An Exploratory Study on the Challenges Faced by Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in the Schools of Maleboho East Circuit of the Capricorn District of Limpopo Province to Develop a Multi-Disciplinary Model

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that it is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

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Surname, Initials (title)   Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to all the orphaned and troubled children in schools, children who have to face the adversities of life, while still young. In some cases, they carry the responsibility of caring for others, while they also need to be cared for. They sometimes feel the void of affection and love of a mother, yet, they are growing up and showing strength every day.

Their story has touched my heart!

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I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this research. My special thanks go to:

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children
ARC	Action for the Rights of Children
AU	African Union
CBO's	Community-Based Organisations
CFH	Child Family Heads
CHH	Child-Headed Households
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 19
CSE	Comprehensive Sexual Education
CSG	Child Support Grant
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DE	Department of Education
DH	Department of Health
DSD	Department of Social Development
FBOs	Faith-Based Organisations
FCG	Foster Care Grant
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
HIV	Human Immune Virus
HIV/ Aids	Human Immune Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Virus
IDP	Integrated Development Programme
IFSW	International Federation of Social Work
ILO	International Labour Organisation

IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISHP	Integrated Schools Health Programme
KZN DoE	KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education
NDP	National Development Plan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NIDA	National Institute on Drug Abuse
NPC	National Planning Commission
NSNP	National Schools Nutrition Programme
NSSIAS	National Strategy for Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
OVC	Orphaned and Vulnerable Children
PAR	Participant Action Research
REPSSI	Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative
RHRC	Reproductive Health Rights Services
SACSSP	South African Council of Social Services Professions
SADC	Southern African Development Commission
SAIDE	South African Institute for Distance Education
SAPS	South African Police Services
SASA	South African Schools Act
SAVF	Suid Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie
SBTF	Strength-Based Theoretical Framework
SGBs	School Governing Bodies
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections

SSA	Statistics South Africa
UNAIDS	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention for the Rights of Children
UNCRPD	United Nations Centre for the Rights of People with Disabilities
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children and Educational Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

ABSTRACT

Society faces the serious challenges of having to find solutions to look after orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC), who often survive against all odds, and are exposed to more threatening or challenging environments than other children. Although this is a widespread and global problem, in sub-Saharan Africa it is exacerbated by other precarious social conditions such as poverty, unemployment, inequality and domestic violence, among other factors. South Africa is no exception to these challenges. Being a developing country, it is still faced with an escalating problem of vulnerable children. This scenario is complicated by the fact that the scope of vulnerable children is vast and complex, but OVCs form the most vulnerable group, as they experience multiple dimensions of vulnerabilities. The South African Government took a positive step and responded with a series of legislations, policies and programmes to mitigate the vulnerability of children. However, despite these responses, the issue of vulnerability continues to grow. In schools, vulnerability makes it extremely difficult for OVC to cope with the demands of academic work and causes them to repeat their grades several times.

The present study explored the challenges facing OVC in schools of the Maleboho East Circuit. The communities around the Maleboho East Circuit are termed multi-risks communities, where social issues such as poverty, unemployment, inequality and substance abuse are prevalent. The study anchored itself on ecosystem theory, emphasising the importance of a person in context, strength-based, which was a shift from deficiencies to strengths and resilience theory. This approach provided a lens and mind map that guided the study. This was paramount for a study of this nature, as the problems experienced by the child at home will eventually cascade into the school environment, where academic performance is needed. The three theories were complementary to each other, as they were used to compensate each other's deficiencies.

The study followed an interpretive paradigm, which placed emphasis on the participants'

lived experiences. In a study such as this one, where in-depth data was required; this paradigm allowed the researcher to enter the participants' lived world through a focus group discussion and personal interviews. From the interviews, themes and sub-themes were generated that were informed by the participants' responses.

Findings indicated that the OVC face many challenges both in school and in their homes as well as their communities. In their homes, they are heavily burdened with household chores that consume most of their time, making it difficult for OVC to juggle both household duties and academic work, causing serious barriers that hinder their academic progress, and results in them often failing and repeating their grades multiple times. They are also challenged by other psychosocial issues such as anger and frustration, and emotional difficulties caused by their lack of basic and school necessities.

