

Table 1*Overview of themes and sub-themes*

Themes	Sub-themes
Theme 1: Contributions to the well-being of law students.	1.1 Presence of social support and belonging. 1.2 Academic fulfilment and balance. 1.3 Student safety on campus.
Theme 2: Hindrances to the well-being of law students	2.1 Academic challenges and pressures. 2.2 Unhealthy or negative coping mechanisms. 2.3 Personal challenges.
Theme 3: Factors that enrich the well-being of law students.	3.1 Accessibility and support. 3.2 Prioritisation of mental health. 3.3 Fostering student community and engagement.

Table 1*Presence of social support and belonging*

Focus group	Online survey
"I would say definitely I think a strong ... foundation in terms of family and friends."	"My Friends" (p15, p16, p89).
"Okay ... also like she said like a strong support system and ... I think a balanced student life is definitely something that contributes to being."	"Time spent with friends and loved ones" (p20, p40, p123).
".. and I think it's the same with you with your relationships and your friends and your family if things are good at home then that really helps to support you in your studies and in every other aspect same with your friend but if ... there's drama at home or drama with your friends then you know that's gonna... that's gonna be subtracting from it so I think it's just about you know kind of finding the balance..."	"Being on campus with friends" (p23).
	"Support of family, friends and lecturers" (p26, p77, p107, p131, 132, 133, p141, p145, p163). "Knowing that I have constant support at all levels - whether that be academic or emotional and beyond" (p14). "Lecturers who actually care about their students" (p32).

Focus group	Online survey
	<p>“Seeing friends, talking to people, being social” (p34, p96, p110, p149).</p> <p>“...a supportive home structure” (p38, 148).</p>
	<p>“Staying at my residence” (p36).</p> <p>“My family, friends and faculty support” “Good academic support system” (p42, p55, p69, p71, p86, p88, p127, p152, p160).</p>
	<p>“...social support” (p73).</p> <p>“Talking to someone about the challenges I face from home and being a student too” (p75).</p> <p>“Therapy afforded by *” (p164).</p>
	<p>“Going to lectures, interacting with fellow students and having the freedom of movement to leave the house. I also have joined many clubs between first and second year. My favourite club to attend was * and the *. * Club was nothing revolutionary. Most of the time we simply 'hung out.' Every Wednesday or Thursday for about an hour or so, but it was something to look forward to. The * had a music/poetry show before lockdown which I attended and recited a piece of writing. I enjoyed this too. These were the reasons I left my home in * to come and study at *. Yes, it's tough sometimes to live alone. But I liked my life there. So, in summary, human interaction contributes to my well-being” (p94).</p> <p>“An interactive residence environment, good support structures, good friends, and working consistently in academics” (p167).</p>

Table 2*Academic fulfilment and balance*

Focus group	Online survey
“I think a balanced student life is definitely something that contributes to well-being...”	<p>“I try take some time for myself to focus on myself and properly relax” (p4, p67, p104, p106).</p> <p>“Having downtime to recuperate from stressful times not in the form of sleep and solitude” (p67, p122, p125, p130, p153, p155, p161).</p>
“...so, like your academics either you can get immense pleasure from it and you can really be like doing well and then that will make you feel better and you’ll actually, you know ... your well-being improves. I think stress to a certain extent is good but ... just to pressure you into doing work. I think it’s just about you know kind of finding the balance where you’ve got enough stuff that’s actually contributing to wellness and less that’s subtracting from it...”	<p>“A good balanced lifestyle, a routine, spending time with friends and res life” (p5, p22, p31, p45, p46, p50, p58, p79, p81, p91, p149).</p> <p>“A work-life balance...” (p17, p61, p135).</p>
“I find that what gives good wellness is a clear state of mind ...”	“Listening to music” (p12, p70, p151).
	<p>“Feeling like I’m in control of my schoolwork and managing my stress” (p18, p66, p101, p109, p117).</p> <p>“Studying under pressure and eating healthy” (p49).</p> <p>“Ability to maintain a good academic average” (p25, p136).</p>
	<p>“Doing activities outside of my academic work” (p42).</p> <p>“Working out, reading, hiking, football” (p39, p44, p59, p93, p95, p105, p143).</p> <p>“Time management” (p76, p165).</p> <p>“Being able to get everything done on time” (p85).</p>

