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Flourish: The impact of an intergenerational program on third-grade students' social and emotional wellbeing with application to the PERMA Framework

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> *the role that a well-planned inter-generational program can play in … enabling students to experience meaning and joy … serving others; and enhancing student self-efficacy.*

Abstract

Intergenerational programs are increasingly being recognised as a means of promoting wellbeing through connecting communities, promoting caring relationships, and combating loneliness and isolation. While existing research provides evidence of the positive benefits of intergenerational programs for the elderly, there is limited research on the impact that these programs have on children's wellbeing. The aim of this study was to measure the impact of the intergenerational program, 'Flourish', on student social and emotional wellbeing.

The study was conducted on 20 third-grade students from Noosa Christian College who participated in the Flourish Program over a six-month period. A mixed-method, qualitative and quantitative research design consisting of questionnaires and reflective journals was applied. Martin Seligman's (2011) PERMA model provided a functional framework to measure student wellbeing within the elements of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. Quantitative data indicated a significant difference in the elements of relationships, meaning and accomplishment. These findings were supported by qualitative data which additionally showed strong indication of the positive emotion element and the role it plays in the engagement of participants. The positive emotion element was also found to permeate across each of the other four PERMA elements.

Results emerging from this study highlight the role that a well-planned intergenerational program can play in providing positive experiences and interactions; creating caring and connected communities; enabling students to experience meaning and joy associated with serving others; and enhancing student self-efficacy. This study also draws attention to the essential role that both hedonic and eudaimonic facets play in promoting wellbeing and flourishing. Findings underscore the importance of implementing regular, scheduled visits with activities that focus on positive experiences and outcomes that actively engage all participants.

Introduction

The rapidly changing 21st century has resulted

in shifts in lifestyles, living conditions, families, relationships, and methods of communication. These changes have had a direct impact on individuals, families and communities. Although material wealth and access to services have improved substantially in developed countries, there has not been a corresponding increase in life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing, but rather, a rise in depression, anxiety and distress (Forgeard et al., 2011; Post, 2005). This increase is reflected in Australia's young people with around one in seven primary school aged children and one quarter of secondary school aged children experiencing mental health problems (Lawrence et al., 2015). In response to this wellbeing crisis, the Australian Government has injected funding into the development of wellbeing resources and programs such as Headspace, Mind Matters and Beyond Blue (Scott & Kearney, 2018). Schools play a pivotal role in implementing initiatives and programs that aim to increase wellbeing and resilience in children, preparing them socially and emotionally for learning and living in the 21st century (Gregory & Brinkman, 2015; MCEETYA, 2008; Waters, 2011). The implementation of wellbeing initiatives in schools has a flow on effect, positively impacting on academic engagement and achievement by enabling students to experience a sense of purpose and connectedness to people and the world around them (Noble et al., 2008).

This study focuses on the implementation of the Flourish Program, an intergenerational program which was developed to positively impact student wellbeing in a third-grade classroom.

What is wellbeing?

Defining wellbeing is challenging due to its complex and abstract construct, which involves both feeling good and functioning well (Dodge et al., 2012; Kern et al., 2015). A hedonic perspective of wellbeing focuses on happiness, defining wellbeing in terms of deriving pleasure and avoiding pain, whereas a eudaimonic perspective focuses on meaning, self-realisation, competence and social-connectedness (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Research (McMahan & Estes, 2011) shows that although both hedonic and eudaimonic dimensions are associated with wellbeing, the eudaimonic dimension has a stronger association. Allin & Hand (2014) point out that in most cases, definitions of wellbeing are merely descriptions of what wellbeing looks like. For the purpose of this study, social and emotional wellbeing is defined as:

A dynamic state, in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong, positive relationships with others, and contribute to their community. It is enhanced when an individual is able to fulfil their personal and societal goals and achieve a sense of purpose in society
(UK Government Office for Science, 2009 cited in Allin & Hand, 2014, p. 117).

Positive psychology defines wellbeing in terms of describing aspects of positive affect that can be measured, rather than focusing on the absence of negative affect such as depression or loneliness (Butler & Kern, 2016). The term 'flourish' is used to describe human functioning that is thriving, resilient, generative, socially-connected and fulfilling (Butler & Kern, 2016; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). Flourishing describes a state that is achieved through the integration of hedonic and eudaimonic facets (Henderson & Knight, 2012), and engagement in valued activities (Bhullar et al., 2013). Due to the multi-dimensional nature of wellbeing, it is more readily measured using various aspects rather than a single measure. Research (Kern et al., 2015) supports Seligman's (2011) PERMA model as a multi-dimensional approach to measuring wellbeing within a school context.

