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Perspectives of South African Adolescent Girls making decisions for their future

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Background: Poverty, inequality and unemployment interfere with adequate education and training in South Africa. Young people need to be empowered and enabled to navigate their way through education into the world of work to earn a sustainable livelihood.

Objectives: The aim of this article is to capture life-experience and perspectives of adolescent girls who participated in a multifaceted group intervention to develop both fundamental hope and social emotional learning (SEL) skills, as they make decisions regarding their future education and training. A purposive sample of adolescent girls (n = 116) who were making decisions regarding their future education and training participated in a multifaceted group intervention.

Methods: A qualitative case study approach was used. Data were collected by an open-ended questionnaire. Raw data were coded and emerging themes were identified using an iterative recursive approach.

Results: The emerging themes are illustrated using direct quotes from participating girls, against a background of theoretical context. The findings highlight: the importance of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills; listening to narratives from people who have conquered adversities; and, the suitability of a culturally and contextually relevant group-based multifaceted intervention.

Conclusion: In the global south, youth need to be enabled and empowered, with SEL skills using the constructs of hope as a foundation. Furthermore, youth need to be exposed to work opportunities available to them in context.

Contribution: This study makes a valuable contribution to social-constructivist indigenous knowledge by giving voice to life-experiences and perspectives of adolescent girls who participated in a multifaceted group intervention.

Keywords: social emotional learning; hope; South Africa; future readiness; decision-making; world of work; gender inequality.

Introduction

The Department of Higher Education in South Africa (DHET, 2016) acknowledges three pervasive challenges faced in education: poverty, inequality and unemployment. More than half the population of 62 million live below the poverty line (Francis & Webster, 2019; Plagerson, 2023; World Bank, 2022). Forty per cent of South African students do not finish grade 12 and the dropout ratio for each grade escalates in grades 10, 11 and 12 (BusinessTech, 2023; Hartnack & Vale, 2022). Entrenchment of inequalities in South African schools by race, gender and socio-economic status, despite successive waves of policy reform, is well documented (Bassey & Bubu, 2019; Spaull & Jansen, 2019). The digital divide is profound. Economic growth has been thwarted by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, and state capture (kleptocracy) has had a crippling impact on the economy, business and education. Recent power outages disrupt the normal function of society, exacerbating crime and unemployment (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2023).

Disempowering dominant discourses have a negative effect on learners who struggle to bridge the gap between education and work. A total of 62.1% of youths between the ages of 15 and 24 years and 40.7% between 25 and 34 years are unemployed (Stats SA, 2022). Youths are discouraged and have lost hope of finding employment. Hence, youths, especially girls, need to be empowered

Note: Topical Collection: Advancing career intervention in developing countries.

and equipped with personal and marketable skills to prepare them for the future. The Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) skills are taking the lead in the modern world of the Fourth Industrial Revolution as important marketable skills. Furthermore, evidence from literature shows how hope (Boesak, 2014; Dreyer, 2011; Freire, 1992; Hooks, 2003; Krafft et al., 2023; Solberg et al., 2020) and social emotional learning (SEL) skills equip young people with fundamental for future success (Durlak et al., 2022; Zins et al., 2003). To compete globally, South Africa must empower its youth with the necessary future ready skills.

Recently, scholars including Cipriano and McCarthy (2023) and Durlak et al. (2022) discuss the need to focus on programme design and implementation, based on research findings to determine the efficacy of school-based interventions to develop future ready skills. Hooley and Sultana (2016) and Ribeiro (2020) assert that programmes should be culturally and contextually relevant to be effective. A qualitative approach, giving voice to students' perspectives, is useful to inform appropriate design and implementation of interventions to be culturally relevant.

The focus of this study is to understand the lived experience of girls struggling to navigate the disempowering discourses of their context and their perspective of the group-based multifaceted intervention. The study explores the lived experience of grade 9 girls' decision-making regarding their future education and choice of subjects.

Theoretical background

Context should be considered when designing, evaluating and implementing work-related interventions for young people. People of different cultures require a different approach to learning, which is relevant for them in context. The following contextual issues and theoretical background are discussed.

