concerns about her future direction, life goals and wellbeing, Christens and Dolan (2011) explored the interconnection between youth development, community development and social change through a comprehensive review of

documents and analysing qualitative data and found that a sense of community, such as volunteerism, neighbourhood and organisation involvement, and civic engagement significantly predicted adolescents' development and wellbeing. For Joanne, this appears to be missing, potentially explaining her self-reported high role stress on this variable. Joanne's attitude towards community participation could reflect her emotional disturbances highlighted in different microsystems, which signifies the interconnectedness of multiple social contexts.

5.2.1.6 Summary of Joanne's experience of role stress

Joanne expressed the elements of high role stress as evidenced in Chapter Four and through the semi-structured interview themes presented above, such as challenges with her family, peers, friends, schooling experiences and wider community. As discussed in the literature review, research on adults has found that interpersonal difficulties in multiple relationships can potentially lead to role stress (Liu & Kaplan, 2004; Lou et al., 2007). To date, few studies have explored role stress emanating from multiple relationships in adolescents, therefore the findings of the current study appear to fill a gap in literature about adolescent role stress. Joanne's story has highlighted the importance of feeling connected with family, friends, peers, and the wider community; something that is supported by McGraw et al. (2008). They found that adolescents with lower levels of connectedness with family, peers and school reported high levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, suggesting that a "potential factor in handling the stress of adolescence is connectedness" (McGraw et al., 2008, p. 27). For Joanne, the remains a need for her to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness to help to reduce her self-reported high levels of role stress and existential stress.

The pressure to follow her family's traditional values was described as contributing to her emotional state, leading to feelings of confusion. For instance, Joanne appeared to have a distant relationship with her father, yet the literature notes that this relationship is important in developing an understanding of other relationships (Brassai et al., 2013); something that may have impacted on Joanne's relationships with others. Compounding this was Joanne's negative peer relationships, where she reported experiencing bullying and feelings of being *different from all the kids in the class* which seemingly appeared to increase her role stress and adds insights into her overall high levels of role stress and existential stress in her quantitative results.

Joanne's negative school transition experiences may be linked to her experiences with her parents. For instance, in a quantitative study, Zeedyk (2003) highlighted the crucial role of positive parent-adolescent relationships in the transition process suggesting that positive peer and teacher relationships help adolescents' transition from primary to secondary school. For Joanne these positive

relationships appeared to be missing, making her transition difficult. De Bruyn (2005) examined role strain in 749 students in first year of secondary school with a mean age of 13.05 years from the US. Findings revealed that poor relationships with one's peers and teachers could result in role strain. For Joanne, these peer relationships were difficult and this, coupled with her lack of connectedness to her teachers, may help to shed light on her high self-reported role stress.

In terms of community involvement, Hull et al. (2008) conducted a longitudinal study with 7,863 adolescents in the US and found that adolescents' mental health strengthened with participation in community activities such as neighbourhood interaction, religious participation, or extracurricular activities. For Joanne, community involvement was of no interest as she explains that *I don't feel like to be involved in any such activities, not now and not in [the] future. I am not interested; it is just waste of time. I don't think I will get anything out of it*. Having some community involvement could potential buffer some of the adverse effects Joanne may experience as a result of living with high role stress.

5.2.2 Experience of existential Stress

As depicted in Table 5.1 above, Joanne scored high on the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011); therefore, providing insights into her lived experiences of existential stress through her responses to the semi-structured interview will help to illuminate these results.

5.2.2.1 Life goals

> *I am not sure, but I have to achieve my parent's expectations, my parents want me to become a doctor, but I do not want to… I would not be able to achieve that. There is too much competition. It is hard, [and] I can't do this.*

Joanne appeared to lack direction in terms of her career goals, stating *I am not sure*, which is an issue that Schulenberg et al. (2016) identified in adolescents aged 11-18 years who reported higher levels of existential stress in the US. Similarly, Joanne scored 5 = 'Strongly disagree' in the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) (Chapter 3, Table 3.9) on the item 'In life, I have clear goals and aims'. This lack of clarity around her life goals could however have stemmed from her parents wanting the best for their daughter despite a mismatch in her own self beliefs.

Joanne expressed different expectations from her parents, which she felt were unachievable; *my parents want me to become a doctor, but I do not want to. I would not be able to achieve that. There is too much competition. It is hard, I can't do this.* Joanne's response suggests that she was not aligned

with her parent's expectations as she lacked confidence in her ability to achieve their goals for her. This mismatch in aspirations may highlight a gap in communication between them. On the other hand, these responses arguably highlight how Joanne was trying to avoid identity foreclosure, an aggravated stage of identity crisis in which there appears to be no clarity in life goals (Marcia, 1966) and, as such, she created the appearance of following her parents' wishes and subsequently experienced existential stress. This was also reflected in her score of 5 = 'strongly disagree' in the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) (Chapter 3, Table 3.9) 'In achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfillment'.

The impact of Joanne's existential stress on her emotions is evident when she explains that *I wish I was born richer, like, most of the time I jealous,* which may be contributing to her high scores on existential stress; something that is evidenced in her quantitative score of '5 = strongly disagree' with 'my personal existence is meaningful' on Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) (refer Chapter 3, Table 3.9). Berman et al. (2006) conducted a quantitative study among 140 adolescents aged 15-18 years in the US and identified that existential anxiety and concerns, and a feeling of emptiness or meaninglessness is highly prevalent among adolescents. They also revealed positive association between these concerns and emotional dysfunction in adolescents. De Lazzari (2000), who examined the quantitative interrelationship between emotional intelligence, purpose in life and wellbeing among 155 adolescents from a Catholic high school in Canada, found that emotional challenges, such as difficulties in understanding and managing emotions, was connected to a lack of purpose in life. Joanne's statements also reflected her responses on PIL-SF Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) in the quantitative survey as she reported 'strongly disagree' with items such as 'my personal existence is meaningful' and 'I have fully discovered a satisfying life purpose'.

5.2.2.2 Summary of Joanne's existential stress

As discussed in the literature review, the research has explored the impact that lacking clear life goals, religious and spiritual beliefs, and a sense of belonging can intersect with a high level of desire to change one's existing life (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Yalom, 1980). For Joanne, each of these elements may have contributed to her self-reported high level of existential stress. She appeared to lack clarity about her life goals and was influenced by her parent's expectations and religious beliefs. As discussed above, Joanne's beliefs appeared to differ from those of her parents, which could be linked to her perception of being different from others in the class. This potential psychosocial crisis could place her at risk of existential stress as it clouds her sense of purpose in life (Erikson, 1968). In addition, Shek (1998), in their quantitative longitudinal study with 378 adolescents aged 12-16 years in Hong Kong, explored the interrelationship between parent-adolescent conflict and psychological

wellbeing. They found a strong positive correlation between lack of purpose in life and experiences of conflicts and disagreement with parents which also influenced one's psychological wellbeing (refer Section 5.3.4), something that was also evident in Joanne's life.

Joanne's relationship difficulties resulted in a lack of connectedness, as *I could not relate to my parents … I'm not attached to the teachers or school*, a behaviour observed by Awang-Hashim et al. (2015) as a threat to a meaningful existence in their study of the positive relationship between school engagement and purpose in life among adolescents with a mean age of 15 years. As such, Joanne showed a desire to make changes because of her dissatisfaction with her current life by wishing that she *was born richer* and asking, *why can't I do that like everyone else in the world can do this, what's wrong with this*.

Joanne's lack of purpose in life could also be attributed to her peer relationship issues which she reported had caused her depression, a link supported by previous studies (Blau et al., 2019; Heng et al., 2020). Blau et al. (2019) identified a positive and significant link between peer support and purpose in life among 193 adolescents aged 14-18 years. Heng et al. (2020) also identified a positive relationship between peer support and the presence of meaning in life in 577 adolescent aged 15-16 years in Singapore and Israel. It is argued that these elements of Joanne's life appear to have increased her existential stress and could explain why her score of 20 in this area is over double the mean score of 8.16.

5.2.3 Emotional intelligence

Joanne's experiences of role stress and existential stress can be attributed to her emotional intelligence. Reflecting on her emotional disposition, Joanne described herself as *emotionally detached*. She reflected an inability to appraise others' emotions, explaining that *sometimes I am not able to understand others' emotions, why a person will be facing that problem when I am not, I am emotionally detached*. Davies et al. (2010) measured emotional intelligence in 955 student athletes aged 18-25 years in the UK. They found that those adolescents reporting high emotional intelligence were able to respond flexibly to changes in their life and the social environment and build supportive networks which helped them to cope. However, Joanne reports not being able to understand others' emotions suggesting that she may not experience high emotional intelligence. This places her at risk of experiencing stress; something that was also reflected in her low score of 4 on the dimension 'ability to appraise others' emotions' on BEIS (Davies et al., 2010) (refer Chapter 3, Table 3.9). She also expressed challenges in managing her own emotions in her social interactions, stating that *sometimes my behaviour hurts other people* and, when asked about the impact of her emotions, she

explained that *I just find it difficult to manage my emotions*. This kind of behaviour is often visible in people who have difficulty regulating their own and others' emotions (Davies et al., 2010), a dimension of emotional intelligence in which Joanne scored 4 (as she 'disagreed' with all the items of this dimension), which was well below the mean score of 7.38 for adolescents aged 13-19. Davies et al. (2010) reported that having the ability to regulate one's own emotions was linked with an individual's ability to control their emotions and seek activities that make them and others happy by arranging events they enjoy.

In the quantitative survey Joanne disagreed with items such as 'I know why my emotions change' and 'I easily recognise my emotions as I experience them', scoring 4 on 'Appraisal of own emotions'. Her interview responses highlighted an awareness and appraisal of her emotions. For example, she said *sometimes I feel I am different, sometimes depressed… I don't like sugar-coating stuff, so I may come out as a bit of a harsh person… I was just like bullied in class; I just could not concentrate. And I don't want to do this. It just like my brain went down. I had a counsellor for a while, because I suffered from anxiety after that, I am very delicate person.* This was in contrast with Parker et al.'s (2004) findings in which they examined emotional intelligence among 667 adolescents aged 14-18 years in the US and found a negative correlation between stress and the ability to understand one's own emotions. It is of note that Parker's study employed a quantitative methodology where Joanne also scored low, however it was in her qualitative response that the nuances behind her scores were revealed.

Adding to this, Joanne explained that *sometimes I avoid things that cause [me] stress just like I don't want to do this anymore, I want to give up on everything … I ignored things when they like are challenging or like annoying me*. In terms of her quantitative results, Joanne scored 4 compared to the mean score of 7.65 on 'utilisation of emotions'. This was also supported by her low levels of behavioural self-regulation and her life goals, eventually resulting in Joanne's tendency to *give up on everything*. As Siu (2009) described, responses such as emotional exhaustion and feelings of being overwhelmed and stressed can potentially have a negative impact on emotional intelligence. Joanne reported adopting avoidance strategies to cope with feelings of stress emanating from her different relationships and life generally. In contrast to Joanne's story, Mavroveli et al. (2007) studied 282 adolescents aged 11-15 years from Dutch state high schools and found that proactive strategies, such as problem solving and meaning making, were positively associated with emotional intelligence.

The emotional expressions of feeling upset, and lacking understanding were potentially contributing to Joanne's high role stress score of 24, as evidenced in Chapter Four. Joanne's reflections support the study of Merida-Lopez et al. (2017) who found a positive relationship between role stress and

emotional regulation in their adult sample of teachers from Spain with the mean age of 43 years. They also identified that constant experiences of role stress had a detrimental effect on an individual's wellbeing. Joanne's low emotional intelligence was further reflected in her overall quantitative results on the emotional intelligence variable, where she scored 20 on the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010), which was below the mean of 38.55 for adolescents across years 8-12. It was also below the mean of 38.43 for females and 38.55 for year 8 adolescents.

5.2.4 Wellbeing

In response to questions about her current wellbeing, Joanne explained that her emotional wellbeing had been affected by her interactions with her family, peers, and schooling experiences. At this point in the interview, Joanne looked frustrated when talking about her experiences with her family, *it was like a big difference … like, I couldn't relate to my parents, they are very traditional and religious … I didn't talk to my parents for a long time … I have never had the daughter-father relationship'*.

Joanne's views on religion were different from those of her parents, and she felt unsupported by them. Jose et al. (2012) found that family connectedness is important for healthy and positive wellbeing in adolescents aged 10-15 years. Joanne's comments were consistent with her low emotional and social wellbeing scores of 14 and 12 respectively, as compared to the overall mean scores of 19.6 and 21.61. Adams et al. (1997) examined a multidimensional approach to wellness among adults aged 18-51 years from Austin, in the US They identified a strong positive interrelation across and within different dimensions of wellbeing, that is, psychological, social, and physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing, that is decrement in one dimension of wellbeing linked with possible decrease in the level of others dimension. The possible connection among various dimensions of wellbeing can be seen in Joanne's case in the current study. While their study focused on adults, the findings were consistent with those of the current study, where they

Joanne's explained that '*most of the time I am jealous, I cannot do this, I wish I was born richer'* and *they [peers] were making fun of me as if I am nerd, and that I am not the prettiest person* which is consistent with her response on item 7 on the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010) (refer Chapter 3 Table 3.9), where she indicated 'strongly agree' that there have been times when she felt inferior to most people. Joanne also further appeared to have feelings of hopelessness, explaining that *I am not sure, but I have to achieve my parent's expectations, my parents want me to become a doctor, but I do not want to… I would not be able to achieve that. There is too much competition. It is hard, [and] I can't do this*, through which she reflected her uncertainty about her abilities and her fears related to future challenges. This was seemingly having a negative impact on her psychological wellbeing. Adams et al. (1997) identified lower levels of psychological wellbeing in adults aged 18-

51 years who perceived that they would experience negative outcomes to events and circumstances in their life. This was also in line with Joanne's quantitative score of 10 in this dimension, below the mean score of 21.65 for adolescents. Overall, comparing Joanne's responses with her quantitative results where she scored 76, well below the overall mean score of 124.35, on the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997). She also scored below the mean score of 127 for females, and below the year 8 mean score of 126.21.

5.2.5 Summary

Joanne reported high levels of role stress and existential stress in her quantitative survey. Upon interviewing her, there appeared numerous factors that may have been at play. For instance, she reported relationship difficulties across all areas of her life, a lack of clear goals in relation to her future, a lack of connectedness and belonging, and a desire to change her life, all of which appeared to negatively influence her role and existential stress levels. The seeming lack of parental support in terms of her father's participation, and her difference in opinion with her parents on religious and other aspects of life seemed to influence other relationships, such as her negative schooling experiences attributed to bullying, the feeling of being different from peers, and her lack of communication with her teachers. In spite of this, Joanne identified that when she was younger and experiencing depression her friends acted as a protective buffer. Friends and peers are important in terms of protecting individuals against stress and adversities (Rutter, 2012), therefore the need to support Joanne in fostering these relationships and regaining a sense of belonging is crucial (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Osterman, 2000).

Notably, in addition to her self-reported role stress which is seemingly attributed to interpersonal difficulties in relationships, Joanne also reported high levels of existential stress in terms of her desire to bring about changes in her life, her lack of belonging, and her lack of confidence in achieving her life goals. As argued above, such behaviour highlights the interconnection between role stress and existential stress supporting the quantitative findings from Chapter Four, where a positive correlation of 0.64 was found between role and existential stress. This correlation appeared to also influence Joanne's emotional intelligence and wellbeing, suggesting that each of these constructs have a bi-directional influence on each other whereby changes in one construct may impact on the other. In relation to the potential relationship between these forms of stress and her emotional intelligence, Joanne referred to her emotional detachment and her inability to regulate and utilise her emotions, potentially resulting in her not being able to deal with the challenges in her life, in maintaining her social relationships, regulating her own emotions and those related to others such as her parents, peers, friends, and teachers. However, of interest was Joanne's lived experience which appeared to

be in contrast to her low score in appraising her own emotions. Similarly, the relationship between stress and wellbeing can be seen in Joanne's experiences of feeling depressed due to conflict in viewpoints with parents and hopeless due to fears related to future.

For Joanne, experiences and challenges in her microsystem appeared to filter and impact on other ecological systems. For instance, the mismatch in her macrosystem experiences such as religious beliefs and those of her parents seemingly left Joanne feeling different. In addition, her parent's restrictions on her clothing choice also left Joanne reporting that she felt like *I am nerd, and as I am not the prettiest person.* These feelings in turn seemingly had an impact on the way she acted around her peers and the way they perceived and treated her, potentially impacting on her relationships with them. This is one example of how Joanne's lived experiences have highlighted that supporting adolescent role stress and existential stress cannot merely rest with an individual intervention but must be addressed at the community level while acknowledging that changes in one's chronosystem and macrosystem may ripple down and impact on an individual's microsystem experiences. It has long been acknowledged that factors in an individual's life can potentially protect them from role and existential stress. These include positive relationships with family, peers, teachers and schools, and community involvement (Rutter, 2012), yet for Joanne many of these are missing or not what she desires, highlighting the need to consider what is needed to support Joanne.

In terms of Erikson's (1968) stage of role versus identity confusion it is important to recognise Joanne's struggle to meet her parent's expectations of being a doctor; something she believes *I would not be able to achieve that … there is too much competition. It is hard, I can't do this* leaving Joanne feeling pressured to be something she feels is out of her reach. This potentially leads to Joanne questioning Who am I? Why I am here? What is the meaning or purpose of my life? (Erikson 1968) (refer Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2.1). Relationships with parents, family, school, teachers, friends, peers, siblings, and the wider community impact on an individual's identity (Berman et al., 2006). For Joanne, as reported in her quantitative scores, she is unhappy with these relationships explaining that she feels disconnected and lacks a sense of belonging, all of which may impact on her sense of identity. Feeling unsure of the future could potentially add to her feelings of confusion about her role and identity (Erikson 1968) (refer Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2.1), and seemingly have significant impact on overall wellbeing.

When considering Joanne's story, it is argued that there appears to be an interplay between ecological systems that impact on her roles and purpose in life. In addition, there also appears to be a synergy between Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems theory and Erikson's (1968) Stage 5 - Role versus Identity Confusion whereby the relationships that Joanne experiences in her micro and mesosystems seemingly have an impact on identity formation and purpose in life. It is also

noteworthy that these same relationships could potentially act as a buffer against the stress that she is reporting, highlighting a need to support Joanne in fostering these relationships.

5.3 Kelly's Story

Kelly is a 13-year-old female who, at the time of the interview, lived at home with her mother, father, two brothers and one sister and was in Year 8 at a metropolitan high school in Adelaide, South Australia. Kelly scored 19 on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004), placing her above the overall mean of 12.01, above the female mean score of 10.86, and the Year 8 mean score of 11.21. Her score of 16 on the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) was double the overall mean of 8.16, above the female mean score of 8.16, and the Year 8 mean score of 8.41. Kelly's emotional intelligence score of 26 on Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010) was comparatively higher than Joanne's, but was below the overall mean and the year 8 mean of 38.55, and the female mean of 38.43. Her score of 84 on the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997) was higher than Joanne's; however, it was below the overall mean score 124.35, the year 8 mean score of 126.21 and the female mean score of 127. Kelly's scores are presented in Table 5.2 below:

Table 5. 2 Kelly's scores on role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing

Variables	*Overall mean scores*	*Kelly's scores*	*Year 8 mean scores*	*Females mean scores*
Role stress	12.01	19	11.21	10.86
Existential stress	8.16	16	8.41	8.16
Emotional intelligence	38.55	26	38.55	38.43
Wellbeing	124.35	84	126.21	127

Analysis of Kelly's results suggest that she is in the medium to high range for both role stress (16-24) and existential stress (12-20) according to her quantitative results (refer Chapter 4). Her responses to the semi-structured interview questions provided insights into her lived experiences of role stress and existential stress and shed light on the potential relationship these had with her emotional intelligence and wellbeing. When analysing Kelly's qualitative semi-structured interview responses, it was interesting to note that they were often in contrast to her self-reported quantitative scores.

Kelly describes herself as *a happy person* who *love*[s] *being happy* despite reporting experiences of family conflict which leave her feeling *sad, scared, upset, depressed, and frustrated.* She further reported feeling *happiness, I have friends or family my peers are nice, my house. I have shelter, food, everything*.

> *I get upset at home like when mum and dad have argument on something ... sometimes, I feel stressed ... sometimes maybe I just want to be alone ... sometimes when my friends because we're four and they always be like, pick a group of three and go together and I am always be left out. I feel very sad at that time ... I feel scared start thinking about what is going to happen in the future ... I have friends, family, my peers are nice, I have shelter, food, everything … I* [am] *more of a happy person. I love being happy*

5.3.1 Experience of Role Stress

Kelly scored 19 on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) which, although lower than Joanne's score, was still above the average mean score of 12.01, placing her in the category of high role stress. The following sections will discuss Kelly's lived experiences in relationship to role stress.

5.3.1.1 Family relationships

> *I get upset at home like when mum and dad have argument on something…. which makes me upset and depressed … like, I cannot concentrate on my other stuff or things like my studies, and* [I] *keep on thinking about such arguments ... I am more close to my mom than anybody else because I share everything and my feelings*

Kelly's microsystem experiences in her home environment, particularly the arguments between her parents, seemingly influenced her emotional status, leaving her feeling *upset and depressed*. This supports Formoso et al.'s (2000) quantitative study that explored the relationship between attachment to parents, family conflict and conduct problems in 284 adolescents aged 10-16 years in the US. Findings revealed a positive association between family conflict and depression; something that was also evident in Joanne's lived experiences. When discussing her relationship with her father, Kelly explained that *he* [father] *really does not talk to us how he's done and stuff. He stays quiet*, suggesting that her father may have a reserved personality or there could be a lack of communication between them. Highlighting the importance of a father's role in an adolescent's development, Carlson (2006), in their quantitative investigation about the interrelationship between family structures, father involvement and behavioural outcomes of 2733 adolescents aged 10-14 years from the US, found that adolescents who experienced higher levels of father involvement reported fewer behavioural problems. However, for Kelly, she appeared to lack a high level of involvement with her father which

potentially could contribute to her feelings of being *upset and depressed*. This mesosystem experience could also impact on her self-reported high levels of role stress and existential stress.

In contrast to her relationship with her father, Kelly explained that *I am more close to my mom than anybody else because I share everything and my feelings* and, as such, she relied on her when trying to achieve her goals. The close relationship that she shares with her mother may potentially act as a buffer against the stress that Kelly was experiencing. Maternal attachment has been found to act as a protective factor for girls in Formoso et al.'s (2000) quantitative study among 284 adolescents aged 10-16 years in the US. Yet, despite describing a very close relationship with her mother, Kelly scored '3= Unhappy' about her relationship with her parents and '1= Happy' about her relationship with siblings on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004). Kelly's microsystem experiences in her home life, where arguments between her mum and dad were reported as reasonably common, may have contributed to her high score of 20 on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004), as evidenced in Chapter Four. Families provide the training for how to socialise with others and, as such, it would appear that Kelly's relationships, particularly with her father, may have shaped and influenced the way she interacts with friends and peers which in turn has influenced these relationships.

5.3.1.2 Interactions with friends

> *We are close to each other. We are group of four friends, and we are like really close to each other. We tell everything what happens at home like we can talk to each other. … Sometimes when they are sad, I am upset. I feel quite upset and depressed if any of my friends have any family issues, something that reminds me of my family issue … maybe sometimes when my friends because we're four and they'll be like, Oh yeah, pick a group of three and then they'll go together. I'll be left out. I feel very sad at that time. So, I have to go find other people ….*

When asked to describe her friendships, Kelly says she has a *group of four friends, and we are like really close to each other…they [friends] support me,* yet they are *not really helpful* in helping her achieve her goals and *sometimes distract me from my learning*. It is not uncommon for close friends to distract from learning however it was important that Kelly did not see her friends as support and driving her to achieve her life goals.

In addition to being *really close to each other,* Kelly also reported *that times they pick a group of three and then they'll go together. I'll be left out. I feel very sad at that time*, however she has the social skills to *go find other people.* While Kelly is seemingly unphased by this exclusion and has the confidence to *find other people* it does seem to have a significant negative impact on her role stress as evidenced in her consistent score of 3 = 'unhappy' on all items concerning friendship. The impact of this exclusion on Kelly's overall happiness is not surprising because, as individuals move into adolescence, their social worlds expand and friendships become increasingly important for their

social and psychological development; therefore, challenges within these relationships often leave adolescents feeling unhappy (Cyr et al., 2014; Brent et al., 2014).

Kelly is a supportive, compassionate and caring friend who shows high emotional intelligence. She explained that when *my friend had family issues and she would tell me everything… I would like support her every time, I want to even ask her if she wants to come to my house for two hours just to rest and then she felt happy*. Showing the close relationship, she shared with friends, she further explained, *I feel quite upset and depressed if any of my friends have any family issues, something that reminds me of my family issue*. This highlighted the impact that her microsystem experiences with her family had on her and her relationships with friends, highlighting the influence that interactions between different microsystems can have on an individual's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Kelly appeared emotionally connected to her friends, therefore when she is excluded it is not surprising that this has a major impact on her emotional wellbeing (refer Section 5.3.3) and leaves her feeling *very sad* which in turn may explain her high scores on the friendship items of the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004).

5.3.1.3 Interactions with peers

> *Not really talk to them* [peers] *that much. Sometimes they like talk behind people's back and stuff and then like you get mad … Sometimes you feel oh yeah what are they talking about, I am imperfect or* [inaudible] *makes you feel stressed.*

Kelly described instances where *one of my classmates teased me again and again,* which left her feeling *really frustrated … sometimes I feel really angry* as she was unsure *why is she doing that to me?* Kelly's microsystem experiences with her peers and friends seemingly influenced her high levels of role stress which eventually led to feelings of being *imperfect*. For Kelly, being teased by her peers seemingly had a negative impact on her identity, which in turn could have impacted on her role stress and her purpose in life. Previous studies on adolescents' wellbeing often pointed out that teasing among peers have drawn less attention than bullying, but many adolescents experiencing peer victimisation reported negative psychological outcomes such as social anxiety and loneliness (Van Harmelen et al., 2016). Kelly's description of her experiences with peers confirmed the findings revealed by Van Harmelen et al. (2016), in relation to the strong association between peer victimisation/bullying and depressive symptoms in adolescents which emerged in their longitudinal study with 771 adolescents aged 14-17 years in the UK.

For Kelly, being teased by her peers seemingly influenced her response on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004), where she responded, 'feeling unhappy' about 'relationship with peers'. Despite

experiencing challenges in her home, peer, and friend microsystems, Kelly reported sharing healthy relationships with her teachers, resulting in her feeling positive about her school environment.

5.3.1.4 Schooling experiences

> *So when I go to school, it is like a nice environment. So it makes me feel happy … when I come back from school to home, I feel happy… I always talk to my teacher because me and my teacher are really close to each other... Once I had a problem with a student and my teacher said "Oh, don't worry" because she will talk to the principal, or you should go talk to the principal … this makes me feel happy that she actually did something.*

In contrast to her interactions with her peers, Kelly felt closely connected with her class teacher, which supported her quantitative results on 'feeling happy' about 'relationship with teachers'. Unlike Joanne, Kelly described her teachers as supportive and, as such, she appeared to be able to communicate with her teachers effectively and to develop a close relationship. Aldridge et al. (2016), in their quantitative study with adolescents aged 12-17 years in Australia, found a positive and strong association between teacher support, school connectedness, and students' wellbeing. They further suggested that "understanding the school climate, particularly in terms of feeling socially connected and having a sense of belonging, has important implications and the potential to guide school-wide interventions that promote students' resilience" (Aldridge et al., 2016, p. 17). Kelly positively described her teachers as *helpful* making her feel *happy* in her exosystem experiences at school as evidenced in her comment that *my teacher helps me to be happy*. This close relationship with her teachers is important as it has been recognised that supportive teacher-student relationships can help adolescents, like Kelly, cope with existential stress and role stress by providing a sense of belonging (Osterman, 2000; Rutter, 2012).

Kelly reported feelings of happiness at school and a sense of belonging as, for her, *when I go to school, it is like a nice environment, when I come back from school to home, I feel happy*. A sense of belonging cannot be underestimated as Baumeister and Leary (1995) describe it as an innate 'fundamental human motivation' (Baumeister & Leary 1995, p. 520) that one strives to meet once they have fulfilled basic needs such as food and safety. For Kelly, her class teacher has filled this need to belong and has potentially provided a buffer against the role stress she was experiencing, helping to explain her low role stress scores.

In addition to providing a sense of belonging, Kelly's teachers also helped her with difficulties in her peer relationships, explaining that *once I had a problem with a student and my teacher said "Oh, don't worry" because she will talk to the principal, or you should go talk to the principal, this makes me feel happy that she actually did something*. Through Kelly's comment you can hear that she felt

supported by her teacher and was confident that she would follow up with the principal, which left Kelly feeling *happy*.

It can be argued that the difficulties Kelly reported in her peer relationships may have been neutralised to some extent with the help of positive experiences in her relationships with her teachers and a healthy school environment; something that has been reported as important. For instance, adopting Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological System theory, Ibrahim and Zaatari (2020) studied eleven teachers and six female students from year level 11 in the UAE to determine their perceptions of their relationship with each other, and how this effected their sense of belonging. They found that positive teacher-student relationships enhanced the student's sense of belonging. While positive teacher-student relationships and a cohesive school climate are important, the wider community can also provide an adolescent with a sense of belonging and connectedness (Osterman, 2000).

5.3.1.5 Community participation

Community is highlighted in the exosystem of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems theory, with community involvement recognised as an important buffer against stress (Albanesi et al., 2017). However, for Kelly, when talking about community involvement, she described that '*I am not doing anything'.* When asked about her intentions to become involved in the community she replied, *'I don't know in* [the] *future'*. While such comments may suggest that for Kelly community activities and involvement were not a priority, it is possible that her attitude may have partially attributed to her high levels of both role stress and existential stress. Stewart and Simons (2010), in their quantitative study of 867 adolescents aged 10-13 years and 763 adolescents aged 12-15 years in the US, revealed that a sense of community involvement predicted a decrease in aggressive behaviour. Also highlighting the importance of community involvement in adolescents, Christens and Dolan (2007), in their comprehensive review, revealed that community involvement also played an essential role in the development of adolescents' personal and social identity and psychological wellbeing.

5.3.1.6 Summary of Kelly's experiences related to role stress

Kelly reported several challenging microsystem experiences within her family and peers. At home, Kelly reported *I get upset with the arguments at home between my mum and dad, which makes me upset and depressed* and this seemingly negatively influencing her wellbeing. She further described experiencing difficulties in her relationship with her father whereby she appeared to lack a connection with him. This is concerning as Jose et al.'s (2012) study found, for their adolescent sample aged 10-15 years, a positive relationship between family connectedness and positive wellbeing. While Jose et

al. (2012) focussed on family connectedness, Baumeister and Leary (1995) argued that lacking a sense of belonging generally can lead to psychological distress.

Kelly also reported difficulties with her peers where she described being teased and sometimes excluded which, coupled with her family relationship challenges, may have contributed to her self-reported high levels of role stress. Lopez-Zafra (2019) examined the protective role of emotional intelligence and social support in 1227 adolescents in Morocco with a mean age of 16.5 years and found that those who understood and managed their emotions reported positive social support from multiple relationships. For Kelly, however, positive social support appeared absent except with her friends and teacher, thus potentially leaving her vulnerable to both role stress and existential stress.

5.3.2 Experience of Existential Stress

Kelly also scored 16 on the PIL-SF Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) which was above the mean of 8.16. Engaging in a semi-structured interview was important as it provided further insight into Kelly's lived experiences of existential stress.

5.3.2.1 Life goals

> *I would make* [change in life] *is maybe less stress in the house and make less arguments here sometimes…. when you're like, maybe you're thinking about it and then you think about that, but you won't think about your task, you're doing okay.*

Kelly spoke about *stress in the house* and highlighted the negative effect this had on her learning. When asked about her life goals, Kelly's response was *to lose weight*, adding that *she had help from my mom* [and] *my sister. She helps me like, don't eat too much calories and stuff*.

Kelly reported feeling happy in her current life saying *… I have friends, family, my peers are nice, I have shelter, food, everything*, yet when asked what changes she would like to make she said *some changes I would make* [change in life] *is maybe less stress in the house and maybe make less arguments here.* She further explained that the arguments in the house make her *feel scared thinking about the thing, like what is going to happen in the future*. For Kelly, experiencing challenges in her microsystem experiences at home and having unclear goals for the future seemingly placed her at risk of high role stress and existential stress (Erikson, 1968); a pattern that was also evident in Joanne's story.

