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The value of relational wellbeing theory for youth studies in the Global South

Dr. Angelique Wildschut (and team), 7 October 2025



fondation
BOTNAR



Nature of review:

Key questions:

1. *How relational wellbeing applied?*
2. *Research at intersection of young people, wellbeing at focus areas?*
3. *Value for youth research in the Global South?*



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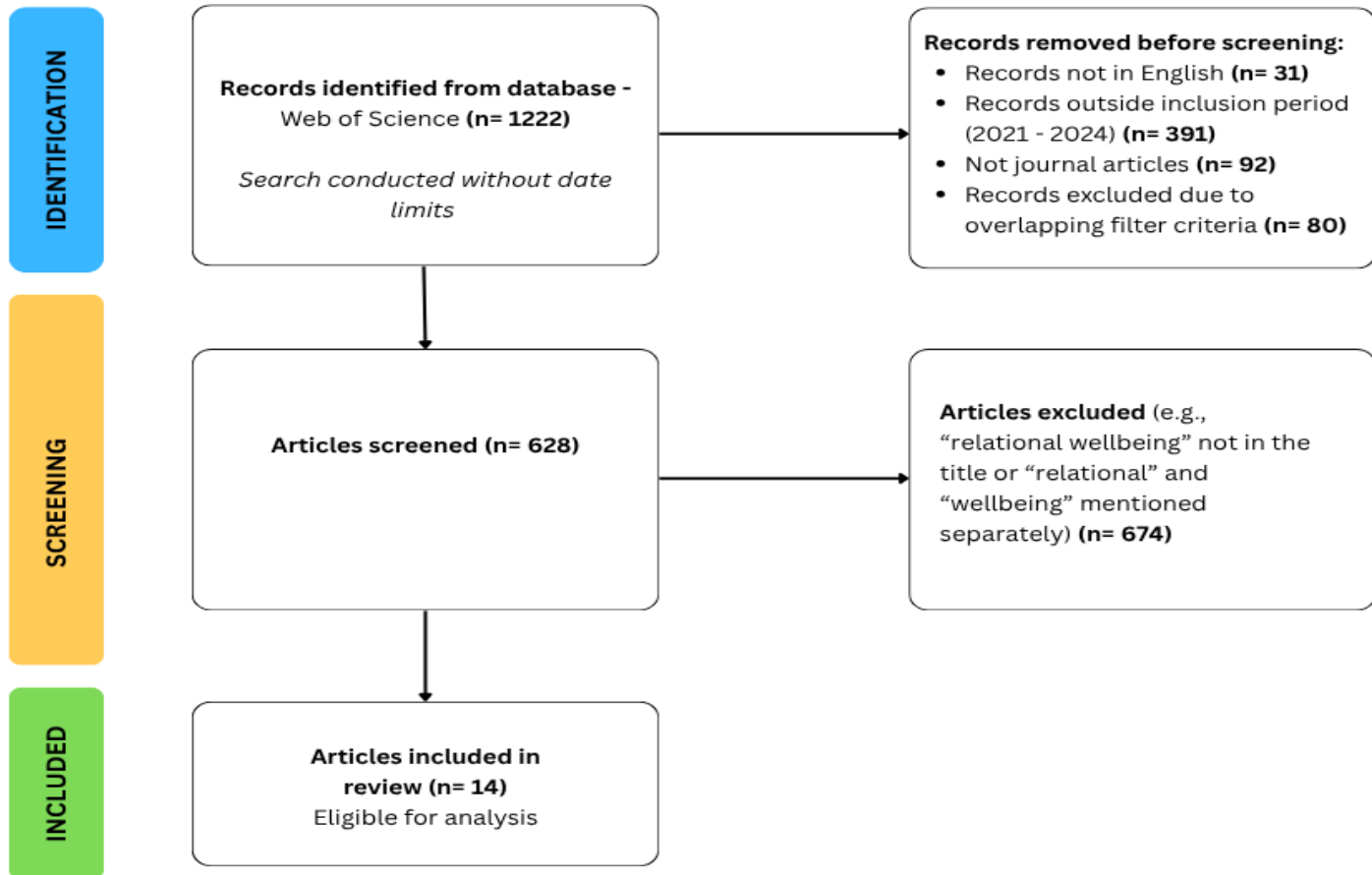
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Evidence review