The PERMA model

In this study, the PERMA model provides the framework to conceptualise, clarify and measure student wellbeing. This research supported approach to measuring wellbeing focuses on the five elements: Positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (PERMA) as aspects that contribute toward individuals flourishing.

The first element of the PERMA model, positive emotion, includes states of happiness, pleasure, rapture, warmth, peace and other pleasant emotions (Seligman, 2011). Experiencing positive emotions enhances an individual's ability for optimistic outlook, leading to positive reactions to others and activities, as well as general positive moods like joy or contentment (Noble et al., 2008). Exposure to positive emotion also acts as a contagion and research (Fowler & Christakis, 2008) indicates that people who are surrounded by happy people tend to become happier themselves. Furthermore, positive events can be a catalyst for growth by signalling a more meaningful and purposeful life, increased self-esteem; spiritual development; and more effective relationships (Roepke, 2013). Positive emotions may propel individuals towards greater capacity for creativity, resilience, knowledge, and social integration, as well as enhance overall health and wellbeing (Fredrickson, 2004).

Engagement, the second PERMA element,

imple-mentation of wellbeing initiatives in schools has a flow on effect, … enabling students to experience a sense of purpose and connected-ness

refs to psychological connection to activities or groups and how interested or absorbed one is when participating in an activity or event (Kern et al., 2015). Students are reported to show higher levels of participation and engagement when they have opportunity to participate in challenging yet manageable activities which make use of their intellectual or character strengths (Noble & McGrath, 2010). During engagement, when an individual is operating at full capacity, a state of flow is achieved (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009), leading to feelings of pleasure, mastery and personal satisfaction.

The third element of PERMA, relationships, pertains to being part of a community and having close and meaningful connections with others (Kern et al., 2015). Roffey (2011) defines connectedness as "a sense of belonging to a community, a feeling that you matter, and that your contributions are valued, and others care about you" (p.15). Good relationships are linked to happiness, resilience, and quality of life (Walsh, 2011). Social and emotional skills are positively linked to wellbeing. These skills enable individuals to get along with others, work cooperatively, show empathy, manage conflict, share, and develop and maintain friendships (Noble et al., 2008).

The meaning PERMA element refers to a state where individuals have a sense of belonging to and contributing to a purposeful endeavour that is greater than self. Pathways to wellbeing include civic participation where students are given opportunity to participate in and contribute to school and community projects as well as service learning, which assists students to develop a sense of meaning and purpose (Noble et al., 2008). Knight (2016) points out that Christian education assists students to "unwrap their God-given gifts" (p. 77) and use these gifts for service to others. Contribution and service to others are essential elements of joyful living (White, 1909) and the "paradox of happiness" (Walsh, 2011), is that when individuals spend time and resources on others, they in turn become happier and an "uplifting influence brings new life to the whole being" (White, 1909, p. 257).

The final PERMA element, accomplishment, deals with experiencing success, achieving or completing a task or attaining a desired goal. An individual's self-efficacy impacts on motivation, achievement, accomplishment and wellbeing (Fishman & Husman, 2017). Schools play an important role in providing a variety of opportunities and diverse activities that help students to explore weaknesses and areas of low efficacy, and to utilise strengths. When individuals are able to identify

> "
> *Christian education assists student to 'unwrap their God-given gifts' and use these gifts for service to others*
> "

and use strength areas, doing what they naturally do best, they have a sense of control, mastery and autonomy which has a positive impact on wellbeing (Noble et al., 2008).