Having a clear future orientation has been noted by researchers as a protective mechanism that acts as a buffer against adversity and stress. Zheng et al. (2019) examined the future orientation in youth

as a protective factor against daily depression and stress in their cross-sectional quantitative study with 369 adults aged 18-56 years in China. They found that a future orientation moderated the level of depression and stress in these participants, with those with a high future orientation being able to cope better with daily stress such work pressure, responsibilities, and conflicts with other people. Without a future orientation it is possible that Kelly could continue to experience high levels of role stress and/or existential stress which may have a negative effect on her wellbeing.

5.3.2.2 Summary of Kelly's Experiences related to Existential Stress

Gilman et al. (2013), in their quantitative study of 876 adolescents aged 17-18 years in the US, identified negative home life experiences as one of the main causes of stress for adolescents, with many fearing for their future and seeking to change their life situation. For Kelly, a confrontational home life left her feeling stressed, uncertain about her future, and having a desire for a stress-free environment at home, which may explain her high levels of existential stress, as further evidenced in Chapter Four. Blau et al. (2019) found that for 193 adolescents aged 14-18 years those who lacked a purpose in life due to negative social/home life experiences reported a lack of clarity in their life goals, highlighting the interplay between microsystem experiences and existential stress. Further compounding her existential stress, Kelly described a lack of belonging among her family and peers. Heng et al.'s (2020) study of 577 adolescents aged 15-16 years found that parental and teacher support were predictors of life satisfaction. Overall, challenges in Kelly's micro and mesosystem experiences have left her feeling alone and unclear about her future, which has possibly contributed to her existential stress. It is noteworthy, however, that her scores on the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) were not as high as Joanne's which could potentially be due to the close relationships she shared with her mother and teachers.

5.3.3 Emotional intelligence

Kelly scored 26 on the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010) which was below the overall mean score of 38.43, below both the female mean score of 38.43 and the mean score of 38.55 for Year 8 students. When asked about her emotional disposition, Kelly stated that

> *I* [am] *more of a happy person. I love being happy when I'm sad. I don't like being sad like it's really hard. Happy like always laughing smiling. I can't stop smiling … Sometimes I feel I can't manage my emotions and maybe hurt others. I try to avoid the things that cause me stress but find it difficult sometimes … I do something I like or maybe stop thinking about something or like talking to a person.*

The above quote reflects Kelly as a happy person who cannot stop smiling and is competent at appraising her own emotions, which is a stark contrast to her quantitative scores where she scored below the mean score on emotional intelligence. In relation to regulating her emotions she mentioned, *Sometimes I feel I can't manage my emotions and maybe hurt others. I try to avoid the things that cause me stress but find it difficult sometimes*. Here, it would appear that the effects of role stress and existential stress have impacted on Kelly's ability to regulate her emotions, leaving her to adopt avoidance strategies. Merida-Lopez et al. (2017) also highlighted the vital role that emotional regulation plays in an individual's ability to cope with role stress. Sharing an example when she felt challenged, Kelly explained that *sometimes, maybe someone trying to like tease you* [or] *something. You get really frustrated. But you can't take that frustration off.* However, on the quantitative survey Kelly reported 'Neither agree nor disagree' to items related to her ability to regulate her own emotions, such as 'I seek out activities that make me happy' and 'I have control over my emotions'. In contrast, Joanne reported 'Disagree' to these items (refer Section 5.2.3). In the quantitative survey, Kelly disagreed in terms of successfully appraising her own emotions (refer Chapter 3, Table 3.9), yet this does not seem to be consistent with her statement in her interview that *I do something I like or maybe stop thinking about something or like talk to a person* which suggests that she is aware and understands her emotions.

Further, her statement *I try to avoid the things that cause me stress but find it difficult sometimes,* seemingly suggests that she appraises her emotions and takes steps to address these through avoidance. Kelly's response is also reflected in her quantitative emotional intelligence score of 7, which is higher than Joanne's score of 4, and nearly equal to the overall mean score of 7.65 on the dimension of 'ability to utilise emotions'. On the items of this dimension, Kelly reported '3 = Neither agree nor disagree' to 'When I am in positive mood, I am able to come up with new ideas' and '4 = Agree' to 'I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles'.

While Kelly showed that she was able to empathise with others who *have any family issues, something that can remind me of my family issues,* she was not interested in being *involved in any volunteer or community work,* and did not show any intention to get involved *in* [the] *future*. Kelly also scored lower on the dimension 'regulating other's emotions' in the quantitative survey, as she reported 'Disagree' with both of the items on this dimension: 'I arrange events others enjoy' and 'I help other people when they are down', which potentially contributed to her high role and existential scores. This is consistent with Parker et al.'s (2004) findings that there is a negative correlation between stress and the ability to understand one's own emotions among adolescents aged 14-18 years.

5.3.4 Wellbeing

When talking about her life goals, Kelly explained that *one of my life goals is to lose weight,* raising concerns about her perceptions of her appearance and, potentially, her physical wellbeing. This was also reflected in her low score of 17 on the physical wellbeing dimension of the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997) (refer Chapter 3 Table 3.9). Comments related to feeling *imperfect*, *frustrated*, and *sad* could be argued to be having an impact on Kelly's sense of self, her identity, and her emotional wellbeing, scoring 11 compared to a mean score of 19.6.

Like Joanne, Kelly reported feelings of hopelessness when talking about the arguments in her family, explaining that *I feel scared thinking about things like what's going to happen in the future*. Such comments could suggest that she was unsure about her ability to cope in the future, and, therefore, fearing that her future may not play out as she would want, potentially leading to poor spiritual wellbeing (Adams et al. 1997). This was in line with her quantitative score of 14 on this dimension, below the mean score of 21.65 for adolescents aged 13-19 years.

Kelly suggested that she faced difficulties and feelings of discontent in her relationships with her peers, leaving her feeling sad and alone, as exemplified in her description of her wellbeing, *I don't communicate with anyone very well sometimes maybe I just want to be alone.* On further probing of her response, she added *sometimes* [if] *someone is bullying me at school or sometimes maybe I haven't had my full hours of sleep or maybe something doesn't go the way I wanted to go*. In Kelly's case, it seems to have resulted in lower levels of emotional wellbeing. In the quantitative survey Kelly scored 11 on the emotional wellbeing dimension of the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997), which was below the overall mean score of 19.60 (refer Chapter 3, Table 3.9).

Kelly also demonstrated a lack of meaning or purpose in life, which appeared to be due to *stress in the house,* potentially negatively impacting on her psychological wellbeing. This is also supported by Kelly's quantitative psychological wellbeing score of 14 compared to a mean score of 21.61. Among adolescents, meaninglessness or lack of purpose in life has been found to be associated with poor psychological wellbeing (Brassai et al., 2011; Bronk et al., 2009). Brassai et al. (2011), in their quantitative study of 2152 adolescents aged 15-19 years from Romania, found that a lack of meaning in life contributed to poor psychological wellbeing, potentially resulting in substance use. Similar findings had emerged in the US, when Bronk et al. (2009) examined 153 adolescents aged 13-18 years and found a strong association between psychological wellbeing and adolescents' purpose in life. Kelly's stress was related primarily to her microsystem experiences, including those with family and peers and her lack of life goals. This might explain her score of 84 on the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997), which was lower than the overall mean score of 124.35; below

both the female mean score of 127 and the year 8 mean score of 126.21 (refer to Chapter 3, Table 3.9).

5.3.5 Summary

Like Joanne, Kelly reported significantly higher scores than the mean on both role stress and existential stress measures in the quantitative phase of the study. Throughout her interview, Kelly reflected on the importance of her home and school environment, where the quality of her relationships with her parents, peers, and teachers played an important part in either increasing or protecting her from role stress and existential stress. Conflicts within her home life and a lack of communication with her father left Kelly feeling *depressed*, potentially affecting her role stress and existential stress, and overall wellbeing. Compounding this were challenges in her peer relationships which often left her feeling *imperfect* and *frustrated*. As noted, peers and friends play an important role in an adolescent's life and particularly in identify formation. For Kelly, feeling *imperfect* would potentially over time start to form part of her self-concept, affecting the way she acts, and is perceived and treated by her peers. Further, feeling uncertain about her future and what that might look like could also impact on her role confusion and identity (Erikson 1968) (refer Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2.1).

Despite these challenges, Kelly reported finding the support of her mother and her class teacher to be beneficial in providing a buffer against her high levels of stress, as evidenced in Chapter Four. Such support might explain why Kelly's quantitative scores on the role stress and existential stress scales were lower, and higher on the emotional intelligence and wellbeing scales than those of Joanne.

Kelly's semi-structured interview has shed light on the nuances that could not be explained or understood by numbers alone. On many of the variables measured in the quantitative phase, Kelly's scores did not match her lived experiences, highlighting the need to capture the voice of adolescents when understanding role stress and existential stress.

5.4 Conclusion

Gaining an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of adolescents who reported high role stress and high existential stress formed the focus of this chapter. Although both Joanne and Kelly self-reported high on role stress and existential stress in the quantitative study, their semi-structured interviews highlighted both similarities as well as differences. From both Joanne's and Kelly's case it became apparent that relationships played an important role in their perceptions of life, purpose in life, emotional disposition, and wellbeing.

In Joanne's case, poor relationships with parents and peers, possible lack of sense of belonging, lack of connectedness at school and with teachers, no community involvement are some of the significant factors that appeared to attribute to her high scores on role stress and existential stress scales and low scores on emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

Kelly's interview responses are often in contrast to her self-reported quantitative scores. Despite some challenges in her relationships, Kelly reported support and connectedness with her parents, siblings, friends, peers, teachers and school, something that was missing in Joanne's case. Specifically, Kelly mentions the supportive relationship with her mother and teacher which seemingly act as a protective factor that helps her to cope. Her story illustrated that positive supportive relationships with her mother and teacher could provide a protection against stress while improving emotional intelligence and wellbeing, something which was not highlighted in her quantitative scores. This raises the need to understand the lived experiences of adolescents who reported low role stress and low existential stress.

Chapter 6. Lived experiences of adolescents with self-reported low role stress and low existential stress

6.1 Introduction

As evident in Chapter Five, analysis of adolescents with high role stress and high existential stress partly supported the quantitative findings reported in Chapter Four. Moreover, gaining insight into the lived experiences of participants who self-reported low role stress and low existential stress provided a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. Out of 375 adolescents, 138 reported low role stress (i.e., ≥ 9 refer Section 4.3.1) while 105 reported low existential stress (i.e., ≥ 8 refer Section 4.3.2). Gaining insights through semi-structured interviews into the lived experiences that may have contributed to low role stress and low existential stress collectively will enhance understandings of adolescents' role stress and existential stress. Thus, to further explore the research questions, the lived experiences of participants who reported low or no role stress and/or existential stress in the quantitative study were considered important. Addressing the research question: What are adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress in relation with their emotional intelligence and wellbeing? Chapter Six presents the lived experiences of John, Jess, Lisa, Daryl, Mandy, Helen, and Sam who all self-reported low role stress and existential stress in the quantitative phase of the study.

6.2 John's Story

John, a 14-year old male in Year 8 at a South Australian high school, lived with his father, mother and younger brother at the time of the interview. John scored 8 on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004), placing him below the mean of 12.01, the male mean of 13.47 and the Year 8 mean of 11.21. His score of 4 on the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) was also below the mean of 8.16, below the male mean of 10.17, and below the year 8 mean of 8.41. Table 6.1 below provides an overview of John's scores in comparison to the mean scores.

Table 6. 1 John's scores on role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing

Variables	*Overall mean scores*	*John's scores*	*Year 8 mean scores*	*Male mean scores*
Role stress	12.01	8	11.21	13.47
Existential stress	8.16	4	8.41	10.17
Emotional intelligence	38.55	43	38.55	35.51
Wellbeing	124.35	153	126.21	120.35

John explained that *I share good relations with my family members … they* [friends] *encourage you to achieve and stay positive*. Throughout his interview, John reported feeling satisfied with his life and had a clear vision about doing *something in literature, then maybe my language skills like in teaching or media*. He further understood that to achieve these goals he needed *just to stay focused. And yeah, not go off track.* John also made constant reference to his *positive attitude* and experiences of *trust* and *encouragement* in his relationships, which appeared to have a positive impact on his wellbeing.

> *I share good relations with my family members … I do most of the things like tools* [work] *at home, like cleaning the house… they* [friends] *encourage you to achieve and stay positive… can trust them* [friends] *and that they will be there for you for any help… I want to do something in literature… it* [life goals] *makes me to stay focussed … positive attitude and stuff and you stay happy you achieve more*

6.2.1 Experiences of role stress

As depicted in Table 6.1, John self-reported low role stress in the quantitative online survey. John, Jess (refer Section 6.3) Joanne and Kelly (refer Chapter 5) were all in Year 8 at the time of the interview, however John and Jess reported low role stress and low existential stress while Joanne and Kelly experienced high role stress and high existential stress. Therefore, to gain a deeper understanding of adolescent role stress and existential stress it is important to explore John and Jess' lived experiences to identify similarities and differences between their cases and those of Joanne and Kelly. The discussion will commence with John's lived experiences with his family, peers, friends, school, teachers and wider community.

6.2.1.1 Family relationships

I share good relations with my family members ... I do most of the things like tools [work] *at home, like cleaning the house, sometimes cooking, and listen to my mother and help her. My father is always there to help me, like any doubts in studies and* [in] *other ways ... I respect my mum and dad, share good times, and enjoy with them and* [we] *share everything in our life*

John described a close, positive, and reciprocal relationship with his parents, where he helped them with household chores, and they supported him in decisions and studies. He reported enjoying spending time with them; something that was a stark contrast to Joanne's family relationships. John's father took and active interest in his life, including helping him with his studies, further demonstrating the close relationship they shared which appeared to be missing in Joanne and Kelly's cases. It is therefore argued that close, supportive family relationships are important in supporting adolescents to manage stress.

John's microsystem experiences appeared to be bi-directional, whereby he helped with the household chores, was supported by his father and enjoyed time with his parents. Good relationships with one's family, according to Erikson (1968), lays the foundation for developing a positive identity. It also provides a learning platform from which to develop positive social skills which can be used when developing friendships and peer relationships. In addition, relationships also appeared to provide a buffer for John as he explained that *I have got such stronger relationships, that I can rely on* [an]*other person, I could trust them that they will be there for me ... I listen to my mother ... I respect my mum and dad*. Supporting the importance of positive family connectedness, Resnick et al.'s (1997) quantitative study of 12118 adolescents from years 7-12 in the US found that the most powerful protective mechanism against risky behaviours such as violence, stress, suicidal ideation and substance use among adolescents was positive family relationships; something that was evident through John's voice.

John expressed positive relationships with his family, something that was seemingly reflected in his score of '1= feeling happy' on the item 'your relationship with your parents' in the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) (refer Chapter 4, Section 4.3.1).

6.2.1.2 Interactions with friends

A funny kind of friend, Yeah I mean not really a mean kind of friend ... like sort of not normal, but best friends ... they [friends] *encourage you to achieve and stay positive and to reflect on what you've already got. If you have got such a strong bond, it would help you to rely on the other person, you can trust them* [friends] *and that they will be there for you for any help*

John described his friends as *best friends* who *encourage* him to *stay positive*. He explained that *one of my friends completed an assignment early and I was running a bit late and might not finish. But he kept on helping me, as in like, not telling me the answers but like* [saying] *"you can do it"*. For John, trust was central to his relationships, pointing out that he can *rely on the other person* and there is a *trust* that *they will be there for you for any help* and *they* [friends] *encourage you to achieve and stay positive and to reflect*.

Friends often play an important role in protecting adolescents against various mental health challenges. For instance, Van Harmelen (2016), in a longitudinal quantitative study with 771 adolescents aged 14-17 years in the UK, found that friends were important in adolescent's social and psychological development, and those with higher friendship support reported lower depressive symptoms; something that appeared consistent in John's life. Therefore, it is argued that John's strong bond and positive relationships with his friends seemingly contributed to his low role stress scores.

John's descriptions of positive experiences with his friends was consistent with his response on the quantitative survey in which he reported '1= feeling happy' with the kind of friends he has as well as being accepted or included by friends.

6.2.1.3 Interactions with peers

> *I know everyone in my class, and I am actually a pretty good friend with everyone in my class and neighbouring class. I have a good relationship with my peers*

John reported sharing a good rapport with his peers across year levels, supporting his quantitative response that he was happy in his relationships with his peers. Unlike Joanne and Kelly, John's positive relationships with his family provided the necessary platform to learn good social skills which, in turn, helped him to develop positive peer relationships. Shin et al. (2016), in their quantitative study of 800 adolescents from years 7-9 in South Korea, found that adolescents with a positive bond with their parents perceived themselves as secure, worthy, and competent, which helped them interact with others effectively and reduced peer victimization. John's positive self-concept, together with his good rapport with everyone *in his class and neighbouring class*, could potentially be the reason for his overall low role stress score of 8, and score of '1= feeling happy' with his relationships with peers, which is seemingly also reflected in his social wellbeing (refer Section 6.2.4) and emotional maturity (refer Section 6.2.3).

Positive interactions with peers and family have potentially provided John with a strong sense of belonging which appears to have contributed to his positive schooling experiences; something that has provided John with a sense of security in his microsystem. Such security has provided

opportunities to lean on others and be supported in times of need, highlighting the important role that microsystem experiences can play in an individual's life (Bronfenbrenner 1979).

6.2.1.4 Schooling experiences

> *I feel good at school, never disappointed about anything at school … I'm sort of a teacher's pet, yeah. The teachers act*[ing] *next to me in helping all the time … The teacher would also encourage me just like my parents, as any studying kind of sort of like giving me tips or tricks to study harder*

John reported *feeling good* about his school environment where he shared supportive relationships with his teachers who enabled him to *study harder*. John described his schooling as being full of opportunities where he *get*[s] *to learn new things and experience new challenges* which he believed would help him reach his life goals. He described his teachers positively and compared them in the same light as his parents, explaining they *act next to me in helping all the time … the teacher would also encourage me just like my parents*, and is someone he can *trust*. He described himself as *sort of a teacher's pet*, suggesting a mutual relationship between himself and his teachers. Hong and Eamon (2012) examined the association between students' perception of unsafe school factors at different ecological levels, particularly micro, meso, and exosystem level, in their quantitative study of 1249 adolescents aged 10-14 in the US. They found that teachers play an important role in adolescents' microsystem experiences to ensure they feel involved and safe at school.

John's positive relationship with his teachers was consistent with his score of '1 = feeling happy' with relationships with teachers on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004). Despite good relationships with his teachers, John explained that he experienced *some challenges in learning, such as currently doing German and Punjabi in high school … Just all the new words*. *It is difficult* [to learn] *a new language*. However, John was successful as he *listen*[ed] *to my teacher, follow*[ed] *their instructions, complete*[d] *assignments, and stuff on time or sometimes before, always achieving A+ grades in all subjects*. Through John's explanation of a time when he found learning more challenging it was interesting that he attributed his success to his teachers; something that was in stark contrast to Joanne's attitudes towards her teachers. John's connectedness with his teachers and sense of belonging in school seemingly positively influenced his intellectual wellbeing (refer Section 6.2.4) while enabling him to succeed. Through John's narrative it would appear that his teachers acted as a protective buffer that helped him succeed and thus seemingly contributed to his low role stress scores. Teachers have been recognised in the literature as being an important person in an individual's life which was very apparent in John's story (Benard 1991; Howard & Johnson 2000). John's description of positive experiences at school were also reflected in his quantitative score of '1 = feeling happy' with schooling experiences on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004).

6.2.1.5 Community participation

> *I go to temple every week to volunteer in langar* [free food] *and to worship … I am pretty much busy in doing sports and tuitions and stuff like that, so I don't get a lot of time for volunteer works*

John reported that he performs volunteer activities at the *temple every week*. John's commitment to his religion and working to help others was also highlighted in his spiritual wellbeing (Adams et al., 1997) (refer Section 6.2.4). In the statement, [I am] *pretty much busy … not many volunteer works*, John referred to his current commitments with *sports and tuition*, resulting in not having much time for further *volunteer activities* which he believes deserved more time than he can currently give.

John's commitment to his religion and sport reflected his participation in community activities which could potentially explain his low role stress scores and high wellbeing scores (refer Section 6.2.4). Albanesi et al. (2007), in their quantitative study of 566 adolescents aged 14-19 years in Northern Italy, found a positive association between community engagement and social wellbeing. They argued that community involvement provided opportunities for adolescents to experience a sense of belonging with other social relationships, thus promoting their social wellbeing (Albanesi et al., 2007) and potentially reducing role stress.

John's sense of belonging to a community may also explain his low existential stress (refer Section 6.2.2.2) as Christens and Dolan (2011) argued that the adolescents in their study identified community participation as being important in determining their future directions and life goals. Furthermore, a sense of community represents a strong overlap between John's micro and meso system experiences, supporting the notion that experiences in different ecological systems influence each other, and together they impact on role stress and existential stress (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

6.2.1.6 Summary of John's experiences of role stress

John described mutual trust and active participation in his relationships with his parents and teachers which may have influenced his relationships generally. He reported that he has *such stronger relationships, that I can rely on other person, I could trust them that they will be there for me*. Consistent with John's case, Liu and Kaplan (2004), in their quantitative study of 3,107 adults aged 19-21 years in the US, found that those who reported positive experiences with their family, friends, colleagues and romantic relationships scored lower on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kapan, 2004). While this study focussed on adults, the findings were consistent with the themes that emerged in John's life, suggesting that positive relationships could also be important in the lives of adolescents.

Unlike Joanne and Kelly, John reported having good relationships with his peers, explaining that he was in touch with everyone in the class and shared good relationships with many students from other classes and year levels. It is argued that, for John, the positive, supportive relationships that he shared with his parents may have established a foundation for developing positive peer relationships; something that was not evident in Joanne and Kelly's lives.

John also trusted his teachers, describing them as being *just like my parents giving me tips or tricks to study harder … I listen to my teacher and follow their instructions*. The support of one's teachers has been described by researchers as a buffer against stress that emanates from the school environment and/or other social relationships (Hong & Eamon, 2012. Therefore, for John it is argued that the positive relationships that he has experienced in his micro and meso systems have had an impact on his attitude towards his macrosystem, highlighting the important interplay between and among the systems (Bronfenbrenner 1979). In addition, these relationships also appeared to support John's positive view of himself. He explains that he is a *pretty good learner and always score above average* and *a funny kind of friend* all of which will form part of John's self-concept and identity (Erikson, 1968).

6.2.2 Experiences of existential stress

As shown in Table 6.1, John scored low on existential stress in the quantitative online survey; therefore, to gain insights into his lived experiences a semi-structured interview was conducted.

6.2.2.1 Life goals

> *I had some challenges in learning, such as currently doing German and Punjabi in high school … I already learnt about two or three other languages, it just kind of gets mixed up with the other ones … I am a pretty good learner and always score above average … I want to do something in literature, then maybe* [use] *language skills like in teaching or media*

While John reported some *challenges in learning* which appeared to stem from his interest in learning new languages, he described himself as *a pretty good learner and always score above average.* When asked about his life goals, John responded quickly, saying he was interested in exploring *literature, then maybe* [use] *language skills in teaching or media*. Through these comments John demonstrates a positive sense of self and a future orientation; both of which could protect him against role stress and existential stress.

John's aspirations aligned with his response of 'strongly agreed' to the item of PIL-SF scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) in the quantitative survey item 'In life I have clear goals and aims'. He further explained that:

> *it* [life goals] *makes me to stay focussed … always score above average because I do not really get distracted much from other things … like sort of friendship groups like persuading you to do something not related to study … I just study and stuff, I go to school to study, not just to socialise*

John presented as a young man who was clear about his life goals and what was needed to achieve them. He further explained that his life goals enabled him to *stay focused* which was in contrast to both Kelly and Joanne (refer Chapter 5). Such clarity in his life goals was consistent with his low score of 4, compared to the mean of 8.16, on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) as reported in Chapter Four.

John articulated that, to achieve his life goals, he needed *to stay focused… I just study and stuff, I go to school to study, not just to socialise,* reflecting his ability to understand his role and responsibility in ensuring that his life goals are met. To do this requires confidence, which he potentially could have gained from his positive micro and meso system experiences. This comment also aligns with his response of '1 = strongly agree' with, 'my personal experience is meaningful', and 'in achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfillment'.

John's future orientation seemingly contributed to his low existential stress, supporting the study of Zheng et al. (2019) who found that future orientation acted as a protective mechanism for 369 participants aged 18-56 years in China. They further argued that participants who reported a future orientation were able to manage obstacles as and when they arose in their lives.

6.2.2.2 Summary of John's experiences of existential stress

By stating that he wanted to learn different languages for the purpose of *maybe* [use] *language skills in teaching or media* [for a job], John described a vision for his future, and demonstrated a future orientation that possibly contributed to his low existential stress scores. Furthermore, John liked *to learn new things and experience new challenges*, describing his interest in learning opportunities which, in turn, could shape his future and help him achieve his life goals. On a more social note, John further reported wanting *to go on a trip around the world*, which demonstrated his low existential stress and high emotional intelligence, particularly his ability to regulate his own emotions (refer Section 6.2.3).

John also reported sharing a close and supportive relationship with both parents and explained that *Dad always helps me with my doubts in studies and in other ways*. He further reported feeling connected to his peers and his school. John's sense of belonging with multiple social relationships seemed to be act as a protective mechanism against existential stress. This finding supports previous research indicating that social support from multiple social relationships is positively associated with adolescents' purpose in life (Blau et al., 2019; Heng et al., 2020). Blau et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between social support and purpose in life in 193 adolescents aged 14-18 years in Israel, and found that their perceived social support from parents, teachers, classmates and friends was positively associated with their purpose in life. Heng et al. (2020) also identified a positive relationship between social support (from teachers, classmates, friends, parents and people in the school) and meaning in life in 577 adolescents aged 15-16 years from Singapore and Israel. John's low existential stress can also be attributed to his sense of belonging to the community and participating in community activities, which appeared to provide support for his life goals; something that supported Christens and Dolan's (2011) findings.

6.2.3 Emotional intelligence

Scoring low on role stress and existential stress could potentially be related to John's ability to appraise his own emotions, as exemplified by his comment, *I understand my emotions pretty good*. This is in line with his quantitative score of 9 which is above the mean of 7.44 on the dimension of 'appraisal of own emotions' in the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010). He described his emotions and purpose in life as being inter-related with both influencing each other, explaining that *I don't get stressed I am* [a] *very calm person and focus on my* [life] *goals …* [if] *I stay happy, I will achieve more, if I am sad, I don't have that push to learn*. As such, he demonstrated his ability to regulate and use his emotions (Davies et al., 2010).

John's comments were consistent with his quantitative results of 9 and 9 respectively for 'regulation of own emotions' and 'utilisation of emotions', which was above the mean scores of 7.38 and 7.65 respectively. Furthermore, he scored 43 on the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010), which was above the mean of 38.55 for adolescents, above the mean of 35.51 for males, and above the mean of 38.55 for year 8 students. His positive attitude, and close relationships with his family, friends, and teachers, together with clear goals for the future, possibly contributed to his high emotional intelligence scores. It is also possible that, due to his high emotional intelligence, he was able to cope well with role stress and existential stress, suggesting that emotional intelligence may act as protective buffer against role stress and existential stress. This supports other studies that have explored the interrelationship between social support, emotional intelligence and feeling happy with

one's life. For instance, Lopez-Zafra et al. (2019) studied the interconnection between perceived social support (from family, friends and school), emotional intelligence, life satisfaction and depression among 1277 adolescents with a mean age of 16.15 years from Morocco. They found a bi-directional relationship between social support and emotional intelligence, with both acting as protective mechanisms against depression, thus promoting their life satisfaction and overall wellbeing.

6.2.4 Wellbeing

> *I don't get stress I am very calm person and focus on my* [life] *goals … if I stay committed to achieve my goals, then it will be effective, but if I lie down from actually trying, then it will not really* [be] *helping*

In the quantitative survey, John scored 153 on the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997) which was higher than the overall mean of 124.35, the mean of 120.35 for males, and the mean of 126.21 for year 8 students.

When asked about his wellbeing, John enthusiastically expressed *it* [wellbeing] *is very good, I do a lot of exercise and my diet is pretty good … I don't get stressed I am a very calm person.* While John focussed primarily on the physical and emotional dimensions of wellbeing, there was some reference to the other dimensions; something that has been found to be common among people who have a positive perception of their own wellbeing (Adams et al., 1997). John's comments were also consistent with his quantitative scores of 25 on physical wellbeing and 25 on emotional wellbeing, compared to the mean of 21.58 and 19.6 respectively. Demonstrating his psychological wellbeing, John related his wellbeing to his life goals and expressed his strong commitment to them (Adams et al., 1997). This was also reflected in his quantitative score of 25 on the psychological wellbeing items, which was above the mean of 19.59.

John demonstrated that he was aware of his emotions and their impact, expressing *I understand my emotions pretty good*, which, according to Bluth et al. (2017), was characteristic of an individual with high emotional wellbeing. In his comment, *I go to temple every week to volunteer in langar [free food] and to worship*, John mentioned his religious involvement which Adams et al. (1997) identified as an important indicator of spiritual wellbeing.

Possibly influencing John's cognitive wellbeing is his perception of himself academically as a *pretty good learner*. This self-perception could be linked to his positive relationships with his family, friends, peers, school, teachers and wider community, something that supports Jose et al.'s (2012) findings. In their quantitative longitudinal study of 1774 adolescents aged 10-15 years in New

Zealand they found a significant and strong positive association between social connectedness with family, peers and neighbourhood and wellbeing, highlighting the importance of positive relationships and the bi-directional nature of this with wellbeing.

6.2.5 Summary of John's experiences of role stress

For John, there were a number of factors that appeared to contribute to his low role stress and existential stress. For instance, he reported healthy levels of social support in his microsystem experiences, sharing strong relationships with family, peers, and teachers. He mentioned his role in taking on household chores and, unlike Joanne and Kelly, also enjoyed his father's active involvement in his life. These experiences seemingly provided John with the confidence and support needed to tackle challenges, develop friendships and this mediated the potential impact of role stress and existential stress.

John also demonstrated clear future-oriented thinking by identifying his life goals and having strategies in place to help him achieve these. Having a trusting, supportive relationship with his teachers appeared to support his purpose and drive in life and thus possibly reduce existential stress. In this way John's lived experience really highlighted the inter-play between role stress and existential stress, where one's relationship with other's playing a significant role in determining who they are and what their purpose in life is. Supporting this argument is the contrast between John's life and that of Joanne and Kelly, who reported poor peer relationships and limited family support, and which appeared to be central to their high role stress and existential stress. It is also interesting to note that, regardless of different lived experiences, the interplay between the ecological systems remains apparent (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

In addition, John had a strong community attachment through his religious affiliations. This appeared to support his spiritual wellbeing, but also provided him with further support. Central to John are supportive and trusting relationships that appeared to influence and be influenced by his macrosystem and microsystem experiences. John spoke of trust frequently in his interview; therefore, it is possible that, for him, trust will become central to who he is and this will start to attach itself to his self-concept and in turn his identity (Erikson, 1968). In addition, with a clear understanding of who he is, what he wants to achieve, and what is needed, it would appear that John has a strong sense of his own identity (Erikson, 1968) and has the support from his various ecological systems to achieve this (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

6.3 Jess' Story

Jess is a 13-year-old female studying in year 8 at a metropolitan school in South Australia. At the time of the interview she lived with her mother and father. She was as an only child. Like John, Jess also scored 8 on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004), placing her below the overall mean of 12.01, below the female mean of 10.86 and the Year 8 mean of 11.21. Likewise, her score of 4 on the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) was below the overall mean of 8.16, and below the female mean of 10.17 and the year 8 mean of 8.16. Table 6.2 below explicates Jess' scores in detail.

Table 6. 2 Jess's scores on role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing

Variables	*Overall mean scores*	*Jess's scores*	*Year 8 mean scores*	*Female mean scores*
Role stress	12.01	8	11.21	10.86
Existential stress	8.16	4	8.41	8.16
Emotional intelligence	38.55	43	38.55	38.43
Wellbeing	124.35	153	126.21	127

Jess reported clear life goals and employed active strategies such as *organisation, communication,* and *managing time* to achieve her goals. This clarity seemingly derived from her family's *encouragement* and *happy* school environment with *helpful* peer relationships and feeling *secure* in her relationships with her teachers. Like John, *trust* played an important role in Jess' social relationships, particularly in her family where she trusted her parents' experiences and guidance. For Jess, trusting mutual relationships were important:

> *They* [family] *encouraged me all the time … Sometimes, my family is the reason I get emotional, I get sad because I couldn't go there or somewhere … But then I was OK, I think maybe that was the right thing, they* [parents] *think better than me and experienced … My friends helped me all the time … they* [friends] *tell me what I think what looks better and what works better … I feel secure and like really better with my teachers … I feel really happy at school*

6.3.1 Experiences of role Stress

Like Joanne and Kelly, Jess is also in year 8 at school, yet she scored 8 on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) in the quantitative online survey which was below the mean of 12.01. Her experiences with her family, peers, friends, school, teacher and wider community are presented in subsequent sections.