Career guidance versus empowering and enabling for a sustainable livelihood

The concept of career is often misplaced in a country where unemployment is high and opportunities are limited. Furthermore, the term career guidance, which implies an authoritative power imbalance, is inappropriate in a context with a history of oppression. In a country where unemployment prevails, and where the formal sector accounts for only 69% of the employment, it makes sense that youth should be empowered and enabled to use their skills and the available resources to meet the needs of the community in context and earn a sustainable livelihood (Marsay, 2014, 2020b; Marsay et al., 2021; Solberg et al., 2020).

Bantu education

Under the oppressive *Bantu Education Act* (1953–1996), people of mixed race were discriminated against (Christie & Collins, 1982; Wills, 2011). The *Bantu Education Act* focused on producing manual labourers and narrowing the school curriculum – eliminating the teaching and learning of mathematics and science. There were separate institutions for education and training for black people (Bantu) whose education and training were limited to developing skills for manual labour. Parents and teachers of present-day youth were educated during this time. Furthermore, certain occupations were reserved for white people. In 1994, this segregated approach to education became unconstitutional and dismantled in 1996 in accordance with the *South African Schools Act*. However, the disempowering discourses of inequality and gender bias prevail in education (Albertyn, 2011; Zuze & Beku, 2019) and the workplace (https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=16533) despite the democratic ideals set in 1994. Young girls are less confident about achieving academically and are at risk of dropping out of education.

Dropout

Learner dropout rate is currently high (BusinessTech, 2023; Daily Maverick, 2023; Hartnack & Vale, 2022; Van Der Berg et al., 2019) and can be attributed to both internal factors (difficult learning environments) and external factors (peer and family pressure). Reasons for dropping out of school differ by gender. Family commitments are a common reason for girls to stop attending school, while boys stop attending school because they have lost hope in education (Stats SA, 2022).

Relevant subjects

Teaching and learning of mathematics (Jojo, 2019) and physical science (Ogegbo et al., 2019) are problematic in South African high schools. Although Maths is a compulsory subject, many students do Maths Literacy (practical application of numeric calculations), which is not recognised for further STEM education. Furthermore, students are not always able to choose physical science because it is not a compulsory subject (Gatticchi, 2022). In 2021, a low percentage of learners, who wrote the final exams, achieved an adequate pass mark to be accepted into STEM education. Maths and Science are critical subjects, not only to gain access to further STEM education and training but also to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Learners need to have confidence in their ability to achieve in maths and science (Çiftçi, & Yildiz, 2019). Abe and Chikoko (2020) emphasise the three key factors (interpersonal, intrapersonal and career expectancy outcomes) that influence students' decision to study STEM subjects.

Hope

A great deal of scholarship has accumulated around the concept of hope in times of oppression and despair, and the importance of hope for future success has been well documented worldwide (Diemer & Blustein, 2007; Dreyer, 2011; Freire, 1992; Hirschi et al., 2015; Hooks, 2003; Scioli & Biller, 2010; Solberg et al., 2020). Scioli and Biller (2010) identify four constructs of hope: attachment, mastery, survival and spirituality. Hope is intersubjective and

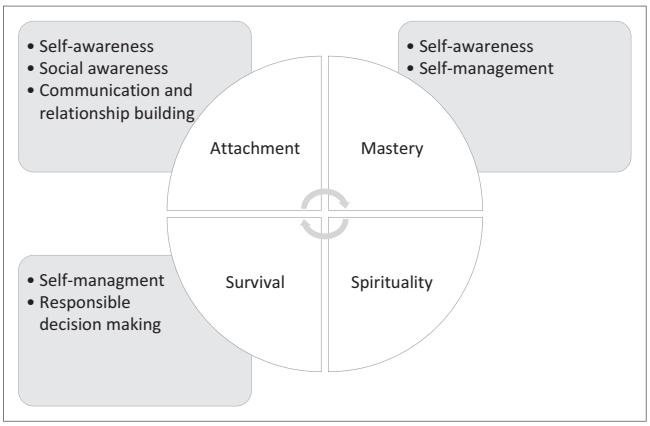

FIGURE 1: Illustration of connection between hope and social emotional learning skills.

difficult to define objectively. Recently, there has been a rekindling of discussions around hope in South Africa (Cherrington, 2020; Groener & Land, 2022; Khau, 2021; Marsay, 2020a, 2020b; Savahl, 2020; Solberg et al., 2021). In the South African context, Savahl (2020) explains *hope as a set of cognitions focused on children's agency to contemplate workable goals, to identify pathways to achieve those goals, and the intrinsic beliefs about their capacity to activate sustained movement towards those goals*. For purposes of this article, the constructs of hope (Scioli & Biller, 2010), namely attachment, mastery, survival and spirituality, are intertwined with SEL skills, as fundamental for future success.