Table 3
Student safety on campus

Focus group	Online survey
<p>"I feel safe on campus because only specific people are allowed entry onto campus that doesn't necessarily mean a rapist a person who molest wouldn't come onto campus, I just think ... specifically that I'm a male as well, I have certain biological factors that allow me to protect myself more than that over females obviously."</p>	<p>"A safe environment" (p14). "...safety" (p28, p92).</p>
<p>"I think like campus is a safe space but it's only as safe as the people that come onto campus; if you have a sociopath on your campus, it's not necessarily a safe space for anyone within twenty metres of that person."</p>	<p>"...having the freedom of movement to leave the house" (p94).</p>
<p>"...so in reality you know campus is a lot safer than outside of campus it's not like a hundred percent safe..."</p>	
<p>"...I feel safe on campus because only specific people are allowed entry onto campus..."</p>	
<p>"As a male, yes, I feel safe."</p>	
<p>"Ja, as quite a small statured female, I'm not gonna lie, okay, on campus I feel quite safe, but at night after walking out a test at eight o'clock at night walking on campus is not really well lit is kind of ...you're a little more on guard, ja."</p>	
<p>"...so, in reality you know campus is a lot safer than outside of campus it's not like a hundred percent safe we've had cases ... it just doesn't get, like, reported to ... media so nobody knows about it..."</p>	
<p>"...I think we have to say that yes okay in reality at least the campus is rather safe and you know walking to reses not like the worst thing ever but it does still play a psychological role where I feel like you should be fine, you know, if you want to walk naked around campus well obviously, like, that's public indecency, but you should still be able to feel safe..."</p>	

Table 4*Academic challenges and pressures*

Focus group	Online survey
“When lecturers expect you to have ... time for five other modules plus theirs and they believe that their module is the only one you’re taking, it’s a bit difficult to juggle that around.”	“Workload” (p78).
“...the expectations that other people like ... they have like your family and stuff like that, that contributes to stress.”	“During online teaching and learning, the faculty has no regard for our well-being, and just overwhelms us with (more than usual) work, despite us having to work under challenging circumstances” (p83). “* is no longer contributing anything other than stress” (p84).
	“Less extreme deadlines” (p100). “Doing schoolwork helps me focus. But being inundated and overwhelmed like this is giving me stress” (p101).

Table 5*Unhealthy or negative coping mechanisms*

Focus group	Online survey
“You think you’re the only person who’s going through it, but I can almost guarantee you when you get to class the next day, there’s gonna be twenty people that had just gone through that same kind of trauma but you won’t know because you’re too scared to speak out as well cause you think it exudes a kind of a weakness about you, where in actuality it it’s not really I mean everyone is an emotional being...”	“Drugs” (p146). “Ritalin” (p126).
“I feel like a lot of people also self-diagnose...” “Self-diagnosis self-medications...Never a good thing unless you understand...”	“The strip” (p10).
“...Because he was addicted...And he’s also been through the whole thing of friends dying, depression ... anxiety specifically, like, copious amounts of anxiety because you are... you feel as though you are not worthy, I find that, that’s a big thing for me at university because when I put hard graft in and I get a fifty-eight, I think I’d be way better working for my pops at home in the butchery, you know what I mean...”	

Focus group

Online survey

“...it’s quite a prevalent thing...drug culture... Why is drug culture not included when we all know it goes on...”

“In certain instances, though, you could argue that, like, I’ve been so depressed at certain times because I haven’t smoked and then you smoke and then you, like, life isn’t that bad. That’s the psycho-active altering effect on your ja...”