Though faced with these challenges, they developed their own coping strategies to manage their situation. However, the researcher concluded that the OVC's challenges made them feel and become educationally excluded. As most OVC are coming from impoverished homes, they will fail to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty they are subjected to. Therefore, the researcher recommended that the government as a custodian of children's welfare should create an environment that is more conducive for the policy for inclusive education to be implemented. Schools should adopt a responsibility, where the focus is not only on education, but on creating an environment where all learners will be catered for holistically, irrespective of their background, thereby enabling them to become better citizens of tomorrow. This is in line with the spirit of the Constitution of South Africa, 1996.

Keywords: *High-risk conditions, Multi-risks communities, Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Vulnerability*

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

"Knowledge is like a garden. If it is not cultivated, it cannot be harvested". African proverb

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

The continuously increasing number of orphaned and vulnerable children [OVC] continues to present a societal challenge in sub-Saharan Africa (Dekeza, 2018) as to how to care for all of them. This problem is escalated by the prevalence of social factors that include HIV/AIDS and poverty, among others (Mutiso & Mutie, 2018). In 2018, the number of orphaned children was estimated to be at around 17 million (United Nations Children and Education Fund [UNICEF], 2018). South Africa is no exception to the rising problem, and despite the country's many proactive responses to this challenge, the vulnerability of millions of children continues to rise and the contributing factors are more complex than ever (Hlalele, 2015). According to the latest figures released by Statistics South Africa (SSA), about 3.7 million children are living without one or both parents, and of these children, 150 000 are found in child-headed households (Hall & Sambu, 2018; SSA, 2020). This figure excludes children who may have parents but are exposed to societal issues like poverty, various forms of abuse and crime, among others.

Maleboho East Circuit, which was the focus of the present study, falls under the jurisdiction of the Blouberg Municipality in the Capricorn District of the Limpopo Province. In the circuit, 80% of learners were vulnerable to risk factors such as extreme poverty, substance abuse, domestic violence, drugs, having to care for minor siblings, and living alone (A. Mothapo, personal interview, April 25, 2017). These factors tend to become barriers for these children that diminish their opportunities to experience success in education. In the rural context of the circuit, where opportunities for personal advancement are scarce, success in education remains the only option for breaking the cycle of poverty and deprivation that these orphaned and vulnerable children are subjected to (Kemp, 2013; Motsa & Morojele, 2017).

Studies have shown that rural conditions in South Africa are characterised by a high unemployment rate, lack of resources and extreme poverty (Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012; Ntjana, 2014). Rural communities such as the Maleboho East Circuit, are categorised as multi-risks, as they have a high unemployment rate, widespread substance abuse, extreme poverty, a lack of resources, and a lack of opportunities for active participation in economic development (Phillips, 2015). Some community members resort to selling liquor and dagga (marijuana) as a means of creating some form of income, and many of their clients are school children.

Vulnerable children are not only experiencing the lack of nurturing parents and being provided with a safe environment, but they are further exposed to high-risk situations such as sexual exploitation, physical abuse, neglect, hunger, child labour, sicknesses and diseases, social isolation, discrimination, and impaired cognitive and emotional development (Hlalele, 2015; Magero, 2012; UNICEF, 2018). In a school context, these children experience a range of psychological distresses (Wood & Goba, 2011). They are often absent from school or passive during lessons, and they have a low self-image, and lack general cleanliness (Department of Social Development [DSD], 2012; Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative [REPSSI], 2009). These results were confirmed in a preliminary interview with one school principal, who highlighted that these children are continuously absent from school and do not cope with the demands of academic work, which minimises their chances of any academic success.

South Africa has made notable strides in developing legislation and policies that herald the rights of children (Proudlock & Röhrs, 2018). Specific programmes intended to deal with the problem of vulnerable children in schools were also created (Bekwa, 2017; Kgothadi, 2015; Mamotsheare, 2016). However, the rise of antisocial behaviour such as aggression towards fellow learners and teachers, as well as the high prevalence of substance abuse among school children, teenage pregnancies and school drop-outs signal a deeper problem, which these programmes are not addressing. The numbers of children who repeat grades also continue to grow. There was both practical and

observational evidence that showed that the policies were not addressing the real problem (Malatji, 2017). Mulvenney (2017:12) highlights: "We cannot keep papering over the cracks when dealing with vulnerable children".

There is a critical need for school social work services (Kemp, 2013; Reynecke, 2018). However, despite calls made already by social work academics such as Kasiram (1993), Ntombela (2004), Kemp (2013), Kemp 2014) as well as other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the Suid Afrikaanse Vroue Dienste [SAVF], there seems to be no political will to mainstream social work services in schools (Kemp, 2013; Kemp, 2014; Reynecke, 2018). It is only in provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal, the Free State and the Western Cape, where notable steps have been taken to address the problem, while other provinces seem to still be lagging behind (Bekwa, 2017).