Social emotional learning skills

Social emotional learning skills can be defined as the *process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions*. (CASEL, 2020) The five constructs of CASEL model are self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, and relationship building. These skills are critical for preparing youth for the new workplace of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, especially those from culturally diverse communities (Jäckel-Visser et al., 2021; Jagers et al., 2019; Marsay, 2022; Marsay et al., 2022; Solberg et al., 2020). One aspect which is not included in SEL skills is spirituality. Spirituality, one of the constructs of hope, is an important part of African culture and addresses beliefs and values of self within community (Boesak, 2014).

As researcher in practice in South Africa, I wish to suggest the need to combine development of both hope and SEL skills to enable and empower youth. Figure 1 illustrates the connection between these constructs.

Research methods and design

In diverse cultures of the global south, it is necessary to engage in intercultural dialogue about educational interventions. Decisions should be communal rather than unilateral (Hooley & Sultana, 2016; Ribeiro, 2020). A qualitative case study research approach informed by Merriam (1998), Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and Yin (2017) was used with an ethnographic lens, allowing for a constructivist epistemology in natural settings to understand and make meaning of the lived experiences of adolescent girls from an emic perspective. Yin (2017) asserts that case studies are useful for explaining the links between intervention and outcome. The benefit of interventions can be evaluated by listening to participants' perceptions and experiences.

Procedure and ethics

Procedural ethics were governed by Human Sciences Research Council code of ethics (HSRC). Principles of informed consent, confidentiality, the right to withdraw, privacy and the scientific use of the data were followed. Informed consent was given by parents to the school for participation in the intervention. Answering the questionnaire was voluntary and confidential. I, as researcher, developed the intervention in collaboration with various stakeholders (school principal, teachers, faith-based organisations assisting school communities, and corporate business) over a period. The questionnaire was co-constructed by relevant stakeholders.

Position of researcher

I acknowledge that insights from adolescents should be central to how we use research and practice to develop useful interventions. The social constructivist approach emphasises context and highlights the role of culture and knowledge derived from social processes. For the past 20 years, I have worked as an educational psychologist, in three roles: registered psychologist in private practice, psychologist consulting to schools, and researcher exploring alternate ways of assisting adolescents to become future ready for the world of work.

Participants

A sample of Grade 9 girls, attending an all-girls' school in Johannesburg, South Africa, was purposively selected. The girls are from a low socio-economic background, born of parents who were educated during the years of Bantu Education. The average age of 116 participants who completed questionnaires was 14.3 years.

To conclude, for the purpose of clarity regarding the verbatim responses from participants, the socio demographic characteristics of all participants (number 1 to 116) are the same, namely age is 14 years old; gender is female; and background is low socio-economic income group.

The intervention

The unique foundation for this intervention was to awaken hope and develop SEL skills to enable young girls to make

choices for their future education, empowering them to become future ready for the workplace. Group-based interventions, which are cost and time-effective using a blend of individualist and collectivist strategies, are suitable to meet the needs of youth within collectivist models in the global south.

The main objective for the intervention was to equip adolescent girls with necessary personal skills to become future ready. The key aims were multifaceted:

- To explain and develop constructs of hope (attachment, mastery, survival and spirituality) and SEL skills (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building, and responsible decision-making).
- To discuss the value of different school subjects (including Core Maths and Physical Science), which will allow girls to have wider possibilities within the workplace.
- To empower the girls with skills to resist gender bias in work roles by listening to stories of those who have succeeded despite the dominant discourse of gender bias.
- To showcase a variety of different work opportunities available in the corporate world.
- To equip girls with responsible realistic decision-making skills to think carefully about choosing subjects and set realistic goals.

The multifaceted group-based intervention began with a description of the changing world of work and skills needed for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, specifically the hard (technical market-related skills) as well as the soft (hope-based SEL skills). A self-directed booklet with a variety of introspective reflective exercises to develop Hope and SEL skills was given to each participant. The girls were encouraged to answer questions, to make notes, and to keep the booklets for continued reflection and reference. Some of the exercises in the booklet were completed individually. Other activities took the form of interactive discussions with peers. The third facet involved listening to narratives of several women, who work in the corporate world of an international mining company. They shared their personal narratives about how they navigated their journey to become successful independent women. These sessions, designed to introduce girls to different work roles, were interactive. There were several breaks for private reflection, as well as time for peer discussion. The intervention took place on a Friday, before the weekend break. On Monday morning, allowing for a period of self-reflection, the principal of the school, as an objective observer, handed out an open-ended questionnaire for each girl to complete. The principal executed this step of the process to address response bias. The principal explained the rationale behind the questions posed and emphasised that answering the questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous.

