LEADING ARTICLE

"DOES ANYONE EVEN NOTICE US?" COVID-19'S IMPACT ON ACADEMICS' WELL-BEING IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

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ABSTRACT

In March 2020, the President of South African announced that the nation would go into full lockdown in the wake of an increase in COVID-19 infections. Academics had, in some instances, only one day to prepare for "emergency remote teaching". Few academics had taught online before, as South Africa's internet connectivity is not guaranteed in underprivileged areas, where 80 per cent of the population reside. The online move thus necessitated an entirely novel pedagogy for most academics, with high potential for an escalation of work-related stress and related illness, outcomes we have related in the wider sphere of workplace readjustment during COVID-19, to a state of "pandemia". In this article, we report on an institutional case study where we surveyed n=136 academics from a university in the Western Cape, South Africa to learn more about impacts of COVID-19 on their work. The data analysis adopts Ryff's (1995) theory of well-being. Findings indicate that the enforced lockdown due to COVID-19 and the subsequent move to online teaching has had a negative impact on academics' sense of well-being. However, the

emergence of positive, caring relationships between colleagues is reported as a significant outcome of the COVID-19 enforced move to online teaching.

Keywords: COVID-19, academic well-being, higher education, online teaching

INTRODUCTION: THE CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA IN 2021

While South Africans have lived for centuries with a colonial past (and, indeed, the modernist present), this was largely dealt with in higher education (HE) settings in an academic manner, with various courses developed to teach critiques of colonialism (Fataar 2018). This picture shifted in 2015 when Chumani Maxwele, a South African political activist, threw faeces at the statute of Cecil John Rhodes that sits above the steps leading up to the University of Cape Town. What started as a call for the statue of this infamous colonialist to be removed ("Rhodes Must Fall"), soon became a general movement for the removal of fees in HE and call for education based on decolonial epistemology. Student protests effectively shut down all universities in South Africa, something unprecedented in the history of HE in South Africa (Kamanzi 2015; Hlophe 2015; Masondo 2015). This #FeesMustFall movement led to universities addressing the dominant Western epistemologies underpinning approaches to learning and teaching (Cini 2019). Many universities set up special groups of academics and students to re-design curricula. The movement challenged academics to redesign the curricula in a manner that incorporates the voices of previously marginalised people (Francis and Hardman 2018; Le Grange 2020).

Transforming the demographics of universities also became central to universities in South Africa. Prior to democracy in 1994, faculty were entirely white, and largely male, academic; the focus now is to include other racial groups (Breetzke and Hedding 2016). However, while there are positive signs of transformation of the demographics of universities in South Africa, the colonial foundation of these institutions, coupled with systemic racism, continues to impact adversely on the well-being of people of colour. Francis (2021) outlines the toxic structural racism that continues to exist in some spaces and places in HE institutions, making the focus on decolonising them both demographically *and* epistemologically essential. Systemic racism continues to have significant effects on the well-being of people who are not white.

While not unique to South Africa, the colonial and apartheid past require serious deconstruction if all race groups are to flourish. However, the pandemic has only hardened a neoliberal focus on technological advancement, where the push for a digital economy threatens to weaken any attempts to include indigenous knowledge into the academy (Koopman and Koopman 2021). A decolonial approach to pedagogy requires that modernism and capitalism

are also opened to critique (Hardman 2021). Certainly, the uncertainty generated by the shutdown and continued move towards decolonial HE curricula has led to increased stress among academics, who may have fears for their careers.

For Tlostanova and Mignolo (2005), decolonial education refers both to instruction (knowledge used to practically navigate the world) and nurturing (knowledge aimed at collective as well as personal well-being, what we may view as an ethics of care). The ethical base of an ethics of care differentiates a decolonial approach to education from a postcolonial one in that postcolonialism has no explicit ethical base (Hardman 2021). This ethical base is articulated philosophically in the African notion of *ubuntu*, where a focus on collective well-being, rather than on an individual, is central. We return to this notion of ubuntu later in the article where we discuss well-being.