1.2 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS

The key concepts for the study were as follows:

1.2.4 High-risk conditions

High-risk conditions were situations that put OVC at higher risk of being neglected, exploited, abandoned, or abused and discriminated against than their counterparts (Daniel, 2010; DSD, 2012; UNICEF, 2018). These conditions expose children to a higher risk of being emotionally, physically, and sexually abused (UNICEF, 2018). In the context of the study, these children are exposed to the risk of underperforming academically and dropping out of school because of their background and current living conditions.

1.2.3 Multi-risk communities

Multi-risk communities are communities that are exposed to various risks and threats such as poverty, unemployment, and violence (Phillips, 2015). In the study's context they were communities that were characterised by mass poverty, widespread unemployment, social inequality and exclusion, community unrest, as well as a considerable number of

child-headed homes.

1.2.2 Orphans and vulnerable children

An orphan is a child who is under the age of 18, who has one biological parent or no parents, while vulnerable children are children exposed to risks that may negatively affect their social functioning (Children's Act 2005; DSD, 2012). In the context of this study, vulnerable children included learners who were orphans; learners exposed to domestic violence; learners exposed to various forms of abuse and extreme poverty; learners from child-headed homes; learners who were living with people who were not their biological parents; learners who were bullied; and those who were or had been exposed to sexual violence (DSD, 2012:11; UNICEF, 2018).

1.2.1 Vulnerability

In the context of this study, vulnerability was defined as situations and conditions that place children involuntarily at a higher risk of being deprived of the resources to meet their basic survival and developmental needs, attributed to a lack of care and support (DSD, 2012; Phillips, 2015; UNICEF, 2018).

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

The problem of children's vulnerability continues to present a major societal problem in the 21st century (Maluleka, 2020). Children's vulnerability is also closely linked with challenges that neither social work nor can the education sector deal with unilaterally. It needs a collaborative and multi-sectoral effort. Therefore, the present study was motivated by my story as a high school teacher. Nothing in my training and practice as a teacher prepared me for how to deal with orphaned and vulnerable children. They were broken, grieving, in pain and often hungry. Trying to meet their necessities with one of my colleague was insufficient. Some of these OVC have resorted to dagga and alcohol usage. The only professional help for these children outside the school environment was a small social work office about five kilometres away. Though that young social worker

was quite helpful in dealing with issues facing the children, she was sometimes hindered from seeing the children due to lack of transport.

There was a serious gap in the rendering of social services to learners. My decision to do social work came as a desperate means to be able to offer a little bit of professional help. However, the problem has continued to escalate and has become more complex than ever. Observational evidence has proven that most of the learners who are multiple grade repeaters have psychosocial issues, conduct and behavioural problems are OVCs. That is why I decided to conduct an elaborate study to explore the challenges that these learners were facing at school, with a view to develop a model that could be used in schools to assist these vulnerable children.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Schools in Maleboho East Circuit record a high number of OVC (Mothapo, 2017). Being vulnerable exposes these children to high-risk conditions and threats, which ultimately affect their social functioning (DSD, 2012; Hlalele, 2015). Research evidence has shown that OVC face a whole range of challenges, including high-risk conditions such as physical and sexual abuse (Magero, 2012; Mwoma & Pillay, 2015; Wood & Goba, 2011). They also experience high levels of stress and low coping skills, which lead to a high level of absenteeism (DSD, 2012; UNICEF, 2018).

Cluver, Gardner, and Operario (2009) reported that these children experience high levels of anxiety, depression and anger, sleep problems and nightmares, feelings of hopelessness, suicidal thoughts, low self-esteem, and conduct problems. In schools learners are expected to progress academically, but as these children were unable to cope, they failed to produce positive educational outcomes (Kemp, 2013; Kemp, 2014; Williams, 2010). Literature has widely documented the different challenges faced by OVC in schools (Mamotsheare, 2016; Mwoma & Pillay, 2015; Osei-Agyakwa, 2012; Phillips, 2015). The South African government also launched mitigating programmes such as the National School Nutrition Programme [NSNP] and scholar transport initiatives, among

others that were intended to ameliorate the impact of negative social factors on children. However, the researcher noted a serious gap in these programmes' effectiveness regarding OVC, as these programmes failed to address the needs of vulnerable children beyond food and transport. In the ecosystem notion of this study, children were products of their environment as well as of its different systems. As such, any intervention should not only address material needs, but also offer social, psychological and emotional support.