Experiential service learning

Service learning is an experiential form of education that provides an engaging and meaningful way of fulfilling community needs while supporting students to develop socially and become part of something bigger than themselves (Freeman & King, 2001). According to Fair and Delaphane (2015), "Service learning differs from community service in that academic curriculum accompanies service learning as teachers incorporate the experience into class curricula and assign directed reflective writings" (p. 19). Reflective practice (Celio et al., 2011), and strong community partnerships with shared goals (Karasik & Wallingford, 2007) are important for fostering student growth and monitoring the effectiveness of the program. Researchers (Pretty et al., 2006) report that individuals who are engaged in "meaningful social contact and positive social cohesion" (p. 9), where they are belong to and are able to make contributions which impact positively on a community, show increased levels of health and wellbeing. Similarly, research (Post, 2005) indicates a strong correlation between regulated altruistic behaviours and emotions, and individuals' happiness, health, longevity and wellbeing. Service to others is central to the educative process in Adventist schools, as it "help[s] students to not only internalize God's love but also to externalize it" (Knight, 2016, p. 77-8).

Intergenerational programs

Radford et al., (2016) describe an intergenerational program as "the purposeful bringing together of younger and older people for their mutual benefit through activities aimed at meeting specific life goals" (p. 120). Such programs are beneficial for developing prosocial behaviours in children, forming positive relationships and promoting wellbeing in all participants (Radford et al., 2016). Internationally, a shift has been made towards localised and ongoing intergenerational programs which serve the purpose of bringing the young and old together. These programs range from playgroups and child-care centres to college classrooms with a growing number of these programs occurring at integrated facilities to allow maximum interaction between the generations (Skropeta et al., 2014). Effective intergenerational programs are characterised by components that promote participant engagement. These components include provision of a shared, accessible space for participants of all ages; a

consistent schedule; open-ended activities that give emphasis to the process rather than the product; intentional facilitation of cross-age interactions; and observational evidence which informs the planning of future activities and is shared with the families of participants (Epstein & Boisvert, 2006).

On the Australian scene, intergenerational programs are still in their infancy, with the current trend being one of segregation between facilities, and programs according to age (Radford et al., 2016). There has been a shift, however, towards implementation of intergenerational playgroups in aged care facilities, particularly in the states of Victoria and New South Wales (Cartmel et al., 2018). Griffith University, in Queensland, recently trialled the implementation of intergenerational programs across four research sites with positive results for all participants and a raised community awareness of these benefits (Moriarty, 2018; Marshall, 2019). There is research support that successful programs have mutual benefits for both young and elderly participants (Fair & Delaphane, 2014; Hagert, 2017; Karasik & Wallingford, 2007; Schwalback & Kiernan, 2002; Skropeta et al., 2014; Thompson & Weaver, 2016). Studies of intergenerational programs have focused on children's perceptions of aging or children's attitudes towards the elderly (Cumming et al., 2002; Newman et al., 1997; Penick et al., 2014; Pinquart et al., 2000); the contribution to the wellbeing of the elderly (Belgrave, 2011; Thompson & Weaver, 2016) and intergenerational programs as an intervention strategy to reduce the risk of child delinquency (Whitten et al., 2017).

There is a lack of documented research regarding the effectiveness of intergenerational programs on children's wellbeing. The aim of this study is to determine the Flourish Program's effectiveness in promoting social and emotional wellbeing in third-grade students. It is hypothesised that student social and emotional wellbeing will be enhanced as a result of participation in this experiential, intergenerational program.

Methodology

The Flourish Program is an intergenerational program which was developed for a third-grade classroom The program seeks to promote student wellbeing through participation in service-learning activities, linking the students with elderly residents at an aged-care facility located within close proximity to the college. Each fortnight, after initial preparation in the classroom, the third-grade children were involved in visits to an aged-care facility for ninety minutes which provided opportunities for them to participate in

activities designed to promote interaction between generations, build relationships and generate positive emotions. Program activities included singing, craft, dance, games, reading, along with other activities that involved learning and sharing together.

The program is underpinned by Adventist Education's ultimate aim of preparing students for service to God and others, as it is through service to others that joy and highest education is found (Knight, 2016; White, 1952).The Flourish Program implements Positive Educational Practices (PEPs) (Noble & McGrath, 2010) as pathways to wellbeing which include: developing social and emotional skills; building positive relationships; promoting and enhancing positive emotions; using a strength-based approach; and nurturing a sense of meaning and purpose.

Participants

The study involved 20 third-grade students (male n=6; female n=14), aged 7-9 years. These children were predominantly from middle class socioeconomic backgrounds.