6.3.1.1 Family relationships

> *In my family, my mother, father, and me … They* [family] *encourage me all the time when I feel like it's challenging, and I can't do it. So, they come to help me a bit and say you can do it … I'm good with my father and good with my mother.*

Jess described her microsystem experiences as being encouraging, with her parents helping her to remain motivated in challenging times. When asked if she experienced any challenges in her family microsystem she said *no, no, no*. She instead described a positive relationship with both parents who played a notable role in her decision-making. She explained that she was *nice and good, hard working daughter … helps* [her] *parents all the time*. Jess' family appeared to share a mutual relationship where she helped her parents and, in turn, they were supportive of her. There were, however, times when their expectations differed from her desires, which left her feeling sad. However, she overcame this saying, *then I was ok, I think maybe that was the right thing, they* [parents] *think better than me and* [are] *experienced.*

> *Sometimes, my family is the reason I get emotional, I get sad because I couldn't go there or somewhere … sometimes I want to go somewhere, but then my dad did not allow me, and my mom did not allow me as well, so I feel sad, but then I was OK, I think maybe that was the right thing, they* [parents] *think better than me and* [are] *experienced*

Like Joanne, Jess experienced parental pressure; however, Jess trusted her parent's experience which enabled her to understand and follow their direction without it seemingly impacting on their relationship. Such positive relationships and respect for her parents set an ideal platform from which she was able to develop positive peer relationships. The current finding is consistent and provides support for the notion of previous studies that found the level of influence of social support on an individual highly depends on how they *perceive* support from their relationships rather than actual received support (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Falci & McNeely, 2009).

6.3.1.2 Interaction with friends

> *I have good relations [with friends] because I share everything and talk to others really respectfully ... My friends helped me all the time ... they* [friends] *never say bad stuff like negative stuff to me, like they do say that it does not look good, or you should try a bit more*

Jess' relationships with her friends were similar to those of John in that she *shares everything and talk to others really respectfully*. She described her friends as *helpful*, despite at times being bluntly honest about her appearance or through comments such as *you should try a bit more*. These friendships appeared to be mutual, honest and respectful, thus providing Jess with a positive sense of belonging and possibly contributing to her low scores on the Role Stress Scale. Falci and McNeely (2009) studied the association between perceived social support from friends, number of friends, and depressive symptoms in 9097 adolescents from 132 junior and high schools in the US. They found that perceived positive friend support was significantly and negatively associated with depressive symptoms. For Jess, this suggests that her positive friendships and the support that she receives from them may protect her from depressive symptoms and role stress. In addition, the interaction between various elements of Jess' microsystem is quite apparent, given that her respectful upbringing has clearly influenced the way she interacted with her friends and peers, highlighting the importance of a positive supportive family life. It is possible that Jess' positive microsystem experiences also acted as a buffer against stress, potentially explaining her low role stress score of 8, as evidenced in Chapter Four.

6.3.1.3 Interaction for peers

> *My peers are like my friends, like my close friends ... I have friends like above my year level and I have more like five in my year level but across classes because I like to make friends across classes, instead of year levels ...* [peers] *have always helped me and like talk to me in really good faith*

Although the literature makes a clear distinction between peers and friends, Jess had strong relationships with both, suggesting that she was well accepted among her peers (Diener et al., 2010). For her, the relationships she shared with her peers was positive and she considered them to be *like my close friends*. Relationships with peers are recognised as a potential buffer to adversity and stress (Rutter, 2012), therefore Jess' good peer relationships may have helped to explain her high scores on the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale, as evidenced in Chapter Four. Jess enjoyed supportive relationships with her peers and explained that *last week, we had spelling bee, my friends really helped me ... like how to say words, what does it mean ... I really appreciate that*. Like John, Jess also shared friendships across year levels and enjoyed making *friends across classes,* which may have

stemmed from her positive microsystem experiences. Having a positive sense of belonging in the way that Jess did has been found to be characteristic of those with low or no role stress and existential stress (Blau et al., 2019; Heng et al., 2020). In this way, Jess' positive relationships at home, and with her friends and peers, seemingly acted as a buffer against stress and differentiated her from those participants with high role stress and existential stress (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Drolet and Arcand (2013) explored the relationship between positive development, sense of belonging, and support from peers among 12 adolescents aged 12-13 years from Canada. They found that trusting peer relationships at school and in other contexts were critical to positive development in these adolescents. They further argued that the role of parents, teachers and peers could not be underestimated in early adolescence.

Jess described her schooling experience as positive, explaining that she enjoyed opportunities to learn in competition with her peers. While this competitive environment may not suit all students, for Jess, the *school environment is quite good. I feel happy at school we played games, study and compete with each other*. This further reinforced the benefits that Jess gained through her relationships with peers.

6.3.1.4 Schooling experiences

> *I think school provides everything to me, and the teachers do a lot for my academic achievements by everything … I feel secure and like really better with my teachers ... School environment is quite good. I feel happy at school, we played games, study, and compete with each other … my relationship is good with teachers, because I behave respectfully to teachers all the time*

After family and home, the school environment and teachers are recognised as important features of an adolescent's social environment, where challenges to fulfil different roles towards teachers and peers are faced (Ibrahim & Zaatari, 2019). Jess reported behaving *respectfully to teachers all the time*, which was seemingly reciprocated, thus enabling her to share positive relationships with her teachers and enjoy school. She reported that school *feels secure and like really better with my teachers*, and she *feel*[s} *really happy at school*, which further enhanced her sense of belonging, potentially protecting her from role stress and/or existential stress.

Jess' school environment included playing games, studying, and competing with other students, each of which she enjoyed. She described her close relationship with one particular teacher, explaining that *there is one teacher who I feel like friendly a lot … whenever we meet each other, like my friendly teacher, we just talked in a really funny way and then yeah as a friend all the time*. Blau et al. (2019) found a significant and positive association between social support from teachers and purpose in life

and social support from other relationships in their cross-sectional quantitative study of 193 adolescents aged 14-18 years in Israel. It is therefore suggested that Jess' close and supportive relationships with peers and teachers may have contributed to her low role stress and existential stress scores.

> *It's my first year of high school, I am going further to A and A+ and I would try my best next year to get more A plus, yeah and achieve my goals for the next year … I feel when you get from year 7 to Year 8, you actually change, because I had a friend who was changed, she was a bit rude and mean in year 7 and now, she is so cool and a good girl. I think I have changed a bit as well in year 8 from* [year] *7 …* [When] *I was in year 7 my working skills were not really good, and now* [year 8] *I have changed, I am better than last year*

Jess spoke of her academic goals and explained that, unlike Joanne, she found the transition from year 7 to year 8 seamless and a time of notable positive change. For her, this time of transition was not a catalyst for role stress but instead a time of growth which, according to Fenzel (1989), is in contrast to those found to experience stress.

6.3.1.5 Community participation

> *Not yet* [involved in community activities]*, but I want to be involved in such activities … because it will impact on my personality and wellbeing in society …* [I want] *to be communicative, it* [being involved in community activities] *helps me with that as well*

Jess reported not being involved in community activities at the time of the interview; however, she clearly noted that she would be interested in the future as this would help her wellbeing and *be communicative, it* [being involved in community activities] *helps me with that as well*. As noted in John's story and Christens and Dolan's (2011) qualitative study, community involvement, such as volunteering, neighbourhood and organisation involvement, and civic engagement, helps adolescents establish their life goals and gain skills that help them achieve their life goals. For Jess, her willingness to be involved in community activities in the future could potentially help her to achieve her life goals by providing opportunities to support her communication skills. Through her comments, Jess clearly demonstrated a sense of community and an emerging future orientation which could potentially explain her low role stress and existential stress, as evidenced in Table 6.2.

6.3.1.6 Summary of Jess's experiences of role stress

Jess said that her family *encouraged me all the time when I feel like it's challenging*. This appeared to provide her with the support needed to face challenges and thrive, which partly explained her low level of role stress (Argyriou et al., 2016; Bireda & Pillay, 2017). Like John, Jess experienced positive relationships with her friends and peers, sharing everything with them: *I have good relations* [with friends] *because I share everything … My friends helped me all the time*. In addition, Jess also had *friends above my year level, and I have more like in my year level,* as she *like*[s] *to make friends across classes*.

Jess stated that her *relationship is good with teachers, because I behave respectfully to teachers all the time*. She appeared to trust her teachers, believing that *teachers do a lot for my academic achievements by everything … I feel secure and like really better with my teachers … there is one teacher who I feel like friendly a lot … whenever we meet each other like … as a friend all the time*. This close relationship with her teachers may have contributed to her low role stress as research has identified a strong connection between friendly communication with teachers and adolescent's positive perceptions of relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Greenberger et al., 2000; Marchant et al., 2001). Jess also demonstrated an interest in community work and explained how her future active participation in community activities might help her to improve her communication skills. Such foresight has been noted by researchers as enhancing personal and social development (Christens & Dolan, 2011; Evans, 2007).

It is argued that, for Jess, her positive family relationships have laid the foundation for positive peer relationships. Being accepted by one's peers promotes a sense of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and, when coupled with supportive student-teacher relationships, helps an adolescent to achieve academically and feel connected (Osterman, 2000). Each of these factors are important in terms of potentially protecting an individual against role stress and existential stress.

6.3.2 Experience of existential stress

As evident in Table 6.2, Jess scored 4 in the existential stress variable of the quantitative study which was below the mean of 8.16. To gain further insights into these statistics, Jess engaged in a qualitative semi-structured interview. Her lived experiences of existential stress are discussed below.

6.3.2.1 Life goals

In her interview, Jess expressed a clear life goal *to be a doctor*, while also recognising what is required. This was consistent with her response on the quantitative survey, where she indicated 'strongly agree' with 'I have clear life goals and aims' and 'I have fully discovered a life purpose'. Interestingly, she noted that *time management will challenge me … because sometimes you play different roles, you need more time and time is something that runs really fast*. Jess' recognition of a potential challenge suggests a maturity beyond her years. She further explained that *organisation, communication, and managing time* is needed for her to focus on her goals. Her awareness of the challenges she may face in achieving her life goals could potentially cause existential stress, however she was able to clearly articulate strategies needed to overcome these challenges which reduced any potential stress related to her life goals.

In the quantitative survey Jess responded, 'strongly agree' with items such as 'My personal existence is meaningful' and 'In achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfillment' on the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011). Explaining her understanding of the congruence of life goals with the management of roles, Jess articulated the importance of managing different roles in her life to achieve her life goals. She explained that *I managed my roles all the time, when I am at school and talking to my friend, and at home as well. If I actually see that I am in front of* [the] *teacher, so I behave like giving respect to my teacher*. This comment supports Ho et al.'s (2010) study that highlighted a positive relationship between purpose in life and a positive sense of self in 1807 adolescents aged between 12-18 years in Hong Kong.

6.3.2.2 Summary of Jess's experiences of existential stress

Blau et al. (2019) described the importance of an adolescent's home environment in developing their identity and supporting them in pursuing their goals. Jess, who reported a supportive family environment, has clear life goals *to be a doctor.* In contrast to Joanne, Jess believed that she is capable of achieving her life goals and therefore it does not appear to have caused her stress. Instead she described strategies such as *organisation, communication, and managing time* which are recognised signs of low existential stress (Wong, 2011; Yalom, 1980). Similarly, Drolet and Arcand, (2013) described positive and happy schooling experiences as playing an important role in one's sense of belonging and positive development; something that was evident in Jess' story.

Jess described her school experience as *quite good. I feel happy at school, we played games, study and compete with each other.* This supports Awang-Hashim, et al.'s (2015) study that explored the

association between purpose in life and school engagement among 2381 adolescents aged 12-15 years from Malaysia. They found a significant and positive association between school engagement and purpose in life, suggesting that a high sense of school belonging is important for adolescents to gain a meaningful existence.

6.3.3 Emotional intelligence

Jess' emotional disposition was influenced by her family and friends who *try to make me feel happy …. I am trying my best to be happy. And then like, few minutes later, I was really happy*. In her words, Jess demonstrated her ability to recognise and manage her emotions which was also reflected in her high score of 8 on her 'ability to appraise own emotions' on the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010). Jess was able to effectively control her emotions with the help of active strategies such as talking to herself or seeking social support, explaining that *sometimes if I am sad and angry … I got to go somewhere and talk to myself to control my feelings … I do not really get stressed, yeah, it does not really affect ... I know how to control* [emotions] *… I went somewhere silent or like talk to myself and talk to mirror I control like that such situation*. This was also reflected in her high score of 8 on the 'ability to regulate own emotions' on the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010) in the quantitative survey.

Furqani (2020) reviewed literature and highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence in adolescent development, concluding that those with high emotional intelligence tend to have positive social interactions, lower levels of stress and frustration, are empathetic, have purpose in life and high academic achievement and good mental health; all of which were evident in Jess' life. Like John, Jess scored 43 on the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010), which was well above the overall mean of 38.55, the female mean of 38.43, and the year 8 mean of 38.55. Jess' high scores on emotional intelligence and its dimensions are seemingly attributed to her positive social interactions and purpose in life.

6.3.4 Wellbeing

Diener et al. (2010), in their discussion of the measures of wellbeing, highlighted that for an individual to experience positive social wellbeing they need to be supported by others, but they also need to support others. Jess described supportive relationships with her family, peers and teachers explaining that they *encouraged me all the time when I feel like it's challenging*, and that her peers *have always helped me*. In turn, Jess also supported and helped her family and friends which enhanced her social

wellbeing. This is also reflected in her high score of 23 on the social wellbeing dimension on the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997) in the quantitative survey.

Reflecting her high score of 30 on the spiritual wellbeing dimension in the quantitative survey, Jess demonstrated clear life goals and positive future orientation in her comment *my goals are to manage my studies and to be a doctor … if I have the knowledge of my study, I will be a doctor in the future*. Therefore, Jess' lived experiences supported her results from the quantitative survey where she scored 153 on the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997), which was significantly higher than the overall mean of 124.35, the female mean of 127, and the year 8 mean of 126.21. These high levels of spiritual wellbeing can be attributed to her positive experiences in her microsystems (family, friends, peers, teacher, and school) and exosystem (wider community).

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory argues that an individual's ecological environment has a strong influence on their development; something that was evident in Jess' life where her micro and meso systems in particular appeared to have a bi-directional influence. As previously mentioned, adolescents who reported higher levels of social connectedness often also reported higher levels of wellbeing (Jose et al., 2012) which was evident in Jess' lived experiences.

6.3.5 Summary

Jess is an adolescent who reported low role stress and existential stress in her quantitative survey. Despite facing some parental pressure, Jess felt encouraged by her parent's support and helped them with their work. This bi-directional relationship supported Jess' supportive and positive microsystem experiences, something that also appeared to influence her other relationships. For instance, while Jess' friends candidly pointed out any flaws in her efforts, she considered them to be helpful and *close,* highlighting her ability to be positive and think constructively about criticism or suggestions. Supporting her popularity, Jess had friends across class and year levels, highlighting her ability to mix with all peers and suggesting that she had good social skills. Family microsystems provide an initial socialisation for individuals. For Jess, these experiences were positive and provided a good role model for her to learn the necessary social skills to be able to make friends of all age groups. To do this, Jess also needed to be able to regulate her emotions which was evidenced in her ability to treat challenges as opportunities. Altogether, the supportive social environment that surrounded her, including her positive schooling experiences in which her peers and teachers were helpful, seemingly influenced her understanding of the various roles that one needs to play in life. Notably, Jess expressed her understanding of the importance of managing different roles in life to achieve her goals. She stated that she wanted to become a doctor and understood that her communication skills, and

ability to organise things and manage her time appropriately would help her to achieve these goals. This positive self-image and purpose in life indicated a clarity and a sense of wellbeing which was also evident in her focus on academic success and her life goals.

6.4 Lisa's Story

Lisa, a 16-year-old female, attended year 10 at a high school in South Australia at the time of the interview. She described herself as an extrovert who likes to interact with new people. Her family includes her elder brother, sister and supportive parents. Lisa scored 8 on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004), placing her below the overall mean of 12.01, below the female mean of 10.86 and the year 10 mean of 13.34. Her score of 4 on the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) was also below the overall mean of 8.16, below the female mean of 8.16, and the Year 10 mean of 9.78. A breakdown of Lisa's scores is presented in Table 6.3.

Table 6. 3 Lisa's scores on role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing

Variables	*Overall mean scores*	*Lisa's scores*	*Year 10 mean scores*	*Female mean scores*
Role stress	12.01	8	13.34	10.86
Existential stress	8.16	4	9.78	8.16
Emotional intelligence	38.55	46	36.03	38.43
Wellbeing	124.35	155	124	127

An analysis of Lisa's results across these two quantitative scales suggested that she had overall low role stress and existential stress. Lisa presented as an emotional and talkative person, who considered herself to be a support for her friends. She liked to interact with new people from all spheres of life, such as her peer group, teachers, and community groups. Notably, she related her outgoing behaviour to her strong interest in learning and increasing her knowledge. She also described the support that she received from her family and the rest of her social environment, in which her father, sister, and her peers motivated her to achieve and helped her to learn.

> *I think emotions do impact because I could get emotional about things ... I am really a talkative person ... I'm always like, as a support kind of system for them* [friends] *... I communicate with them* [peers] *the way I interact with them* [peers] *Because if I do not interact*

with many people how am I going to extend my knowledge … It [community participation] *helps me increase my knowledge about people and how I interact with them … He* [dad] *motivates me like to try it out … other than my friends, my family,* [inaudible] *peers help me. So, without this help and support, I can't really do much.*

6.4.1 Experiences of role stress

In the quantitative study, 86 adolescents participated from year 10 (M = 13.34) on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004), higher than the other year levels Year 8 (M = 11.21), 9 (M = 13.22), 11 (M = 10.56) and 12 (M = 11.36). Both Lisa and Daryl (refer Section 6.5.1), were in year 10, with both reporting low role stress in their quantitative survey. Therefore, to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences they were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview. Lisa's experiences with her family, peers, friends, school, teacher and wider community are presented below.

6.4.1.1 Family relationships

My mom and I share very strong relationship … my dad would be the one because he's always pushing me to study … so he [dad] wants that good future for me … whenever I am struggling with the things, he helps me out … He motivates me like to try it out, let's see how you go … they [parents] *are always there for me and they support and everything, doesn't kind of like make me feel that way* [under pressure]

Lisa described living in a positive family environment where she shared a strong bond with her mother, and her father was a source of support and motivation. She explained that while she did not see a lot of her father due to him working night shifts, he motivated her to experiment with things by herself to learn; something he helped her with at times.

Me and my sister. We always do fight over like makeup, our clothes and everything. But then we do share a strong bond because we're in such like a position where we can tell [share] *like everything, my brother and I were just having that teasing type of bond between us. And yeah, we love each other a lot.*

Lisa clearly enjoyed a strong although different type of relationship with both her brother and sister. She explained that her *family is always supporting me towards my learning towards my knowledge and telling me to extend it. So that kind of helps me achieve a lot of more things*. She also felt *really happy and blessed that I have such a family and such a good support with my family and friends*.

Lisa's positive perceptions of her family were also reflected in her score of '1= feeling happy' with relationships with parents on the role stress variable in the quantitative survey. The positivity and encouragement evident in her microsystem (her family relationships) was also linked to her relationships with her friends and peers. This supports Shin et al.'s (2016) quantitative study which

examined the relationship between parental bonding and peer relationship among 716 adolescents from years 7-9 in South Korea. They found a negative association between parental bonding and later peer relationships with those reporting a lack of care and warmth from their parents being at an increased risk of poor relationship with peers.

6.4.1.2 Interactions with friends

> *They* [friends] *support me and that helps me increase my level of knowledge and how I react to things … if I get something wrong, they helped me out, they helped me find the right answer towards things … we have such a good bond between us that I don't think I ever have to doubt on anything, or feel challenged about anything … I think I am pretty good friend; I am always there for my friends. And I think I can always support them whenever they need me. I'm always like, as a support kind of system for them.*

In the quantitative survey, Lisa scored '1= feeling happy' on the items 'How happy you are with the kinds of friends you have'? 'being accepted and included by friends?' on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) (refer Chapter 3, Table 3.9), indicating that she is happy in her friendships. Lisa reported sharing positive relationships with her friends, who were supportive and willing to help her when needed. Lisa explained that her friends enhanced her level of knowledge by helping her to find the right answers. She considered her friends as *her strength*, and clearly felt *really good* being with them. In return, Lisa was also a *pretty good friend* who is like *a support kind of system* for them. This bi-directional relationship potentially supports Lisa in feeling a positive sense of belonging which, in turn, may provide protection against role stress (Baumeister & Leary 1995; Osterman 2000). Sharing an example of how she helps her friends, Lisa explained *whenever they're down, like stress, I always go to them talk it through, and hopefully that can help them out.* While this illustrates Lisa's willingness to help others, it also reflects her awareness of other's emotions and how best to support them; something that is reflected in her emotional intelligence scores.

Lisa's low role stress can be attributed to her sense of belonging with her friends. Falci and McNeely (2009) examined the relationship between social integration and depressive symptoms in 9,097 adolescents from 132 junior and high schools in the US, and highlighted that those who have higher positive perceptions of belonging or support from their friends also reported lower depressive symptoms; further suggesting that Lisa's sense of connectedness and belonging may have protected her against role stress.

6.4.1.3 Interactions with peers

> *They* [school friends] *are my strength … I communicate with them* [peers] *the way I interact with them* [peers] *Because if I do not interact with many people how am I going to extend my knowledge … Other than my friends, my family,* [inaudible] *peers help me. So, without this help*

> *and support, I can't really do much … there is no big challenges that* [I] *have to face when I'm meeting new peers. So, you not knowing them in your life,* [feel] *very shy to talk to them,* [but] *I think that is from both sides … so first of has to be one of you to start* [conversation]

Lisa was seemingly very receptive to interacting with her peers who she identified as being a source of support and strength for her. She recognised the importance of having good and healthy interactions with her friends and peers as they helped her to achieve her goals, gain more knowledge, and improve her communication skills. Vasudev (2016) reviewed literature that examined adolescent peer relationships and highlighted the importance of positive peer interaction for adolescents. That is, "good academic performance, health competitions, participation in extra-curricular activities, imbibing good habits and values" (p. 36); something that was evident in Lisa's case. Unlike other adolescents with low levels of role stress and existential stress, Lisa did not have many friends across year levels, explaining that, *I always interact within my group I don't go outside much*. She elaborated by saying that if something were to come up related to schoolwork, then she would *interact with peers around me, so we share.*

While Lisa reported feeling *shy* when communicating with new peers, she easily overcame this and therefore did not report any challenges in her peer relationships, explaining that *I am quite close to them* [peers].

Positive peer relationships are important as they provide a sense of belonging and connectedness which helped Lisa to develop and confirm her identity (Erikson 1968). They also provide protection against role stress and existential stress which was evident in Lisa's low role stress score where she reported 'feeling happy' with relationships with her peers on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004).

6.4.1.4 Schooling experiences

> *My school is actually a pretty big school, we have a lot of support system, we have quite a lot of teachers … I have all my friends in school … I am always happy at school … there* [at school] *learning and spending quality time … They* [teachers] *can interact with you, they can help you out with stuffs … they* [teachers] *are always helpful, they always* [there] *to explain things to you.*

Lisa reported a positive sense of belonging towards her school, explaining that *when I'm stressed with assignments, and when I feel down, I just talk with friends … like maybe asking my teachers for some support, ask them for some time when I have my assignments going late and everything so they can always talk it through with me, helped me out with anything I'm struggling with*. For Lisa, school was an opportunity to learn and spend quality time with peers and teachers who helped her with work and challenges that she faced. Lisa's positive perception of her relationship with her teachers was reflected

in her score of '1= feeling happy' with relationship with teachers on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004).

Unlike Joanne, who was not able to communicate with her teachers, Lisa viewed the *huge variety of teachers* as opportunities to gain as much knowledge from them as she could explaining that *they can interact with you, they can help you out with stuff*. Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that an individual's development is influenced by multiple social interactions across their microsystem. For Lisa, these positive perceptions of life and opportunities in the school environment seemingly resulted in low levels of role stress. This was evidenced in her score of '1= feeling happy' with schooling experiences on the role stress variable in the quantitative survey. These results are consistent with Hong and Eamon's (2012) findings. Their quantitative survey of 1,249 adolescents aged 10-15 years in the US found that a positive perception of school was related to a friendly school environment for these adolescents (Hong & Eamon, 2012). This study highlights the important role that schools can play in helping adolescents cope with and reduce role stress and existential stress, thus suggesting that interventions and preventions need to adopt an ecological approach.

6.4.1.5 Community participation

> *I think I should contribute a lot more and help. And yeah, because I have not done much community things except for like our community here and not other than that … the group that I'm involved in, where I spend time that is just like one, I play sports and get to meet some of my friends … It* [community participation] *helps me increase my knowledge about people and how I interact with them … Wellbeing yes because they made me laugh all the time … They're always carrying their own jokes and throwing out to me, teasing me and everything, makes me* [feel] *pretty good*

Lisa enjoyed connecting with new people through various activities such as sports. She stated that, while she was not participating in volunteer activities at the time of the interview, it was something that she would consider. She believed that getting involved in social groups would help her to increase her knowledge and would have a positive impact on her wellbeing, *because they made me laugh all the time*. When considering the sporting group that she was involved in, she reported feeling *pretty good* when she was with the friends that she had met. Lisa demonstrated an awareness of the importance of community participation acknowledging that *I should contribute a lot more*. Supporting this, Albanesi et al. (2007) investigated the relationship between sense of community and wellbeing in 566 adolescents aged 14-19 years in Italy and found that "sense of community predicts social wellbeing" (p. 387). Hong and Eamon (2012) explored adolescents' (aged 10-15 years) views of school safety in the US after several school shootings. They found that at the exosystem level, being part of a safe and positive community helped these adolescents interact better at school, highlighting the interplay between ecological systems. Christens and Dolan (2011) explored the

interconnection between youth development, community development and social change through a comprehensive review of documents and identified that community engagement helped adolescents to also identify their life goals, identifying potential links between role and existential stress protective factors. In line with these previous findings, Lisa's positive perception of community engagement potentially attributed to her low scores on the role stress and existential stress variables.

6.4.1.6 Summary of Lisa's experiences of role stress

Lisa described her relationship with her parents as supportive and encouraging, particularly her father who she saw as a source of motivation, explaining that *my dad would be the one because he's always pushing me to study … so he* [dad] *wants that good future for me … whenever I am struggling with the things, he helps me out … He motivates me*. Here Lisa was inadvertently described the strong relationship between a happy home environment and low role stress (Fenzel, 1989). In addition, her relationships with her friends and peers were supportive and encouraging, stating that helpful peer relations and friendships *are my strength … I am always there for my friends … I communicate with them* [peers] *… They* [friends] *support me and that helps me increase my level of knowledge …* She feels that being interactive with other people and her *communication connection with people* would help her to *extend my knowledge*. Unlike Joanne, who reported high role stress, Lisa was able to view all elements of her life positively. For her, having a range of teachers in high school was something she embraced believing that she could learn from each of them. This optimistic outlook appeared to contribute to her low role stress score in the quantitative survey. These findings provide support for the argument that a lack of interpersonal difficulties and challenges in multiple relationships can result in low role stress (Liu & Kaplan, 2004; Lou et al., 2007). While these findings have been primarily with adults, it is argued that the same may be consistent with an adolescent sample. McGraw et al. (2008) explored sense of connectedness with family, peers and school among 204 adolescents from year 12 in Australia, and found that those adolescents who scored higher on social connectedness reported lower levels of depression, anxiety, and stress; something that was also evident in Lisa's story.

For Lisa, positive relationships appeared to act as a protection against role stress. Starting with her supportive family, Lisa learned the importance of being positive, supportive and trustworthy. She appeared to take these qualities into her peer relationships and friendships enabling her to be a *pretty good friend*. Her respect and admiration for her teachers followed a similar vein, resulting in a positive sense of belonging and cohesion at school. This, together with her sporting commitments and willingness to be involved with the wider community, highlights the interplay of elements of

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems theory when considering role stress and/or existential stress.

6.4.2 Experiences of existential stress

In the quantitative study, adolescents from year 10 (M = 9.78) reported higher levels of existential stress when compared to those from other years: 8 (M = 8.41), 11 (M = 9.21), and 12 (M = 8.76). They also reported lower levels of existential stress when compared to adolescents in year 9 adolescents (M = 10.03) (refer Chapter 4, Table, 4.18). Capturing the lived experiences of Lisa and Daryl (refer Section 6.5.2) may shed light on the existential stress experiences of adolescents in year 10.

As depicted in Table 6.3, Lisa scored low on the existential stress variable in her quantitative online survey, thus she was invited to participate in a semi-structured interview to gain further insights into her experiences of existential stress.

6.4.2.1 Life goals

> *I want to complete my high school with good SACE and then I am really interested in crime* [science]. *So, either I would want to go for police or detective … I think my concentration towards my work and my communication with others will help me achieve these goals … I know what I'm doing in the future.*

Lisa's main life goal was centred on a career in professions related to the field of crime, potentially a police officer or detective. She clearly articulated the strategies she would need to employ to achieve her goals explaining that; *I think my concentration towards my work and my communication with others will help me achieve these goals, asking people what I should do next, what I need to improve or would help me go towards these things better*. Lisa's ability to plan for the future may have acted as a buffer to stress, thus potentially contributing to her low existential stress. This finding is consistent with that of Zheng et al. (2019) who examined the role of future orientation and depressive symptoms in 217 adults aged 18-56 years in China. They found that adults who had future goals and were motivated to accomplish them were less likely to experience depressive symptoms and life stress. This appeared to be the case for Lisa, who scored 4 'strongly agree' with 'In life I have clear goals and aims' and 'In achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfillment'.

Lisa also explained that she understood the challenges involved, describing that *I can't concentrate, like quickly onto things. So, it takes me a little time to get on to a task*, which may impact on her life

goals. She also positively related her schooling experiences to her life goals explaining how *during like school I think about it* [goals] *... That's what* [school] *makes me feel I should go that way I'm interested to.*

6.4.2.2 Summary of Lisa's experiences of existential stress

Lisa was confident when discussing her life goals, saying *I want to complete my high school with good SACE and then I am really interested into crime* [science] *... either I would want to go for police or detective ... I know what I'm doing in the future*, which is an important attribute related to low existential stress in adolescents (Schulenberg et al., 2016). When asked about her life, Lisa said *my life is going good, it is quite smooth. I have good friends and living in a good family and have a good environment,* highlighting a positive attitude that was consistent throughout the interview. Lisa also had a strong sense of belonging at school, explaining that school supported her in achieving her life goals. She explains that *during like school I think about it* [goals] *... there* [at school] *learning and spending quality time ... they* [teachers] *are always helpful ... when I feel down, just talk out with friends ... like maybe asking my teachers for some support*. Lisa was connected to her supportive teachers and peers at school, where she was excelling in her learning and felt happy. A strong sense of belonging is an important factor that influences an individual's wellbeing and low existential stress. Highlighting this, Blau et al. (2019) examined the association between social support and purpose in life among 193 adolescents aged 14-18 years in Israel, and found that purpose in life was associated with adolescent's perception of the support they received from their parents, teachers, peers, friends and school; elements that were evident in Lisa's lived experiences.

6.4.3 Emotional intelligence

While at times in the interview Lisa became somewhat emotional, she was able to demonstrate an ability to recognise her own emotions and their effects on her overall wellbeing. She explained that *I think I just have to go my mind decide to relax, don't think of many things* when she felt down, which explained her high score of 9 on the ability for 'appraisal of own emotions' and 'regulation of own emotions' on the BEIS (Davies et al., 2010). Notably, Lisa trusted her family and friends who helped her out in difficult times. She felt very happy and blessed to have such family and friends, and also acknowledged the importance of her positive school environment in regulating her emotions, explaining that *when I wouldn't get that support* [from school] *that make me go down because I wouldn't have any other support system*. Apart from family, Lisa linked her emotional state to her friends, stating that *if my friends are stressed obviously, I would feel stress*. This supports the findings

of Balluerka et al. (2016) who investigated the relationship between presence of emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing in 2182 adolescents aged 12-18 years. They found that emotional intelligence strengthened the association between social relationships and psychological wellbeing. Lisa scored 46 on the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010), which was above the overall mean of 38.55, and above the mean of 38.43 for females, and 36.03 for year 10 students. This also supports Lopez-Zafra et al.'s (2019) study that explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and social support with 1277 students with a mean age of 16.15 years. They found that social support had a positive relationship with satisfaction with life and emotional intelligence. Lisa clearly had positive social support from her family, peers, friends and teachers and this seemingly impacted on her purpose in life and emotional intelligence.