Data collection

An open-ended questionnaire was used instead of individual interviews because it is time and cost-effective. The purpose of the questionnaire was twofold. Firstly, to prompt introspective reflective thinking for the participants. Secondly, to gain greater understanding of the life-experiences and perspectives of the girls, to improve interventions.

Each participant was prompted to answer the following questions:

- What do you think will help you to reach your goals?
- What are you most afraid will get in the way of you reaching your goals?
- What do you think we should do more of to help you in an intervention like this?
- What about this intervention helped you the most?
- Please write any further comments.

Data analysis

An inductive approach was used for analysing data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). A strict audit trail including field notes and a journal of process, was followed during this iterative and recursive process. Dependability and confirmability were addressed by coding and recoding raw data by two independent coders. Triangulation and credibility were achieved through the collection of multiple sources of data (116 participants). An independent objective peer review, using a thick description of findings illustrated by direct quotes, was reflected against a backdrop of literature, providing triangulation from theory.

The responses were coded and organised into two visual displays by both the researcher and an independent analyst. Codes were clustered and themes emerged. The frequency of each theme was calculated. Patterns were matched and discussed comparing and contrasting two independent visual-displays, which were merged into one comprehensive display. Emerging themes and actual patterns were matched against a backdrop of theoretical knowledge of predicted patterns. The question constantly posed during the process of coding and matching was 'Do we have this right?' A thick description of the intervention and discussion of findings, illustrated with verbatim quotes from participants, allows the reader to make their own interpretations, and consider the efficacy of the intervention.

Ethical considerations

All ethical considerations were adhered to during the collection of data. There was no risk to participants. Data were collected using an anonymous questionnaire. Participation was voluntary. Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of participants were upheld. The questionnaire invited the participants to share their perception of the multifaceted intervention, which took place as part of the school curriculum on school premises during school hours.

Results

The findings are discussed next and compared with findings from literature. The quotes are verbatim, and no alterations were made to the language used.

Question 1: What do you think will help you to reach your goals?

The three most frequent themes that emerged from this question were: hard work (33%), determination (18%), and setting realistic goals (15%). The following quote encapsulates all three themes and highlights the important need for SEL skills, specifically self-management skills:

> 'Hardwork, determination and having a realistic goal.' (Participant 68)

This finding resonates with the results of a study, which revealed that educators in South Africa regard self-management skills as the most important skill for learners to achieve success, followed by relationship building and social awareness (Marsay, 2022).

The following quote illustrates the need for self-confidence (13%) and resonates with the findings of Çiftçi and Yildiz (2019) who assert that learners need to have confidence in their ability:

> 'Telling myself I can do it, not letting anything get in my way, full dedication.' (Participant 24)

The following quotes confirm the need for social awareness and social support (10%). Several miscellaneous themes made up the remaining 11%:

> 'Getting all support and putting strengths and belief to achieve goal.' (Participant 64)

> 'Support from family and friends, hardwork and doing research.' (Participant 33)

> 'Right friends to encourage me.' (Participant 12)

> 'Asking for guidance from experienced people.' (Participant 15)

In summary, these quotes emphasise the relevance of intrapersonal and interpersonal SEL skills and illustrate the interconnectedness of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building, which are enablers to making responsible decisions about the future.

Question 2: What are you most afraid will get in the way of you reaching your goals?

Thirty-eight per cent of participants fear the impact of negative people and disempowering discourses, which may impede their progress as discussed:

> 'People who don't want me to succeed in life – family and friends.' (Participant 2)

> 'When I am terrified about reaching my goal – and other peoples' opinion will sidetrack me – negative thoughts about my goals.' (Participant 29)

Failing academically or dropping out is a worry for the participants in this group (24%):

> 'Failing is what I am most afraid of getting in the way of reaching my goals.' (Participant 20)

> 'I am most afraid of not getting the results I want and feeling disappointed in myself.' (Participant 66)

It is not always family and friends who form the support group for these adolescent girls. Hence, the adults in the learning environment play a powerful role in supporting, mentoring and providing a safe place for youth, who might otherwise be at risk of dropping out.