Research design

A mixed-method design was used for this study. Denscombe (1998) states: "The multi-method approach allows findings to be corroborated or questioned by comparing the data produced by different methods" (p. 85). Quantitative and qualitative data was collected concurrently using an embedded design which allows one form of data to support the other form of data (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the quantitative data determined whether the Flourish Program made an impact on student wellbeing, and the qualitative data explained how the program impacted on wellbeing. Using a mixed methods design enables the strength of one method to counteract the weakness in the other method (Creswell, 2014), and enhances the validity of the findings through triangulation (Descombe, 1998).

Data collection

Seligman's PERMA theory (2011) underpinned both quantitative and qualitative data collection, providing a tested framework as a springboard. Veal (2005) proposes that the researcher sources and examines existing research, using this to inform the questionnaire design process. A quantitative component, consisting of a questionnaire was constructed, based on Seligman's (2011) PERMA theory in combination with the EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Wellbeing (Gregory & Brinkman, 2015) to make it more developmentally appropriate. Responses to the questions were based on a Likert

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Table 1: Questionnaire Examples

PERMA Element	Question
Positive Emotion	I enjoy participating in the Flourish Program I am comfortable about spending time with elderly people I am happy when I am around the elderly people
Engagement	I enjoy being with the elderly people so much that I forget about time I share ideas about activities I would like to do at Minodus[1] I get so involved in the activities at Minodus that I forget about everything else
Relationships	I think about other people's feelings before I do or say something I can make friends at Minodus I am uncomfortable when I am around people who are different to me There are people at Minodus who care about me
Meaning	I actively contribute to the happiness of elderly people to make their life better. I feel that visiting Minodus is valuable and worthwhile I am able to contribute to my local community
Accomplishment	I work hard to master things that are difficult for me to do At Minodus, I am making a positive difference in somebody's life I have strengths and talents that I can use to make the world a better place

> *The initial questionnaire was administered … before the commencement … [then] four months later, and a third time six months after the initial survey.*

5-point attitudinal scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Due to the age-group being researched (7-9 year olds), emojis were used to assist students when using the scale.

The initial questionnaire was administered to students before the commencement of the Flourish Program. Students were surveyed four months later, and a third time six months after the initial survey. Kumar (2011) states that pre-test/post-test study designs are effective for measuring change and "is the most appropriate design for measuring the impact or effectiveness of a programme" (p. 107). The questionnaire was comprised of 16 questions based on the dimensions of Seligman's (2011) PERMA model, as shown in Table 1.

The applicability of the PERMA elements scales for this context was evaluated by generating the internal reliability using Cronbach's alpha for each PERMA element, as shown in Table 2. These alpha values suggest that the use of the PERMA element scale is appropriate for this preliminary research data (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) however low reliabilities for both Relationships and Accomplishment means that readers should keep outcomes associated with these variables in context.

In order to obtain richer interpretation of data,

[1]Minodus is a pseudonym for the aged care facility visited.

Table 2: Internal Reliability of PERMA Elements Scales

PERMA Element	Cronbach Alpha
Positive Emotion	.804
Engagement	.776
Relationships	.510
Meaning	.602
Accomplishment	.482

qualitative data in the form of journal entries, was used in addition to the questionnaire. After each visit to Minodus, students completed a reflective journal entry outlining their experiences, understandings, and growth (Fair & Delaphane, 2015). Cress et al. (2005) state: "Effective reflection involves pushing ourselves out of our comfort zones to make new connections between concepts and to think in new ways" (p. 111). In addition to highlighting these areas, guided reflection gave students a means of developing emotional

awareness through assisting them to recognise social and emotional growth as well as personal strengths and weaknesses.

Data analysis

An analysis of the questionnaire responses was conducted to determine if changes in the five PERMA elements (Seligman, 2011) occurred from baseline to post-intervention. A one-way ANOVA test was performed to determine if there was significant variance between the baseline and subsequent post-tests.

Qualitative data was obtained from analysing students' reflective journal entries according to the general principles of thematic analysis. The journal entries were initially deductively analysed and categorised according to the five PERMA elements. This directed analysis approach allowed the initial coding of data to be guided by a pre-existing framework or theory (Hashemnezhad, 2015; Zhange & Wildemuth, 2009). The data was then inductively analysed and reduced to ideas and understandings which provided further meaningful themes from which conclusions were drawn.

Results

Data obtained from the administration of questionnaires at intervals over a six-month period described an overall upward trend for the Year 3 group (n = 20) for each of the PERMA elements: positive emotion, engagement, relationships,

meaning and accomplishment as shown in Figure 1.