6.4.4 Wellbeing

Lisa expressed a positive spiritual wellbeing saying *I know what I'm doing in the future … I think my concentration towards my work and my communication with others will help me achieve these goals*. This showed her confidence in her ability to achieve her specific goals in the future. Lisa also explained that she did not get stressed and could handle a lot of work. Lisa had plenty of support and help through her social relationships, particularly with her family, friends, and teachers, which increased her motivation and encouraged her to expand her knowledge. This positive perception towards her social relationships (Jose et al., 2012) and sense of community (Albanesi et al., 2007) was a sign of positive social wellbeing. Lisa's high social wellbeing was reflected in her score of 25 on this dimension in the quantitative survey. Lisa also showed signs of positive social adjustment, clear life goals, and felt happy at school which was consistent with her score of 25 on the psychological wellbeing dimension and 29 on the spiritual wellbeing dimension in the quantitative survey. The positive association between meaning or purpose in life and adolescents' psychological wellbeing is evidenced in previous work by Ho et al. (2010) in their quantitative study with 1807 adolescents aged 12-18 years in Hong Kong. They found that "Optimism also served as a partial mediator in the relationships between meaning in life and both positive and negative aspects of well-being" (Ho et al., 2010, p. 658), something that was evident in Lisa's life.

Lisa also shared that she felt happy in activities that involved interactions with people, *I think it's pretty good. I'm quite happy. Most of the time, I get to interact with a lot of people, which kind of makes me a lot happier*, a behaviour noted by Adams et al. (1997) in adolescents with high levels of emotional wellbeing. Lisa's results from the quantitative survey indicated a score of 155 on the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997), which was well above the overall mean of

124.35, above the mean of 127 for females, and the mean of 124 for year 10 students. These results were supported by Lisa's interview findings.

6.4.5 Summary

Lisa had low quantitative scores for role and existential stress as evidenced in Chapter Four. As shown in Lisa's story, her low scores could be attributed to the positivity and motivation she received from her family and peers, who clearly played an important role in her endeavours to extend her knowledge. Lisa also emphasised the importance of social interactions and healthy communication in her social relationships. In addition, Lisa's confidence in her ability to achieve her goals signified her wellbeing and the clarity of her sense of self. Her perceptions of her teachers and the school environment were positive, and she reported her friends and family as being supportive, potentially explaining her clear life goals. She confidently discussed her life goals and described her strategies to achieve these. In addition, she reported that she was happy and satisfied with her life and was not seeking any change. Such attitudes and actions resulted in her low existential scores in the quantitative survey.

For Lisa, a supportive family life appeared to lay positive foundations for good relationships with others including friends, peers and teachers. Her engagement with sport further provided a supportive environment in which she could flourish. Each of this element of Lisa's life seemingly contributed to her low role stress and existential stress and enabled her to develop into a positive, optimistic young woman. Through Lisa's voice it became apparent how positive relationships can influence one's identity and purpose in life, therefore highlighting the need to look at role stress and existential stress holistically (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Erikson, 1968).

6.5 Daryl's Story

Daryl is a 15-year-old male in year 10 at a metropolitan school in Adelaide, South Australia. At the time of the interview Daryl lived his mother and father. Daryl described himself as a sensitive person who gets emotional at times but who also shows control over his emotions when handling difficult situations. Daryl scored 8 on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004), placing him below the overall mean of 12.01, the mean for males of 13.47, and the year 10 mean of 13.34. His score of 4 on the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) was also below the overall mean of 8.16, the male mean of 10.17, and the year 10 mean of 9.78. Table 6.4 details Daryl's scores in comparison to means.

Table 6. 4 Daryl's scores on role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing

Variables	*Overall mean scores*	*Daryl's scores*	*Year 10 mean scores*	*Male mean scores*
Role stress	12.01	8	13.34	13.47
Existential stress	8.16	4	9.78	10.17
Emotional intelligence	38.55	50	36.03	35.51
Wellbeing	124.35	161	124	120.35

Analysis of Daryl's results across role stress and existential stress scales suggested that he perceived low levels for both. Daryl was a *good son* who *respects* his parents and *stay*[s] *positive* not only to keep his *emotions stable* but also as a strategy to avoid stress. Daryl stated that he is *sometimes funny* but also sensitive and would *cry easily,* however he described that he *keep*[s] *his emotions to himself*. He attributed his supportive social environment to his behaviour of being *helpful* in his relationships, particularly with his peers and teachers.

> *My mom and dad are always proud of me, so I think I am a good son … I am like respecting them …* [Do] *not get stressed about exams coming so I can do* [well] *because I need to stay positive to achieve … I try keeping a positive face … sometimes I am sensitive … sometimes things could make me cry easily sometimes things don't make me cry easily but I try keep emotions to myself sometimes … I could sometimes be funny*

6.5.1 Experiences of role stress

As depicted in Table 6.4, Daryl scored low on the role stress variable in his quantitative online survey, therefore he was invited to participate in a semi-structured interview to further explore his experiences of role stress. The following presents his lived experiences.

6.5.1.1 Family relationships

> *They* [parents] *are the one who had told me to manage my emotions and like, keep them stable … We have a really good relationship like we talk to each other really well … my parents they can know what is happening to me and then they tell me what to do so that they can actually support me … my dad inspired me to keep my emotions stable okay, and then same as my mom, she has done like studies she helped me* [in] *studies.*

Daryl is part of a small family, living with his mother and father who are supportive of him. His comment that his father inspired him to keep his emotions stable suggested that his father is involved in his life. He explained that *I barely see him* [father] *sad and I asked him like how he is always so happy, he always tells me like he stays positive ... He inspires me to do that* [be positive] *like him.* This closeness and admiration were clear in Daryl's narrative, however it was missing in Joanne's and Kelly's. Carlson (2006), in a quantitative study of 2733 adolescents aged 10-14 years in the US, found that higher father involvement resulted in fewer behavioural problems in these adolescents. Daryl's mother was also active in his life as she organised his studies. The literature points to parental participation in the lives of their adolescent children leading to a better understanding of other social relationships (Shin et al., 2016). Daryl recognised that his family may be different from others explaining that *I've seen other families like they just go to* [their] *rooms when they come from schools, on their telephone or something, yeah, they don't even talk to their parents … I think spending good time with families is everything*. For Daryl, it would appear that the supportive family microsystem that he has experienced may buffer against role stress; something that was absent in both Joanne and Kelly's lives. Thus, Daryl's descriptions of his family experiences reflected his score of '1= feeling happy' with his parents on the quantitative online survey.

6.5.1.2 Interaction with friends

> *Sometimes when I express my emotions, some of my friends actually understand, I think, got to know me better … I have friends that like me … some other friends actually helped me with my studies as well. They helped me to keep my emotions stable sometimes.*

Daryl's friends appeared to help him manage his stress as they were reported to be understanding when he expressed his emotions and helped him with his studies. In this way both Daryl's family and friends played an active role in keeping his *emotions stable* thus potentially contributing to his low role stress, existential stress and potentially reflected in high emotional intelligence scores for regulating own emotions and emotional wellbeing (refer Sections 6.5.3 and 6.5.4). In his quantitative online survey, Daryl reported '1= feeling happy' with his relationships with his friends, which is aligned with his positive description about them. Daryl appeared to be satisfied with his friendships which formed an important supportive role in his microsystem, explaining how *I have like most* [of] *those type of friends who helped me with my learning*. Notably, Daryl often reciprocated by helping *my friends in their works, like in their assignments.* He further explained that when *some kids like when they get bullied, I see them like crying in the corner or like not even talking to their friends, I have some of those friends* [and] *my classmates they always like ask me for advice like how to manage this… and I always tell them to just don't give much attention they will soon stop.* Daryl's supportive

behaviour could have stemmed from a supportive family microsystem where his parents were there for him and helped him with studies and emotional challenges.

Having positive friendships appeared to contribute to Daryl's low role stress and existential stress thus supporting Jones et al. (2014). Adopting Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory (1968) as a framework, Jones et al. (2014) examined the relationship between friendship characteristics and adolescents' psychosocial development with 702 adolescents aged 18-23 years. The findings revealed that friendship support and conflict were linked with adolescent psychosocial development, with support from friends being positively related to identity development and the formation of social relationships.

6.5.1.3 Interaction with peers

> *They* [peers] *communicate with me pretty well ... Earlier I wasn't good at communicating with people, I feel like if I say something, they might think I'm dumb … but now we communicate well … They* [peers] *tell me some of their techniques of doings things, for some of my peers like me as well so we work together*

Daryl described a supportive relationship with his peers where they have helped him communicate effectively. Despite this, Daryl described times when he was presenting and *people* [were] *laughing and always teasing like… I really feel bad, not that well when people are laughing when you're presenting so I don't give eye contact with them.* In this description you can hear the uncomfortableness that his caused Daryl however he was able to avoid eye contact *and continue and they soon stopped.* Further illustrating his confidence, Daryl made efforts to interact with his peers who *didn't even talk*, and would take the initiative to make friends, a behaviour that potentially contributed to his high emotional intelligence (refer Section 6.5.3).

Daryl further explained that [it's] *very hard but sometimes I asked the teachers some questions about the* [class] *work, she gave me the answers, I tell my peers those answers as well, so they know that I am that type of person that like shares and they like me*. Here, Daryl reflected a time when he had the courage to ask questions and then support his peers by sharing the answers thus showing a development in his sense of self. Consistent with this, a previous study conducted by Aceves et al. (2010) among 148 adolescents from year level 9-12 in US found that peers have influence on adolescent development, however quality of relationship determines the positive or negative outcome. Daryl reported 'feeling happy' with his peers in the quantitative survey which is consistent with his lived experiences.

His peer group played an ambiguous role in his learning, with Daryl *feel*[ing] *annoyed* at being distracted from his study by his peers. Nevertheless, support from his friends *helped me with my*

learning and *with studies* thereby seemingly acting as a buffer against some of his challenges with his peers and potentially supporting positive mesosystem interactions.

Daryl, like Joanne and Kelly, experienced challenges with his peers, however what appeared to be different was the abilities to cope with these with for example, Daryl making an effort to develop good relationship with peers; something that was seemingly missing in Joanne and Kelly's cases. Supporting this, Moksnes et al.'s (2010) quantitative study of 1508 adolescents aged 13-18 years in Norway also found that higher levels of emotional stability were associated with lower stress due to peer pressure. In Daryl's case, his peers and friends seemingly protected him against stress, however this did not appear to be the case for both Joanne and Kelly.

6.5.1.4 Schooling experiences

> *School* [is] *pretty comfortable …* [There] *are different activities around the school that helps like lots of equipment, like people play soccer ... cricket, football …*[The] *school and teachers they help, and I see they* [are] *actually pretty confident now they are walking around … So, like if you don't understand the task the teacher has given you, you can stay* [back] *after school and they can help you … In the morning,* [I] *can meet the teachers and always feel like they* [are] *always there to help you.*

Responding to the quantitative survey, Daryl scored '1= feeling happy' with school experiences and relation with teachers. This was supported in the interview when asked about his schooling experiences, Daryl described *school is pretty comfortable*, particularly the *different activities* in sports *like cricket and football* and his positive interactions with his teachers. In the interview, Daryl stressed the importance of active *communication* in his schooling experiences, *the school communicates with kids really well … the teachers like always communicate*. He also expressed his *trust* in his school, as he felt *pretty confident* on the way school and teachers *helps* and *communicates* with him. Daryl responded enthusiastically when talking about his relationship with teachers and expressed being very happy as he had *teachers who actually help the students* and having a school which allowed students to stay back after school time *if they* [students] *don't understand the task* so that the students could *meet the teachers …* [as they are] *always there to help*. Again, in relation to his helping behaviour in relationships, Daryl explained how *I do help [my] teachers, like* [if] *they tell me to do something, I do* [it] *without arguments … same with students when they need help with their work, I* [am] *always there to help them*. As Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggest, Daryl's positive sense of belonging in terms of support from his school and peers, may potentially be supportive in reducing potential risk factors of role stress and contributing to his high self-report across the wellbeing dimensions which will be discussed further in Section 6.5.4. Daryl's descriptions of positive experiences at school may also be associated with quality relationships within his immediate microsystems of the home and his

strong connection with his father, as well as the school environment with supportive relationships with peers, friends and teachers. These findings are seemingly consistent with Uslu and Gizir's (2017) quantitative study exploring relationships between teacher-student relationship, peer relationships, family involvement and adolescents' sense of school belonging among 815 adolescents aged 11-16 years in Turkey. The findings highlighted teacher-student relationship, peer relationships, and family involvement as significant predictors of adolescents' sense of belonging towards school, where supportive relationship with teachers and peers was stronger predictor than family involvement for both males and females. However, Daryl's low role stress may be attributed to broader ecological system influences of home and school microsystems and mesosytem relationships to broader community engagement.

6.5.1.5 Community participation

> *I always look after the community, like I clean as well, so like when I see some rubbish around,* [I] *pick them up … I would want to join some* [community groups] *in future … It* [joining community groups] *will help to know the people more … help me with my learning as well*

By engaging in deep conversation, it became apparent that Daryl took pride in his proactive role in community work, including cleaning activities, *helping society, assisting older* [people] *whenever I get chance*. Daryl expressed self-awareness of the importance and benefits of participating in community activities and intended *to join some* [community groups] *in future*. Similar to Lisa, Daryl also linked his participation in community work with his social and intellectual wellbeing, suggesting that; *It* [joining community groups] *will help to know the people more … help me with my learning as well*. As reflected by Albanesi et al.'s (2007), quantitative study exploring the relationship between sense of community and social wellbeing among 566 high school adolescents in Italy aged 14-19 years, findings highlighted that sense of community promotes healthy social relationships among adolescents which in turn enhanced their social wellbeing. From the brief conversation of Daryl's engagement in the community, he was expressing elements of confidence in himself and identity within the local community, potentially supporting him in navigating Erikson's (1968) identity versus role confusion developmental stage and a possible factor in his self-report of low role stress.

6.5.1.6 Summary of Daryl's experiences of role stress

Daryl's positive engagement in the interview and descriptions of his relationships supported the self-reported role stress score identified in Phase One of this study. The conversation enabled him to express his significant pleasure in spending time with his family, where he described being well

supported and encouraged by both of his parents. His father inspired him to stay positive and his mother took an active interest in Daryl's life, helping him in his studies as well, *I know my dad … he* [dad] *always so happy, he always tells me like him stays positive. He inspires me to do that* [being positive] *like him … and then same as my mom, she has done like studies she helped me* [in] *studies*. Active participation and support from parents have been identified by Jose et al. (2012) as an important factor in helping adolescents to understand their social relationships, thereby potentially significant in influencing Daryl's low role stress score. Daryl's positive perception of friendship support and self-reflexivity on his own role in maintaining positive relations was highly evident throughout the interview through descriptions such as; *I have like most those type of friends who helped me with my learning …*[and] *I help my friends in their work … I'm really a good friend*. Such reciprocal support and positive bidirectional interactions within Daryl's immediate microsystems seemed important to Daryl whereby a level of conscious awareness and monitoring of his engagement with others was seemingly central to navigating friendships, learning and family connectedness. This was extended to his community engagement with Daryl's explanation of taking a proactive role in *helping society, assisting older* [people] *… I always look after the community, like I clean as well, so like when I see some rubbish around*. Thereby Daryl's understanding of his role in society and engagement with others was a behaviour identified in adolescents who reported low role stress (Evans, 2007; Whitlock, 2007). Heng et al.'s (2020) quantitative study among 577 adolescents from Singapore and Israel examined the relationship between social support from friends and meaning in life and reported that adolescents with healthy and helpful friendships also had clarity in their life goals. Thus, exploration of Daryl's self-reported low existential stress and potential links between factors influencing his low role stress was necessary.

6.5.2 Experiences of existential stress

Consistent with his low role stress score, Daryl also scored low on the existential stress variable in the quantitative online survey. The following presents his description of his lived experiences to further explore his experiences of existential stress.

6.5.2.1 Life goals

> *I want to be an Electrical Engineer when I grow up. I'm interested in those things and one of my uncles is in this field* [said that I] *know very well these things … he said you can come on weekends … so I'm going to my uncle to learn some stuff … I can like I am focused you know* [on these areas of interest]*… my parents support me a lot and same as my uncle, I'm thinking of like researching there on Internet, reading books about it, about like what I can do to achieve this.*

In terms of his life goals, Daryl was extremely confident in expressing how he *wants to be an Electrical Engineer* in the future. As evidenced in exploring role stress, support from family, friends, and teachers were described to be significant influences in developing positive relationships and learning, however Daryl described potential influences of significant others in inspiring and supporting him to follow interests aligned to achieving life goals. That is, the *inspiration of staying positive* from his father and *help* from friends and teachers seemingly resulted in a sense of clarity in Daryl's life goals: *I look at people making stuff, like I see my uncle, like, he told me how useful it is and stuff and I see him fixing the equip*[ment] *and stuff, I am like, if I can learn these things, I can be really useful and I can* [do it]. As the conversation continued, Daryl's enthusiasm was highly evident as he described what he was doing at the time to pursue engineering expressing, *this summer, I'm going to my uncle to learn some stuff and yah, my teacher said that's a good idea*. As Erikson (1968) emphasised, the period of adolescence is critical in the development of life goals, values, and a sense of purpose in life, with Daryl clearly articulating strategies to work towards achieving his goals. For example, *researching there on* [the] *Internet, reading books about it, about like what I can do to achieve this*.

As reported in Chapter Two (refer Section 2.4.3.5) as adolescents identify and realise goals, their meaning in life is reinforced, thereby contributing to deeper purpose in life which is a strength (Steger & Kashdan, 2013; Steger et al., 2009). Thereby for Daryl, this may have potentially influenced his perceived self-report of low existential stress supported in both the quantitative and qualitative data. Steger et al. (2009) reported that some adolescents may find it challenging to withstand pressures and that these may arise form a diversity of ecological influences. For Daryl however, when asked about the challenges he may face in achieving his goals, he was quick to identify that *sometimes I am bad at maths*, which he believes would be important for him in the future. He further explained how he was committed to learning and how he was *keeping up with that* [maths] *bit, a lot actually*. Daryl's positive approach and optimism about his life goals and pathway to realise his goals potentially was a protective mechanism guarding against existential stress, which is consistent with Fahlman et al. (2009) study reporting that a sense of pessimism increases the existential vacuum and potentially experience of existential stress. As Steger et al. (2009) identified in the study with emerging adults (18-24 years), clear life goals were important in supporting low existential stress levels as was evidenced by Daryl's lived experiences and these were potentially influenced by positive relationships with significant family, friends and teacher influences.

6.5.2.2 Summary of Daryl's experiences of existential stress

A common characteristic of adolescents with low levels of role and existential stress is the clarity of their life goals and the lack of fear about their future (Ho et al., 2010). This was apparent for Daryl

who *want*[s] *to be an Electrical Engineer*, and a protective factor buffering him from existential stress included his connection and inspiration of his uncle and support of his parents to pursue his future. This focus on his life goals also appeared to be related to his positive self-image, which in turn might be attributed to the support he earned from his healthy relationships with his friends and family, highlighting interrelations between protective elements for both role stress and existential stress. As Ho et al.'s (2010) study that examined the relationship between meaning in life, and psychological wellbeing (life satisfaction) among 1807 adolescents aged 12-18 years in Hong Kong. Findings included how adolescents that set and achieved goals related to the values or expectations families and friends', had an increased feeling of satisfaction with family and friends and reflective of Daryl's experiences.

Daryl's positive relationships in his school environment with his peers and teachers were also supportive in buffering from existential stress as *they* [peers] *communicate with me pretty well … Some of my peers like me as well so we work together … I do help* [my] *teachers, like* [if] *they tell me to do something, I do without arguments … always feel like they* [teachers] [are] *always there to help you*. Daryl explained how he worked with his peers and how he positively perceived his teacher's support, thereby supporting Aceves et al.'s (2009) findings that a positive sense of belonging with schooling and low existential stress in adolescents resulted in healthy relationships with peers and teachers. That is for Daryl, feeling comfortable and engaged in activities and learning at his school provided a meaningful microsystem environment thereby protecting him from potential existential stress. As Daryl described, *School* [is] *pretty comfortable* ... [There] *are different activities around the school that helps … after all studies are really good*. However, interrelated with low role and existential stress, through Daryl's sharing of his lived experience, high levels of emotional intelligence was evidenced.

6.5.3 Emotional intelligence

Daryl's high emotional intelligence was evidenced throughout the interview with explanations such as, [I do] *not get stressed about exams coming so I can do* [well] *because I need to stay positive to achieve ... I try to keep my mind away from those* [stressful thoughts]. This was reflective of the quantitative score of 10, above the mean scores of 7.44, on the dimension of 'Appraisal of own emotions' in Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010). For Daryl, being positive helped him to achieve his goals and to keep his emotions regulated and stable. He described: *now I keep myself stable, no one can see from outside what's happening from within.* [or] *What I am thinking about. And I try keeping a positive face*. This insight was reflected of his score of 10, above the mean scores of 7.20, on the dimension of 'regulation of others' emotions' in the Brief Emotional

Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010). It was also supported by De Lazzari's (2000) quantitative study among 168 adolescents in the UK that identified positive association between emotional intelligence and meaning in life and psychological wellbeing. For Daryl, protective mechanisms included his capability to not only appraise his emotions but regulate and control his emotions. However, Daryl was open in sharing how some peer behaviours impacted negatively on his feelings, however in seeking to belong and present as confident and competent, Daryl applied strategies to overcome these challenges. He described, *If you are presenting* [giving a presentation] *in class or like in school, those people* [peers] *like laughing and always teasing ... I really feel bad not that well ... So, I do not give them eye contact and continue* [presentation], *they soon stop*[ped]. Daryl's high score of 10, above the mean scores of 7.38, on the dimension of 'regulation of own emotions' in Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010) was reflected and potentially these capacities supported him from these challenging interactions with peers from experiencing higher role stress and existential stress. Daryl's overall score of 50 on the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010) which was above than the mean score of 38.55 for all adolescents, 35.51 for males, and 36.03 for all year 10 adolescents, was reflective of his positive approach to life and belief in oneself, supportive family, and have some friends that he connected with. One questions, that if Daryl did not have such high emotional intelligence and awareness and control of own other's emotions, whether he may be at a heightened risk of role and existential stress, with potential influence on his wellbeing.

6.5.4 Wellbeing

Throughout the conversation, Daryl continued to emphasise his high level of emotional wellbeing, *I am feeling pretty good, I always look bright side of the things*. This was representative of his positive attitude in the way he saw things in sharing his lived experiences as well as being consistent with the high score of 26, above the mean score of 19.60, on the emotional wellbeing dimension of the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997). Daryl's positivity appeared to be more of a reflection of the *help, positivity*, and *inspiration* he got from his relationships with his family, friends, and teachers, *like my friends always tell me that I'm a really good friend ... and I asked him like how he*[father] *always so happy, he*[father] *always tells me like he stays positive ... He*[father] *inspires me to do that* [being positive] *like him*. In relation to Daryl's social wellbeing his positive relationships somewhat appeared to be linked to his positive outlook on life, which was also reflected in his positive approach to overcoming any challenges in his peer relationships as described above. His social wellbeing was underpinned by a strong sense of needing to connect and be liked by his peers as evidenced by sharing his teacher's answers, *I tell* [to] *my peers those answers as well, so they* [came

to] *know that I am that type of person that likes sharing and they like me*, thus developing trusting relationships with some of his peers.

Daryl's high score of 27on the social wellbeing dimension of the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997 was above the average score of 21.61. As identified in Bluth and Eisenlohr-Moul's (2017) study of 47 adolescents aged 11-17 years in the US, emotional wellbeing was positively related to social wellbeing. That is, adolescents with high emotional wellbeing reported lower social stress, anxiety, and depression. Of importance to Daryl was descriptions of how some of his friends showed trust in him, *sometimes like when someone tells me like their secret, I could keep them* and this seemingly made him feel positive about himself and belief in his regulation of his behaviours. Within the psychological wellbeing dimension, Daryl also recorded a high score of 24 (above the mean score of 19.58), reflective of his positive attitude and self confidence in his identity and commitment to achieving his life goals. Therefore, Daryl's lived experience was reflective of the high score of 161 on the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997) which was well above the mean score of 124.35 for all adolescents, 120.35 for males, and 124 for all Year 10 adolescents and whilst he encountered challenges with some peers, the interconnected emotional intelligence and wellbeing across all dimensions were protective factors against role and existential stress.

6.5.5 Summary

The inspiration that Daryl obtained from his family in staying positive and controlling his emotions appeared to be important factors in supporting his perceived low levels of role and existential stress, reflective of the low scores in his quantitative survey. In addition, Daryl's supportive helpful peer relationships along with his awareness of the importance of community participation evidence the importance of microsystem, mesosystem and broader ecological influences that can be protective mechanisms in relation to addressing role and existential stress and these were seemingly linked to his overall high level of wellbeing and emotional intelligence. In relation to his understanding of different roles, Daryl highlighted his bi-directional behaviour in his social environment, where he reportedly helped his teachers and friends and in return, he received help from them. Daryl also demonstrated how his positive attitude helped him not only to develop his relationships with his peers, which he initially perceived to be challenging, but also how it motivated him to focus on his life goals. He also related his participation in the community as integral to his learning process, which was supported by his interest in engaging in activities that would lead him to achieve his goal to become an Engineer. Together, these attitudes and actions highlighted Daryl's clarity in his life purpose, indicating low existential stress which was supported in his results from the quantitative study (refer Section 3.7.2.3).

6.6 Mandy's Story

Mandy is a 19-year-old female studying in Year 12, her family migrated to Australia when she was two years old. She very much enjoys outdoor activities such as hiking and rock climbing and loves reading books in her free time. Mandy scored 8 on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004), placing her below the mean of 12.01. This was also below the female mean score of 10.86, and the Year 12 mean score of 11.36. Her score of 4 on the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) was well below the mean of 8.16. This was also below the female mean score of 8.16 and the Year 12 mean score of 8.76. Table 6.5 below outlines Mandy's scores in comparison to the means.

Table 6. 5 Mandy's scores on role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing

Variables	*Overall mean scores*	*Mandy's scores*	*Year 12 mean scores*	*Female mean scores*
Role stress	12.01	8	11.36	10.86
Existential stress	8.16	4	8.76	8.16
Emotional intelligence	38.55	45	37.58	38.43
Wellbeing	124.35	163	125.29	127

An analysis of Mandy's results reported that she perceived having low role and existential stress which was supported with her interview responses. As a senior student, Mandy described herself as being *mature enough* and able to understand the importance of *working in a team* and always trying to help her family in the *business* or *anything*. She mentioned her family and friends as being her *support system* who helped her face challenges. She described not feeling any challenge about achieving life goals, which seemingly was a source of significant *encouragement* for her. Notably, Mandy *trusted* her friends and teachers, as she described relying heavily on their advice to make decisions.

> *I still try to* [help] *my family out with anything, that they have any accounting work or anything they have to do with business … We should be mature enough to be working in a team … I've got* [family] *like a support system, whenever I* [feel] *challenged by something, they are always there to help me … They* [friends] *are like a whole different sort of support group … you know, you have someone to speak to you … The sort of encouragement for me is like, how badly I want to reach my goal … I don't feel any challenge about achieving my* [life] *goals … they*

[friends] *are always there, you don't feel alone whenever you are making any decisions or any like major decisions*

6.6.1 Experiences related to role stress

Of interest in the quantitative study, total 59 adolescents from year level 12 participated recording an average score for year level 12 (M = 11.36) which was comparatively lower than the average score for year level 9 (M = 13.22) and 10 (M = 13.34) on the role stress variable. However, the year level 12 adolescents reported slightly higher role stress on average as compared to year level 8 (M = 11.21) (refer Chapter 4, Table, 4.18). Three adolescents in Year 12; Mandy, Helen (refer Section 6.7.1 for Helen' experiences of role stress), and Sam (refer Section 6.8.1 for Sam's experiences of role stress) expressed their interest to participate in the follow-up interviews with all three self-reporting perceived low role stress in in the quantitative survey. Therefore, exploring their experiences may provide deeper understanding of role stress and existential stress experiences for these year 12 adolescents. Mandy's experiences with her family, peers, friends, school, teacher and wider community are presented in subsequent sections.

6.6.1.1 Family relationships

I share a lot with my mom and sister … she [sister] is pretty much like having a third parent as she is very protective of me, very caring … I've got [family] like a support system, whenever I [feel] *challenged by something, they are always there to help me … I still try to* [help] *my family out with anything, that they have any accounting work or anything they have to do with business.*

Mandy's family relationships were healthy, particularly with her parents who were very supportive and caring towards her. Mandy also had a strong bond with her sister, *I share a lot with my mom and sister … she* [sister] *is pretty much like having a third parent as she is very protective of me, very caring*. Such protective caring attitudes and actions are key indicators of positive parent-child relationships, as suggested by Stattin and Kerr (2000) in their quantitative study among 703 adolescents aged 14 years from Sweden. Sharing and communicating with family is also seen as a strong aspect of the microsystem in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory. Mandy stated that she knows *they* [my family] *are always there to help me*, and described that this feeling helped her emotionally, mentally as well as physically. In discussing the positive experiences within her microsystem, Mandy said that her family was *like a support system* and *always there to help* if ever she may *feel challenged by something*. In the quantitative survey, Mandy reported 'feeling

happy' with relationship with her parents and sibling, which was highly evident in sharing her lived experiences in the interview.

An interesting factor emerging from the data was that for those adolescents who reported low stress levels in the quantitative survey in Chapter Four, such as John and Jess, and Mandy, they would often support and help their family with their housework or their job. Mandy *feel*[s] *so bad about not being able to support financially,* so she tended to *give them* [parents] *a hand with that* [any accounting work or anything] *..., to just spread the workload out*. Thereby family was a significant protective factor in navigating life events and any potential challenges to alleviate potential role stress.

6.6.1.2 Interactions with friends

> *I have friends ... couple of them* [friends] *are* [in] *year levels below me and some above my year level ... They* [friends] *are like a whole different sort of support group ... you know you have someone to speak ... they* [friends] *are always there, you don't feel alone whenever you are making any decisions or any like major decisions ... Whenever if I am down or I ever be upset about something, I always remind me that there is so much more that I have to be grateful for ... So, they* [friends] *help me to* [be] *emotionally stable.*

Her bonding with friends and peers was strongly connected across a range of year levels. She also reported 'feeling happy' with number of friends, kinds of friends and being accepted or included by friends in quantitative survey. Her low role stress scores were reflected from her description about her relationship with friends. She stated that *we* [me and friends] *are pretty much like we are more like siblings* and that they *pretty much grew up together* and this seemingly helped her to make decisions, thus playing an important part in regulating her emotions and navigating life challenges. Allen et al.'s (2003) review of literature reported that adolescents' emotional behaviour is more influenced by peers and friends than family when they grow older, which is highlighted in Mandy's comment *they* [friends] *help me to* [be] *emotionally stable*. This was also evident in her other comments while describing about the challenges as there was *always a bit of bickering* in her friendships, where she stressed more the *value of friendship*. She added that *you have arguments with everyone every once in a while, but you make up for it ... we're pretty forgiving for each other*. Mandy's honest and deep reflections of somewhat complex but seemingly mutually respectful friendship interactions perhaps reflect her identity development and awareness of working through the Erikson's (1968) identity versus role confusion stage and the importance of reliable and emotionally supportive friends in navigating potential sources of role stress.

6.6.1.3 Interactions with peers

> *A relationship with peers you know, going to the classroom and expect like a positive sort of environment, sort of helps you learn if you are like in an environment where kind of everyone strive for something yeah, you sort of motivating yourself and I suppose sort of it is really right that competition like it sort of drives you that everyone is wanting to do the best and you want to be up there as well*

Mandy identified that motivation and positivity in her peer relationships had helped her to achieve academically, somewhat similar to Daryl's sense of positivity. She described her peers as supportive competitors who motivated her to compete in an environment where e*veryone strives for something* and *wanting to do the best*. As Mandy described, *I think it really helps broaden your knowledge when everyone shares what they know, and helps you achieve*. Here, she identified her helpful and motivating relationships with her peers.

> *We do a lot of work, I suppose it sort of prepare you, not only for the university or school thing, but also for the workplace where you are sort of interacting and communicating a lot with new people and you're working alongside other colleagues of yours, you know, in most occupations* [it] *is not going to be like an individual service … We should be mature enough to be working in a team*

Mandy further reflected her level of maturity in the above comment, explaining that effective engagement in the workplace or community benefits from interaction with peers and working as a team. As Davies et al. (2010) reports, understanding and demonstrating one's own level of maturity has been suggested by as an indicator of emotional intelligence (refer Section 6.6.3). Mandy perceived that interactions and communication with peers was important to prepare oneself for the future and in forming meaningful relationships and this potentially contributed to her low role stress score of 8, and score of '1= feeling happy' with peers in the quantitative survey. This finding is in consistent with previous findings. For instance, Kiesner et al.'s (2003) quantitative study explored the relationship between peer relationship and adolescents' behaviour among 215 adolescents aged with mean age 13.2 years in Italy. The results revealed that adolescents with quality peer relationships reported lesser depressive symptoms.