Unlike postcolonialism which seeks to come after colonial thinking, decolonial epistemologies seek to dismantle the binary, Cartesian logic of modernism, upon which colonialism rests (Hardman 2021). Indeed, decolonialism recognises that colonialism cannot merely be discarded and left behind, but, rather, needs to be interrogated and re-written. One could define postcolonialism as involving "a studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effect" (Quayson 2012). Hardman (2021) argues that decolonialism, while critiquing colonialism in a manner not unlike postcolonial thinkers, involves a deeper engagement with dismantling colonial epistemology by questioning modernism and the rampant capitalism it has developed through its colonial project. Higher education institutions in South Africa in the 21st century, then, are facing serious challenges: equal and free education for all; a call for decolonising the hegemonic Western curricula that pervade academia in this country and the consequent academic stress and uncertainty. Against this background, barely five years after #FeesMustFall shut down universities, the first cases of COVID-19 were identified in South Africa.

On the 26 March 2020, South Africa went into a full, "level 5" lockdown, which saw the closure of the economy, schools, and institutions of higher education. Like institutions globally (Watermeyer et al. 2021a), universities in South Africa were forced to rapidly shift to "emergency remote teaching" with little notice. As of 18 June 2021, over 1.6m people in South Africa have been infected with COVID-19 and nearly 60,000 deaths have been recorded (NICD 2022). With such high levels of infections and deaths, there was little choice for the government to contain the pandemic outside of closing the country. South Africa is acknowledged as the most unequal country on earth with a near perfect Gini co-efficient of 0.65 (Harmse 2014). Although classified as an upper middle-income country, 55.5 per cent of South Africans live in

poverty (defined as having access to less than R992 per month or GBP49.54) (United Nations Population Fund); a further 25 per cent of the population suffers from food poverty. That is, around 80.5 per cent of South Africa's population is either in severe poverty or struggling with food poverty. In a country with such high levels of poverty, connectivity and access to technology for teaching/learning is challenging. Although poverty affects the majority of the population, it is interesting to note that around 36 million people in the country use mobile phones (GSMA 2020). Thus, teaching online in South Africa very often refers to teaching through and with mobile phones, rather than tablets or personal computers; devices often have to be shared among family members (Hardman 2020). Moreover, access to reliable internet connectivity/bandwidth as well as technology other than mobile phones is since the electricity supply is not guaranteed.; the failing power grid in South Africa often leads to electricity outages for up to 6 hours a day (Winkler 2021). These contexts require that all lectures be asynchronous, which has resource implications as asynchronous instruction is habitually more labour intensive in preparation than synchronous delivery.

While the physical health risks of the pandemic were rapidly identified and studied, only later did the impact on mental health become a topic for investigation (Mbunge 2020). A corpus of literature highlights the serious impact that COVID-19 has had on the mental health of care and front-line workers globally (De Kock, Latham, and Leslie 2021; Babore 2020; Cai 2020). While there is a substantial body of research that looks at the effects of COVID-19 on various sectors of the population, there is a general dearth of such studies focusing, specifically on academics. Sahu (2020) introduces the challenges that academics face in the pandemic, such as moving teaching/learning online, travel restrictions preventing research and conference attendance, the challenge of assessing students online and mental health issues such as depression and anxiety arising from increased stress, workloads, isolation, and the uncertain future academics now face as universities turn increasingly towards technology for cost-effective teaching. Such challenges, framed in the wider sphere of workplace readjustment during COVID-19 as a state of "pandemia", have been studied in a variety of international contexts; for example, in Australia (McGaughey et al. 2021), Ireland and the UK (Watermeyer et al. 2021b). Added to these concerns are academics' worries for their own family's health as well as their students' well-being. It is within this context, then, that our survey asked the following overarching research question: What is the impact of COVID-19 on academics' well-being in a university in South Africa?

REVIEW OF CURRENT STUDIES IN THE FIELD

At the time of writing, there is a general dearth of published peer-reviewed work that focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on academics' well-being. A search of PUBMED, EBSCOHOST, and ERIC, found no articles that deal specifically with this topic; only two articles addressed the differential impact COVID-19 has on gender and well-being in the academy. A SciOPS (Scientist Opinion Panel Survey; Jung 2020) article came closest to addressing the question of this article. In this opinion piece, Jung (2020) found that COVID-19 has had a negative impact on academics' ability to concentrate, increased anxiety around contracting the virus and the effects of unanticipated childcare responsibilities during home schooling. This piece, however, like the other articles reviewed, focuses on the gendered dynamic underlying the impact that the virus has had on academics, with female academics almost twice as likely as their male counterparts to experience feelings of anxiety or concentration difficulties, if they have parental responsibilities. The gendered dimension of division of labour is well established in the literature in general (Miller 2021; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2016; Guy and Arthur 2020) and specifically in relation to the impact of COVID-19 on academics (Miller 2020; Yildirim and Eslen-Ziya 2021; Burzynska and Contreras 2020). Female academics who are mothers experienced a higher level of work at home in relation to home-schooling and childcare responsibility, and consequently were more likely to report feelings of being tired or overwhelmed by the amount of work they were facing with online teaching (Miller 2020; Jessen and Waights 2020; Lutter and Schröder 2020; Andersen et al. 2020).