“Think ja and... what we don’t take... cognisance until there’s alcohol is a drug as well.”

“I have friends who I live with who are willing to pay crazy amounts of money for Ritalin. I’m like, you’re not even ADD what are you doing? What are you doing? You’re gonna... you’re gonna destroy your brain, like, stop it and then no, I need to study, I need to study. I need to stay up till four, wake up at five...”

“I’ve even seen on some of the WhatsApp groups people asking for like Ritalin.”

“Oh, okay, I have many friends who are avid users of the substance of marijuana, some of them shouldn’t use it cause they’re lazy in nature. Others, they need to use it cause they too active, they’re too... they don’t know how to chill like... you need to relax dude, you’ve been working for sixteen hours, this is how you get mentally unstable, I think. So there’s certain, ja, there’s certain things like certain people must just know like what substances you should use and then the quantity you should use them cause I also have certain people on my corridor who are alcoholics who... shake before twelve if they don’t, like, a brandy or something, I don’t know. Oh my goodness dude it’s gotten to a point whereby you need it to sustain yourself. ”

“...the university actually should have some sort of responsibility towards you know alcohol... abuse because we’ve had some deaths this year... because of alcohol students getting drunk you know there’s car accidents...”

“Under develop minds should be drinking anything, like, I’ve been drinking since was fourteen. I’ve had thinks under supress recently for the past years. I’m an avid user of marijuana, avid, and in the past two months, I’ve subsequently had to stop because of schizophrenia and scares of schizophrenia... I speak on behalf of myself, when you use something to function whether it be Concerta, alcohol, cough syrup in

Focus group**Online survey**

the morning to make you chilled, weed, whatever it is, if you're using it to function, there's a very big problem that you are suppressing."

"Ja, and just to... bring it back to the... to the Ritalin and Concerta, Concerta issues it in first year. I used Concerta like once to get an assignment done... and it was like in a hectic week and everything and I had to learn all night and concentrate, but I realised that that's just not a good idea. That's actually a very bad idea because I've got friends who I didn't have then, but like I've got friends that actually have to use it that actually you know and... I realised just you know sometimes people think, I... you know you're on Concerta that's like cheating and now you're a super student but the fact is they need it to get equal to the average student... with regards to concentration and I used it to like, you know, boost myself and afterwards I was not myself for at least two days. I think I went forty-five hours without sleep."

"...anyway onto this lady that lives next door to me, she didn't know how to prioritise her time, so another person introduces to her take Concerta. Now she's addicted to Concerta, she can't stop using it and when it becomes time for exam season, there's like, you can tell the lips are going crack... I need Concerta, I need to study and then, like, she altered her brain cap, we told her, "are you ADHD, are you ADD?" Not we, I told her, "are you ADD or what are you? Why are you taking Concerta so much?" and she's like, "no, I need it to study" and that's like someone who sniffs cocaine for the first time, does something and then like later on they can't get off of it because now you've changed something of their... and you can't just switch it back, you can't just stop so there and there's, like, it's not like a group of students. I mean it's more often than not; it's like, I would be happy to say 30 to 40% of most modules with strenuous weeks people are popping Concerta, Ritalin - I know there's another one."

Table 6
Personal challenges

Focus group
“...I find but then something that will also places burden on your wellness will probably be your own vices, I procrastinate ...”
“...it can also be that you find yourself... in a bad place academically, you know, falling behind for whatever reason and then you know stress is really definitely...”
“What keeps me from being well... family stress and trauma involved in that obviously and... varsity plays a huge roll... when lecturers expect you to have ... time for five other modules plus theirs, and they believe that their module is the only one you’re taking it’s a bit difficult to juggle that around... ja.”
“...but if ... there’s drama at home or drama with your friends then you know that’s gonna... that’s gonna be subtracting from it...”
“...I think my wellness is very dependent on my context, so whether I be doing well in school but not having a good home in terms of family difficulties, my wellness will not be... it will be in to be independent on the other, so I find that what gives good wellness is a clear state of mind ... but given the position we all hold here at university, it’s very hard to have such a thing, especially away from home I found. So my wellness is probably structure from home having... my mom wake me up or whatever in the morning and things like that, I haven’t had that so that deducts from my wellness...”