Results of the one way ANOVA test indicated a significant difference between the pre-test and subsequent post-tests, at the < 0.05 level, for the elements of Relationship, $F_{(2,57)} = 4.757$, p = .012; Meaning $F(2,57 = 8.900$, p = 0.000; and Accomplishment, $F_{(2,57)} = 8.288$, p = 0.001. There was no significant difference for Positive Emotions and Engagement.

Data analysis of journal entries identified and correlated key themes, providing a richer description of student experiences and understandings. A total of 113 statements, words, phrases and sentences were colour-coded according to the five PERMA elements. Following this, 15 themes were inductively identified (italicised in discussion following) and these themes enabled a depth of understanding as to how the Flourish Program impacted on student social and emotional wellbeing within the PERMA framework.

PERMA element: Positive emotion

Positive emotion was the most frequently identified element of the PERMA model in this study. Themes pertaining to this element included *self-happiness, an all-round happy experience, happiness of the elderly, positivity towards the elderly and positivity towards the program*. Students reported feelings of happiness, excitement, and joy which was evidenced by smiles, laughter, singing and happy social interaction.

> *Results … indicated a significant difference between the pre-test and subsequent post-tests for … Relationship, … Meaning … and Accomplishment*
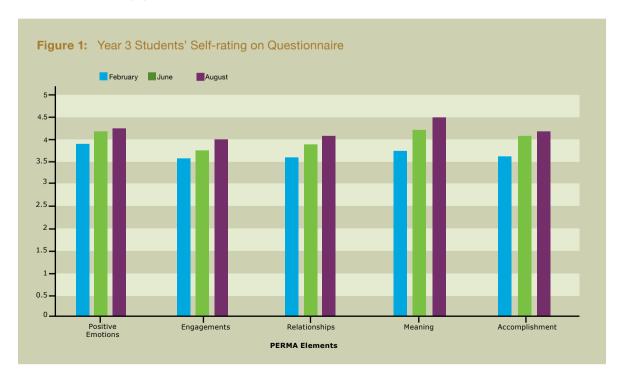
Figure 1: Year 3 Students' Self-rating on Questionnaire

Table 3: PERMA Elements and Identified Themes

Positive Emotion	Engagement	Relationships	Meaning	Accomplishment
38 Statements 5 Themes	18 Statements 3 Themes	23 Statements 3 Themes	17 Statements 2 Themes	17 Statements 2 Themes
Happiness (self) 6 Happy Experience 4 Happiness (elderly) 9 Positive to Elderly 7 Positive to Program 12	Engaging activities 5 Interactive activities 7 Fun 6	Caring relationships 10 Friendships 9 Togetherness 4	Contributing to others 11 Sense of purpose 6	Personal Development 11 Increased confidence 6

*Out of a total of 113 statements, 15 PERMA sub themes were identified.

> **"**
> *Going there has made me a lot happier in my life... I think whenever we go to the old people's home it is a happy day for me.* **"**

Going there has made me a lot happier in my life… I think whenever we go to the old people's home it is a happy day for me. (Participant 2)

They smile when we sing and dance. When we enter in the door they are always happy and smiling at us. And it is really amazing and it brightens up their faces. When we go (to Minodus) we all feel excited. (Participant 19)

I really enjoyed my time at the nursing home because they smiled and sang along. They were more happy because we came and made them be more happier and more excited for the next time. (Participant 6)

Students noted the happiness that the elderly people derived from participating in the program and attributed their own happiness to be a by-product of observing other people's happiness.

Today what made me smile was Joyce smiling and singing. (Participant 2)

I feel happy because they smile at me and it makes me happy. (Participant 9)

Positivity was also expressed towards the elderly people, with students commenting on pleasure derived from spending time with them and delight that they were fun to be with. The people are amazing and fun. (Participant 1)

Being with the old people is good. (Participant 3)

I love going to Minodus to see the old people. (Participant 16)

Optimistic feelings towards the program was most notable, with students expressing amazement and surprise at the positive outcomes and the benefits for participants.