6.6.1.4 Schooling experiences

> *My school first of all it is quite multicultural school, sort of like here everyone is quite tolerant … it's been pretty good environment … It is just not all about academics, they quite focus on a lot of all other things whether it is being like in the debate team, sports you can achieve as much as you can … So, it is just not limited to your academic achievement. You can do good in sports if you are a good athlete … they will make sure that you are doing like the most that you can do to your potential.*

Mandy also reported 'feeling happy' with teachers and schooling experiences in quantitative survey. According to Mandy, her school experiences were very enjoyable in which she learnt a lot among a glut of opportunities. She said that it was a *pretty good environment* in her *multicultural school* where *everyone is quite tolerant*. She also became involved in a range of opportunities such as the debate team and various sports available in the school where one could explore their potential in areas other than their academic studies. When discussing the impact of school on her wellbeing, Mandy expressed that *it's not just like a place where I go to learn* [it is] *where I go to socialize*, that is, the microsystem of the school provided a protective influence of building positive relationships to buffer potential role stress. This finding supports Jose et al.'s (2012) quantitative study among 1,774 adolescents aged 10-15 years, whereby a sense of connectedness with school and teachers promotes greater sense of wellbeing in adolescents. She further added that [school] *makes you emotionally stronger and makes you really motivate*[ed]. When asked about how school has an impact on her emotions.

> *Fortunately, our teachers are pretty communicative, they are less like teacher type and more like friends. They give us* [a] *hand whenever we need, there is no sort of like a hierarchy between us. It is more like a friendship at this age … We are not like sort of scared of them or anything that is pretty open with our teachers*

When asked about her relationship with her teachers and the impact of these relationships on her emotions, she was quick to respond that her teachers were *pretty communicative and more like friends*. She explained that the teachers knew your strengths and weaknesses, so they were a vital guiding force in one's career choice and in providing the best academic advice. Mandy acknowledged the experience of teachers expressing that *teachers obviously been teaching you for a while, so they know what your strengths and weaknesses are … They are able to advise you better on things like that*. This shows her *trust* in her teachers, thereby this teacher-student relationship is a significant factor in recuing any potential role stress. Uslu and Gizir (2017) in their quantitative study exploring the teacher-student relationship and sense of school belonging among 815 adolescents aged 11-16 years, reported how the positive teacher-student relationship was a significant predictor of adolescents' sense of school belonging.

6.6.1.5 Community participation

> *I am involved in our cultural community, where we do like, we do things together as such as like on clean up on Australian day, we all get together and we do like a certain area that's assigned to us, just helping people out in our community as well … I would like to see myself involving in such activities* [sports] *… like helping especially immigrant having issues in speaking English … so you can volunteer to sort of help them [immigrant students] out with that*

In terms of her involvement in community work, Mandy *love*[d] *to volunteer* and was *involved in a cultural community*, and she provided the example of *Clean Up on Australia Day*. She further expressed strong prosocial behaviour and intentions to *help … especially immigrants having issues in speaking English*. However, Mandy was concerned about the time she devoted to social work and felt that she wished to be more involved, *as a community member, I feel like I could probably be a bit more involved in community activities. I suppose with school and all other extracurricular activities, I am not that involved in the community at the moment*. Her commitment towards her academic work and extracurricular activities were reasons provided as to why she was not very active in community work. However, Mandy's understanding of engagement in community activities and broader macrosystem activities had potentially contributed to her low role stress (Albanesi et al., 2007) and existential stress (Christens & Dolan, 2011), through having meaningful life goals. Albanesi et al. (2007) in their quantitative study among 566 adolescents aged 14-19 years identified adolescents with a sense of community were found to experience more positive social relationships. As identified by Christens and Dolan (2011) in their qualitative study, adolescents who actively participated in community activities have better understanding of their potential which hep them to have meaningful life goals.

6.6.1.6 Summary of Mandy's experiences related to role stress

Following the previous stories about John, Jess, and Sam, family support continues to be an important aspect of adolescents' lives which helps them to understand their life roles and ultimately positively navigate potential role stress factors. As Mandy expressed, *I am pretty close to all of them* [family] *… she* [sister] *is pretty much like having a third parent as she is very protective of me*. She also mentioned her mental and physical development through her family's unwavering support. Her relationships with her peers were similar, *A relationship with peers … helps you learn if you are like in an environment where kind of everyone strive for something … it sort of drives you that everyone is wanting to do the best and you want to be up there.* Whilst a slightly competitive notion may be initially evident, working collectively as a team provided a source of motivation and positive environment which encouraged her to succeed alongside others. She also related her peer relationships to her maturity level which would prepare her for future challenges explaining, *in most occupations* [it] *is not going to be like an individual service … We should be mature enough to be working in a team*. Similar perceptions of peer relationships and the school environment have been identified in other adolescents with low levels of stress such John, Jess, Lisa, and Daryl, particularly in relation to their low role stress. Mandy also had friendly relationships with her teachers: *they are less like teacher type and more like friends … It is more like a friendship at this age*. She also trusted her teachers who had *been teaching you for a while, so they know what your strengths and weaknesses*

are. This point is an important catalyst in adolescent's understanding of roles in different relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

6.6.2 Experiences related to existential stress

In the quantitative study, adolescents from year level 12 (M = 8.76) reported a lower level of existential stress as compared to adolescents from year level 9 (M = 10.03), 10 (M = 9.78), and 11 (M = 9.21) and reported higher level of existential stress as compared to year level 8 adolescents (M = 8.41) (refer Chapter 4, Table, 4.18). Similar to role stress, Mandy, Helen (refer Section 6.7.2 for Helen's experiences of existential stress), and Sam (refer Section 6.8.2 for Sam's experiences of existential stress) reported low scores on the existential stress variable in quantitative survey (refer Table 3.9). Mandy's experiences of existential stress are discussed in subsequent sections.

6.6.2.1 Life goals

> *I am pretty much goal oriented ... I wish to complete my degree in medical and then find the job in the same field I am interested in ... The sort of encouragement for me is like, how badly I want to reach my goal … So, I am like by this time I want to have achieved this much … I do not feel any challenge about achieving my* [life] *goals*

Mandy identified herself as a fairly *goal-oriented person* who had a clear life goal to pursue medicine. Mandy had great clarity about her life goals, which perhaps resulted in her low/no existential stress; in quantitative survey she 'strongly agreed' that 'In life I have clear goals and aims'. Reaching her goal was also a *sort of encouragement* for her, and her understanding of the consequences of failure was quite apparent, *if* [I] *do not get into my preferred university, I could probably get* [to] *take a year off or probably go through another different institute*, reflecting her lower score of '1= strongly agree' with 'My personal experience is meaningful'. Mandy was clearly aware and ready to put a strategy in place in case of failure and did not *find any challenge* in achieving her life goals, reflecting her maturity at the age of 19. This also reflected her score of '1= strongly agree' with 'In achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfillment'. Like John, Jess, Lisa, and Daryl, Mandy also considered herself as *goal oriented,* an important protective element against stress and problem behaviours. This finding is consistent with Zheng et al.'s (2019) quantitative study among 217 adults aged 18-56 years in China. They examined the relationship between future orientation and depression and stress and revealed that future orientation helped individuals to cope with stress and acted as a protective factor in the stress-depression relationship.

6.6.2.2 Summary of Mandy's experiences related to existential stress

Mandy's low existential stress, positive perceptions of life, and positive self-image were primarily in relation to life goals, seeking changes in life, and experiences related to school and other relationships. Mandy's life goals showed little confusion, and she had a positive attitude towards life and appeared very happy with her current situation, *I am enjoying my life … very happy with existing life*, which reflected low existential stress (Schulenberg et al., 2011). This was similar to her school experiences; *Everyone is quite tolerant … it's been pretty good environment …* This reflected Mandy's awareness of the many opportunities to learn and achieve, *whether it is being like in the debate team,* [and] *sports you can achieve as much as you can*. Mandy's positive sense of belonging with the school environment was also quite apparent, *they are doing really good and important, keeping you healthy they provide us support … makes us emotionally stronger and makes really motivating*. Similar to Jess and John, positive sense of belonging was an important protective factor for those participants with low perceived role stress and existential stress.

6.6.3 Emotional intelligence

Mandy was also well aware and informed about her own emotions (Davies et al., 2010), astutely identifying her emotional status and reacting accordingly, *I suppose if you let the stress get to you, like if something is not working out, and just like the stress get to me, it's always going to affect your wellbeing, But if you just accept it as a part of life and you try to move on, I suppose you can avoid that happening*. This emotional intelligence and honest capacity to acknowledge the complexities that an adolescent may face was also reflected in her high scores of 9 and 10 on the dimensions 'appraisal of own emotions' and regulation of own emotions' respectively. Mandy's control over her emotions was described as: *I control my emotions … I manage my emotions really well and stay active all the time or keep myself occupied in activities I enjoy*, describing how she regulated her emotions by engaging in activities that she enjoyed, and which helped her to stay *active* [and] *pretty happy*. This could potentially be another sign of her low role and existential stress scores, as depicted in Table 6.5. The findings provide support for previous studies including Lopez-Zafra et al.'s (2019) quantitative study with 1,227 adolescents with mean age 16.5 years in Morocco that highlighted a significant positive association between social support and emotional intelligence in adolescents. Furqani (2020), in a literature review on emotional intelligence in adolescents, highlighted the relationship with adolescents having positive perception of relationships and life. This was further reflected in Mandy's comment, *I just try like clear my mind as much as I can, help out around the house, and just try and get busy and be active*. Such problem-solving skills, coping strategies, and an attitude of seeking out activities to stay stress-free, reflects Mandy's high level of emotional

intelligence. This was consistent with Mandy's score of 45 on the 'Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale' (Davies et al., 2010), which was well above the mean score of 38.55 for all adolescents, 38.43 for females, and 37.58 for year 12 adolescents.

6.6.4. Wellbeing

In terms of wellbeing, Mandy described being *pretty healthy and easy going*. *I manage my emotions really well … my interests involved a lot of outdoor activities like hikes, rock climbing*, which was consistent with her scores of 22 and 24 on the emotional wellbeing and physical wellbeing scales respectively. Mandy also received substantial social support from her family and schooling microsystem and mesosystem relational experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), stating that *I know they [my family] are always there to help me* and *They [teachers] give us hand whenever we need*. Such comments reflected her social wellbeing – a dimension she scored 24 which was above the mean score of 21.61 in the quantitative survey. Mandy's goal-oriented behaviour was also revealed in comments such as *I am pretty much goal oriented* and *have always like set objectives in life … sort of encouragement for me is how badly I want to reach my goal … So, I am like by this time I want to have achieved this much*. This is consistent with the previous study of Brassai et al. (2011) with 2,152 adolescents aged 15-19 years in Romania. The results of the study revealed that attitude of having clear purpose in life and being goal oriented among adolescents is positively associated with their psychological wellbeing. This was similar for Mandy and reflective of her high score of 28 for psychological wellbeing in the quantitative survey. Like John, Jess, and Daryl, Mandy appeared to be very satisfied and *pretty happy with achievement so far*, reflecting her high spiritual wellbeing score of 27 in quantitative survey. A similar pattern emerged in Mandy's overall quantitative survey results from Chapter Four, scoring 163 on The Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997), which was well above the mean score of 124.35 for all adolescents, the mean score of 127 for females, and the mean score of 125.29 for Year 12 adolescents.

6.6.5 Summary

Mandy's close attachment to her mother, sister, and friends and reliance on them for making decisions due to her trusting relationship were significant protective role stress and existential stress buffers. She also sought out bonding opportunities and close proximity in her relationships and she described her strong relationship with her sister who was like a *third parent* for her, with her friends who were like her siblings, and with her teachers who were like friends to her. Therefore, Mandy's perception of her own level of maturity, her healthy relationships in her social environment, and with her sister

and friends in particular, appeared as strong factors that influenced her low scores of role stress in the quantitative survey. This was also highlighted in her emotional maturity, particularly in relation to the importance of her peer interactions for her life in the future. Her awareness of her ability to control her emotions helped her enormously as she worked hard not to allow stress to affect her. Helping her parents with house chores and engagement in outdoor activities to stay happy were other indicators of Mandy's wellbeing. In terms of having meaning in her life, Mandy's sense of belonging was evident from her responses in which she described her school environment as motivating and supportive. She also expressed an interest in community work, participating and helping her community in a range of ways. Mandy's goal orientation, which was a source of encouragement for her, was another factor in Mandy's emotional intelligence and wellbeing, and in her low levels of role and existential stress in the quantitative survey.

6.7 Helen's Story

Helen is a 19-year-old Year 12 student who is studying in a metropolitan school in South Australia. Helen has an elder brother, a younger sister, parents, and grandparents in her family. She had a good relationship with her family, her siblings, and her mother. Helen scored 8 on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004), placing her well below the overall mean of 12.01, the female mean score of 10.86, and the Year 12 mean score of 11.36. Her score of 4 on the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) was below the overall mean of 8.16, the female mean score of 8.16, and the Year 12 mean score of 8.76. Helen's scores comparison is given below:

Table 6. 6 Helen's scores on role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing

Variables	*Overall mean scores*	*Helen's scores*	*Year 12 mean scores*	*Female mean scores*
Role stress	12.01	8	11.36	10.86
Existential stress	8.16	4	8.76	8.16
Emotional intelligence	38.55	50	37.58	38.43
Wellbeing	124.35	143	125.29	127

The analysis of Helen's results across these two scales suggested that she had neither role nor existential stress. Even though Helen experienced challenges in her relationships with her family and

in her school environment, she appeared to have handled these situations well. In addition to family encouragement and helpful peer relationships, Helen emphasised the importance of healthy communication within her social environment that helped her to develop her confidence in achieving her goal of becoming a teacher. She described herself as quite happy and a physically healthy person who saw no need to make changes in her life.

> *Sometimes there is some issue with my mom, sometimes I have issues with my dad … but I handle those situations well … my dad always encourages me … luckily, my peers are very helpful if I need any help in my work in the class … in school, if we all are good with each other this communication will help me in future life … teachers already helping too many [students], then I am like double-minded … I need help as well, so yeah it's sad and then stressful at the same time … Helping community makes me more confident and bit more communicative and develops self-confidence*

6.7.1 Experiences of role stress

As depicted in Table 6.6, Helen scored low on role stress variable in his quantitative online survey. The semi-structured interview helped further to explore her experiences of role stress as presented in the sections below:

6.7.1.1 Family relationships

> *They* [family] *help me to prepare for the exams or if there is I face any problem,* [my] *dad always encourages me, they* [family] *let me sit aside in the room and just let me focus on my studies … Sometimes there is some issue with my mom, sometimes I have issues with my dad … had few dads and daughters type of issues … but I understand that it will help me in future, so I do what they say, they are my well-wishers and experienced too … I help around the house; mom actually need help with everything*

Helen described how her family played an important role in her academic learning, in which encouragement from her family, and her father in particular, helped her to *focus on my studies*. Although she reported some issues in her family relationships, particularly her occasional arguments with her mother and the father-daughter type of issues, her father's active participation in her life and her close relationship with her mother, sister, and brother who she reported *are very supportive* seemingly neutralised such challenges. This could also have been due to Helen's self-awareness *I understand that it will help me in future* and trust in her parents reflected in her statements where she called her parents *experienced* and her *well-wishers*. Such self-awareness and trust could arguably be the ingredients that allowed her to handle these situations well. Helen reported herself as a responsible daughter who *helps around the house* and understands her role in her family relations. Helen's responses reflected her low score of '1= feeling happy' with her relationship with family on Role

Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) in quantitative survey (refer Chapter 3, Table, 3.9). This finding is in consistent with previous studies. For instance, McGraw et al. (2008) conducted quantitative study to examine the role of social connectedness in depression, anxiety and stress among 204 adolescents aged between 16-19 years in Australia. The results highlighted that adolescents with higher family connectedness reported lower negative affect such as depression, anxiety, and stress.

6.7.1.2 Interaction with friends

> *I doesn't have too many friends, I got few close friends, one is pretty close to me like she is like sister to me, yeah, it's just that she's been with me for quite a while, yeah, so if there is anything that I need help with, she's always there to help me and same I am always there to help her … when she is sad, that really makes me sad*

Unlike other adolescents who had many friends across the different class levels and who reported low role and existential stress scores in the quantitative survey, Helen said that she did not have many friends. She had a few close friends, and one who was close to her who was very helpful. She also said that meeting new people was a little challenging for her. This was perhaps a way of justifying her friendship with only a few people. Thus, supports the argument of Falci and McNeely (2009) in their quantitative study among 9,097 adolescents from junior and high school in US, that quality of friendship is more important than quantity. After this comment, she changed her facial expression and started smiling and further added that *as a friend I'm good, friends need help and I am always there to help*, expressing her positive sense of self. Her empathetic and two-way relationship with her close friend apparently leads to her positive sense of self, which further resulted in happy relationships with her friends, supporting her quantitative score of '1= feeling happy' in her relations with friends.

6.7.1.3 Interaction with peers

> *luckily my peers are very helpful if I need any help in my work in the class, I am very comfortable to ask anyone in my class ... I understand that it will be happy and nice environment in school if we all are good with each other, this communication will help in future life*

In quantitative survey Helen reported '1= feeling happy' in her relations with peers, which was also evident in her description of her relationship with peer group *luckily my peers are very helpful*. Like her relationship with friends, Helen expressed her relationship with peers is *good as well*. She was asked to explore more about her peers and how her relationship with them is *good*. In response, she said that her peers were very helpful and emphasised the importance of healthy communication in the school environment for a better future life. This is in line with previous work by Uslu and Gizir (2017) who identified significant association between peer connectedness and positive sense of school belonging among 815 adolescents aged 11-16 years in Turkey. Interestingly, despite having only a limited number of close friendships, Helen had a good understanding of the importance of healthy relationships in peer groups; *this communication will help in future life*. This finding provide support for Falci and McNeely's (2009) quantitative study among 9097 adolescents from 132 junior and high school students in US. The findings highlighted the importance of quality of relationship with friends than quantity. They further suggested that adolescents with positive perception of social relationships reported lower depressive symptoms. A similar level of maturity was also apparent in Mandy and Sam's responses, who were Year 12 adolescents like Helen. She finds it challenging in *dealing* [with] *people with different backgrounds*, however, seemingly due to helpful and healthy peer relations she feels very comfortable in approaching others in her peer group when required, suggesting that Helen's school experiences were positive.

6.7.1.4 Schooling experiences

> *I feel very comfortable in school … so much support and freedom make happy environment in school, so many activities we do together ... Relationship between teachers and myself is pretty much good … they* [teachers] *always expect good from me and behave very nicely with me … I learn a lot from them* [my teachers]

Helen felt comfortable in the school environment, getting support and the freedom to explore so many possible activities. She pointed out that she learnt a lot from her teachers and expressed her trust in them in terms of her life goals, *they are more experienced and have more knowledge, they can help us to achieve goals*, apparently suggesting her sense of belonging within the school environment. The findings are in line with Ibrahim and Zaatari's (2020) results of positive association between supportive and positive teacher-student relationship promotes sense of school belonging among

adolescents. However, she explained that she sometimes felt sad and stressed when dealing with her teachers. In relation to this issue, Helen shared an example which happened at times,

> *when it comes to complete an assignment, and teachers already helping too many* [students], *then I am like double-minded … I am like double minded I think I should talk to the teacher,* [but then I think] *no she is helping* [another] *student … sometimes I like say 'no teacher, I need help, they have already done their assignment' … it's sad and stressful at the same time*

Despite such challenges, Helen said that her relationships with her teachers was quite good, as they had no complaints about me and were very supportive. Such positive micro-system experiences, including family support and a close relationship with one of her friends, provided her with a *cushion* to deal with stressful situations. Helen's positive perception of her teacher and school also reflected in her quantitative score of 1= feeling happy' with her relationship with teacher and experiences at school on Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) (refer Chapter 3, Table 3.9).

6.7.1.5 Community participation

> *The community that I am involved in is just some time at the church, it helps me* [in] *my spiritual development … it's pretty much getting to know more about culture while getting involved in the community work*

Helen expressed her interest in learning more about the social world through her involvement in community work. She said that it was helpful for her spiritual development, and her personality, particularly in being more communicative and confident through improving her interpersonal skills, *helping community makes me more confident and bit more communicative and develops self-confidence*. This finding supports previous qualitative research by Christens and Dolan (2011) indicating that awareness and evaluation of own potential and capabilities are the key benefits identified in adolescents who are more active in community works. Her ideas about an individual's social responsibility also appeared to be very clear in the following quote, *I believe this [involving in community activities] is also one of our duty*, which reflected a positive interaction with Helen's exo-system. Like other adolescents with low role stress and existential stress, Helen sees an opportunity to gain more knowledge by *getting involved in the community work.*

6.7.1.6 Summary of Helen's experiences of role stress

As described by other adolescents with low levels of role stress, Helen's supportive family environment facilitated these low levels, *I am really close to my mum, my sister, and my brother as well, they are very supportive ... They* [family] *help me to prepare for the exams or if there is I face*

any problem … I am thankful and very close to the family. Fenzel (1989) described the importance of support and encouragement from parents for an adolescent's low levels of role stress. Helen's experience was similar in this regard, *they* [family] *help me to prepare for the exams or if there is I face any problem,* [my] *dad always encourages me, they [family] let me sit aside in the room and just let me focus on my studies*. The importance of quality friendship was also significant for Helen, *I doesn't have too many friends, I got few close friends, one is pretty close to me like she is like sister to me*. This was unlike the other participants with low role stress where being extrovert and having many friends appeared to be an important characteristic of their understanding of their role (Allen et al., 2003), as reiterated by Helen in relation to the qualities of her close friend, *if there is anything that I need help with, she's always there to help me and same I am always there to help her … when she is sad, that really makes me sad*, which also reflected her low role stress.

Helen also had similar levels of support and helpful relationships with her peers and teachers, *luckily my peers are very helpful … Relationship between teachers and myself is pretty much good*. She also understood the importance of peer relationships; *this communication will help in future life* and *to achieve goals* for her future. A similar understanding of the value of trustworthy relationships with her teachers was pointed out by Helen, *I learn a lot from them* [my teachers] *… they are more experienced and have more knowledge, they can help us to achieve goals*. This behaviour of relating positive relationships with life goals was partly responsible for Helen's low levels of role stress. Helen expressed her interest in learning more about the social world through her involvement in community work *I believe this [involving in community activities] is also one of our duty*.

6.7.2 Experiences of existential stress

Like on role stress variable, Helen also scores low on the existential stress variable in the quantitative online survey. Semi-structured interview provides further detail of Helen's experiences of existential stress, which are discussed in the following section.

6.7.2.1 Life goals

> *I think talking with teachers just to get experience of becoming a teacher and getting to know a bit more information will help me a lot … I am good with kids to achieve the goal of teaching. I want to get into, so pretty much confident with myself and then communicate well with others*

Helen expressed a sense of clarity about her future life goal to become a teacher after Year 12, and so was focusing on SACE (South Australian Certificate of Education) points to get into teaching. Helen's positive perception of her ability to achieve her goals was evident from her responses, where

she again stressed the importance of communication skills. She also showed no sign of fear or lack of direction and appeared to be focused on her strategies to help her to become more confident and to enhance her abilities to become a teacher. Helen did not experience any parental expectations about her career options; instead, she enjoyed her family's encouragement and support, *they* [family] *know when is the right time for me to study and just make me separate from everyone … They* [family] *help me to prepare for the exams … they* [family] *let me sit aside in the room and just let me focus on my studies*. Apart from her family support, freedom in her school environment and the support of the school community seemingly played an important role in her positive micro-system experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which might well have been the driving factor behind her clear life goals.

6.7.2.2 Summary of Helen's experiences of existential stress

Helen had clear life goals and active strategies to achieve them. She was particularly focused on her goal to *become a teacher*, and was able to outline the strategies she would use to be better able to achieve her goal, *I am good with kids to achieve the goal of teaching … I want to get into so pretty much confident with myself and then communicate well with others*. Ho et al. (2010) conducted a quantitative study to examine the relationship between meaning in life and psychological wellbeing among 1,807 adolescents aged 12-18 years in Hong Kong and found a link between adolescents' clarity of life goals and a sense of purpose or meaning in life, which in turn also help them to promote healthy social relationships. Helen's low levels of existential stress and her understanding of her purpose in life can be attributed to her positive family environment, as also noted in other adolescents with low existential stress. Regarding her schooling experiences, Helen said, *I feel very comfortable in school … so much support and freedom make happy environment in school, so many activities we do together*. Here, she described her positive sense of belonging and her positive perception of her school, and attributed this to the support, freedom, and activities she enjoyed with her peer group, a view supported by Drolet and Arcand (2013). This was similar to Helen's supportive and helpful relationships with her peers and teachers which played an important role in her deep sense of belonging in her relationships.

6.7.3 Emotional intelligence

When asked about her emotional disposition, Helen highlighted her emotional intelligence, *I'm pretty much happier person as you can see, yeah, I engage myself in activities that I enjoy*. Her positive emotions were also associated with her family, with the environment in the family making her happy, *it's like everyone else's enjoying in the house, that's the time when I just enjoy with my family at the*

same time. Helen scored 50 on The Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010), which was above the mean score of 38.55 for all adolescents, 38.43 for females, and 37.58 for year 12 adolescents. Her interview responses are much in tandem with her quantitative scores, especially her reports that she is *quite happy* with her life. Helen also talked about the situations when she feels emotionally unstable and challenged at the same time. For instance, she reported difficulty in managing her emotions at the time of exams and in relation to arguments with the mother. However, confirming the findings suggested by Parker et al. (2004), who established a negative association between appraisal of own emotions and stress levels among 667 adolescents aged 14-18 years, Helen reported self-awareness of her emotional abilities and the strategies she uses in order to overcome the challenges she faces in regulating her emotions: *I just tend to stay in a separate to stay alone for a while just to get that sort of calm down … mostly I just selecting stays on the side … I just go outside into the garden to just calm myself and come back to talk to mum again and say sorry*. Such behaviour is indicative of the low role stress levels reported by Helen in her quantitative survey.

6.7.4 Wellbeing

Helen related her wellbeing to her emotions, her physical fitness, and her academic studies: *there is no stress, I am physically healthy, doing good in studies, I am quite happy*. She also felt grateful for the trust in her close friend who was always there to help. Further adding to her social wellbeing, Helen's peers and teachers were always ready to help her, representing further encouragement and support in her micro-system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These helpful and supportive relationships in her social environment seemingly neutralised the negative effects of the challenges she faced in relation to issues with her mother, father, and her teachers; arguably resulting in a high score of 24 on the social wellbeing aspect of the quantitative survey in Chapter Four. Despite her challenges in dealing with her teachers *when it comes to complete an assignment, and teachers already helping too many [students], then I am like double-minded … it's sad, and then stressful at the same time*, Helen perceived them to be very supportive and considered their experience and knowledge to be a model for achieving her goal to become a teacher, which could also have helped her to stay focused: *they are more experienced and have more knowledge, they can help us to achieve goals*. This was consistent with her high psychological wellbeing scores of 21 in the quantitative survey, with Helen's spiritual wellbeing score of 21, which was higher than the mean of 10.17. This was also highlighted in her responses when she spoke about her involvement at her church which helped with her spiritual development: *The community that I am involved in is just some time at the church, it helps me* [in] *my spiritual development*. Adding to this, Helen was reportedly seeking *no changes that I want to make in my life* as she was quite happy as she was, highlighting her positive feelings about herself,

seemingly attributed to supportive relationships with parents and teachers (Cotterell, 1992), which was also evidenced in her quantitative survey where she scored 143 on the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997) which was well above the mean score of 124.35 for all adolescents, 127 for females, and 125.29 for year 12 adolescents. Cotterell (1992) investigated a sample of 57 adolescents in Australia aged from 14 years 10 months to 17 years 5 months to examine the adolescents' adjustments and supportive relations. Findings suggested a strong association between adolescents' attachment to their parents, teachers and friends, and the adolescents' positive feelings about themselves and level of wellbeing. Similar associations were quite evident in Helen's case.

6.7.5 Summary

Helen's low levels of role and existential stress were strongly influenced by the presence of a helpful and supportive micro-system in her life. Notably, Helen's awareness of her abilities to handle stressful situations in her relationships with her mother and father, and particularly her teachers, could be why she has successfully managed her roles in different aspects of her life. Consistent with this, she also mentioned how she always helped her peers as well as her participation in housework in the same way as John, another adolescent with low stress levels. Reflecting her overall wellbeing in the context of her future orientation, Helen spoke about the benefits of her relationships with her teachers and peers, and the importance of her participation in community work in terms of acquiring skills which might help her to achieve her future goals. Such an approach together with her positive micro-system experiences, may have had a strong impact on the clarity of her life goals and her perceptions about her existence. Perhaps because of this purposeful life, Helen stated that she did not want any change in her life, which resulted in her low existential stress scores in her quantitative survey.

6.8 Sam's Story

> *I am very lucky to have such a family ... The time we spend together is the best time, and yeah, we laugh a lot, we like make fun of each other ... I like [my] school ... I like to spend time with my peer classmates, my friends, and my teachers ... The biggest strategy which I believe [would] help to achieve [life goals] is that I want to maintain healthy relation[ships] ... also I feel that you should be patient enough to listen to everyone, but eventually you should be strong enough to do what you want to do*

Sam is a 19-year-old male in year 12 at a South Australian school, who appears to be an extroverted, outgoing student who aspires to work with computers in the future. He loves to pass his free time by playing computer games or watching cricket or football. He reported low levels of role and existential stress in the quantitative survey. Sam scored 8 on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004), placing

him below the overall mean score of 12.01. This was also below the male mean score of 13.47 and the year 12 mean score of 11.36. His score of 4 on the Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011) was below the overall mean of 9.04, the male mean score of 10.17, and the year 12 mean score of 8.76. Sam's scores comparison is provided in Table 6.7.

Table 6. 7 Sam's scores on role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing

Variables	*Overall mean scores*	*Sam's scores*	*Year 12 mean scores*	*Male mean scores*
Role stress	12.01	8	11.36	13.47
Existential stress	8.16	4	8.76	10.17
Emotional intelligence	38.55	45	37.58	35.51
Wellbeing	124.35	153	125.29	120.35

6.8.1 Experiences of role stress

As depicted in Table 6.7, Sam scored low on the role stress variable in his quantitative online survey. Sam's experiences with his family, peers, friends, school, teacher and wider community are presented in subsequent sections.

6.8.1.1 Family relationship

> *I am very lucky to have such a family. The time we spend together is the best time and yeah, we laugh a lot, we like make fun of each other … My dad always gives me a push. My dad has been the great motivator in my life. He is the one who sets high goals in my life … he just made me that you are capable and that's how I got the confidence … I feel responsible whenever any task assigned to me … and also, I am very caring when it comes to family*

Sam had a close relationship with his family consisting of parents, grandparents, and an older sister. His family played a very important role in his personal life, as well as in his emotions, his education, and his aspirations. He described his father's participation in his life by taking an interest in his studies, which helped him to be clear and focused on his life goals, a phenomenon also seen in the cases of John and Jess. Sam had a deep sense of responsibility towards his family and any family

problems that arose, *I care a lot what their problems are, their health and everything … I understand my responsibilities*.

> *Sometimes my dad is overprotective, so he does not let me do a lot of things. He does not let me experiment which I want to … Like lot of my friends just do it by themselves which I can't do because I have never done that, [But] I can understand he wants to ensure that whatever the things are should be in the right way … he wants to make sure everything is right, and I am not taking the wrong step. So [that's] pretty common*

As in the case of Jess, Sam's father was sometimes overprotective, and this frustrated him. He also pointed out that he sometimes felt that he could not explore things because he was not allowed to do things by himself like his friends could do. However, Sam trusted his father, understood the situation, and was empathetic towards his father, behaviours identified by Davies et al. (2010) in emotionally intelligent adolescents. Sam, like Jess, highlighted the positive perception of his parents' behaviour which, on the one hand makes him frustrated, but on the other hand he understands his parents' viewpoint, which seemingly contributes to his low score of '1= feeling happy' with relationship with his parents on the Role Stress Scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004) in the quantitative survey. This highlights the importance of adolescents' perception of social relationship in developing a sense of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Falci & McNeely, 2009).