In a context where there were no social work services catering for the needs of vulnerable children in the examined schools or in the programmes that were aimed at assisting children with nutrition and transport, the researcher saw the need to develop a multi disciplinary school based model that could be implemented by lay people, including teachers and peers.

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 Aim of the study

This study aimed to explore and describe the specific challenges faced by orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) in the schools of the Maleboho East Circuit, Capricorn District in Limpopo Province in order to develop a multi disciplinary school based model that will enable teachers and peers to fill the gap that is currently experienced in these schools that do not have access to social workers.

1.5.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To identify the categories of vulnerable children as well as the determining factors that make children vulnerable.
- To determine high-risk conditions and challenges faced by orphaned and vulnerable children.

- To develop a multi-disciplinary school based model from a strength based perspective to respond to the challenges orphans and vulnerable children face in the schools of Maleboho East Circuit. This model aimed to promote resilience, build self-confidence and emotional well-being among OVC.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was a participant action research [PAR] study. A PAR is a qualitative approach that offers a researcher an opportunity to collectively involve all role players in the research process (Strydom, 2021a). Macdonald (2012) defined PAR as a "systematic collection and analysis of data for the purpose of taking action and making change by generating knowledge". The researcher selected this research approach, as she was of the view that it would provide an opportunity to utilise a bottom-up, person-centred process, where participants have the opportunity to identify and define the challenges in their environment and how they were affected (Macdonald, 2012; Strydom, 2021a). The research process aligned well with the ecosystem and strength based theoretical framework of the study, as the focus was on the relationship the learner has with the environment and it tapped into the strengths and resources in the same environment to promote resilience in children.

An instrumental case study research design was employed to explore and describe the challenges faced by OVC within the ecosystem framework (Fouché, 2021). The garnered understanding helped the researcher to develop a school based model that focuses on the intrinsic strengths of the systems in the children's lives.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study intended to address the issue of vulnerable children in schools, which is relevant to both social work and the education sector. The number and categories of vulnerable children continue to rise in schools and the factors that predispose children to vulnerability continue to be varied and complex. This negatively affects their social functioning, which in turn affects their optimum academic performance.

The failure of these children to progress in academic work hinders their ability to become responsible future citizens and continues to entrench them in a cycle of poverty, which many of these children are subjected to. Therefore, the study proposed a responsive model to address the needs of these children to enhance their social, emotional, and psychological functioning. The adoption of PAR as a research approach afforded participants the opportunity to help develop a model that is relevant to their specific needs, thus ensuring the responsiveness of the model to the real challenges they are facing.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The issue of vulnerability is complex and broad. It affects many people, but especially those who are historically disadvantaged and marginalised. However, the study was limited to OVC and no other children in schools, and it focused on how vulnerability affected the process of education for these categories of children. Therefore, the findings of this study will not be able to be generalised to other learners who are not categorised as vulnerable.

Second, the study was limited to the Maleboho East Circuit, which is predominantly rural, and studies have found that rural conditions tend to exacerbate the vulnerability of children further. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be generalised to children in urban contexts as conditions are not similar.

The global world is presently still experiencing the coronavirus disease 2019 [COVID-19] pandemic's after-effects and the resulting lockdown and the rise of unemployment, a high death rate, and a sluggish economy, which changed the way people lived, and thus, an especially problematic on vulnerable sections of society. This study was conducted under strict conditions. Initially, the researcher had planned to hold one focus group of participants from two schools that were in proximity to each other. However, due to the prevailing COVID-19 conditions and strict regulations, separate focus group discussions were held for each school.

1.9 STUDY OUTLINES

This thesis is made up of ten chapters, which are summarised as follows:

Chapter 1: General orientation of the study

In this chapter, the researcher presented the general orientation for the study, which involved the introduction and background for the study. The chapter further included the definition for the operational concepts relative to the study, the motivation for the study, the problem statement, the goal and objectives of the study as well as a brief overview of the research methodology, the significance of the study and the limitations of the study. This chapter formed the foundation for the whole study.