It's amazing. The best thing the students have done in year 3 is the Flourish Program. (Participant 18)

The Flourish program makes a difference because the students can sit next to the old people and talk to them to make a smile, show something so they can get interested. It is amazing how the Flourish program can make a difference to everybody. (Participant 11)

PERMA element: Engagement

Thematic analysis of the engagement element revealed activities that were *interactive*, *engaging* and *fun* as being engaging to all participants. The results revealed that students saw value in participation in activities that were designed to promote interaction between the generations, particularly singing, dance and show-and-tell. There was a lot of overlap between engagement and positive emotion.

At the old people's home the best thing to do with the old people is singing. The students have lots of fun singing, playing and talking with the old people. When the students sing, the old people are clapping and singing. (Participant 15)

We did a lot of singing, dancing and talking to the old people. I just can't believe that their smiles looked just like ours. The old people were singing with us and yeah it was AMAZING! The students cheered them up by doing activities, show-and-tell and singing. (Participant 18)

PERMA element: Relationships

The Flourish Program gave students the opportunity to develop relationships with elderly people. Emergent themes included *caring relationships*, *friendships* and *a sense of togetherness*. Students identified a caring attitude

towards the elderly as well as the reciprocation of care from the older generation.

> I had a chance to have the experience of having old people around me and now I'm much more caring for them. (Participant 3)

> I love the old people. I think they are kind and friendly. They love us to come over there. They understand you. They might have difficulty hearing or have old skin but they still love you going there. (Participant 17)

> I know the people at Minodus care about me because they smile at me and hug me and laugh at me. (Participant 9)

As the relationships developed, participants experienced a sense of togetherness and community. Students were observed to be more comfortable with the elderly, holding conversations and showing physical affection (smiling, holding hands, hugs).

> Before I went to the Flourish Program I was embarrassed to be with elderly people. But now I can make friends and talk easily to them. The old people just love being with us and we love being with them. (Participant 13)

> At the end of the day we miss them and they miss us because we have been parted. (Participant 7)

Students were also able to establish new friendships and experience a sense of social competence.

> Before I even went there I thought that I wouldn't make a friend. But afterwards I made a friend and she is so good at looking after me. (Participant 7)

PERMA element: Meaning
With relation to PERMA's meaning element, *contributing to others* and *having a sense of purpose* during the Flourish Program were two themes that emerged. Students identified links between their contribution to the program and the positive response from the elderly participants. Student reflections revealed a correlation between serving and contributing to others and the element of positive emotions.

> They were happy because we came and made them more happier. (Participant 6)

> The Flourish Program can make old people happy. It makes a difference because we make them have big smiles. They love us coming and they enjoy the Flourish Program. We cheer them up by going every week. (Participant 8)

> I feel like I'm making a difference in someone's life by looking at how the old people are smiling at me and it makes me feel joyful too. (Participant 18)

PERMA element: Accomplishment
Themes pertaining to the accomplishment element included *personal development* and *increased confidence*. Students who were apprehensive prior to the first visit documented growth in confidence with feelings of nervousness subsiding as the visits to the aged care facility continued. For example:

> At Minodus the first time we went there I was feeling very shy when I saw all the old people there when we had to meet and greet. Before I even went there I thought that I wouldn't make a friend. But afterwards I made a friend and she is so good at looking after me. (Participant 7)

> When I went to the old people's home at first I was really shy but now I love going to the old people's home. I met some of the old people and they are really nice but one of them is really funny and kind. Her name is Margaret. She laughs a lot and smiles a lot and she loves to see what we want to show her. (Participant 15)

Having opportunities to experience success in forming new relationships with the elderly and trying new activities have contributed to student personal development.

> Ever since the first time I visited Minodus it made a big difference in my life. I made a friend called Joyce. Going there has made me a lot happier in my life. We have done a lot of things and it has made me feel more confident around old people. When Joyce passed away I felt like nobody could make me feel better. Then I met another person called Joyce. We became friends and Minodus is a great experience. (Participant 2)

> I think it [Flourish] has made me more confident and every time I go there [Minodus] I learn something new. (Participant 12)

Discussion
The aim of this study was to explore the impact of an intergenerational program on the social and emotional wellbeing of third-grade students. Findings in this study support the hypothesis that student social and emotional wellbeing can be improved through participation in an experiential intergenerational program.