- Search on the construct of relational wellbeing, searching in the abstract, limiting to 2012-2022, full text, resulting in a total of 1293 records.
- Limiting selection to use of construct in title resulted in 119 available records, further delimiting the search to boolean phrases resulted in **49 records in sample.**



Identification of studies via database



** We limited the review to literature published between 2021 and 2024 to capture the most recent conceptualizations of Relational Wellbeing

Relational wellbeing as applied in literature over past 10 years

1. A focus on the **quality of relationships** (romantic, familial, work-related)
2. A focus on **relational wellbeing as a dimension** contributing to overall wellbeing
3. Tendency to be **used interchangeably with social relations & social relationships**
4. Increasing **recognition of relational wellbeing** itself as **multi-faceted**



Relational wellbeing as applied more recently...



Nature as site for RWB



Non-verbal methods provide deep access to RWB



Expressed through the body and spiritual practices



Not always positive



Challenging Western separation of mind-body spirit



A process not a state



Absence of material wellbeing from youth narratives

Insights from the Four Focus Areas



Potential to shift livelihoods towards better understanding social outcomes



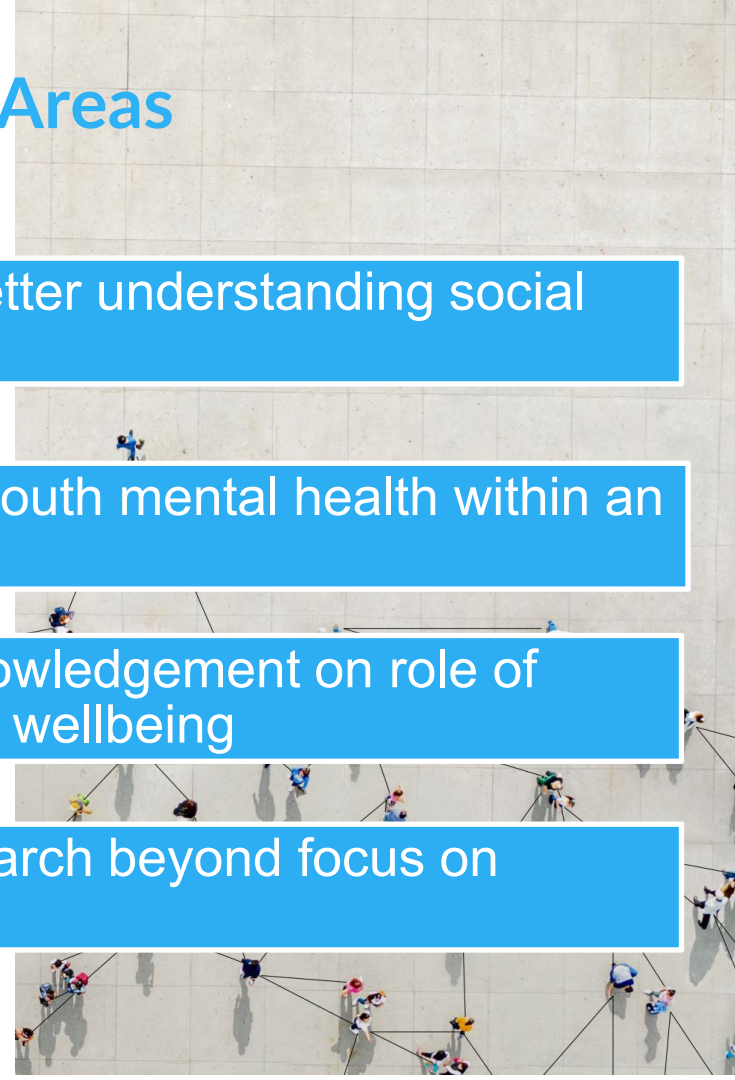
Beyond individual domain nesting youth mental health within an ecology of bi-directional systems



Shift digitalisation research to acknowledgement on role of digital inequality in access for youth wellbeing



Potential to move climate change research beyond focus on activism



What RWB Offers Youth Studies

1. Wellbeing **beyond economic or psychological** metrics
2. Relational methods and community-engaged research
3. Insight into **systemic and structural** conditions
4. Culturally relevant, context-sensitive policy interventions
5. Holistic lens suited for complex, intersectional challenges
6. Deeper empirical testing across Global South and North
7. Urges **co-produced, interdisciplinary** research that foregrounds relationality
8. Critical in contexts of urbanization, displacement, & systemic marginalization





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Thank you!