6.8.1.2 Interaction with friends

Sam reported that he feels happy with his friends, and he also considers himself to be a good friend. Even though Sam has a *limited number of close friends,* as he is *very choosy when it comes to selecting friends,* he said he is very outgoing as he *knows a lot of people*. When he was further probed regarding his limited friendship circle, lack of understanding from his friends emerged in his comments, *I feel not everyone understands me well, a lot of people misinterpret me that I've got a lot of attitude, all my close friends know that I am totally a shy person and all of that*. This is a challenge Sam faces sometimes. Though he also stressed healthy communication which helps in his friendships to *clear* [away] the misinterpretations *once they start talking to me and they realised* [that] *I am not the way they thought*. Sam shared an example when *a very close friend of mine right now he, the first time we met, he never wanted to talk to me but now he can't live without me,* which highlights his position in his friendship circle. Sam reported that his social environment included friends who helped him to *feel stress away*, as the time he spent with his friends was fun time, *they make you happy and you have fun time with them, feel stress away*. Sam further added *their* [friends'] *problem is my problem,* explaining he is very good friends with others if *someone is close to me.* However, he enjoys more *spending time with my family over spending time with my friends*, suggesting his close bonding in family relationships. This finding is in contrast with previous other studies. For instance, Mounts and

Steinberg (1995), adopting Bronfenbrenner (1979) Ecological Systems Theory as a framework, identified the quantitative association between peers' and friends' behaviour and perception of parenting, and suggested that, during adolescence, with an increase in level of interaction with friends and peers there is decrease in adolescents' perception of the importance of their relationship with parents.

6.8.1.3 Interaction with peers

> *My classmates are alright … I like to spend time with my peer classmates, my friends, and my teachers … They* [my peers] *are very helpful, when deadlines are near (laugh) and I am helpful to them as well … I have* [friends] *all mixed here from all classes*

Like John and Jess, Sam also had friends across the year levels at his school as he was quite socially active. Sam had built up a good rapport in the school environment, with his peers being very helpful with him. Even though Sam reported challenges when *some peers want to have fun all the time* but he did not get distracted and was able to successfully maintain his focus on his studies, *some peers want to have fun all the time, but I'm fine with that. I don't blame anyone, I get distracted with that, then I don't pay attention and don't let it affect my studies, I can handle it by myself*. This can be attributed to his high emotional intelligence (refer Section 6.8.3) The findings are consistent with Petrides et al.'s (2006) quantitative study in which they examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and peer relationships among 106 adolescents with a mean age 10.8 in UK. The findings of the study highlighted the important role of emotional intelligence in positive peer relationships. Employment of strategies to overcome the challenges probably contributed to Sam's low role stress scores. Furthermore, his comments *my peers are very helpful* is also reflected in his quantitative survey where he reported '1= feeling happy' in his relations with peers. Sam also reported that he feels happy *when needed to help them* [peers]. Helpful peer relations possibly contribute to his positive school experiences.

6.8.1.4 Schooling experiences

> *I like to go to school … I like to learn new stuff and everything so that helps me, the study environment motivates, talking to people at the whole structure* [school] *… Teachers are very cooperating and some of the teachers give extra help … I like to spend time with teachers who know a lot about what they are teaching and who actually shared their life examples as well … I know having good relationships with teachers like that impact on your learning … I make sure that whatever is being taught, I listen to the lectures carefully*

Sam enjoyed his school environment where he had the opportunity to learn and explore new things by talking to new people, and he felt motivated at school and was encouraged to learn, as *it* [school] *makes you realise you have to do something.* He *like*[s] *to go to school* and *feel*[s] *good at school*, where his teachers were also very helpful. Sam emphasised the importance of having healthy relationships with his teachers as this helped him to achieve good grades. He trusted his teachers and spent time with them because he understood that he would learn from their experiences, a behaviour considered important for adolescents' sense of school belonging. Ibrahim and Zaatari (2020) identified a qualitative relationship between teachers' support and adolescents' sense of school belonging among six adolescents from year level 11 in the UAE. The findings of their study highlighted that positive teacher-student relationships promote adolescents' sense of school belonging. Though Sam reported there are *some tutors* [teachers] *who just do their job of teaching,* he liked to *spend time with teachers who know a lot about what they are teaching and who actually shared their life examples as well.* Sam further reported that his *teachers are very cooperating and some of the teachers give extra help* and *being a very good student,* Sam listens to his teachers.

6.8.1.5 Community participation

Sam showed significant interest in extracurricular activities, *doing well in sports, I'm a dancer, so I think all* [inaudible] *have been covered I actively take part in co-curricular activities as well.* Sam's active community participation seemingly contributed to his low existential stress scores. Christens and Dolan (2011), in their qualitative study, highlighted that community participation helps adolescents to understand their potential and form their life goals. Sam also understood the importance of participation in community activities, *I mean I volunteered a couple of times but not much, I just do a bit by bit trying to increase when I get time.* Sam said *being part of society we have a duty to contribute … I would love to spend more time to carry on my community works,* expressing his understanding of importance of community participation and his intentions to take part whenever he gets time as he is usually *busy with studies.* Sam's intentions and interests in community participation reflected in his low role stress scores. This view was identified by Albanesi et al. (2007), who investigated 566 high school adolescents in Italy aged 14-19 years and highlighted that sense of community promotes healthy social relationships among adolescents.

6.8.1.6 Summary of Sam's experiences of role stress

Sam had a strong relationship with his family. He reported his family relationships as being positive and happy, and described his father's huge role in his life, *I am lucky to have such family. The time we spend together is the best time … He has been the great motivator in my life. He is the one who*

sets high goals in my life … that's how I got the confidence. This excerpt shows how Sam felt confident because of his father's motivation and active interest in his life. Notably, Sam also displayed a great sense of responsibility within himself, which may be attributed to his relationship with his family, particularly his father: *I feel responsible whenever any task assigned to me and also, I am very caring when it comes to family, I care a lot what their problems are, their health and everything*. Carlson (2006) reported that where adolescents showed a sound understanding of their roles, this was due to their family and their father's support and participation in their lives. Sam was also actively involved in activities such as dance and sports, *I'm a dancer, doing well in sports, I actively take part in co-curricular activities*. He also volunteered for other community activities. Involvement in community work has been found to be an important indicator of adolescents' understandings of social relationships. Albanesi et al. (2007) identified the relationship between sense of community in adolescence and social wellbeing among 566 adolescents aged 14-19 years in Italy. In their findings, they reported that involvement in community activities help adolescents to develop stronger relationships with peers, school, neighbourhood and significant adults in different settings. Similarly, in the following excerpt, *mean I volunteered a couple of times but not much, I just do a bit by bit trying to increase when I get time … being part of society we have a duty to contribute*, Sam reflected his low levels of role stress in his view that it was an individual's duty to contribute towards society and his subsequent active involvement as a volunteer.

6.8.2 Experiences of existential stress

As depicted in Table 6.7 Sam also scored low on the existential stress variable in the quantitative online survey. Semi-structured interview provides further detail of Sam's experiences of existential stress, which are discussed in the following section.

6.8.2.1 Life goals

> *I want to run my own business because I come from a business family. My dad is into finance, so looking at the way how he deals with* [the] *clients, he talks to [the] people and I learned a lot from him. So that my life goes around of being a business owner, entrepreneur … I aim to finish* [bachelor's degree]*in the next four or five years with good grades at Uni*[versity] *will help* [to achieve goals] *after the bachelors working in the industry, knowing people, knowing how things and system work will help a lot*

Sam was academically sound and had a clear picture of his future life goals, *doing really well in academics*. Describing his life goals Sam explained that *I am interested in the software field and become a software engineer … get to know about IT world and eventually I want to become an*

entrepreneur, which seemingly attributed his low score on existential stress and high scores on emotional intelligence (refer Section 6.8.3). De Lazzari (2000) examined the quantitative interrelationship between emotional intelligence, purpose in life among 155 adolescents from a Catholic high school in Canada, purpose in life is positively associated with purpose in life.

The experiences that Sam had working in the family business helped him to focus on his life goals. His family support played an important role in his understanding of the importance of planning and time management, which has been suggested by researchers as major attributes of high emotional intelligence (Davies et al., 2010) (refer Section 6.8.3) and high level of purpose in life (Schulenberg et al., 2011). This view was also evidenced in Sam's high score on item 'I am progressing towards life goals' on existential stress variable in quantitative survey.

His attribute of developing his own strategies to achieve his future goals was apparent in the following response, *the biggest strategy which I believe* [would] *help to achieve* [life goals] *is that I want to maintain healthy relation*[ships] *… also I feel that you should be patient enough to listen to everyone, but eventually you should be strong enough to do what you want to do*. This showed Sam's sense of belonging, level of self-confidence and determination. The findings are in line with previous study by Sulimani-Aidan et al. (2020) in their quantitative study among 213 adolescents aged 16-19 years in Israel, they reported that sense of belonging in among adolescents significantly contribute to their future expectations and enhance the positive future outlook in adolescents. Sam described himself as a good listener who had the ability to look at the positive side of things as a strategy to keep stress at arm's length. Sam's statement supports his response 'strongly agree' on item 'My personal existence is meaningful' on existential stress variable in quantitative survey.

6.8.2.2 Summary of Sam's experiences of existential stress

The research has revealed a strong correlation between an individual's sense of belonging to their social environment and purpose in life (Blau et al., 2019; Heng et al., 2020). From this, Sam's low levels of existential stress may be attributed to his experiences with his friends and peers and his school, where his peers and friends were very supportive and helpful, *I like to spend time with my peers and friends … My peers are very helpful when deadlines are near (laugh) and I am helpful to them as well … I have friends all mixed from all classes*. How an adolescent perceives their school environment, as supportive or discouraging, plays an important role in their sense of belonging, and eventually, their existential stress. Sam described his school experiences *I like to go to school. I like to learn new stuff and everything so that that helps me, the study environment motivates, talking to people at the school*. Sam's positive sense of belonging within his social environment seemingly extended to the clarity of his life goals. Sam spoke about his IT skills and wanting to become an

entrepreneur, *I am interested in software field and become a software engineer get to know about IT and, eventually, I want to become an entrepreneur*. Sam was clear about his life goals to start a business, and he attributed his business skills to his family, particularly his father, who inspired him to achieve his goals, *I want to run my own business because I come from business family. My father is into finance, so looking at the way how he deals with the clients, he talks to the people and I learned a lot from him*. A similar link between meaning in life and family environment has been found by Heng et al. (2020) in their quantitative study among 577 adolescents aged 15-16 years in Singapore and Israel.

6.8.3 Emotional intelligence

> *I have very mixed emotion ... as such sometimes at one point I might be happy, very happy about it, like next moment I'm sad … If I'm happy and I'm showing that, whereas if I'm sad, I don't want to share my problem*

Sam was also emotionally stable and related his control of his emotions to his level of maturity, *I mean, you're much more mature, I feel much more mature, when it comes to emotional stability*. This quote showed that Sam believed that he was mature enough to handle his emotions successfully. This also reflected his score of 8 which above the mean score of 7.49 on 'appraisal of own emotions' a dimension of Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010) (refer Chapter 3, Table 3.9). Sam demonstrated the characteristics identified by Davies et al. (2010) in an emotionally intelligent individual, that of intending to keep others happy, *I don't like my emotions out in front of anyone. Just let them out in front of myself … I don't want my family to know about my problems, I always try to show them that I'm happy*. His response seems to be in line with his high score of 8 above the mean score of 7.20 on dimension 'regulation of others' emotions' on Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010) (refer Chapter 3, Table 3.9). Like Jess, Sam also said that he sometimes overthought issues, *I just keep thinking about what mistakes are made, it makes me stressful*, but unlike Kelly, Sam recognised and controlled his emotions, using active strategies to deal with stress, *Sometimes being with my sister is the best moment. Yeah, I love spending time with her, I just need friends to talk to you and I will be fine*. Sam reflected his high score of 10, which was above the mean score of 7.20, on 'regulation of own emotions' dimension of Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010) (refer Chapter 3, Table 3.9). Sam scored 45 on the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (Davies et al., 2010), which was above the mean score of 38.55 for all adolescents, 35.51 for males, and 37.58 for year 12 adolescents. Sam's positive perception of his relationships seemingly attributed to high score on emotional intelligence, a view evidenced in previous studies. For instance, Lopez-Zafra et al. (2019) in their quantitative cross-sectional study examined the relationship

between social support from family, friends, and school and adolescents' emotional intelligence among 1,227 adolescents with mean age 16.5 years in Morocco. The findings of the study highlighted that, adolescents who perceive higher social support from their social relationships reported higher emotional intelligence.

6.8.4 Wellbeing

Like John, Sam also linked his wellbeing to his physical fitness, *I think I am physically fit, actually I play lot of sports. And I think I'd be joining gym as well, once I join Uni[versity]*. In the quantitative survey, like John, Sam also scored 153 on the Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997), which was above the mean score of 124.35 for all adolescents, 120.35 for males, and 125.29 for Year 12 adolescents. Sam is *doing really well in academics,* partly because *I don't really feel exam stress.* He was also involved in extra-curricular activities such as dance and sport and demonstrated positive relationship with family, peer, friends, school and teacher, which seemingly contributed to his low role stress score a high social wellbeing score of 23 which was above the mean score of 21.61 on Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams et al., 1997) (refer chapter 3, Table 3.9). This finding provides support for the previous results by Albanesi et al. (2007) in their quantitative study to examine the relationship between sense of community, civic engagement, and social wellbeing among 566 adolescents aged 214-19 years from Italy. Findings of their study highlighted the sense of community provide opportunities to adolescents to experience sense of belonging with peers and significant others in their social environment which in turn increase their social wellbeing.

6.8.5 Summary

The motivation that Sam obtained from his father and school environment appeared to be the main drivers of his low quantitative scores in relation to role and existential stress. Though Sam faces challenges in terms of overprotection from his father and distraction from his friends, his awareness of his maturity to handle his emotions could be the reason he is able to understand the situation and the way to deal with it. Sam described his healthy social environment where he enjoys supportive and helpful peer relationships. Sam highlighted his sense of belonging in his responses, describing his school environment as a learning opportunity and a source of encouragement. He also expressed his interest in participating in community activities, which he considers as his duty towards society. Sam emphasised the importance of relationships, other than planning, management, and determination, in achieving life goals. Consistent with this, he described how he is inspired by his father to become an entrepreneur in the future. Altogether, encouragement from the family, helpful peer relationships,

supportive teachers, and self-awareness of emotions could be playing important role in regulating his role and existential stress levels.

6.9 Conclusion

As mentioned previously, in the current study role stress refers to the feeling of dissatisfaction or being unhappy in relationships with family, friends, peers, school, and teachers, whereas existential stress refers to the stress that arises from dissatisfaction with life or from having a lack of purpose in life. Investigating adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress in their personal, interpersonal, and social interactions has helped to expand the knowledge about the relationship between role stress and existential stress in adolescents, and also the potential relationship of these stressors with adolescents' emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Adolescents were asked about their wellbeing, emotional disposition, life goals, perceptions of life, their experiences with their family, friends, peers, school, and teachers, and their community involvement. Such experiences highlighted a number of similarities as well as differences between adolescents with high and low/no role stress and existential stress.

Social relationships, which initially start in the family before broadening out to the community, were found to be the important driving factors that lead adolescents to low or high levels of role stress, and understanding and emotional support from these relationships helped them to successfully understand their roles in life. The importance of the role of the father of the adolescent came out as an important finding in the current study, where it was seen that adolescents with high levels of stress reported poor levels of interaction with their fathers, whereas others with low/no stress reported the active participation of their fathers in their daily lives. In addition, the current study also explored the direct and positive relationship between role stress and existential stress, where an adolescent facing poor relationships is also often found to have no meaning in life, fears about the future and no clarity in their life goals.

The adoption of coping strategies by adolescents in addition to their emotional skills also emerged as distinguishing factors between adolescents with high and low/no role and existential stress, where adolescents reporting low/no role and existential stress tried to solve their problems, whereas adolescents with high stress levels tried to avoid problems. Emotional skills such as empathy, understanding one's own and others' emotions, positive perceptions of social relationships, and a positive self-image, were the attributes mainly found in low/no role and existential stress adolescents. In the next chapter, a discussion of the issues around the primary research question will be presented through an integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings.

Chapter 7. Discussion and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Adolescent wellbeing is a global concern with an increasing number of young people aged 14-17 years reporting high or very high psychological stress (AIHW, 2016; ARACY, 2018; UNICEF, 2020; WHO, 2021). During adolescence, arguably a period of continuous physical and psychological transitions, adolescents witness significant changes in life, mainly when their close relationships shift from their family to their peers, teachers, friends and the wider community. Such changes in adolescents' life together with the experiences of their social interactions make them more vulnerable to role stress and existential stress. Therefore, it is important to empower adolescents with coping skills and emotional abilities to manage high levels of role stress and existential stress. The relationship between adolescent's role stress and existential stress with emotional intelligence and wellbeing has received little attention by researchers to date, highlighting a need to further understand this element of adolescence. Aside from support from positive relationships in their family, social connectedness is critical for adolescents to overcome challenges in their personal and social lives; something that is paramount for their psychological development and positive wellbeing. Education plays a central role in equipping adolescents with the skills to achieve both academic growth and active social participation. Therefore, it is important for educators, researchers and policy makers to address adolescents' wellbeing in terms of their emotional abilities and social interactions, highlighting the importance of the current research.

Employing an explanatory sequential mixed method design, this thesis explored role stress and existential stress in adolescents and the potential relationship these have with emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory (1968) and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory underpinned the methodological design of the project which led to the conceptualisation of the Adolescent Wellbeing Conceptual model (refer Chapter 2, Section 2.6.5). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory provided a platform to explore the relationship between role stress and existential stress, and emotional intelligence and wellbeing of adolescents, an area left unexplored in the previous studies.

Phase One, the quantitative phase of the current study (Chapter 4), provided the current self-reported levels of role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing of 375 adolescents aged 13-19 years from Years 8-12 in South Australia. Findings from this phase provided insights into the nature and strength of the relationship between these constructs while highlighting that a significant

number of adolescents who reported experiencing low role stress and existential stress and moderate to high emotional intelligence and wellbeing. In contrast, there were some participants who self-reported moderate to high role stress and existential stress and lower emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Participants who self-reported experiencing either high or low role stress and existential stress were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews to support or challenge adolescents' initial self-reported responses and for deeper understanding of their lived experiences in relation to role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing to be gleaned.

Phase 2 involved multiple, instrumental case studies with nine participants aged 13-19 years in Years 8-12 (Chapters 5 & 6). The importance of capturing their voices regarding their lived experiences, provided rich examples and explanations of the nuances behind the statistics thus affording an in-depth understanding of role stress and existential stress for participants who reported at each end of the continuum; that is, high or low. As such, potential elements that were seemingly increasing role stress and existential stress or protecting an individual from these stressors were revealed, thus addressing a gap in literature and providing important implications for policy and practice.

The following research question and sub questions underpinned this study:

- What are adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress and what are the potential relationships of these stressors with their emotional intelligence and wellbeing?

    - What are adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress?
    - What, if any, relationship is there between adolescents' role stress and existential stress?
    - What, if any, relationship does role stress and/or existential stress have on adolescents' emotional intelligence?
    - What, if any, relationship does role stress and existential stress have on adolescents' wellbeing?
    - What, if any, relationship is there between emotional intelligence and adolescents' wellbeing?

Chapter Seven commences with a discussion of the current study's findings and how they have contributed to the body of work on adolescent role stress and existential stress thus addressing a gap in literature which has been predominantly adult quantitative studies as identified in Chapter Two. Findings across both phases of the current study will then be brought together to address the research questions while presenting a holistic view of adolescents who experience high or low role stress and

existential stress. Reflections on the implications that these findings have on policy, practice and future research bring this chapter to a conclusion.

7.1.1 Summary of the Context and Research Gaps

Addressing adolescents, mental health is a global priority, with escalating reports of anxiety, depression, stress and suicidal ideation evidenced in national and international research (AIHW, 2016; ARACY, 2018; UNICEF, 2020; WHO, 2021). In contributing to growth and development of any economy, investing in adolescents' wellbeing is essential. Therefore, the findings of the current study have advanced this global priority by providing insights into the relationship between and the lived experiences of role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

To date numerous longitudinal and cross-sectional quantitative studies have explored role stress (Nordenmark, 2004; Vergara, 1999) and existential stress (Krause & Rainville, 2020; Lockman & Servaty-Seib, 2016) in adult samples finding a link between these stressors and behavioural issues, poor wellbeing and emotional disorders. However, researchers have argued that adolescence is a stage of human development where young people are potentially at risk of role stress (Bird & Harris, 1990; De Bruyn, 2005; Fenzel, 1989) and existential stress (Erikson, 1968; Fitzgerald, 2005; Shumaker, 2012); yet their voice is seemingly missing in literature. Studies in role stress with adolescents have focused primarily on role strain because of transition from primary to secondary school (De Bruyn, 2005; Fenzel, 1989). Role strain is at the opposite end of the continuum to role stress and yet little to date is known about adolescents' role stress (Bird & Harris, 1990). This is surprising as adolescence is a time where friendships and peer relationships are important which can potentially leave an adolescent feeling unhappy with multiple social relationships thus potentially resulting in role stress (Liu & Kaplan, 2004). Studies related to existential stress in adolescents have focused on meaning or purpose in life with few studies focussing on a lack of purpose in life (Vanhooren et al., 2017) and the influence this has on an adolescent's emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

Therefore, the current study addressed these gaps in literature by providing knowledge about the interrelationship between role stress and existential stress in adolescents. Understandings of the relationship between these potential stressors and adolescent's emotional intelligence and wellbeing adds a further contribution to the field. Finally, giving voice to adolescents who self-reported experiencing high or low role stress and existential stress provided a unique opportunity to capture their lived experiences thus contributing to existing literature while also informing policy and practice.

The current study also contributes to the field of adolescent wellbeing by employing a mixed method design that integrated existing quantitative measures with qualitative case studies. This provided the statistical relationships to be revealed while capturing the lived experiences that help to explain the statistics.

7.2 Addressing the Research Questions

This chapter presents the integrated findings of the quantitative and qualitative studies within an explanatory sequential mixed method design. The quantitative study employed 375 adolescents aged 13-19 years from Years 8-12 and provided data on the strength and nature of the relationship between the variables under exploration. In addition, the results of the quantitative study provided a means of recruiting participants for qualitative semi-structured interviews enabling further insights to be gleaned. Participants who reported either high role stress and existential stress or low role stress and existential stress and provided their contact details were approached (Creswell, 2012; Morse, 1994). Nine participants (six females and three males) from Years 8, 10, and 12 agreed to take part in this second phase of the study.

Discussions will now turn to the research questions in light of the integrated findings from both phases of the study.

7.2.1 Adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress

To gain an in-depth understanding of adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress, participants initially responded to a quantitative online survey followed by semi-structured interviews.

The quantitative results revealed that on average adolescents in the current study reported moderate role stress (M = 12.01), where 36.8% (n = 138) of these adolescents reported lower role stress. However, a significant number (63.2%, n = 237) of adolescents self-reported moderate to high role stress. These findings provided empirical support to previous studies which assert that adolescents are at risk of role stress (De Bruyn, 2005; Fenzel, 1989). Quantitative findings also highlighted that overall, these adolescents reported high role stress in terms of their relationships with teachers (50%, n = 188) followed by their experiences at school (44.8%, n = 168) and relationships with peers (40.3%, n = 151); suggesting that for these participants, school is a place that may causes role stress. Participants reported low role stress in their home microsystem with 75% of adolescents reported being happy with their relationships with siblings and parents. These findings support previous

findings that the school environment and family relationships play a prominent contributory role in adolescents' abilities to cope with role stress (Fenzel, 1989; Jose et al., 2012).

Notably, a similar trend was evident in the quantitative data relating to existential stress where participants reported moderate existential stress (M = 9.04) with 28% of adolescents (n = 105) reporting low existential stress. However, a considerable number (72%, n = 270) reported moderate to high existential stress. Deeper analysis of participants' responses revealed that 44.3% (n = 166) did not agree that 'I have fully discovered a satisfying life purpose', followed by 'in life I have clear goals and aims'. Interestingly, the least number of participants reported that they disagreed to the statement 'in achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfillment'. Current findings support previous literature, suggesting that adolescence is the age when an individual first encounters existential issues (Damon et al., 2003; Erikson, 1968; Hacker, 1994)

Further, semi-structured interviews with adolescents who self-reported high role and existential stress and those who reported low role stress and existential stress, provided an in-depth understanding about their experiences. Participant's lived experiences in most cases supported their quantitative scores however in the case of Kelly this was not so. Kelly reported high role stress, and high existential stress, yet her lived experiences often suggested otherwise. For instance, she described a positive family and school life yet scored '3 = feeling unhappy' with her relationships with her parents and '2 = neither happy nor unhappy' with her schooling experiences. The lived experiences of these participants thereby highlighted certain influences that seemingly increased their experiences of role stress and existential stress or protected them against it.

7.2.1.1 Connection/disconnection with relationships

Participants who reported high role stress and high existential stress described relationships that were disconnected and often fraught with challenges. These in turn appeared to impact on their sense of self and their purpose in life thus increasing their levels of existential stress. Such experiences of disconnection were described by Joanne, who reported significant challenges in her relationships and school mesosystem. Kelly highlighted the significance of the school environment in terms of her supportive relationship with teachers, however challenges in peer relationships appear to have contributed to her high role stress and existential stress scores. Notably, active participation of fathers in adolescents' lives emerged as an important factor and differentiated adolescents in both categories. Joanne reported sharing a distant relationship with her father, with a similar lack of communication also reported by Kelly. This contrasted with those adolescents who reported low role stress and low existential stress as these participants reported supportive and positive relationships with their

families, friends, peers, and teachers. John, Lisa, and Sam shared their life experience in terms of active participation of their father who supported and motivated them. John also reported bi-directional behaviour of helping his family. Additionally, Mandy highlighted the significance of her positive connection with her friends and peers, when she reported that this communication motivated her to prepare for the future. Bi-directional behaviour of helping family, friends, peers, and teachers, has emerged as an important factor in adolescents' sense of connection with their supportive mesosystem and exosystem relationships. This seemingly protected adolescents from role stress and existential stress.

7.2.1.2 Community engagement/disengagement

A further difference was evident in adolescent's participation in or willingness to be involved in community activities with those reporting low role stress and existential stress often feeling connected with their community which appeared to help them cope. It is argued that there is a bi-directional link between and across Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems where an impact at one level effects the other. This was particularly evident in participant's micro and meso system experiences. Neither Joanne or Kelly reported engagement in any community activities nor were they interested, yet adolescents who reported low role stress and low existential stress either participated in community activities or showed their understanding of the importance of such interactions and expressed their interest in the future. For instance, Helen is an active community member of the church and considered such involvement to be her social responsibility. Such active interactions in one's exosystem appeared to be an important buffer for these adolescents.

7.2.1.3 Clear/unclear life goals

A clear vision of future life has been the another differentiating factor between adolescents who reported high role stress and high existential stress and others, as adolescents reported unclear goals also reported high stress levels. In the current study, lack of clarity about one's future appeared and challenges in one's microsystem experiences seemingly resulted in high role stress and high existential stress. Unclear life goals were one of the common factors found in participants who scored high in the quantitative survey on role stress and existential stress. Previous studies have suggested that future orientation acts as a buffer against stress, thus leading to high wellbeing in adolescents (Gan et al., 2007); something that is supported in the current study.

7.2.2 Relationship between role stress and existential stress

A statistically positive correlation between role stress and existential stress r (375) = .64, p = .05 was found in the quantitative analysis of the current study. In the analysis, 'Pearson product moment correlation' was conducted to examine the nature and significance of the relationship between role stress and existential stress among 375 adolescents aged 13-19 years in Years 8-12.

For participants in the current study, this statistical correlation meant that high role stress was associated with high existential stress. This finding supports Erikson's (1968) notion that adolescence is a time of role versus identity confusion where one starts to question their existence by asking Who am I? Why I am here? What is the meaning or purpose in life? And as such reflect on their different roles and the quality of these. This result provides support to previous studies who reported that meaning or purpose in life was positively associated with social support and social connectedness (Blau et al., 2019; Heng et al., 2020). Adolescents who do not have meaning in life reported social isolation, rejection or disturbances and social maladjustment (Ho et al., 2010) which in turn impacted on the quality of their relationships potentially leading to role stress. Deeper analysis of participant's responses on each item revealed a moderate to strong association between role stress emanating from outside the home microsystem, (e.g., friends, peer, and schooling experiences) and all items of existential stress. The relationship however was weak to moderate in the case of relationships with parents and siblings. These results are in contrast with previous studies which found that social support from parents had a strong positive association with purpose in life (Blau et al., 2019).

A positive association between role stress and existential stress was supported by the qualitative study. Similarities and differences between Joanne and Kelly (who reported high role stress and existential stress) and John, Jess, Sam, Mandy, Lisa, Daryl and Helen, who reported low/no role stress and existential stress were identified. Poor perceptions of their relationships, lack of sense of belonging, feelings of loneliness, less or no involvement in community activities, lack of meaning or purpose in life, poor self-concept, hopelessness, pessimistic were some of key characteristics that were identified in those reporting high role stress and existential stress; something that supports other quantitative studies (Fitzgerald, 2005; Ho et al., 2010). Whereas sense of belonging, seeking social support, feeling part of a group, positive perceptions of one's relationships, having life goals, making strategies to achieve life goals, meaningful hobbies, positive self-concept, optimism, and hopefulness were some of the key characteristics of those who reported experiencing low role stress nor existential stress.

Lack of religiosity and spirituality among those reporting high role stress and existential stress was also identified. While this is not new (Taliaferro et al., 2009; Tillich, 1952; Zika & Chamberlain, 1992), the insight gained by accessing Joanne's lived experiences shed further light on this element. Having opposing views from her parents, Joanne sees her parents as traditional (strict in following rituals) and religious which makes her upset and frustrated. For her, religious or spiritual involvement was a waste of time. Neither is she able to understand the reason behind being religious nor can she connect herself with spirituality. Whereas no such issue is reported by adolescents with low/no role stress and existential stress.

Dissatisfaction with most of one's relationships is another important characteristic which differentiated those reporting high role and existential stress from reports of low role and existential stress. Joanne and Kelly who reported high role stress and existential stress in the quantitative study highlighted their dissatisfaction with most of their relationships Lacking a sense of belonging and experiencing difficulties with relationships with family, peer victimisation, arguments between parents, traditional, religious and parents being overprotective

The qualitative findings provided detailed explanations of why there was a significant positive relationship between role stress and existential stress as highlighted in the quantitative study. Adolescents who reported being unsatisfied with most of their relationships developed a poor perception of life (Erikson, 1968). On the other hand, those who reported low role stress and existential stress in the quantitative survey demonstrated satisfaction with most or all of their relationships in their qualitative semi-structured interview. They were also able to identify their life goals and recognise strategies needed to achieve them.

7.2.3 Relationship of role stress and existential stress with emotional intelligence

In the current study, a statistically negative association between role stress and existential stress with emotional intelligence was identified. In the analysis, 'Pearson product moment correlation' was conducted to examine the nature and significance of the relationship between role stress and emotional intelligence among 375 adolescents aged 13-19 years in Years 8-12. The logic of this relationship was based on Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory, which asserts that role confusion and identity diffusion cause an emotional upheaval during adolescence. The findings of the current study also support the literature that suggests high stress is associated with poor emotional intelligence (Bartwal & Raj, 2013; Fernandez et al., 2006; Gomez-Baya et al., 2016).

Quantitative findings highlighted a statistically strong negative correlation between role stress and emotional intelligence r (375) = -.69, p < .05. These findings also revealed the strongest negative correlation between role stress emanating from feeling unhappy with the number of friends and emotional intelligence r (375) = -.63, p < .05, followed by relationships with peers r (375) = -.60, p < .05 and accepted and included by friends r (375) = -.55, p < .05. Comparatively moderate negative correlation was observed between adolescents' emotional intelligence and their relationship with parents r (375) = -.43, p < .05 and siblings r (375) = -.44, p < .05; followed by teacher r (375) = -.48, p < .05. Most of the dimensions of emotional intelligence such as appraisal of one's own emotions, appraisal of others' emotions, regulation of one' own emotions, and utilisation of one's own emotions has a strong negative correlation with role stress due to friendship networks and peer relationships. There was a weak to moderate negative correlation between the dimension 'regulation of others' emotions' and all the domains of role stress. Findings were consistent with previous studies on adult samples which identified a negative association between adults' role stress and their emotional intelligence (Merida-Lopez et al., 2017; Vergara, 1999). The current findings also provided support to previous literature on social support and emotional intelligence in adolescence, showing the bi-directional relationship between adolescents' perception of social support and their emotional intelligence (Balluerka et al., 2013; Lopez-Zafra et al., 2019).