WELL-BEING AS A LENS

For most of its history, Western psychology has focused its analytical gaze on psychological dysfunction, rather than on defining mental health in terms of the presence of positive attributes, sometimes referred to as positive psychology (Ryff 1995; 2014). This is not unusual as Western psychology was borne out of the need to understand psychological illness, rather than wellness. The rates of depression and anxiety have grown in the 20th and 21st centuries due to many factors, but one of the most significant factors is modernisation, which appears to place people at a higher risk of mental dis-ease to such an extent that depression is often called the disease of modernity (Hidaka 2012). However, African psychologies focus very much on the collective, rather than on the individual, critiquing the social and institutional systems that perpetuate oppression, particularly in people of colour, by highlighting how poverty, for example, leads to pathology. That is, African psychology is not premised on the binary, Cartesian logic of the West that promotes an ego-psychology, but rather, on a dialectical logic that views the

individual and social as inextricably intertwined. Pathology then, for African psychology, is located in the social and institutional systems that perpetuate inequality, rather than in a single individual (Ratele 2019). The epistemic foundation of this collective focus is captured in the African notion of "*ubuntu"*, a philosophy of humanity that means "I am because you are". For Mugumbate and Chereni:

> "[ubuntu] refers to a collection of values and practices that black people of Africa or of African origin view as making people authentic human beings. While the nuances of these values and practices vary across different ethnic groups, they all point to one thing – an authentic individual human being is part of a larger and more significant relational, communal, societal, environmental and spiritual world." (2020, vi).

This notion of consciousness as developing from social interaction with others is echoed in the work of Marx who stated that "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness" (1996, 143). We argue that this epistemic base calls for an ethics of care, which focuses on the collective experience of being human within the world of non-humans and eschews an individualistic stance towards human development in favour of describing care as relational (Gilligan 1993; Miller 2021; Bozalek, Zembylas, and Tronto 2020). As one can see, the idea that one becomes human because of others is premised on an ethics of care. We might even say that decolonial, African psychologies, founded as they are on dialectical logic, are necessarily underpinned by an ethics of care. An ethics of care, then, is in opposition to the neoliberal times we find ourselves in. Indeed, the Academy's push for excellence at all costs must be interrogated from the standpoint of an ethics of care. As we shall explore further in this article, the need for care, support and encouragement from management has been very real among academics during COVID-19.

African psychology is only now beginning to gain traction in the world in the context of calls for decolonisation of knowledge (Ratele 2019; Francis and Hardman 2016; Hardman 2021). We can currently find no African psychologies directed specifically at well-being in the published literature; however, when we outline the Western notion of well-being, we will be suggesting how this can be viewed from African psychologies viewpoint, with the necessity of personal relationships for well-being. Specifically, in this article, we draw on Ryff's (1995) model of well-being in adult life, as our participants are all adults. This model is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 illustrates the six guiding dimensions of psychological well-being as they are operationalised by Ryff (1995), viz.: *autonomy*, *personal growth*, *positive relationships*,

environmental mastery, *self-acceptance*, and *purpose in life*. Empirical research carried out by Ryff has established the validity of these dimensions (1995; 2014). If we unpack these dimensions, we can understand personal growth at an individual level as someone who feels