The authoritative attitude of parents could be an obstacle to reaching personal goals. Ten per cent of the girls mentioned that their parents' expectations are sometimes different from their own:

> 'My parents might not agree about my career and my subject choice.' (Participant 85)

Distractions may cause failure (10%). This quote illustrates the importance of self-management skills:

> 'I think it is the lack of myself pushing harder and being okay with little success that I achieve instead of me working harder and distraction that interfere with me reaching my goals.' (Participant 10)

Interestingly, difficulty with finances was not seen as a major obstacle (10%). And it is noteworthy that the external factors are not the most frequent difficulty. Internal factors experienced in a difficult learning environment were most frequently mentioned as obstacles:

> 'Not having enough money to get into the career I want – failing a grade.' (Participant 1)

The following quotes describe other fears mentioned by these participants (8%):

> 'Robotics are taking over and I have a feeling that robots will take my dream away.' (Participant 95)

> 'I have fear of the unknown and what the future holds.' (Participant 104)

> 'There might be times when I really struggle and have no idea how to get back up.' (Participant 67)

The emergence of these themes resonates with the findings of Hartnack and Vale's study (2022) and Van Der Berg et al. (2019), which suggests that although adults looked outside the school environment for causes of dropout, the learners themselves experienced academic challenges, bullying, pressure from parents and teachers, and the lack of a caring and supportive school culture, contributing to their disengagement. In summary, developing and implementing hope and SEL skills in schools and communities to create positive supportive learning environments, is important.

Question 3: What do you think we should do more of to help you in an intervention like this?

A large proportion of responses (62%) suggest that interventions should include more information about different fields of work and possible work opportunities:

'I think you should give more information about each and every career and explain carefully what happens in that field.' (Participant 2)

'Maybe bring ladies of different careers in different industries e.g. music, art, dance, agriculture, law and accounting.' (Participant 75)

The importance of relationship building is illustrated in the following quote, which is an example of several quotes asking of individual consultations (18%) illustrating the need for both group and personal interventions resonating with findings from Jäckel-Visser et al. (2021) who advocate the need for one-on-one or group engagement with the self-directed intervention:

'I think the people from the workshop should have one- on- one sessions to discuss with the children and help them find solutions.' (Participant 16)

The relevance of institutional support and encouragement emerged as a theme from the responses to this question (11%):

'Keep motivating us and encouraging us to do better – keep inspiring us with real life stories.' (Participant 68)

Difficulties in the learning environment were also referred to again (9%).

In summary, the responses highlight the fact that there is not enough individual support around future readiness to empower youth to navigate their pathways, overcome challenges and circumvent obstacles they confront giving testimony to the difficulties in the learning environment. These comments are useful to consider when trying to improve the relevance of the intervention and resonate with suggestions that interventions need to be multifaceted (Abe & Chikoko, 2020; Ungar &Theron, 2020). The most noteworthy result illustrates the need for knowledge about possibilities in the workplace, in context, to support decision making. The responses to this question guide us, as researchers and practitioners, to listen to the perspectives and opinions of the youth by giving them voice.

Question 4: What about this intervention helped you the most?

As writer, I give the reader the opportunity to listen to the voices of the participants without comment. I have clustered the responses into themes and selected quotes to illustrate the themes to provide some structure for the reader.

Gained self-knowledge (54%):

'The process helped me discover who I really am and what my interests actually are.' (Participant 32)

Knowledge of career world (13%):

'It helped me see more than just one career but more careers and that I can do more than I expect.' (Participant 48)

Narratives of working women (16%):

'The speeches helped me because motivation from experienced people plays a huge role in pursuing one's dream.' (Participant 16)

Inspiration and motivation (14%):

'The speakers have shown me that only I have the power to do something special.' (Participant 73)

'It helped me realise that girls can do anything. We may not be stronger physically, but without us the world would fall apart. Also no dream or goal is too big or too small. To believe in yourself.' (Participant 28)

Other (3%):

'The book about careers for girls helped me narrow down my decision.' (Participant 33)

'The fact that we got little booklets that assisted us in our subject choice and being able to discuss with your friends about your hopeful future career.' (Participant 78)

The responses resonate with Abe and Chikoko's (2020) findings that interpersonal, intrapersonal and career expectations are factors that influence students' decision-making about choosing study pathways.