Chapter 2: Theoretical frameworks anchoring the study

The chapter discusses theories guiding the study. In the researcher's opinion, the challenges facing OVC are interconnected with the environment they are coming from or live in. Therefore, the ecosystem theory was applied as a framework to examine this problem, which was complemented by both the strength based and the resilience theories.

Chapter 3: Care and support initiatives

The chapter discusses care and support initiatives provisioned for OVC in the micro, meso and macro systems. The discussion further elaborates the legislative frameworks intended to address the issue of vulnerability of children. The chapter analyses programmes that had been instituted to deal with vulnerability of children in schools.

Chapter 4: Vulnerability of children and contributory factors

In this chapter, the focus is on conceptualising vulnerability and the different dimensions of vulnerability. The discussion further elaborates the different categories of OVC as well as contributory factors that predispose children to vulnerability.

Chapter 5: Discourse on the challenges facing OVC

The chapter discusses at length the challenges that OVC face. The discussion started by presenting the magnitude of children vulnerability in South Africa and concluded with the challenges they face, which range from psychosocial challenges, challenges at home as well as challenges at school.

Chapter 6: The role of school social work in relation to OVC

The chapter provides a discussion on school social work as a specialised area for children experiencing social problems in schools. The role and functions of school social work are also addressed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of school models for social work practice in schools.

Chapter 7: Research methodology

The chapter discusses the research methodology applied in this study. It starts by giving an overview of interpretive paradigm as it relates to the nature of study. The research methodology is discussed, which includes the research approach, the research design, procedures for sampling, data collection methods, ethical issues and trustworthiness criteria.

Chapter 8: Presentation of findings, analysis and interpretation of data

In this chapter, the data collected from the semi-structured interviews is discussed, analysed and interpreted, using thematic content analysis. The data collected is elaborated upon, together with the views and responses from participants. The chapter

concludes with the suggestions from participants on dealing with the situation of OVC in schools.

Chapter 9: Summary of key findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for future research

This chapter draws key findings from which conclusions are made, followed by recommendations. The findings are backed by literature on the challenges and findings from similar studies.

Chapter 10: Development of multi-disciplinary model for OVC

In this chapter, the researcher provides a proposed multi-disciplinary school-based model envisaged for guiding social interventions for OVC problem in schools. However, the model was not limited to schools, but could be also applied at home by caregivers.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS ANCHORING THE STUDY

"Theories are like mathematical formulas. As the formulas help us to solve the sums, similarly, the theories help us to establish our points in research!" MD Ziaul Haque

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Theoretical frameworks are an important part of research, as they provide researchers with a grounding base or an anchor to structure and support the rationale for the study, the purpose, the significance and problem statement (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). In addition, the use of a theoretical framework guides the review of literature, research methods and analysis of results (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). In simple terms, they provide the study with a clear focus and organisation (Abraham, 2008). However, studies reveal that many doctoral students found it challenging to provide a theoretical framework for their study (Abraham, 2008). Iqubal (2007) captured this struggle in these words: "It is the most difficult but not impossible part of the proposal". However, without a theoretical framework, the vision and the structure of a study remain unclear. By contrast, theoretical frameworks allow a study to be strong and structured with an organised flow from one chapter to the next (Abraham, 2008). Thus, this chapter focused mainly on theoretical frameworks underpinning the study.

In this study the researcher utilised the ecosystem theoretical framework as a grounding base to investigate the situation of OVC and the challenges they face. To enhance the study, the researcher added the strength based as well as the resilience framework to complement the ecosystems' theory.

2.2 ECOSYSTEM THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 Background to the ecosystem theoretical framework

The ecosystem theory has been developed by an American psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner. It is also called development in context, as it focuses mainly on the quality and context of the child's environment (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017; MacBlain, 2018,). Brofenbrenner believes that children's development is affected by everything in their surrounding environment and as the child develops, the interactions in the environment become more complex (MacBlain, 2018, Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009). In the context of the present study, the ecosystem theory holds the view that challenges children experience in their families, social groupings, community and society eventually affect their education process at school. Therefore, the children are not viewed in isolation, but as the product of the environment they find themselves in.

2.2.2 Relevance of ecosystem framework to OVC

The ecosystems' theory argues that a child's development takes place through the processes of progressive, more complex interaction between children and the different levels of the ecosystem layers (Payne, 2014; Tudge et al., 2009). These layers include the immediate environment such as the family, the peer group, the child's characteristics and the wider community (MacBlain, 2018). It further adds that people and their physical, social, and cultural environment are interconnected and are better understood within the context of mutual existence and relationships (Garthwait, 2012; Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2011).