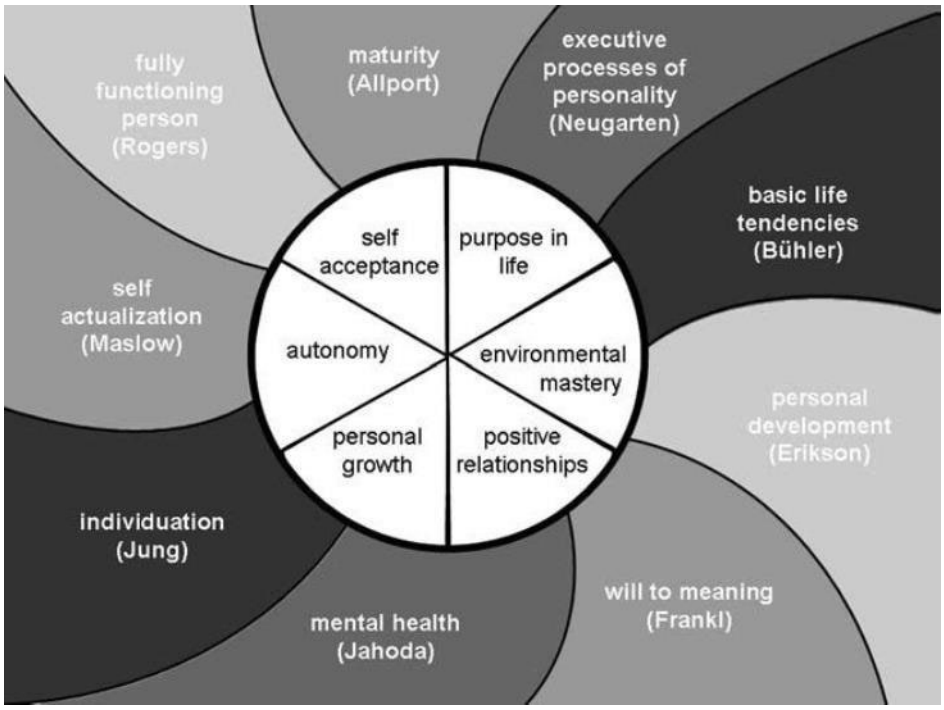

Figure 1: Ryff's model of well-being in adult life (1995, 100).

they have more to develop and learn and has a sense that they can realise their potential. Environmental mastery refers to a sense of competence and mastery over the external environment; a sense that contexts can be created and changed to meet the needs of the developing individual. If we look at environmental mastery as a dimension of well-being in South Africa, we appreciate that the serious poverty faced by much of the population mitigates against a sense of environmental mastery, calling for serious systemic change. Positive relationships refer to an individual's ability to maintain and construct healthy, positive relationships with other people in their social situation, which requires empathy and concern for the welfare of others. Self-acceptance refers to an individual's positive opinion of themselves. However, it relates also to being able to identify and acknowledge both strengths and weaknesses, accepting him/herself/them as they do so and reflects generally positively on their past life. Autonomy is the belief that, as an individual, you can navigate the world successfully on your own initiative, regulating your own behaviour and not giving into societal pressures to be different to what you are. Finally, is one's purpose in life. As adults, our purpose in life, our belief that we have a sense of direction and aims and objectives for living, is often

derived from the career we choose to pursue. If we situate these dimensions within a South African context, we can appreciate that some of these dimensions cannot be met due to the systemic injustice that continues to impact on South African people of colour, even 27 years after apartheid. Well-being, for Ryff and other researchers, requires a level of autonomy and control over one's life and environment that is absent in spaces where poverty is endemic and unemployment amongst youths is over 50 per cent. However, underpinning the injustice that still permeates the South African landscape, lies an African appreciation of the importance of positive relationships between people. While many people may feel alienated from their environment and lack autonomy over their own lives due to poverty and the lasting traces of racism in South Africa, there is still the notion that positive relationships exist and can be used to develop one's well-being. It is against these dimensions that the current article seeks to understand the impact the COVID-19 has had on academics' well-being in a developing country.

METHODOLOGY

The target population were academics in a large, well-established university in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. The university has 1208 academic staff and around 26 000 students. Surveys were sent to all academic staff at the university, across faculties. Respondents were recruited via a convenience sample; this article, therefore, is not intended to generalise to a wider population, but rather, to identify trends that could be investigated in more detail in future research. N=136 responses were fully completed and were subsequently analysed. Table 1 outlines the demographic details of the participants in this study:

Table 1: Demographic details

Category	Valid percentage 100%
Gender	
Male	28.9
Female	68.6
Prefer to self-describe	1.7
Prefer not to state	.8
Living situation	
Living alone	12.5
Living with others	87.5
Caring responsibilities	
I have children.	48.5
I do not have children	51.5
Academic status	
Lecturer or equivalent	16.1
Associate professor (senior lecturer/Reader/ equivalent)	49.2
Full professor	16.1
Teaching only	.8

Category	Valid percentage 100%
Other	11.9
Post-doctoral	2.5
Doctoral student	3.4

Table 1 indicates that most respondents were female (68.6%) and generally senior academics (49.2% associate professor, 16.1% full professor). More than half the participants (51.5%) did not have children and 12.5 per cent indicated that they live alone. It is worth noting that it is mainly female academics who chose to respond to this survey While demographics have shifted rather significantly in South African universities since 1994, the academy is still male dominated, although now only marginally so (Breetzke and Hedding 2016). Men (often white) continue to hold positions of power while female academics are generally silenced (Phakeng 2015). Our survey, therefore, provided female academics an opportunity to break silence and have their voices heard.