Undirected instruction: Please write any further comments

This instruction was posed to allow safe space for participants to raise their own perspectives without prompt. Not all the participants responded to this instruction.

The following quotes illustrate the girls' perspective of the group-based multifaceted intervention:

'I have a dream. I will go for that dream and no one will stop me, get in my way or demotivate me.' (Participant 45)

'I found the workshop very inspiring and an inspiration to every girl out there who doesn't believe that she can make it.' (Participant 71)

'I think they should do more of these workshops because it helps you and gets you thinking.' (Participant 4)

'I think every grade 8 and 9 in the world should get to attend this program because it shapes who you will become tomorrow.' (Participant 32)

'I am really grateful for this opportunity and I hope you do more for other schools.' (Participant 66)

These quotes illustrate difficulties in the learning environment:

'Teachers shouldn't give up on their students.' (Participant 105)

'You should talk more about social career and environmental careers not just based on Maths and Science.' (Participant 111)

'Deciding with friends that know me was really helpful. Always try until you succeed.' (Participant 28)

These quotes refer to content and context:

'It was upbeat and interesting. They know what kind of audience they have.' (Participant 33)

> 'Thank you for the motivational speakers, hearing about their background and what they wanted to do really helped me realise that when one door is shut, the other one opens.' (Participant 8)

These comments resonate with Cherrington's findings (2020) suggesting that collective hope is fostered when a group of people with a shared sense of commitment create a common vision for a better future and then are determined to make it happen. Thus, emphasising the efficacy of multifaceted group interventions.

Discussion

The intention of the author is to stimulate thought and dialogue among educators, policymakers and organisations involved in education and training. There is much to learn from the voices of adolescent girls about their life experience and the impact of dominant disempowering discourses. This research approach reveals knowledge that may be useful for future development and implementation of effective interventions to ameliorate difficulties faced by young girls entering the world of work.

Key factors which these adolescent girls acknowledge as important enablers are both intrapersonal (self-awareness and self-management) skills and interpersonal (social awareness and relationship building) skills, as well as knowing more about different opportunities in the world of work. The findings of this study resonate with the findings of Abe and Chikoko's study (2020). It is important to notice that success stories from others, who have similar contextual backgrounds, are inspiring and motivating for youth who have limited experience and knowledge of the workplace. The importance of intertwining these facets should not be underestimated when designing multifaceted interventions for youth.

Merriam (1998) reminds us that reality is holistic, multidimensional and ever-changing. There was only one school involved in this study and the study focused on listening to the experiences of adolescent girls from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. Thus, excluding many voices. There is a need to replicate this study to gain deeper understanding of the critical factors for useful multifaceted interventions. The intervention was carried out just prior to COVID-19 pandemic, and there was great difficulty doing a follow-up investigation to explore whether the girls found it easier to make choices regarding tertiary education and training. A follow-up investigation would have been useful.

I have tried to be fair in illustrating the emerging themes and acknowledge author bias. The life experience of these girls may influence their comments and therefore cannot be generalised. The comments of this group of adolescent girls represent their context at a particular time. However, valuable lessons can be learnt from taking note of comments from different groups of youth, so that a deeper understanding of general needs may arise. Further research involving different groups is recommended so that findings may be compared.

Conclusion

The interconnectedness of the constructs of SEL skills (self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship building and responsible decision making) is made evident. We may conclude that these are important skills for adolescents to develop as they navigate their future. These skills, together with explicit knowledge of the opportunities in the workplace, enable these young girls to make realistic decisions.

Self-critiquing reflexivity is an important dimension for transformation for both participants and research practices. Participants referred to the internal and external distractions that may interfere with their progress. Once these distractions and disempowering discourses are identified, youths are enabled to recognise them and can develop skills to circumvent them. Evidence of the intangible assets that emerged from responses, illustrates the transformative nature of this study.

In the Global South, where poverty, inequality and unemployment are major challenges, youths need to be enabled and empowered, with both central hard skills (technological and market-related skills) and with tangential soft skills (SEL skills using the constructs of hope as a foundation). Furthermore, youths need to be exposed to work opportunities available to them in context. We can conclude that multifaceted interventions are necessary to empower and enable young people to navigate their way to a successful future.

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Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available on reasonable request from the corresponding author, G.M.

Disclaimer

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