Table 7
Accessibility and support

Focus group
“...so I find that, like, learning facilities for support, there could be more computers on campus for people who don’t have such access to such ...”
“So, like, when I go get my marks, I don’t actually get to meet the person or know the people who are marking my work, nor do they get to know who I am or understand where I’m coming from, so I find that most of the time when I get marked, I’m marked according to a memo and there... it’s... you can’t disagree with it because of the vast amount of people that are in the course, but at the same time, I feel like we shouldn’t be marking according to a memo if you want to have progressive... you know.”
“Just ... to add to that, I think it’s also difficult to mark strictly on a memo, especially with problem-solving questions like we have in law... it’s not a simple answer like, yes, he is guilty. Like, that’s not what we do, it’s very application based so to be marked on the memo I find is also very unfair and to add to your whole learning facilities and support, then I agree completely, like, we have a lot. What I find about a lecturers, especially in the law faculty, is they’re very unapproachable and when you do approach them, they just attack you and tell me that you are lazy, even if that’s not the case.”

Focus group

“...and another thing is also think ... a 24-hour, you know, library facility as computer lab facility is something that would definitely help a lot of those students... that are... that come from ... you know, working class that come from financially struggling backgrounds because I don’t think any of the campuses have 24-hour library facilities.”

“You don’t use consultation hours?” (interviewer) “I do specifically for my major and philosophy, I do, but like for law, when you have like four to five lecturers a day and it falls in your lecture slots, you can’t necessarily just go.”

“I think just up their support, you know, just like let us know you know they care, and not like put more pressure on us academically than is necessary. Like considering the fact that that is the time of the year that’s really bad, especially with the change of season as well, so like in the first semester, right before the exam, you can pressure me as much you like, I’m probably not gonna break, this time of the year like I’m probably gonna grab you.”

Table 8
Prioritisation of mental health

Focus group

[psychologists] “There’s 16 amongst 60 000.”

“We get a lot of complaints... there was the march against... the march for mental health the other day and... and it’s something that I’ve heard there, and I’ve heard it before, and I’ve heard it afterwards as well is that they apparently only take ten screenings per day and I think only on Thursdays, maybe it’s not every single day, but what I’ve heard was yeah, so it’s like ten screenings per week and then you only get limited number of hours... and of ... therapy and then if your issue is not sorted within that time, you have to go through their screening process again and, you know, then you get a new person with, you know, they kind of think, okay, we can’t help you if we haven’t helped you by now, and then you have to start the whole process over again and... I actually have a friend that... this year he’s tried to commit suicide... more than once because, you know, like I think... the idea that the university has for you know for... campus psychologists, it’s good but I don’t think it’s...”

“... because ... if you just look at the... evidence, the number of students that have tried to commit suicide, those that have, you know, everything just points to the fact that it’s not sufficient, it’s not good enough... and something needs to be done about that.”

“Two weeks and then you’re done. Its ongoing constantly, your problem’s never solved when you’re sitting there with, you know, mental health issues and disorders and mood, whether it’s mood disorders or personality disorders it’s, ja, you can’t just have like two weeks of sessions and then you’re done.”

“But private, you paying R170 an hour.”

“So, the average * student probably will not have access to quality... psychological support?” (interviewer)

“And... I think that’s exactly the problem, what happens because of... South Africa is a very unequal society, you know, and that’s something that we have to face. So the thing is, for students that tend to be not mentally

Focus group

well and will probably not need a psychologist are the ones that can afford it, you know, if I'm just speaking like a sense of let's talk about depression specifically, no other sort of ... mental issues, but just depression. So the students that tend to be, like, okay because they've got their support structures or they can afford it, they don't need it as much, or if they need it, it's fine, they can afford it, but then students, you know, poverty, I think contributes a lot towards depression and then it's like catch twenty-two cause you're too poor to go for... therapy and it just, you know, it builds on, on itself."