DATA ANALYSIS

Our online survey posed 45 questions relating to participants' perceptions of the impact of COVID-19 on academic well-being and institutional responses. Quotes were taken directly from open-ended responses from a previous survey which was conducted at the start of the pandemic which investigated academics' opinions on the rapid shift to emergency remote, online learning teaching and assessment (Watermeyer et al. 2021a). For ease of interpretation, the seven-point Likert scale (*strongly agree, somewhat agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree*) was recoded into *"agree",* "*neither agree or disagree"* and *"disagree"*. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were employed to define overall trends in the population.

Qualitative analysis

Open-ended questions were analysed deductively using the categories outlined by Ryff (1995). In total four themes, derived from Ryff's categories of well-being, were identified: environmental mastery; autonomy; personal growth, and positive relationships. We discuss the findings using both quantitative and qualitative data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section of the article both the survey and qualitative data are analysed to ascertain the impact of the pandemic on academics' well-being in a specific context.

This article's central question regards academics' well-being during the COVID-19

pandemic. Figure 2 indicates that 64.5 per cent of respondents felt that the pandemic and the subsequent move to online teaching/learning, was "detrimental to my health and wellbeing", has increased work-related stress (78.5%), and has led to general demotivation (62.6%). A further indication that academics' well-being has been compromised is contained in responses that indicate a sense of alienation (decreasing autonomy) in relation to working in the academy.