The Flourish Program was instrumental in bringing generations together to enhance participant wellbeing. According to Radford et al. (2016), achieving shared goals is a primary purpose of successful intergenerational programs. The wellbeing of the elderly participants was not

> " *I think it has made me more confident and every time I go there I learn something new.* "

investigated in this study however, students were found to have increased subjective, hedonic wellbeing during the program as well as ongoing, increased eudaimonic wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Data indicated an overall increase in positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and engagement, with significant increase in the areas of relationships, meaning and accomplishment. These findings indicate that the Flourish Program contributes towards preparing students socially and emotionally for living in today's society (Gregory & Brinkman, 2015; MCEETYA, 2008).

Upward spirals of positive emotion

Although the data from the questionnaire revealed no significant change in the area of positive emotion (p = .061), the qualitative data identified positive emotion as the most frequently occurring element. The positive emotion element was found extensively throughout journal entries. In this case, the discrepancy of results between research methods allowed the strength of the qualitative data to offset the weakness of the quantitative data (Creswell, 2014). A possible cause of the lack of significant change from baseline to post-test is the participants' high pre-existing positive attitudes and feelings towards the program prior to its commencement (M = 3.9), leaving little room for scaled growth.

Consistent with findings in happiness studies conducted by Fowler and Christakis (2008), a flow-on effect of positive emotion occurred as a result of intergenerational interactions, with students attributing their happiness to the result of seeing the elderly people happy and being in a positive environment. Students expressed positive attitudes towards the elderly people, commenting on pleasure derived from spending time with them and delight that they were fun to be with. These findings were in accordance with previous studies (Cummings et al., 2002; Newman et al., 1997; Pinquart, et al., 2000). Qualitative data revealed that positive emotion experienced during the Flourish Program contributed to further positivity towards the program as students expressed optimism and excitement about visits and realised that their contribution had benefits for all participants. These positive events led to hedonic happiness and were found to lead further to eudaimonic wellbeing, having lasting effects (Fredrickson, 2004; Roepke's, 2013). It would seem that the integration of both hedonic and eudaemonic dimensions, as found in the Flourish Program, is a precursor to a flourishing form of wellbeing (Henderson & Knight, 2012).

> *students expressed optimism and excitement about visits and realised that their contribution had benefits for all participants.*

Engagement

Quantitative data revealed no significant change in the area of engagement (p = 0.197). Qualitative data analysis revealed *engaging*, *interactive activities* and *fun* as emerging themes for this element. Students participated enthusiastically in activities which they perceived as valuable. This demonstration is congruent with studies showing that engagement promotes aspects of wellbeing (Bhullar et al., 2013). The program also provided opportunities for students whose strengths may not be as evident in a traditional academic environment (Noble et al., 2008). Interactive activities provided connection as a group (Roffey, 2011), and provided opportunity for students with strengths in interpersonal relationships to operate at full capacity (Noble & McGrath, 2010). The emergent theme fun, indicated that positive emotion was linked with engagement and motivation, highlighting the value of the hedonic dimension (Henderson, & Knight, 2012; McMahan & Estes, 2011) when planning activities for intergenerational programs. Provision of a variety of activities and experiences within the Flourish Program aided in capturing students' interests and strengths (Noble & McGrath, 2010) as a means of engaging students in the program and enhancing their wellbeing.

Caring connected communities

The Flourish Program significantly contributed to the enhancement of relationships (p = .012). Quantitative findings correlated with qualitative data, which indicated relationships as a frequently occurring element with identified themes of *caring relationships*, *friendships*, and *togetherness*. Each of these themes are linked to enhanced wellbeing as they confirm a sense of connectedness through belonging to a caring community where individuals are valued, which is supported by previous findings (Kern et al., 2015; Pretty et al., 2006; Roffey, 2011). In accordance with Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory (2004), the caring, supportive and positive relationships which were experienced during visits, assisted students in forming further friendships in subsequent visits, and having confidence to try new things. As students established new friendships, they also experienced a sense of social competence. Research literature (Noble et al., 2008; Walsh, 2011) affirms that social and emotional competence and the ability to develop and maintain good relationships are positively linked to increased happiness, resilience and wellbeing.