"I find the people... how we can pay for x amount of coaches for the * first rugby team yet we can't find the funds to give fourteen more psychologist, then we have 30 amongst the 60 0000 students..."

"Like, just last week, I was in the line to the ... what is it South African, it's for depression... it's, you call them on the student help line just to talk to someone because sometimes you can't call your parents at two in the mornings cause they wanna sleep, they have jobs so just to talk to someone, you know what I mean, and then you wait ten minutes on the line because they might be busy or whatever. So, psychological support isn't like, is not prioritised here, it's more like an... it's the whole stigma around university where, like, if you want it, you work for it against all the odds, and sometimes the odds, obviously, as we've seen in like previous weeks, they prevail against you and it sucks."

Table 9

Fostering student community and engagement

Focus group

"For example my girlfriend was in... one of the * resses and she... she didn't even, like, she didn't even know her neighbours in the rooms next to her. She was able to go through like the whole year with, I think, one friend in the whole res and that that's the kind of thing that, you know, someone like that... that's the kind of person, well, I'm not saying she's suicidal but that's the kind of person that can get suicidal because even my, ja, even my neighbours don't know what's going on. Even my neighbours don't care about me, and that's the illusion that's... creating is that they don't care and you, you know if you go and speak to someone about it I'm sure they will care but it's not always easy to go speak to someone. You need someone to notice you and to ask you, "Hey are [you] fine?" and I think that's how students feel towards the university as well because we know, and we know the university knows... September, October, that's the highest suicide... like those two months is the highest suicide rate in university spaces. We know it, we know the university knows it, but yet we don't see the university doing anything."

"What would you like them, the university to do?" (interviewer)

"I think just up their support, you know, just, like, let us know you know they care and not, like, put more pressure on us academically than is necessary. Like, considering the fact that... that is the time of the year that's really bad, especially with the change of season as well, so, like, in the first semester right before the exam, you can pressure me as much you like, I'm probably not gonna break, this time of the year, like, I'm probably gonna grab you."

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“That’s exactly the thing, so, I’m very involved in your know called [sic] student cultures student life or whatever and, what I’ve... realised is that, and speaking to some of our older friends in all parts of the university and it’s, like, this whole thing that’s, you know, student life is taking a very big dip. It’s not what it was like, say, for example, the rugby - you don’t see and, like, people don’t come to the rugby anymore, you know, and that’s where, you know, you get to see whether your friends are okay or not. So yesterday, I went to watch a cricket game that my res was playing against another res and they had zero supporters. They just had the team that was playing, they didn’t even have a coach or nothing and we had, like, at least like 30 to 40 guys to come support our team and that’s, that’s the kind of thing that you need is when people actually, you know, like, and you know cricket doesn’t really matter, but it’s what it does is it brings you out of your room. Okay now I’m sitting next to someone I haven’t seen in two weeks and I say, “okay, this guy’s down, let’s have a chat, let’s drink a coffee,” and that’s the kind of thing it does. So, for example, like the rugby, I think for first teams there was five teams competing, this year, these people don’t care about... support anymore and it’s not just... I think sport’s good because, you know, you need that balance between your academics and physical activity... but at least... soccer has... gotten a lot more people playing soccer, which is good, cause at least people are still active, but you still don’t get a lot of supporters at games and support is, you know, support for the team, but you also find that that’s friends support each other and the same with like the ___ events get people there and that’s where you see your friends that you don’t see every day, and the people that don’t come out of their rooms everyday actually coming out for that, and I find that that in our res, where student, like, when res life is a very important part of it, well, we don’t always academically, you know, sometimes it costs you a bit academically, but with regards to your well-being, like, it’s fine. I’ll take the 10% dip in my academics to know that I’m a happy person... and to know that my friends are happy people.”