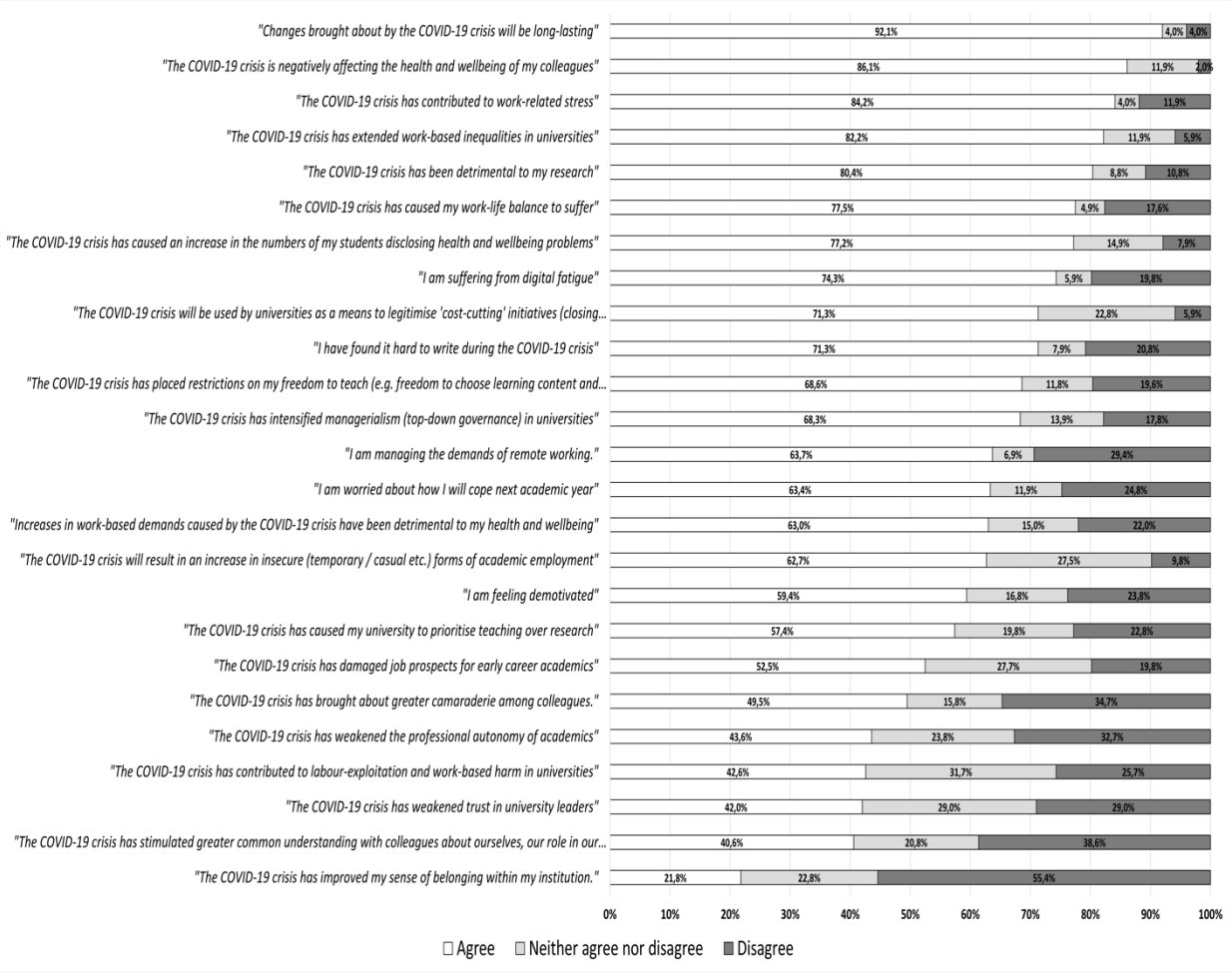

Figure 2: Agreement with survey statements

Fifty-two per cent of respondents indicate that the pandemic has "weakened the professional autonomy of academics", "weakened trust in university leaders" (53.5%) and has been "detrimental to [my] research" (68.8%), pointing to academics' feelings that academics mastery over their environment has been further comprised due to the online move consequent on COVID-19.

Ryff's (1995) model indicates that a sense of autonomy is necessary for well-being. The feeling of a loss of autonomy, therefore, impacts on well-being. This is further exacerbated in South Africa where university academics are dealing with a funding crisis, calls for

decolonising education, toxic racism and sexism (Phakeng 2015; Francis 2021). Survey respondents felt that that inequality has increased (73.3%), that the academy has moved more towards managerialism (66.8%), impacting on academics' sense of mastery over their environment and has led to an increase both in insecure (temporary) forms of academic employment (74%) and damaged prospects for early career academics (74.9). The perception that the ability to gain tenure is being eroded by what some see as institutional legitimisation of cost-cutting initiatives (83.4%) that contribute to labour-exploitation (58.1%). However, it is interesting to note that in terms of collegial relationships, academics (49.5%) report a growth in positive relationships, as colleagues have joined together to help each other navigate this novel teaching terrain.

Qualitative results

The survey included several open-ended questions. Informed by Ryff's (1995) framework, four themes were identified in the data: *autonomy*, *purpose in life*, *environmental mastery* and *personal relationships*.

Theme 1: Autonomy

For Ryff (1995), autonomy refers to one's belief that one can navigate the world using one's own initiative and regulate one's behaviour to be who one is, rather than submitting to a societal picture of who one should be. In the extracts below, academics express concerns about job loss and reduced autonomy over teaching and research.

> "Why do our opinions not have a platform to be expressed, and why can't we be heard, and when we do express ourselves we are seen as emotional and we heard you but nothing is done? No one is listening." (Female, Senior Lecturer/Associate professor)

Throughout the qualitative data, academics express concern that they have lost the ability to do research and publish as the university has become teaching intensive. Research and publishing are central to an academic's development of a sense of autonomy, and this too has been impacted by the pandemic as expressed by a male Professor "Reduced ability to publish, conduct research". This academic goes on to express concern that teaching is becoming central to the university, at the expense of research. "... As universities increasingly look to online as a way to recoup costs in the face of slashed budgets, lecturing work will become even more intense online for everyone".

What is striking is how gendered and status differentiated these two accounts are. While

the female senior lecturer talks about being heard the male professor talks about not having the time to do research and having to teach more. One has an impression from the male professor that COVID-19 is possibly viewed as an assault on male professorial privilege.