In the current study, a statistically strong negative correlation was found between existential stress and emotional intelligence r (375) = -.76, p < .05. It was also worthwhile to note that existential stress due to disagreement with experiencing 'meaningful personal existence' and 'progressing to complete fulfillment to achieve life goals' were strongly correlated with overall emotional intelligence and all its dimensions. However, a comparatively negative weaker correlation was found between 'regulation of others' emotions' and to have 'fully discovered a satisfying life purpose'. The results coincide with previous studies that have shown a negative association between both the variables and revealed that individuals who do not have clear life goals or meaning or purpose in life reported, emotional stress, depressive and anxiety symptoms (De Lazzari, 2000).

Agreement on the notion that stress is negatively related with emotional intelligence, a trend noted in detailed interviews of participants having low/no role stress and existential stress who demonstrated poor emotional intelligence whereas adolescents having high role stress and existential stress demonstrated high emotional intelligence. Feelings of loneliness, lack of resilience, lack of sense of belonging, emotional exhaustion, lack of empathy and understanding, lack of self-regulation of emotions, poor self-concept, hopelessness, pessimism, emotion related, or avoidance of coping strategies were identified as key attributes of poor emotional intelligence in Joanne and Kelly. Whereas John, Jess, Sam, Mandy, Lisa, Daryl and Helen, who reported low role stress and existential

stress, were identified as; emotionally intelligent, having meaning or purpose in life, a sense of belonging, were empathetic, understanding, were able to appraise their own and others' emotions, have a positive self-concept, were optimistic, and able to self-regulate their emotions.

Adolescents with high role stress and existential stress have demonstrated that, they are strongly impacted by unsatisfied relationships and this impact on them is stronger than the possible impact of satisfied or positive relationships they have in their life. Such perceptions also highlighted their poor emotional intelligence. On the other hand, it has been observed that adolescents with low or no role stress and existential stress have satisfaction in their relationships. This is evident in their understanding and support between the adolescents and their relationships, something that is reciprocal. These adolescents are emotionally intelligent in understanding their parents', teachers' and friends' and others' position. For them, transition from primary school to high school is not stressful. These adolescents have the strategies, created by themselves or with the help of others, to achieve their objectives of life, and this differentiate them from those with high role stress and existential stress.

7.2.4 Relationship between role stress and existential stress with wellbeing

In the current study, a strong negative correlation was found between both role stress and wellbeing: and existential stress and wellbeing. A Pearson product moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between the level of role stress, existential stress and wellbeing among 375 adolescents aged 13-19 years from Years 8-12. This result has been observed constantly throughout the literature and suggests the deleterious effect of stress on wellbeing (Bireda & Pillay, 2017; Kelada et al., 2016; Sasikala & Cecil, 2016; Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2013)

Statistically, strong negative correlation was found between role stress and wellbeing r (375) = -.69, $p < .05$, high role stress is associated strongly with low levels of wellbeing. Results of the current study also highlighted that role stress due to unhappiness with the number of friends one has was comparatively strongly associated with overall wellbeing and all the dimensions, followed by the relationship with peers and schooling experiences. A weak to moderate negative correlation was found between overall wellbeing and feeling unhappy with parents (r = -.40); siblings (r = - .39). Similarly, a weak to moderate correlation was found between relationship with parents and siblings and other dimensions of wellbeing. These findings are consistent with previous literature in terms of the nature of relationships. For instance, according to Siddique and D'Arcy (1984) adolescents who perceive stress with their family, peers and/or friends, reported anxiety, depression, social dysfunction and anergia (four measures of wellbeing). Similarly, Glozah (2013) found that social support from

families, friends, teachers, and school, neutralised the impact of stress on adolescent's wellbeing. However, in terms of the strength of the negative relationship, the current findings are in contrast with previous studies such as Jose et al. (2012) who reported that social connectedness with family and school had a strong influence on adolescents' wellbeing as compared to other relationships.

Statistically strong negative correlation was found between existential stress and wellbeing r (375) = -.68, $p < .05$. The findings provided support to previous studies that have found a strong positive association between purpose in life and wellbeing (Brassai et al., 2011; Bronk et al., 2009). Items of existential stress such 'In life I have clear life goals and aims' My personal existential is meaningful', 'In achieving life goals I am progressing to complete fulfillment' were moderately to strongly associated with all dimensions of wellbeing. However, negative weak correlation was found between existential stress that is not having 'fully discovered satisfying life purpose' and social wellbeing and (r = -.30) as well as physical wellbeing (r = .30).

Such findings are revealed in the current qualitative study where adolescents who shared positive experiences with their family, friends, peers, community and school environment, reported positive emotional, social and intellectual wellbeing. These results are consistent with previous studies that highlighted a connection between meaning or purpose in life and wellbeing (Ho et al., 2010; Ryff, 1989; Zika & Chamberlain, 1992). Such studies have also revealed that meaning in life is strongly associated with psychological wellbeing (Ho et al., 2010; Ryff, 1989; Zika & Chamberlain, 1992). Similarly, participants in the current study who reported low or no role stress and existential stress, had no fear about their future and reported clarity about their life goals. It has been seen that such adolescents know what they are going to achieve in future and what strategies they want to use to pursue their life goals. The qualitative study found that such students have high wellbeing, in line with quantitative results. In addition, some previous studies have also demonstrated that lack of meaning in life adversely affected psychological wellbeing (Ishida & Okada, 2006; Ryff, 1989; Zika & Chamberlain, 1992). As witnessed in the current study, adolescents who have shown high role stress and existential stress have shown poor wellbeing, attributable to poor dissatisfaction from family relations and poor support from relationships.

Family has been found to be an important relationship whose support and active participation in an adolescent's life, helps them develop empathy, trust and understanding in all relationships, absence of which leads to poor wellbeing. Similar dissatisfaction and doubt on purpose in life was evident in those who reported high stress and poor wellbeing. An important observation has been made in the current study about a parent's participation, where it is found that all participants who reported high encouragement and active participation from their father, demonstrated high emotional intelligence

and high wellbeing. Such adolescents reported that, besides motivating them to stay positive their father helped them in their studies and encouraged them.

The current study extended the scope of wellbeing by examining the relationship of existential stress with social, emotional, psychological, spiritual, physical and intellectual wellbeing, where it is found that adolescents with high existential stress also have poor wellbeing. Firstly, adolescents having supportive and encouraging family relations have shown no fear related to their future, possibly because parents support and guide them to make a better choice of their future goals, as seen in case of Sam, thus supporting the notion of Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Development Theory and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory; something that support other research (Fry, 2001; Helm et al., 2019; Tuck, et al., 2006). So, they have clear goals and an ability to make strategies and plan for their future. In contrast, poor family support and minimal parental participation seemingly leads to uncertainty about one's future which leads to high existential stress and poor wellbeing.

Following this, adolescents who have low or no role stress and existential stress have attributed their high wellbeing to the support and trust they receive from friends and peers. In addition to social support, having a purpose in life has been positively associated with psychological wellbeing (Arslan, 2018; Gallagher & Vella-Brodrick, 2008; Rathi & Rastogi., 2007). In line with the current study, adolescents who trust their relationships and believe that their friends, peers, family or teachers will be there if needed, have shown high wellbeing. Interestingly, such adolescents become more responsible towards their relationships and understand that they also have to be helpful and empathetic towards others.

Similarly, supportive school setup with more opportunities to learn and explore, contributes to high wellbeing. Besides this, helpful and supportive teachers, which adolescents can trust, play an important role in their positive wellbeing (Ishida & Okada, 2006; Kitmura et al., 2004). In matters related to life goals, learnings and knowledge, adolescents depend on their teacher's expertise. So, if they trust their teachers, the teacher's experience and knowledge will help them make a better future. They will get equivalent support and help from their teachers, which will lead them to high wellbeing. Teachers and peers are an important part of the school environment, so their support and help are important in ensuring adolescent wellbeing.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) in his Ecological Systems Theory identified the macro system where individuals interact with the wider community as being equally important as other systems in an individual's development. Similar importance of community activities was witnessed in the current

study, where differences between those reporting high or role stress and existential stress in terms of their participation in community works and extracurricular activities, were noted. The majority of adolescents with low/no role stress and existential stress reported either being actively involved in community work or indicated their strong interest to participate in the future. Whereas, adolescents with high role stress and existential stress like Joanne reported having no interest in any such social activities now or in the future.

7.2.5 Relationship of emotional intelligence with wellbeing

In the current study, the quantitative findings highlighted the strong positive relationship between adolescents' emotional intelligence and wellbeing r (375) = .67, $p < .05$. These coincide with previous studies that have shown a consolidated relationship between both the variables and highlighted that, adolescents experiencing high emotional intelligence employ coping strategies to manage with challenging situations (Balluerka et al., 2016; Lopez-Zafra et al., 2019). Building on existing studies, the quantitative findings in the current study also revealed a positive association between all dimensions of emotional intelligence with psychological, emotional, social, physical, spiritual and intellectual wellbeing.

The quantitative analysis reported, significant correlation between all five dimensions of emotional intelligence and six dimensions of wellbeing. The majority of these correlations were moderate to strong, suggesting increased emotional abilities which corresponded with improved wellbeing in adolescents. However positive weak correlation was found between emotional wellbeing, and ability to regulate others' emotions (r = .16) and utilizing own emotions (r = .25). Additionally, ability of regulating others' emotions was found weakly correlated to adolescents' physical wellbeing (r = .25), suggesting minimal effect of this emotional intelligence dimension on adolescents' health.

In the semi-structured interviews, participant's lived experiences further provided an in-depth understanding of the relationship between emotional intelligence and wellbeing. In the case of adolescents who reported high role stress and existential stress their 'ability to appraise own emotions' seemed to have no impact on their stress levels and wellbeing. For instance, both Joanne and Kelly self-reported high role stress and existential stress, low emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Whereas in their interviews they demonstrated an ability to appraise their own emotions, that is, they are aware of their emotions, however this ability may act as a buffer against role stress and existential stress for Kelly but not for Joanne. Moreover, there is not much influence of this abilities on their wellbeing.

Qualitative findings also highlighted that one's ability to appraise their own emotions along with other abilities of emotional intelligence such as ability to appraise others' emotions, regulation of own and others' emotions, utilisation of own emotion resulted in low stress levels and high wellbeing. Evidence of emotional intelligence and wellbeing can be seen among adolescents with low role stress and existential stress, which was somewhat missing in the case of adolescents with high role stress and existential stress. For instance, Joanne and Kelly; John and Jess are also from year level 8 but reported low role stress and existential stress. In terms of their emotional abilities, they share an ability to regulate emotions, utilisation of emotion, regulate others' emotions along with appraisal of own and others' emotions and demonstrated, high psychological, emotional, social, spiritual and physical and intellectual wellbeing.

7.3 Methodological Contribution of the Current Study

The aim of the current study was to gain an in-depth understanding of adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress and the relationship of these stressors with their emotional intelligence and wellbeing. The current study contributed to the field methodologically in three ways: adolescent's experiences of role stress and existential stress and relationship with emotional intelligence wellbeing; an explanatory sequential mixed methods research design; and capturing the 'voice' of adolescents which to date has been seemingly silent.

7.3.1 Exploration of adolescent's role stress and existential stress and relationship with emotional intelligence wellbeing

As noted in Chapter Two, the majority of research into role stress and existential stress has focused on adults with the belief that they are more likely to be affected (Adiningsih et al., 2020; Arrindell, 2005; Liu & Kaplan, 2004; Lou et al., 2007). Some researchers have argued that adolescents also face role stress (Bird & Harris, 1990; De Bruyn, 2005; Fenzel, 1989; Siddique & Arcy, 1984) and existential stress (Berman et al., 2006; Fitzgerald, 2005; Hacker, 1994), yet only a few studies have explored this phenomenon with them. This methodology not only specifically focused on an adolescent sample, the design was unique in integrating the four constructs of role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing to not only capture the risk factors but also the protective factors to inform preventative and strengths-based approaches to promote student wellbeing and reduce stress.

7.3.2 Explanatory sequential mixed methods research design

An explanatory sequential mixed methods research design engaged existing and robust quantitative scales employed in the field of role and existential stress, with qualitative semi-structured interviews previously limited in existing studies to date. Quantitative descriptive, correlation and inferential analysis explored the self-reports of adolescent's perceptions across the four variables as well as identifying significant relationships between the variables. Whole group (adolescent, gender and year level) and individual participant scores were recorded. This enabled participants who reported high or low role stress and existential stress to be identified and invited into semi-structured interviews. Integrating a qualitative design facilitated deep sharing of the lived experiences of the nine case study participants and explanations of potential supports or barriers that influenced their role stress and existential stress. This dual approach supported a pragmatic paradigm that enabled similarities and differences in participants' perceptions and experiences to be identified; something that is often missing when employing a single method (Peters et al., 1986).

7.3.3 The 'voice' of adolescents

While quantitative studies provide important insights into the statistical significance and relationships between variables there remains a need to understand the lived experiences that numerical data does not fully capture. To date, the voice of adolescents regarding their experiences of role stress and existential stress has been largely missing in literature therefore providing voice together with statistical data is a contribution to the field. Often the lived experiences of these participants confirmed their scores on the quantitative survey however the statistic did not provide the insights gained by hearing participants explain their relationships and what has impacted on their perception of their purpose in life.

7.4 Contribution of the Current Study to the Field of Knowledge

The current study has provided significant contributions to the field of adolescent role stress and existential stress. These include further understanding adolescent lived experiences of role stress and existential stress through the voice of adolescents; the complex interconnected bi-directional nature of role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing; interplay between the ecological systems and significant role of micro and meso system influences; and potential risk factors and protective buffers.

7.4.1 Adolescent role stress and existential stress lived experiences: the voice of adolescents

As noted in Chapter 2, the literature review, to date there has been limited studies in the Australian context that have focused on adolescents' experiences of role stress and existential stress (Brassai et al., 2011; Sasikala & Cecil, 2016) and adolescent voice was missing. As recognised in The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) young people have the right to have their voice heard on matters that influence their lives, therefore this study prioritised the voice of adolescents regarding their lived experiences of role stress and existential stress. Within the limited literature 'gender role stress' (Kulis et al., 2010; Naditch & Morrissey, 1976; Preiss et al., 2009) or 'role strain' (Bird & Harris, 1990; De Bruyn, 2005; Fenzel, 1989) were predominantly the focus, and adult participants were the focus of existential stress research arguably due to their purported wider social interactions and multiple role-identities (Adiningsih et al., 2020; Arrindell, 2005; Liu & Kaplan, 2004; Lou et al., 2007). This empirical study, therefore, contributed to knowledge in the field to further understand whether role stress and existential stress were influential in the lives of the adolescent participants aged 13-19 years from Years 8-12 in South Australia.

The current study revealed that while many adolescents reported being happy with relationships and having clear life goals and purpose in life, role and existential stress was a considerable concern for a significant number whereby on average participants reported experiencing moderate role and existential stress. That is, a considerable number reported that they were 'unhappy' with their relationships with parents and/or siblings, friends, peers, teachers and overall school experience, thus potentially placing them at risk of high role stress. These findings were further supported within the multiple case studies with stronger relationships expressed for participants identified with low role stress, and more challenging relationships for those reporting high role stress. Recognising that some of these young people are experiencing a degree of role stress is important to understand given the potential impact on their emotional intelligence and wellbeing and navigating life experiences successfully. Recognising how role stress may influence their identity development is important given our understanding that as adolescents develop more advanced patterns of reasoning and a stronger sense of self develops, they seek their own identities and develop important attachments with people other than their parents (Erikson, 1968; Kroger, 2004; Strasburger et al., 2009).

Similarly, initial quantitative findings indicated that many adolescent participants had relatively low existential stress strongly agreeing or agreeing that 'in achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfillment', 'my personal experience is meaningful', 'in life I have clear goals and aim', and 'I have fully discovered a satisfying life purpose'. On deeper analysis however, a considerable number of adolescent participants reported moderate to high existential stress. This study thereby contributes to the knowledge of the field of existential stress in adolescence and raises the importance

of supporting those reporting high levels given Erikson's (1968) identification that development of life goals and values as well as establishing a sense of purpose in life is critical within the period of adolescence. For Joanne and Kelly not having clear goals or conflicting goals with parents and doubting the meaningfulness of their life or purpose aligned with their perception of having high existential stress, in contrast to those describing connection with community and developing pathways to develop skills and knowledge to achieve their relatively clear goals and having a strong sense of the meaningfulness of their life.

Therefore, this study contributed to understanding that some adolescents are experiencing role stress which supports the contention that it is not just related to adults, rather adolescents being the first to confront existential stress (Erikson, 1968; Fitzgerald, 2005; Hacker, 1994).

7.4.2 The complex interconnected bi-directional nature of role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing experienced by adolescents

Significant relationships between role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing were identified in both the quantitative survey and qualitative case studies. Yet through the qualitative semi-structured interviews the bi-directional nature of the variables emerged. For instance, those participants who reported experiencing low role stress (relationships with others) also experienced low existential stress (purpose in life), high emotional intelligence and high wellbeing. In addition, these participants expressed a positive and confident identity which seemingly influenced each of these constructs. However, those who reported high role stress and had difficulty with the relationships with others also lacked a purpose in life and had described having no clear goals which seemingly impacted on their relationships. In turn their also reported low emotional intelligence where they were sometimes unaware of their own emotions and those of others which impacted on their relationships; all of which they described as having a negative impact on their wellbeing. This study contributes to the knowledge in field suggesting that when considering these four constructs we cannot merely look at them in isolation and the importance of the bidirectionality of role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing, which has clear implications for policy and practice.

7.4.3 Interplay between the ecological systems and influence on role and existential stress role: micro and meso system influences

Through the qualitative case studies the interplay between Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems emerged. When contrasting those who reported low role stress and existential stress with those who reported high levels on both, relationships appeared key. However, the interplay particularly between the micro and meso systems were highly evident and the main ecological systems that were evident through the study. For instance, those experiencing low role stress and low existential stress reported supportive and loving relationships with their family members and friends. The characteristics of these relationships included reciprocity, trust, support, and were then mirrored in their relationships with their teachers, peers and school. It is therefore argued that the socialisation skills that they learn in these initial close relationships set the foundation and expectations for future relationships and as such they shape how the adolescent acts and is treated both of which impacts on the quality and satisfaction of these relationships.

7.4.4 Identification of risk factors and engaging protective buffers

In this study the protective buffers adolescents described to be most significant and can inform preventative measures included positive relationships with family including parent/s, siblings, peers, teachers and friends.

Acknowledging earlier studies and the increasing independence of adolescents and seeking relationships with people other than their parents (Erikson, 1968; Kroger 2004; Strasburger et al., 2009), family relationships including relationship with your parent/s, carergiver and/or siblings were reported as the lowest risk factor for role stress in the quantitative measures and this was supported by case studies of those who self-reported low role stress. In contrast high risk factors associated with challenging relationships with family members and diverging macrosystem values and cultural norms were evident in those reporting high role stress and existential stress and this seemingly placed them at risk of low emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Reinforcing the bidirectionality of these constructs, low emotional intelligence in navigating these challenging experiences for some participants impacted on the ability to forge stronger relationships. Thereby protective factors within adolescence for these participants included continuing positive family connections.

The school experience was also deemed as a significant protective factor for those reporting low role stress and existential stress, particularly relationships with peers and teachers. Peer acceptance has been reported as essential for a young person's socialization, and this facilitates the development of

values and social skills, sense of self-worth and emotional self-regulation (Cowie, 2011). Participants who reported low on role and existential stress engaged pro-socially with peers, helping and supporting, while reciprocal actions were received. There was a keen sense of desire for connectedness, acceptance and belonging and for those reporting high role and existential stress, these relationships were not evident placing them at risk and making them question Who am I? and being unclear of their purpose in life.

Teacher relationships were also important protective buffers in not just providing opportunities to connect and support learning, but also in building confidence and identify in who they are and their life goals. This interconnectedness between role and existential stress influences was highlighted by those reporting high on both constructs, identifying how lack of connectedness and support from the teacher impacted on their confidence and self-worth, thus impacting negatively on their school experience.

Friendships also acted as a protective buffer and for some participants it was not the number of friends rather the quality of trusting friendships. Being happy with friends provided a safe space to work through life challenges, whereas those lacking these relationships was a significant risk factor.

A further protective factor for many adolescent participants reporting low role and existential stress, was having the capacity to engage their emotional intelligence in challenging situations and to have positive and optimistic demeanours. As Thorndike (1920) described, emotional intelligence is "the ability to act wisely in human relations" (p.228). thereby supporting the skill development of adolescents can support them in coping with stress, thus promote wellbeing (Fernandez-Berrocal, 2016; Martins et al., 2010; Schutte et al., 2007).

It would therefore appear important to recognise that to support adolescents who are experiencing role stress and existential stress it is important to explore all ecological system influences, and particularly understanding the microsystem and mesosystem relationships that adolescents are engaged with and how these influences their relationships and purpose in life. This study contributes to further understanding how adolescents are navigating complex life challenges and transitions, with adolescents who navigate these more positively activating protective strategies thus minimising the risk of role and/or existential stress.

7.5 Implications of the Current Study to Policy and Practice

The increasing mental health and anxiety and stress being reported by young people evidenced in the literature review of this study, and the current findings of this study whereby a considerable number

of participants in this study report experiencing moderate to high role stress and existential stress, prioritising wellbeing of adolescence is essential. Supporting the wellbeing of adolescents is increasingly becoming central to policy and practice within education in Australia, and as described in the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework, "Australian schools are learning communities that promote student wellbeing, safety and positive relationships so that students can reach their full potential" (Education Services Australia, 2018, p. 2).

The findings from this study provide educators, educational leaders and policy developers with a deeper understanding of adolescent experiences of role stress and existential stress and the relationship with their emotional intelligence and wellbeing. Such insight can inform the preventative approaches that can be applied at system, educational setting and community levels, and within the microsystem of the classroom to best support their learners needs. The study revealed that relationships with teachers and peers are significant protective influences in minimising potential role stress and existential stress establishing mutually respectful and prosocial relationships and supporting adolescents to discover life goals and plan pathways to work towards them. "The wellbeing of children and young people is enhanced, and their learning outcomes optimised when they feel connected to others and experience safe and trusting relationships" (Education Services Australia, 2018, p. 2).

A further implication for educators and leaders is to further support the development of adolescent emotional intelligence to empower them to minimise effects of role stress and existential stress, and thereby support their overall wellbeing. Given the significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and role and existential stress for adolescents in this study, it is proposed that educational practices need to support adolescents to *Look Within:* to develop self-awareness of their innermost feelings and foster confidence in their emotional intelligence to identify potential role and existential stress risk factors, and thereby empower them to engage protective factors of relevance to their needs. This may them lead to positive outcomes for learning given the inextricable link between wellbeing and academic achievement (Price & McCallum, 2016). That is, "Gaining the ability to understand our own emotions and using it to shape our own actions are competencies that are not only essential for our mental and emotional health: they are meta-abilities that are highly linked to school and career success" (Goleman, cited in Weare, 2000, p. 69).

However, the findings evidence that protective factors are not purely intrinsic to the adolescent, and leaders can support through promoting a community approach to wellbeing that integrate protective mechanisms. For example, the significant influence of family and broader community engagement was described as foundational to their perceived low role and existential stress. Thereby implications

for approaches that encourage and facilitate adolescents to *Look Outward:* and engage with a range of microsystems including contributing to local community and society can strengthen mesosystem relationships and promote meaning and purpose in life. This study suggests that a range of interventions are more likely to be effective according to their context and life circumstances.

Further implications of the current study may inform educational programs in partnership with parents/caregivers to further their understanding of the interrelationships between role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing. That is, the need for collaborative approaches that *Look Between*: to recognise the bi-directional and complex interconnectedness between role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing, to inform more holistic approaches in supporting wellbeing. This includes supporting parents/caregivers to understand these interrelations and further their understanding of the significant role they play in minimising a child's potential stressors. This may strengthen partnerships in working collaboratively with students, parents, educators, school administrators, counsellors, and psychologists etc. This may include further understanding of potential stressors and the coping mechanisms for navigating challenging life experiences and how they are significant protective factors as in the case of many participants in this study who reported low role and existential stress.

The findings of this study may also contribute to school counsellor roles and informing school-based prevention and intervention services including counselling, particularly for adolescents who perceive themselves as dissatisfied with relationships and/or life. Further to this, educational support personnel including guidance officers and behaviour support coaches have the potential to gain a greater understanding of the importance of identifying potential risk factors and applying protective mechanisms to minimise these stressors in adolescent student's overall wellbeing.

A further implication of this study is to map how wellbeing and emotional intelligence are embedded in the curriculum and educational policy. The key challenge is then how these can be translated into practice to support adolescents in their identity development and emotional intelligence, so they are equipped to navigate relationships and life experiences with a positive approach and thereby manage role stress and existential stress. For some adolescent's explicit interventions may be necessary to connect adolescents with strong support structures and assistance as they work through challenges and work to empower them in being confident in who they are and their purpose in life. Thus, working collectively and providing policy and practice that translates into action is central to minimising role and existential stress and enhancing emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

7.6 Limitations

While the current study has made considerable contributions to the field it was not without limitations. For instance, both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study relied on self-reports as adolescents aged 13-19 years were considered able to provide detailed and reliable information about themselves (Haughland & Wong, 2001). However, it is recognised that participants may recognise that they are part of a study about role stress and existential stress which may influence their responses therefore future studies should consider perspectives from multiple stakeholders.

While 375 adolescents across Adelaide, South Australia participated in Phase One, the online survey, it is important to note that these findings cannot be generalised to other contexts and adolescents as the sample is not representative. In addition, the study is limited to one state in Australia, therefore caution needs to be taken when applying these findings to adolescents from other states of Australia thus impacting on the transferability of the findings. Yet, while some remain cautious about the transferability of qualitative findings it is nevertheless proposed that the provision of adequate detail enables the reader to decide for themselves whether the findings might be transferable to another setting or context.

7.7 Future Research

One of the main contributions of the current study was the inclusion of adolescent's voice about their experiences of role stress and existential stress. To further empower adolescents, future studies could adopt a co-design or participatory co-design methodology whereby participants act as co-researchers from the onset of the project. This ensures that the questions and the research approach taken is appropriate for an adolescent sample. Spinuzzi (2005) recommends using co-design or participatory design "to iteratively construct the emerging design, which itself simultaneously constitutes and elicits the research results as co-interpreted by the designer-researchers and the participants who will use the design" (p. 164). It is therefore recommended that these participants engage in co-analysing the data and presenting recommendations for policy and practice. It has long been recognised that they are the experts in matters that concern their lives therefore empowering them in this way is timely.

To further inform school policies, future research could consider the impact of role stress and existential stress on academic achievement in adolescent students by conducting the study within a school setting. In addition, including students from minority groups would also provide further

insights into role stress and/or existential stress; however, caution would need to be taken to ensure that the chosen scales are appropriate for diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Mixed method approach adopted in this study has proven to be worthwhile, future studies could employ other approaches such as longitudinal and experimental designs to understand the relationship of role stress and existential stress with emotional intelligence and wellbeing, thus allowing the development and fluctuations in the variables throughout adolescence to be tracked in a more dynamic manner (Carson et al., 2010). Also, the longitudinal design identifying reciprocal and dynamic relationship among role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing over a longer period of time is needed to investigate causality and the generalisability of the results (Farrington, 1991). Taken together, clearly more research needs to gain insight into the complexity of the relationship between role stress and existential stress experienced by cohorts of adolescents within their ecological environment to ultimately reveal the factors that can help adolescents to flourish.

7.8 Concluding Statement

As has been identified at the outset of this thesis, adolescence has been considered the healthiest period in one's life (Patton et al., 2016), and should be a period of opportunity as young people navigate life experiences, increase in independence, establish their identity and purpose in life. However, this healthy period is increasingly being challenged with growing concern of adolescent mental health in Australia with a reported increase of 11.8% between 2014-15 when compared to data collected in 2011 (ARACY, 2018); a trend that appears to be global. If we are to support adolescents and work to reduce these figures there is an urgent need to gain further insights into role stress and existential stress in adolescence.

Employing an explanatory sequential mixed method design, the current study has made a significant, somewhat unique contribution to the field of role stress and existential stress in adolescents. Importantly the overall self-report that on average adolescents in this study experienced moderate role stress, existential, stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing, signifies that while many may be faring quite well, there are a significant proportion that are not. Therefore, our responsibility is to support both adolescents who are not faring well and learn from and support others to sustain positive outcomes. As reflected in the Adolescent Wellbeing Model (refer Section 4.4), a significant bi-directional relationship was evident between role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing; that is that as role and existential stress increased, emotional intelligence and wellbeing decreased and conversely, as role and existential stress decreased, emotional intelligence and

wellbeing increased, something that was supported by the qualitative findings. Therefore, when addressing role stress or existential stress in adolescents we should no longer consider these four constructs independently rather acknowledge the complex interconnectedness that can inform future wellbeing policies and practices. As such it is argued that intervention and prevention programs aimed at reducing role stress and existential stress among adolescents should include efforts to promote emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

Likewise, support within only one of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems does not appear to be enough to protect an adolescent from role stress and existential stress; something that has implications for future practice. Thus, the implication is to form positive relationships beyond a single social domain such as parents or friends, rather engage adolescents in supportive relationships at home, school, and in the broader community. Therefore, an integrated preventative approach founded on community commitment and engagement across multiple ecological systems to support adolescent wellbeing is proposed aiming to minimise risk of role stress and existential stress. The components include supporting adolescents to: (1) *Look Within:* to develop self-awareness of their innermost feelings and foster confidence in their emotional intelligence to identify potential role and existential stress risk factors, and thereby empower them to engage protective factors of relevance to their needs; (2). *Look Outward:* engage with a range of microsystems including contributing to local community and society to strengthen mesosystem relationships and promote meaning and purpose in life; and (3) *Look Between*: recognise the bi-directional and complex interconnectedness between role stress, existential stress, emotional intelligence, and wellbeing, to inform more holistic approaches in supporting wellbeing.

Reducing and addressing role stress and existential stress is a community concern therefore a community-based capabilities approach is needed where support is provided within each of the adolescent's ecological systems. The strong interplay within and across these systems will provide support for the adolescent while also recognising and building on their strengths. As the old African proverb states: "It takes a village to raise a child".

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Appendices

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Appendix A: Participant information sheet for the pilot study

Title: Role stress and existential stress in adolescents: Relationship with emotional intelligence, academic achievement and wellbeing.

Researcher: Ajit Kaur
Tel:(+61) [redacted]
Email: ajit.kaur@mymail.unisa.edu.au

Supervisors: Dr Deborah Price Tel: (08) 83026326 Email: debbie.price@unisa.edu.au
Dr Deborah Green Tel: (08) 83024239 Email: deborah.green@unisa.edu.au

Dear students, parents/caregivers,

I am Ajit Kaur, a PhD student at the University of South Australia. You are invited to participate in a pilot study that aims to study role stress and existential stress in adolescents in years 8-12 and the potential relationship with their emotional intelligence, academic achievement and wellbeing. Role stress refers to a feeling of dissatisfaction regarding interactions or relationships with the individual's environment such as family, friends, peers, school and teachers. Existential stress refers to a feeling of meaninglessness or lack of purpose in life. Although researchers have studied the prevalence and psychological symptoms of role stress and existential stress in adolescence, little is known about the relationship that these stressors have with emotional intelligence and wellbeing in adolescence. The potential outcome of this study may provide adolescents, educators, parents/caregivers with a deeper understanding of these stressors and enhance adolescent's emotional intelligence (ability to perceive, regulate and utilize emotion in self and others) and self-regulation to promote their wellbeing.

This project has been approved by the Department for Education and Child Development and University of South Australia, Human Research Ethics Committee. However, if you have any concerns about the project or questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Executive Officer of the Ethics Committee of the University of South Australia on +61 883023118; email: vicki.allen@unisa.edu.au.

The pilot study will be conducted to refine survey and interview questions, to gain insights into how participants will respond to the questions, the time taken to complete the survey and interview and to inform the design of the final study. Adolescents will be invited to respond to the online survey which should take approximately 30 minutes and an audio-recorded interview which will take approximately 20 minutes. The interview will be conducted at a time and a location agreed on by you

and the researcher. No personal information will be collected about participants in the pilot study however this data may potentially be used for future research.

Participation in this study is voluntary and participants are free to decline or withdraw from the research project at any time without affecting their relationship with the researcher, the teachers, the school or the University of South Australia now or in the future. If you withdraw, the data you have provided prior to withdrawal will be destroyed and not used.

It is not expected that there are any risks associated with participation beyond those encountered during everyday life. However, if you feel some distress from participation in this study and answering questions you are free to avoid answering. If needed, help will be sought from local counsellors, psychologists, and mental health organisations. Contact details and website links of organisations that provide advice on mental health services will be provided on every page of online survey including Beyondblue service support- 1300224636, www.beyondblue.org.au; Headspace Youth Mental Health Foundation 1800650890, www.headspace.org.au. Contact details of the researcher will also be provided at the bottom of every page of the online survey.