Meaning and joy in service

According to quantitative data, meaning was the most significant area of change in this study (p =

.000) from baseline to post-test. Qualitative data analysis revealed the two themes of *contributing to others* and *having a sense of purpose*. In accordance with the literature (Freeman & King, 2001; Noble et al., 2008), the experiential nature of the Flourish Program provided opportunity for students to contribute to the community in a purposeful and meaningful way, becoming part of something that was greater than themselves, thus enhancing wellbeing. Scheduled fortnightly visits with well-planned activities (Epstein & Boisvert, 2006) that promoted social cohesiveness provided opportunity for students to gain direct and immediate feedback about their actions, words and gestures. This first-hand involvement enabled students to experience joy and pleasure in service, leading to increased wellbeing, as found in previous studies (Post, 2005; Walsh, 2011). Reflective journals provided an effective method giving students opportunity to process their experience and see the connection between their contribution and actions as well as the positive responses of the elderly.

Research (Henderson, & Knight, 2012; McMahan & Estes, 2011) shows that both hedonic and eudaimonic dimensions play a role in optimal wellbeing. Student journal reflections on their contributions to the elderly were permeated with examples of hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of wellbeing suggesting that the Flourish Program is instrumental in promoting student wellbeing.

I can do it!

Overall, students gained a sense of accomplishment as a result of participating in the Flourish Program with quantitative data showing significant change for this element (p = .001). Qualitative data revealed predominant themes of *personal development* and *increased confidence*. The experiential nature of the Flourish Program enabled students to push out of their comfort zone and experience a sense of satisfaction and achievement as they developed socially and emotionally (Freeman & King, 2001). Some students who were socially and emotionally reserved in the initial stages of the program reported an increase in confidence after subsequent visits, as well as a sense of achievement at overcoming their shyness through increased self-efficacy in social situations. This reinforces findings (Noble et al., 2008) that schools can provide diverse opportunities and activities to assist students to explore weaknesses and areas of low efficacy. Experiencing success in completing a difficult task is shown to be a contributor of motivation and wellbeing as shown in previous research (Fishman & Husman, 2017).

Conclusion

There were several limitations associated with this project. The small sample size (one class of 20 children) and the lack of a control group limited the generalisability of the findings, threatening external validity (Creswell, 2014). The absence of a control group made it difficult to determine if the results occurred naturally or were the result of participation in the program. Another limitation of this study is that the lead researcher was also the teacher who developed and implemented the program. Conducting the study using an independent researcher would reduce the risk of researcher subjectivity and bias.

Much of the literature presently available focuses on the benefits of intergenerational programs on elderly participants' wellbeing (Belgrave, 2011; Thompson & Weaver, 2016) but this study also indicates there are benefits for third-grade children's social and emotional wellbeing. The PERMA model offers a functional framework to measure student wellbeing in this context, with significant quantitative findings in the elements of relationships, meaning and accomplishment. In addition, qualitative data showed a strong indication of the positive emotion element which also permeated each of the other four elements. Results of this study highlight the role that a well-planned intergenerational program can play in providing positive experiences and interactions; creating caring and connected communities; enabling students to experience meaning and joy associated with service to others; and enhancing student self-efficacy. This study acknowledges the essential role that both hedonic and eudaimonic facets play in promoting wellbeing. Findings underscore the importance of implementing regular, scheduled visits with activities that centre on positive experiences and outcomes which engage all participants. A mixed methods design proved effective in the measurement of the impact of the program on student wellbeing, and the journal entries augmented the findings for each of the PERMA elements.

The topic of student wellbeing continues to be relevant and focal in Australian society and schools and teachers are in a position to address wellbeing concerns by delivering programs and initiatives that assist in promoting wellbeing and flourishing in students. The Flourish Program contributes to the toolbox of school wellbeing initiatives and has the capacity to play a valuable role in schools. More so, the Flourish Program is aligned with the ultimate aim of Adventist Education – unselfish service to others that flows from Christ's selfless service to humanity. Thus, the joy of service becomes the highest education (White, 1952). The experiential

Experiencing success in completing a difficult task is … a contributor of motivation and wellbeing

service-learning approach underpinning the Flourish Program provides an opportunity for students to learn in a real-life context and to externalise love to others in a practical, meaningful and rewarding way. As students experienced the joy of serving others in this study, the words Jesus taught, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20:35 NIV), became a reality for them. TEACH

> *The experiential service-learning approach provides an opportunity for students to … externalise love to others in a practical, meaningful and rewarding way.*

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> *teachers are in a position to address wellbeing … by delivering initiatives … promoting wellbeing and flourishing in students.*