Theme 2: Environmental mastery

The ability to control one's environment, to create and change contexts depending on one's needs is at the heart of a sense of environmental mastery. In an unequal and impoverished country such as South Africa control over one's environment is already seriously curtailed; the pandemic has further brought this into sharp focus. COVID-19 and the drive towards developing a digital economy has seen the academy moving towards increased managerialism, which has led our academic respondents to feel alienated from their environments. There is a sense, as we can see below, that an academic no longer can control their context but is, rather, controlled by management. A male senior lecturer/associate professor indicates that "The university is already using the crisis as an excuse for 'streamlining' administrative functions which means more and more of the admin is handed over to academics. Instead of handing over a variety of physical forms to an admin assistant, academics are now having to do this themselves." The fear of job loss and closure of whole faculties is perhaps, one of the things that impresses most in the qualitative data. A female Professor wrote that "In addition to all other stresses, [we] face job insecurity. To my mind this borders on unethical." This is further articulated with devasting economy by a male professor: "Worst case scenario – major austerity and goodbye Humanities". Even senior academics who are professors with secured tenure indicate that "Financial impacts will be unavoidable as university budgets are contracted. People will lose jobs – there is already uncertainty. Administrative staff will be first to go as nobody seems to have given thought to redefining their work and skills for remote support. Though on second thoughts, HR does the retrenching so perhaps the academics will be laid off and universities will be left with a staff of administrators and managers." From such perspectives are made tangible feelings of lost mastery over the academic environment, and disempowerment by managerialism redoubled, that are injurious to academic well-being.

Theme 3: Purpose in life

The move during COVID-19 to online emergency teaching has led to a focus on teaching, rather than research. This has induced an acute state of self-consciousness and disquiet among our respondents in respect of their professional status and career progression, where career development, competitive funding, and research outputs as prized positional goods has been

superseded by the demands of teaching. Concerns of research-drift – or be that tidal-turn – is stressed by a female senior lecturer/associate professor: "I find it very difficult to prioritise my own research and career aspirations over my students' needs (especially during these times) and so will always default to 'looking after' them first before turning to my own research". The need to look after students' well-being before one's own personal growth is echoed by a female professor: "What we can see here is that students' needs have become greater during the pandemic, calling for academics to prioritise student needs over their own research needs. So, an ethics of care, in a neoliberal institution such as a university, requires that an academic sacrifice their own needs, or life purpose, to meet those of students. This situation is untenable in the long run." The pandemic and subsequent move to online teaching has led to academics devoting a larger portion of their time to meeting students' well-being needs, at the expense, it appears, of their own career trajectories and personal growth. This is especially so in relation to female academics, who carry a larger burden of care than their male counterparts, impacting their career progression (Viglione 2020; Gabster et al. 2020; Burzynska and Contreras 2020; King and Frederickson 2021; Parlak, Celebi Cakiroglu, and Oksuz Gul 2021).

Theme 4: Positive relationships (towards an ethics of care)

While most respondents indicated that emergency online teaching impacted their well-being negatively, some academics perceived they had developed more positive, caring relationships with colleagues and students. A female lecturer states that "A more caring relationship between academics and students as we know so much more about their holistic environments". This is echoed by a female senior lecturer/associate professor who indicates that "colleagues feel more supportive and gentle with each other – staff meetings include things like 'check-ins' to create space for personal sharing that does not usually happen otherwise." The increased development of personal relationships based on an ethics of care is not located simply to the confines of the academy as is illustrated by the following quote from a male lecturer/PhD student "Lockdown has seen me get involved in social responsiveness activities in the community in which I live. There are many safety and food insecurity needs in my area and I feel a civic responsibility to get involved but this is ignored by the university as it is more business must go on. I am also very concerned about the collective mental health and wellbeing of staff and students and the politics that is driving decision making."

South African academics have always encouraged a caring relationship between staff, students and the wider community (Hall 2009). In fact, social responsivity, the active engagement with community, is one of the criteria for promotion in South African universities.

However, what is clear is that the move to online teaching has exponentially impacted on how many students need care. This is due to the lack of human and material resources in underprivileged areas. The increase in students' needing care is articulated by a female professor who states that: "In the crisis labours of care, vigilance and student support have become much more essential. These are things female academics have been doing, unacknowledged in 'normal' teaching." While the development of more personal relationships between staff and students and between colleagues is a positive outcome of the pandemic, management's care for staff was not perceived to have increased. A female professor articulates it thus: "Where is the ground up leadership? Where is the checking in and see how we are coping? How many academics will it take killing themselves before administrators even ask? Why aren't we valued employees?" This quote is not a flippant one; clearly, academics need support to avoid burnout themselves. The general perceived lack of managerial care is echoed by one female professor: "I feel sad, that as academics it is as though we are not also living in a pandemic, me [sic] friends and family are sick and dying also. There is no time to grieve and be in the moment with the world as the pressure is so high. The passive aggressive emails from those in leadership positions add stress not alleviate it. The students in crisis don't call administrators they call academic staff, so on top of our own health and well-being we must listen and help support students in crisis. Also these one line, we thank the academics for their hard work, shows a complete lack of empathy for the hours we are putting in and how we are making education a success despite the poor support. Education is a success in lockdown not because of leaders, but because of staff, we are the ones doing it working it out, making a plan. Does anyone even notice us?"