The figure that follows shows the centrality of the children in all the systems that affect

their lives.
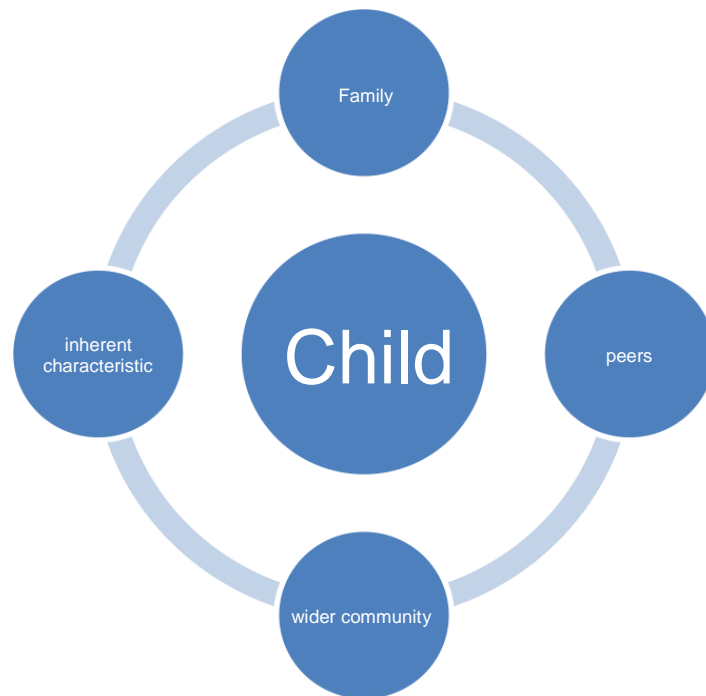
Figure 1: The centrality of children in all systems
         Adapted from Christensen (2016)

The figure above shows that the children's problems could only be understood within the context of the family, community or society within which they live. Ettekal and Mahoney (2017) support that these environmental systems are each influencing children's development. This explains the notion that children who grow up in vulnerable contexts become vulnerable themselves (Hlalele, 2015). Therefore, children who grow up in multi-risks communities also face multiple risks, which increase their vulnerability (Phillips, 2015).

The argument as given provides a professional view of children whereby their interaction with their social environment is examined; to explain how the inherent qualities of children and their environments interact with one another to influence how they grow and develop (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017; MacBlain, 2018). In this light, the OVC occupies the most central position in the ecosystem. All events and experiences are eventually interpreted

in a way that they are related to and have an impact on them. As a result, their experiences can never be viewed in isolation, but should be viewed in the context of the environment they find themselves in (Christensen, 2016). Therefore, OVC's immediate famiies, the peers, and inner characteristics are all contributory to the socialisation process. Through interaction with his environment all the habits, attitudes, values, and the values of the particular social group where they grow up, are learned (Christensen, 2016).

The OVC then becomes the products of the environment in which they find themselves. They are influenced in one way or the other and in turn, they influence their environment as already argued. Their life situations and the well-functioning of or dysfunctioning behaviour patterns, shape their perception and outlook of life (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2011). This complexity of human ecosystems justifies an integrated multi-disciplinary approach, which requires interventions to be carried at the micro level (individual and family), the mezzo level and at the macro level (community) or on all three levels

2.2.3 Levels of environmental interactions

Bronfenbrenner divided the person's environment into five levels of interactions, which are microsystems, mesosystem, macrosystem, exosystem and chronosystem (Germain & Gitterman, 2008). For the purpose of the study, only four levels will be discussed, which are: micro, meso, macro and exosystem.

The micro level forms the inner most layer that is closest to the child and incorporates the biological, psychological and social systems that affect him/her (Farley, Smith, & Boyle, 2013; Openshaw, 2014). This includes the individual child's inner world, comprising of thoughts, will and emotions (Pelech & Pelech, 2014). It further encompasses the child's most immediate environments, such as the child's parents, the playmates, parenting style and socio-economic status of the family. In relation to the OVC, the interaction between the child, siblings, parents or other caregivers affects the child's development. Social interventions at this level should focus on individuals and groups to enhance their social

functioning.