All information will be kept strictly confidential and participation in this study will not influence student learning outcomes. No information which could lead to identification of any individual will be released, unless required by law. The research data will be stored at the University of South Australia, Mawson Lakes Campus, G4-06, in a locked cabinet. Electronic data will be exported, as soon as possible, from the online survey platform and will be stored for the period of 7 years on the University of South Australia's secure ICT infrastructure/computer servers. All paper files will be archived in secure storage in compliance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. The results of this study may be presented at professional meetings or published in a professional journal, you're your child's name and any other identifying information will not be revealed. If you are willing for your child to participate, and your child wants to participate, please sign below. If you have any immediate queries concerning the nature of the proposed study please contact my principal supervisor, Dr Deborah Price at Debbie.price@unisa.edu.au or on phone 08 8302 6326. Participants or third parties who wish to lodge a complaint about either the study or the way it is being conducted should contact the Executive Officer of UniSA HREC in the first instance, email: humanethics@unisa.edu.au or Tel: 8302 3118. At the end of research project, you will be provided with the copy of research report upon request.

Sincerely,

Ajit Kaur, PhD Candidate, University of South Australia

Appendix B: Consent form for pilot study

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any ethical concerns about the project or questions about your rights as a participant please contact the Executive Officer of this Committee, Tel: +61 8 8302 3118; Email: humanethics@unisa.edu.au

SECTION 1: CONTACT AND PROJECT DETAILS	
Researcher's Full Name:	Ajit Kaur
Contact Details:	+61 883025408
Supervisor's Full Name:	Dr. Deborah Price
Contact Details:	+61 883026326
Project Title:	Role stress and existential stress in adolescents: Relationship with emotional intelligence, academic achievement and wellbeing.

SECTION 2: CERTIFICATION

Participant Certification for pilot study

In signing this form, I confirm that:

- I have read the participant information sheet, and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me and to my child. My child understands and agrees to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the pilot study and my child's involvement in it.
- I understand that my child may not directly benefit by taking part in this research.
- I understand that my child is free to withdraw from the research project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied and this will not affect my child's status now or in the future.
- I understand my child's participation in the pilot study and my child will be free to avoid answering any question in the online survey or semi structured interview and may discontinue the study at any time.
- I agree, if required, that members of the research team may contact me again in order to request my child's participation in the main study.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, my child will not be identified, and my child's personal results will remain confidential unless required by law.
- I understand that access to data collected for this study will be strictly limited and the research data will be stored at the University of South Australia, Mawson Lakes Campus, G4-06, in a locked cabinet. Electronic data will be exported, as soon as

possible, from all online survey platforms, and will be stored for 7 years on the University of South Australia's secure ICT infrastructure/computer servers.

- I consent to my child being involved in this project.

Participant's Name	*Participant's signature*	*Parent/caregiver Name*	*Parent/caregiver signature*	*Date*

Researcher Certification		
I have explained the study to subject and consider that he/she understands what is involved.		
Researcher Signature	*Researcher Name*	*Date*

Appendix C: Participant information sheet for the online survey

Title: Role stress and existential stress in adolescents: Relationship with emotional intelligence and wellbeing

Researcher: Ajit Kaur
Tel:(+61) [redacted]
Email: ajit.kaur@mymail.unisa.edu.au

Supervisors: Dr Deborah Price Tel:(08) 83026326 Email: debbie.price@unisa.edu.au
Dr Deborah Green Tel:(08) 83024239 Email: deborah.green@unisa.edu.au

Dear Parents/caregivers/students,

I am Ajit Kaur, a PhD student at the University of South Australia. In today's climate adolescents often face many stressors which have an impact on their wellbeing. This study aims to provide adolescents, educators and parents/caregivers with a deeper understanding of stress and wellbeing in adolescents aged 13-19 years of age.

What will your participation in this study involve?
Students will be invited to participate in a 15–20-minute online survey. Participants who complete the survey may be invited to participate in a follow up interview of approximately 10-15 minutes.

What are the possible risks and benefits of taking part?
It is not expected that there are any risks associated with participation. Web links to organisations providing youth wellbeing and mental health support services will be provided on every page of the online survey.

Can I withdraw from the project?
Participation in this study is completely voluntary and participants are free to decline or withdraw from the research project at any time, without affecting their relationship with the researcher, or the University of South Australia now or in the future. Data provided prior to withdrawal will be destroyed. Participation in this study will not influence student learning outcomes.

Will taking part be confidential?
Individual's responses will be kept confidential by the researcher and participants will not be identified in the reporting of the research. No information which could lead to the identification of any individual will be released, unless required by law. However, the researcher cannot guarantee the confidentiality or anonymity of material transferred by email or the internet.

How will information you provide be recorded, stored and protected?
The research data will be stored at the University of South Australia, Mawson Lakes Campus, G4-06, in a locked cabinet. Electronic data will be exported, as soon as possible, from online survey platforms and audio recorder, and stored for 7 years on the University of South Australia's secure ICT infrastructure/computer servers. All paper files will be archived in secure storage in compliance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

What will happen to the results of the study?
The results of this study will be presented in professional meetings and publications. You will not be identified in any report or publication. Participants will be provided with either a copy of the final research report or a summary of the research findings upon request.

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?
The project has been approved by the Department for Education and Child Development and University of South Australia, Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any ethical concerns about the project or questions about your right as a participant please contact the Executive Officer of the Ethics Committee of the University of South Australia on telephone: +61 883023118; email: vicki.allen@unisa.edu.au or humanethics@unisa.edu.au . If you have any immediate queries concerning the nature of the proposed study please contact my Principal supervisor, Dr Deborah Price.

Thank you for considering this invitation. If you consent to your child's participation, and your child wants to participate, please send the attached signed consent form to school with your child.

Yours sincerely,
Ajit Kaur (PhD student, University of South Australia)

Appendix D: Consent form for online survey

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any ethical concerns about the project or questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Executive Officer of this Committee, Tel: +61 8 8302 3118; Email: humanethics@unisa.edu.au

SECTION 1: CONTACT AND PROJECT DETAILS

Researcher's Full Name:	Ajit Kaur
Contact Details:	+61 [redacted]
Supervisor's Full Name:	Dr. Deborah Price
Contact Details:	+61 883026326
Project Title:	Role stress and existential stress in adolescents: Relationship with emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

SECTION 2: CERTIFICATION

Participant Certification for online survey

In signing this form, I confirm that:

- I have read the participant information sheet, and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me and my child. My child understands and agrees to take part.
- I understand that my child may not directly benefit by taking part in this research.
- I understand that my child is free to withdraw from the research project at any time and can withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied and this will not affect my child's status now or in the future.
- I understand my child's participation in the online survey (approximately 15-20 minutes) and my child is free to avoid answering any question and may discontinue the survey at any time.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, my child will not be identified, and my child's personal results will remain confidential unless required by law.
- I understand that access to data collected for this study will be strictly limited and the research data will be stored at the University of South Australia, Mawson Lakes Campus, G4-06, in a locked cabinet. Electronic data will be exported, as soon as possible, and will be stored for the period of 7 years on the University of South Australia's secure ICT infrastructure/computer servers.
- I consent to my child being involved in this project.

Participant's Name	*Participant's signature*	*Parent/caregiver Name*	*Parent/caregiver signature*	*Date*
Researcher Certification				
I have explained the study to subject and consider that he/she understands what is involved.				
Researcher Signature	*Researcher Name*			*Date*

Appendix E: Participant information sheet for semi-structured interviews

Title: Role stress and Existential stress in Adolescents: Relationship with emotional intelligence and wellbeing

Researcher: Ajit Kaur
Tel:(+61) [redacted]
Email: ajit.kaur@mymail.unisa.edu.au

Supervisors: Dr Deborah Price Tel:(08) 83026326 Email: debbie.price@unisa.edu.au
Dr Deborah Green Tel: (08) 83024239 Email: deborah.green@unisa.edu.au

Dear Parents/caregivers/students,

I am Ajit Kaur, a PhD student at University of South Australia. In today's climate adolescents often face many stressors which have an impact on their wellbeing. This study aims to provide adolescents, educators, parents/caregivers with a deeper understanding of stress and wellbeing of adolescents aged 13-19 years.

What will your participation in this study involve?
Students will be invited to participate in a follow up interview of approximately 10-15 minutes. Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed by researcher.

What are the possible risks and benefits of taking part?
It is not expected that there are any risks associated with participation. However, if you feel some distress from participation in this study and answering questions you are free to avoid answering any questions or discontinue the interview at any time.

Can I withdraw from the project?
Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are free to decline or withdraw from the research project at any time, without affecting their relationship with the researcher, or the University of South Australia now or in the future. Data provided prior to withdrawal will be destroyed. Participation in this study will not influence student learning outcomes.

Will taking part be confidential?
Individuals' responses will be kept confidential by the researcher and participants will not be identified in the reporting of the research. No information which could lead to the identification of any individual will be released, unless required by law. However, the researcher cannot guarantee the confidentiality or anonymity of material transferred by email or the internet.

How will information you provide be recorded, stored and protected?
The research data will be stored at the University of South Australia, Mawson Lakes Campus, G4-06, in a locked cabinet. Electronic data will be exported, as soon as possible, from online survey platforms and audio recorder, and stored for 7 years on the University of South Australia's secure ICT infrastructure/computer servers. All paper files will be archived in secure storage in compliance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

What will happen to the results of the study?
The results of this study will be presented in professional meetings and publications. You will not be identified in any report or publication. Participants will be provided with either a copy of the final research report or summary of the research findings upon request

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?
The project has been approved by the 'Department for Education and Child Development' and 'University of South Australia, Human Research Ethics Committee'. If you have any ethics concerns about the project or questions about your right as a participant please contact the executive officer of the ethics committee of University of South Australia on Tel: +61 883023118; email: vicki.allen@unisa.edu.au or humanethics@unisa.edu.au . If you have any immediate queries concerning the nature of the proposed study please contact my Principal supervisor, Dr Deborah Price.

Yours sincerely, *Ajit Kaur (PhD student, University of South Australia)*

Appendix F: Consent form for semi-structured interviews

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any ethical concerns about the project or questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Executive Officer of this Committee, Tel: +61 8 8302 3118; Email: humanethics@unisa.edu.au

SECTION 1: CONTACT AND PROJECT DETAILS	
Researcher's Full Name:	Ajit Kaur
Contact Details:	+61 [redacted]
Supervisor's Full Name:	Dr. Deborah Price
Contact Details:	+61 883026326
Project Title:	Role stress and existential stress in adolescents: Relationship with emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

SECTION 2: CERTIFICATION

Participant Certification for follow up interview

In signing this form, I confirm that:

- I have read the participant information sheet, and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me and my child. My child understands and agrees to take part.
- I understand that my child may not directly benefit by taking part in this research.
- I understand that my child is free to withdraw from the research project at any time and can withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied and this will not affect my child's status now or in the future.
- I understand my child's participation in the follow up interview (approximately 10-15 minutes) and my child is free to avoid answering any question and may discontinue the interview at any time.
- I understand that interviews will be audio-recorded, and data will be transcribed by researcher into written English, with all names and personal identifiers removed.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, my child will not be identified, and my child's personal results will remain confidential unless required by law.
- I understand that access to data collected for this study will be strictly limited and the research data will be stored at the University of South Australia, Mawson Lakes Campus, G4-06, in a locked cabinet. Electronic data will be exported, as soon as

possible, and will be stored for the period of 7 years on the University of South Australia's secure ICT infrastructure/computer servers.

- I consent to my child being involved in this project.

Participant's Name	*Participant's signature*	*Parent/caregiver Name*	*Parent/caregiver signature*	*Date*

Researcher Certification		
I have explained the study to subject and consider that he/she understands what is involved.		
Researcher Signature	*Researcher Name*	*Date*

Appendix G: Flyer to recruit participants

SEEKING VOLUNTEERS FOR A RESEARCH STUDY

Adolescent Stress and Wellbeing

In today's climate adolescents often face many stressors which have an impact on their wellbeing. This study aims to provide adolescents, educators, parents/caregivers with a deeper understanding of stress and wellbeing of adolescents aged 13-19 years of age.

To participate in this research, you must:

Be a South Australian resident

- **Be aged between 13-19 years of age**
- **Be in year level 8-12**

Participation in this study involves:

- **15-20 minutes online survey**
- **10-15 minutes follow up interview**

If you are interested in participating, proceed to the consent form and survey through the link or QR code given below: -

https://unisaed.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4MCZkuz2c99u4cZ

To find out more information about this study, please contact:

- **Ajit Kaur (Research Student)**
- **Tel:** [redacted]
- **Email: ajit.kaur@mymail.unisa.edu.au**

This study has been approved by the University of South Australia, Human Research Ethics Committee.

Appendix H: Email to recruit participants

Subject: Invitation to participate in a research project: Role stress and existential stress in adolescents: Relationship with emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

Dear Parent/caregiver/student

My name is Ajit Kaur and I am a PhD student in the School of Education at the University of South Australia. I am working on a research project under the supervision of Dr. Deborah Price and Dr. Deborah Green.

I invite adolescents aged 13-19 years of age in year level 8-12 to participate in the research study. This study aims to provide adolescents, educators, parents/caregivers with a deeper understanding of stress and wellbeing of adolescents.

This voluntary study involves completing a 15-20 minute online survey. Based on the results obtained from the survey, a follow-up interview (approximately 10-15 mins) will be conducted with selected participants at a mutually agreed time and location. Thus, voluntary provision of your name and preferred contact number/email will be asked in the online survey. Participants are free to avoid answering any question and can withdraw from the survey anytime.

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee.

Your participation will be a valuable addition in contributing to greater understanding of stress and wellbeing in adolescents.

If you have an adolescent child and you consent to your child's participation, and your child wants to participate, proceed to the consent form and survey through the link given below: -

https://unisaed.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4MCZkuz2c99u4cZ

or scan the QR code

Feel free to forward this email to parents/carers/adolescents in your personal contacts. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

With Thanks,
Ajit Kaur
PhD student, University of South Australia.
Email: ajit.kaur@mymail.unisa.edu.au

Appendix I: Quantitative online survey

Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale-10 (Davies et al, 2010)

A short 10-item self-report Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) was developed by Davies et al., (2010). Findings from studies of the Emotional Intelligence Scale suggest that it provides a reliable and valid trait EI measure: test–retest and internal reliabilities are good and correlations with other measures have generally been found to be in accordance with theoretical expectations (Ciarrochi et al., 2001, Schutte et al., 1998).

Instructions: Indicate the extent to which each item applies to you using the following scale:

1= strongly disagree
2= disagree
3= neither disagree nor agree
4= agree
5= strongly agree

Appraisal of own emotions
1. I know why my emotions change.
2. I easily recognize my emotions as I experience them.

Appraisal of others' emotions
3. I can tell how people are feeling by listening to the tone of their voice
4. By looking at their facial expressions, I recognize the emotions people are experiencing.

Regulation of own emotions
5. I seek out activities that make me happy.
6. I have control over my emotions.

Regulation of others' emotions
7. I arrange events others enjoy.
8. I help other people feel better when they are down.

Utilisation of emotions
9. When I am in a positive mood, I am able to come up with new ideas.
10. I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles.

Role Stress scale (Liu & Kaplan, 2004)

The scale on role stress was designed to measure role stress by additive index of eight items. Each item is coded on a 3-point Likert scale 1 = happy, 2 = neither happy nor unhappy and 3 = unhappy. Higher scores indicate respondents are highly dissatisfied in these important areas of life while lower scores indicate that their stress levels are either low or absent.

How happy, niether happy nor unhappy, unhappy have you been about;

1. The number of friends you have
2. Kinds of friends you have
3. Being accepted or included by friends

4. Your relationship with your parents
5. Your relationship with you siblings
6. Your experience at school
7. Your relationship with teachers
8. Your relationship with peers

Purpose in Life test- Short Form Scale (Schulenberg et al., 2011)

This existence scale is a self-report questionnaire assessing the degree of personal fulfilment in one's existence. The test is based on Frank's Anthropological Theory (2006) on meaning in life. The test consists of 4 items with scores ranging from1 to 5. The maximum score that can be obtained by adding up the item values is 20. The total score is an index of the magnitude of the perception of meaning or purpose in one's life.

1. In life I have clear goals and aims
2. My personal existence is meaningful
3. In achieving life goals, I am progressing to complete fulfilment
4. I have full discovered a satisfying life purpose

Perceived Wellness Survey Scale (Adams, et al., 1997)

Perceived Wellness Survey Scale measures multiple dimensions simultaneously at various levels in them. It is unique and important for several reasons. Firstly, individual's subjective perceptions are valid indicators of future objective health. Secondly, various research studies support the importance of wellness perception. Thirdly, perception forms the basis of cognitive restructuring and lies at the core of several health theories and models (Rothmann & Ekkerd, 2007, p.36).

The following statements were designed to provide information about an individual's wellness perceptions. Please carefully and thoughtfully consider each statement, then select the one response option with which you most agree.

Psychological wellbeing

1. I am always optimistic about my future.
2. I rarely count on good things happening to me.
3. I always look on the bright side of things.
4. In the past, I have expected the best.
5. In the past, I hardly ever expected things to go my way.
6. Things will not work out the way I want them to in the future.

Emotional wellbeing

7. There have been times when I felt inferior to most of the people I knew.

8. In general, I feel confident about my abilities.
9. I sometimes think I am a worthless individual.
10. I am uncertain about my ability to do things well in the future.
11. I will always be secure with who I am.
12. In the past, I have felt sure of myself among strangers.

Social wellbeing

13. Members of my family come to me for support.
14. Sometimes I wonder if my family will really be there for me when I am in need.
15. My family has been available to support me in the past.
16. My friends know they can always confide in me and ask for advice.
17. In the past, I have not always had friends with whom I could share my joys and sorrows.
18. My friends will be there for me when I need help.

Physical wellbeing

19. My physical health has restricted me in the past.
20. My body seems to resist physical illness very well.
21. My physical health is excellent.
22. Compared to people I know, my past physical health has been excellent.
23. I expect my physical health to get worse.
24. I expect to always be physically healthy.

Spiritual wellbeing

25. I believe there is a real purpose for my life.
26. Life does not hold much future promise for me.
27. Sometimes I don't understand what life is all about.
28. I have felt in the past that my life was meaningless.
29. It seems that my life has always had purpose.
30. I feel a sense of mission about my future.

Intellectual wellbeing

31. I seek out activities that challenge me to think and reason.
32. I avoid activities which require me to concentrate.
33. Generally, I feel pleased with the amount of intellectual stimulation I receive in my daily life.
34. The amount of information that I process in a typical day is just about right for me (i.e., not too much and not too little).

35. In the past, I have generally found intellectual challenges to be viital to my overall well-being.
36. My life has often seemed void of positive mental stimulation.

Appendix J: Semi-structured interview schedule

Interview questions:

1. Tell me about yourself
    - As a friend, peer, student, son/daughter, community member
    - Your family background, your hobbies
    - How you perceive your current wellbeing

2. Tell me about your life goals
    - What support do you need to achieve it (what type of encouragement works for you)
    - What changes would you want in your life?
    - How does that (having/not having life goals) impact on your emotions?
    - How does that (having/not having life goals) impact on your wellbeing?

3. Describe your emotional disposition
    - What do you understand by your emotions?
    - How do you manage your emotions?
    - Are there time when you have been challenged by regulating your emotions? What happened?
    - Can you give me an example of a time when you managed your emotions really well or is there any time when you felt challenged to manage your emotions?

4. Tell me more about your family. What your family comprises of?
    - How do you think family is important in achieving your life goals?
    - How do you describe your relationship with each of your family members?
    - Are there any challenges when feel under pressure. Give me an example when you really feel that way? What did you do? How did you do?
    - What impact does it have on your emotions
    - How does that impact on your wellbeing?

5. Describe your relationship with your friends (Tell me more about your friends. Are they above your year level or below, are they inside or outside the school etc.?)
    - How do you think friends are important in achieving your life goals?
    - Have you had any challenges with your friendships (give me an example)?
    - What did you do? How did you do? How did you feel?
    - What impact does it have on your emotions?
    - How does that impact on your wellbeing?

6. Describe your relationship with your peers (Tell me more about your peers)
    - How do you think peers are important in achieving your life goals?
    - Have you had any challenges with your peers (give me an example)?
    - What did you do? How did you do? How did you feel?
    - What impact does it have on your emotions?
    - How does that impact on your wellbeing?

7. Describe your relationship with your school. How do you feel at school? What makes you feel that way? Are there times when you don't feel that way? What are the resons behind that?
    - What impact does it have on your emotions?
    - How does that impact on your wellbeing?
    - Describe your relationship with your teachers (Give me an example of positive or negative relationship). Are there any challenges ? How that makes you feel? How that makes you respond?(What impact does it have on your emotions? How does that impact on your wellbeing?

8. What community group(s) are you involved in and why?
    - What impact does it have on your emotions?
    - How does that impact on your wellbeing?

Appendix K: Human Research Ethics Committee approval

Human Ethics: Application approved

no_reply@unisa.edu.au
Mon 27/11/2017 11:56 AM
To: humanethics@unisa.edu.au <humanethics@unisa.edu.au>; Ajit Kaur, - kauay036 <ajit.kaur@mymail.unisa.edu.au>; Debbie Price <Debbie.Price@unisa.edu.au>

Dear Applicant

Re: Ethics protocol "Role stress and existential stress in adolescents: Relationship with emotional intelligence, academic achievement and wellbeing." (Application ID: 200131)

Thank you for submitting your ethics protocol for consideration. Your protocol has been considered by the E2 Committee Review Group.

I am pleased to advise that your protocol has been granted ethics approval and meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

Please note that the E2 Committee Review Group's decision will be reported to the next meeting of the Human Research Ethics Committee for endorsement.

Please regard this email as formal notification of approval.

Ethics approval is always made on the basis of a number of conditions detailed at http://www.unisa.edu.au/res/forms/docs/humanresearchethics_conditions.doc; it is important that you are familiar with, and abide by, these conditions. It is also essential that you conduct all research according to UniSA guidelines, which can be found at http://www.unisa.edu.au/res/ethics/default.asp

Please note, if your project is a clinical trial you are required to register it in a publicly accessible trials registry prior to enrolment of the first participant (e.g. Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry http://www.anzctr.org.au/) as a condition of ethics approval.

Best wishes for your research.

Executive Officer
UniSA's Human Research Ethics Committee
CRICOS provider number 00121B

This is an automated email and cannot be replied to. Please direct your query to humanethics@unisa.edu.au.

Appendix L: Human Research Ethics Committee protocol amendment approval 1

Amendment request approved 200131

Human Ethics <humanethics@unisa.edu.au>
Mon 11/06/2018 1:08 PM

To: Ajit Kaur, - kauay036 <ajit.kaur@mymail.unisa.edu.au>
Cc: Debbie Price <Debbie.Price@unisa.edu.au>; Deborah Green <Deborah.Green@unisa.edu.au>

2 attachments (47 KB)
New participant-information-sheet (1).docx; Original Information sheet for participation for online survey.docx;

Dear Ajit,

Re: Ethics Protocol 200131 "Role stress and existential stress in adolescents: Relationship with emotional intelligence, academic achievement and wellbeing."

Thank you for submitting an ethics protocol amendment request. I am pleased to advise that the ECO of the University's Human Research Ethics Committee has assessed and **approved** your request, as detailed in your email dated 29/05/2018 to update the participant information sheets. Please note that some additional corrects are required, once made please send a copy to humanethics@unisa.edu.au so we can save it on your ethics file.

- Correct the first sentence under the heading. "What are the possible risks and benefits of taking part?" by adding the following phrase at the end of the sentence: "... beyond those encountered during everyday life."
- Correct the spelling of the word "rights" in the second sentence under the heading, "What if I have a complaint or any concerns".
- Add how much time is participation involves.

Please regard this email as formal notification of approval.

We wish you well with the research and look forward to reading your progress updates.

Kind regards,

Tori Brown | Administrator | Research Ethics and Integrity
University of South Australia | Mawson Lakes Campus | Mawson Lakes SA 5095
GPO Box 2471 | Adelaide | South Australia 5001
Ph: +61 8 8302 6330 | Fax: +61 8 8302 3921 | Email: tori.brown@unisa.edu.au

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From: Vicki Allen
Sent: Tuesday, 12 June 2018 9:43 AM
To: Human Ethics <humanethics@unisa.edu.au>
Subject: FW: Regarding approval of updated information sheet

Hi Tori

The revised Participant Information Sheet is approved provided that the following corrections are made. Please advise the researcher and supervisor and update RM and sharepoint.

Thank you, Vicki

- Correct the first sentence under the heading. "What are the possible risks and benefits of taking part?" by adding the following phrase at the end of the sentence: "... beyond those encountered during everyday life."
- Correct the spelling of the word "rights" in the second sentence under the heading, "What if I have a complaint or any concerns".

Appendix M: Human Research Ethics Committee protocol amendment approval 2

Variation to original protocol approved - Ethics Protocol 200131

Human Ethics <humanethics@unisa.edu.au>

Sun 9/09/2018 12:31 PM

To:Ajit Kaur, - kauay036 <ajit.kaur@mymail.unisa.edu.au>;

Importance: High

1 attachments (33 KB)

HREC conditions.pdf;

Dear Ajit

Re: Ethics Protocol 200131 – "Re: Ethics Protocol 200131 – 'Role stress and existential stress in adolescents: Relationship with emotional intelligence, academic achievement and wellbeing"

Thank you for submitting an ethics protocol amendment request and apologies for the delay in providing you with this feedback. I am pleased to advise that the Chairperson of the University's Human Research Ethics Committee has assessed and approved the following requests (as detailed in your email dated 28 August 2018):

1) to note that the interim and final academic grades of adolescent students will no longer be collected
2) for the removal of references to 'academic achievement' from the study protocol and the research title in line with this change (i.e. – to update the title to *"Role stress and existential stress in adolescents: Relationship with emotional intelligence and wellbeing"*
3) to amend the recruitment strategy to target adolescents aged 13-19 years in years 8-12 using the techniques detailed in the attached Protocol Amendment Form
4) to have participants' parents/guardians provide consent for the survey component at the beginning of the online survey form and to seek further consent for the follow-up interview separately (as detailed in the Protocol Amendment Form)
5) for inclusion of the recruitment flyer and recruitment email templates, the updated Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form for the survey, and the new Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form for the follow-up interviews (as provided)

Please regard this email as formal notification of approval. Please note that this amendment is approved on the condition that the researcher obtains permission from the relevant sites (including from an appropriate authority within the school sites and the Department for Education, South Australia) before promoting the study and recruiting within that site.

Ethics approval is always made on the basis of a number of conditions detailed in the attachment; it is important that you are familiar with, and abide by, these conditions. It is also essential that you conduct all research according to UniSA guidelines, which can be found at http://www.unisa.edu.au/res/ethics/default.asp

Best wishes for your research.

Kind regards

Abbie

Abbie Cawley| Administrator Research Ethics and Integrity| Research and Innovation Services
University of South Australia | Mawson Lakes Campus | Mawson Lakes SA 5095
Ph: +61 8 8302 6330 | Fax: +61 8 8302 3921 | Email: Abbie.Cawley@unisa.edu.au

Appendix N: Human Research Ethics Committee protocol amendment approval 3

Amendment Approval - Ethics Protocol 200131

Human Ethics <humanethics@unisa.edu.au>
Sun 18/11/2018 3:21 PM
To: Ajit Kaur, - kauay036 <ajit.kaur@mymail.unisa.edu.au>
Cc: Debbie Price <Debbie.Price@unisa.edu.au>; Deborah Green <Deborah.Green@unisa.edu.au>

1 attachments (37 KB)
HREC conditions.pdf;

Dear Ajit

Ethics Protocol 200131 Role stress and existential stress in adolescents: Relationship with emotional intelligence and wellbeing

Thank you for submitting an ethics protocol amendment request. I am pleased to advise that the HREC Chair, UniSA, has assessed and approved the request (as detailed in your email):

1. To seek further approval to recruit participants through social media.
   In addition to amended recruitment methods (approved 10/9/18, attached), the researcher seeks to use of the 'social media' platforms of Facebook, Instagram, Linkedin and Twitter.

Please regard this email as formal notification of approval. This approval is on the condition that the administrator responsible for the site(s) provides permission to place recruitment material on the social media site(s). Please forward a copy of relevant written permissions to humanethics@unisa.edu.au

Ethics approval is always made on the basis of a number of conditions detailed in the attachment; it is important that you are familiar with, and abide by, these conditions. It is also essential that you conduct all research according to UniSA guidelines, which can be found at http://www.unisa.edu.au/res/ethics/default.asp

Best wishes for the continuation of your research.

Kind Regards

Suzette Rawady | Research Ethics and Integrity | Research and Innovation Services
University of South Australia | Mawson Lakes Campus | Mawson Lakes SA 5095
Ph: +61 8 8302 6330 | Fax: +61 8 8302 3921 | Email: humanethics@unisa.edu.au

University of South Australia

CRICOS Provider no 00121B
This email is intended solely for the use of the addressee and may contain information that is confidential or privileged.
If you receive this email in error please notify the sender and delete the email immediately.

From: Human Ethics
Sent: Monday, 19 November 2018 10:25 AM
To: Ajit Kaur, - kauay036 <ajit.kaur@mymail.unisa.edu.au>
Cc: Debbie Price <Debbie.Price@unisa.edu.au>; Deborah Green <Deborah.Green@unisa.edu.au>
Subject: Amendment Request - Ethics Protocol 200131

Dear Ajit

Your amendment request has been forwarded to the Human Research Ethics Committee Chair, who will review this within five business days. Please contact humanethics@unisa.edu.au if you have not received an update within this time frame.

Appendix O: Department for Education and Child Development approval

Government of South Australia
Department for Education and Child Development

System Performance
31 Flinders Street
Adelaide SA 5000
GPO Box 1152
Adelaide SA 5001
DX 34
tel +61 8 8226 [redacted]
DECD.ResearchUnit@sa.gov.au
www.decd.sa.gov.au

Reference No: CS/17/000750-1.16

Mrs Ajit Kaur
University of South Australia
[redacted]

Dear Mrs Kaur

Your research project *"Role stress and existential stress in adolescents: Relationship with emotional intelligence, academic achievement and wellbeing"* has been reviewed by a senior officer within our department.

I am pleased to advise you that your application has been approved, subject to the following conditions:

- That a copy of any final reports, presentations or manuscripts accepted for publication be submitted to the DECD.ResearchUnit@sa.gov.au mailbox 30 days prior to their publication.
- That DECD is notified when findings are to be released to other government or nongovernment agencies or to participating schools.
- That only two schools are approached to participate in the study and that additional schools are not approached without approval of the research design by DECD.
- That the letter to school principals states clearly that the school's staff will be responsible for distributing and collecting consent forms and information sheets from parents since the contact details of the parents cannot be provided to the University of South Australia without the parents' consent.
- That the consent forms and information sheets are carefully edited prior to being sent to the schools for distribution and updated copies sent to DECD for our records. As part of these edits DECD should be referenced as the Department for Education and Child Development (in some places it is referred to as the "Department of..." and in another place simply as the "Department of Education". In addition, DECD does not have a formal Human Research Ethics Committee – materials sent to schools and parents should not suggest that DECD provided 'Ethics approval'.

Please contact Betty Curzons in the Business Intelligence Unit for any other matters you may wish to discuss regarding your application (Tel. (08) 8226 0809 or email: DECD.ResearchUnit@sa.gov.au).

I wish you well with your research.

[redacted]

Ben Temperly
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

15 / 3 / 2018

Appendix P: Email to Head of School, School of Education (now Education Futures), University of South Australia

Subject: Request for approval regarding research study

Dear Professor Graham Hardy,

I am Ajit Kaur, a doctorate student at the University of South Australia, who is supervised by Dr Deborah Price and Dr Deborah Green.

I am writing to seek your approval to send an email to all students enrolled in the School of Education inviting them or their children to participate in my research. The invitation is also extended to other adolescents that our pre-service teachers know. I am also seeking permission to post recruitment flyers in School of Education at Magill and Mawson Lakes campus.

About my research study: -

In today's climate, adolescents often face many stressors which have a significant impact on their wellbeing. My research therefore aims to explore the relationship between role and existential stress, emotional intelligence and wellbeing of adolescents aged 13-19 years. This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee.

I have attached the following documents: -

1. Ethics committee approval letter
2. Email to send to students of School of Education
3. Participant information sheet for online survey and follow up interview
4. Copy of survey and interview questions

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you in advance for your support in this matter.

Kind Regards,

Ajit Kaur
PhD student, University of South Australia.
Email: ajit.kaur@mymail.unisa.edu.au