There is clearly a sense that collegiality has improved. However, there is a price to be paid for the burden of care that academics have towards their students; in the absence of managerial assistance, academics face the reality of burnout. Evidence emerging in publications from around the world suggest that it is female academics who are more likely to face burnout, due to the increased burden of care they carry (Viglione 2020; Gabster et al. 2020; Burzynska and Contreras 2020; King and Frederickson 2021) and the very real negative impact COVID-19 has had on their ability to publish and engage in scientific research.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this article, we have analysed the impact of online transitioning to academics' well-being. Using Ryff's (1995) framework, we analysed survey data from n=136 academics at a large institution in South Africa. Quantitative findings indicated that COVID-19 has had a negative

impact on academics' well-being, especially in the areas of autonomy, personal growth, and environmental mastery. The move to online teaching/learning brought with it a focus on teaching at the expense of research. The university's strong managerialist stance impacted on academics' feelings of autonomy and restrictions to productive pipelines other than teaching have intensified academics' anxieties related to their professional growth. Qualitatively, these findings were reinforced, with academics indicating that they feel less autonomous than before COVID-19 and that their anxiety has grown around issues of personal growth and environmental mastery. The article, therefore, concludes that COVID-19 and its consequent shift to online learning and teaching, has negatively impacted university faculty. However, not all findings are negative. The finding that colleagues had pulled together to assist each other, and that camaraderie had grown, points to the development, at least amongst peers, of positive personal relationships – bonhomie amidst crisis – which is necessary for building resilience as a prop to well-being (Corbera et al. 2020). The growth of more positive relationships amongst peers, in fact, would seem to have mitigated at least some of the negative impact on academics' well-being. From an African psychological viewpoint, this finding points towards the development of an ethics of care amongst colleagues grounded in a philosophy of ubuntu (Mugumbate and Chereni 2020). However, this finding must be read against academics' expressing a serious lack of care from management. Positively, against this lack of empathy, we see the emergence of collective responsibility that circumvents official and unempathetic forms of "leadership" that disregard and/or are unable to contend with the social complexity of crisis management and remain one-dimensional in their focus on productive output and forms of capital accumulation that pay no heed to human need. While the pandemic and its impact certainly lie beyond management's control, an ethics of care does not. It is hoped that this article encourages a more concerted effort from the academy to develop an ethics of care in relation not only to students, but also faculty.

The pandemic's effects on higher education must be situated in the larger context of South African higher education institutions' rapid and sometimes turbulent changes since the 2015 #FeesMustFall Change is difficult; even positive change brings with it uncertainty in the unknown. Against this uncertain background, in 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic forced academics to take their teaching and courses online; a huge change given that most institutions in South Africa are not designed as distance learning institutes and other factors – a failing electrical grid, poverty, and inequality – have made worse. As we can see from our survey data and analysis, this led to a negative impact on their well-being. This is especially so in relation to our respondents' feelings of autonomy, environmental masters, and personal growth,

particularly for women.

However, there is a silver lining to this otherwise dark cloud; positive relationships between academic colleagues have proved important as have more deeper engagements with students' needs. Ryff (1995) points to the importance of positive relationships for well-being, and we see this in our data. Further research is needed to unpack whether the strength of positive relationships has mitigated the impact of the pandemic on well-being. It is, however, encouraging to see a movement of academics and students towards focusing on collective well-being, rather than individual well-being. This speaks to the development of an ethics of care that focuses on the collective rather than the personal. This understanding of well-being as collectively generated is a basic premise of the African philosophy of ubuntu and it is encouraging that we see this coming through in this South African study. From structural inequities we are witnessing not only collective self-preservation, but the humanitarian response of ubuntu.

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION

Author 2 conceptualised and initiated the research. Authors 1–8 collected data across different contexts. The data collected for this article was collected by Author 1. Ethics clearance for the data reported in this article was acquired by author 1. Instruments for data collection were designed by author 2 and then refined by all other authors. Questions specific to the South African context were designed by author 1. Data for this article was collected by author 1. Quantitative data analysis for this article was carried out by author 1 and author 5. Qualitative data analysis was carried out by author 1. The draft article was written by author 1 with revisions suggested by authors, 2,3, 5, and 6. The final draft was approved by all authors.

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