In the meso level, the child interacts with smaller groups, such as the family, peers, neigbours and other social groups such as the church (Germain & Gitterman, 2008). The interaction the child has with this small group determines the type of human development the child will have. This layer is unique as it involves those systems that interact with people in the microsystem (Germain & Gitterman, 2008; Tudge et al., 2009). It proposes that children do not develop only by influence from their close family members, but also the surrounding environments which may be their extended relatives and neighbours. Therefore interactions in those systems should be taken into focus.

The macro level comprises of set of overarching beliefs, values and norms as reflected in the cultural, religious and socio- economic organisation in society, which involves groups and systems that are larger than families (Farley et al., 2013). These are organisations, institutions such as the school, the larger community including the traditional authorities and culture (Van Rensburg, 2015). This layer of interaction provides a blueprint of a particular culture or subculture, and it comprises values, laws, customs and resources, lifestyles and opportunity structures (Farley et al., 2013). This will include the cultural environment of the child.

There are certain cultural beliefs which may make children vulnerable and have an impact on OVC development. In some cultures once children loose their parents their family assets are administered by family relatives like uncles as such the likelihood that those assets may never return to the children is increased. Therefore, social interventions should aim at bringing social change at the structural and societal level.

The exosystem level is not an environment in which children resides. Though, it is not directly connected to the child, it nonetheless affects the child and may mitigate or aggravate vulnerability (Germain & Gitterman, 2008). Government policies, parents' workplace and family friends may make children more vulnerable (Constable, 2016; Hlalele, 2015). It takes into cognisance parents who cannot take care of their children

because they earn so little, or are at work and their children are left alone to care for themselves. There also those OVC who live in child headed homes, where they are forced to take on the parental roles for their siblings after the loss of their parents.

The following table depicts how different systems in a learner's environment affect the child's development.

Table 1: The impact of different systems on child's development

Level	Source of influence	Area of influence	Response
Micro	Inner self	Emotions, Thoughts and Will	**Behaviour**
Meso	Outer force	Family, Peers Church Youth clubs	**Direct effect on the child Quality of interactions and socialisation process in this system will influence behavior**
Macro	Outer force	Culture	**Common identity Values**
Exosystem	**Outer force**	**Parents' workplace Larger cultural context**	**Overtime Laid off at work**

Adapted from McKendrick (1990)

From the above table, it can be deduced that the inner characteristics such as emotions, thought and will of the child influence the child's behaviour. On the other hand, the outer forces influence the way the emotions of the child and thoughts are shaped. This is an explanation of why children in particular the OVC in this case react to their environment differently. There are those who will bounce back, despite being faced with a dysfunctional environment and there will also be those who will fail to cope with their circumstances. This shows a strong relationship between the ecosystem, strength based and resilience theories, which will be discussed at a later stage.

2.2.4 Principles influencing interaction process

(a) The exchange principle

The exchange principle explains that social problems and challenges in the family, the community and society influence the child's behaviour and the child's view of life (Germain & Gitterman, 2008; MacBlain, 2018). What happens to the child's immediate environment affects their psychological as well as emotional well-being. For example, if a child is faced with community risks such as poverty, drug abuse and community violence, then their overall well-being, development and social functioning will be duly affected (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2011; Teater, 2014). What is happening in the child's immediate environment can have either a positive or negative impact. In a school, the situation at home or in the community will affect the child's academic performance as discussed earlier. Williams (2010) stated that children cannot do well academically, while facing extreme social challenges.

(b) The principle of reciprocal relationship

Ecosystems theory takes into consideration a person's immediate environment and the reciprocal relationship between the child and the child's environment (Openshaw, 2014; Payne, 2014; Williams, 2010). In the notion of this theory, people and their physical, social, and cultural environment are interconnected and are better understood within the

context of mutual existence and relationships (Garthwait, 2012; Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2011). This includes the psychological, emotional and social aspect of one's life. Ecosystem theory is applied to view the environment of OVC and the relationship between the different systems in their environment and how they influence the child and how the child influences them.

2.2.5 Practice interventions in ecosystem framework

From the social work perspective, the ecosystem theory holds the view that problems of society are reflected in the schools and thus social problems inevitably affect the daily roles and tasks performed by a school social worker and other educational staff (Emovon, Gutura & Ntombela, 2011). Thus, the societal forces such as violence, poverty, family dysfunction and other social problems affect the educational processes and in some instances, undermine the capability of the school to offer equal educational opportunities to all its learners.

Interventions that are intended on the ever-changing relationship between all variables in the child's environment and how they contribute in the impact of these challenges are important (Kasiram, 1993). The awareness of social, political and cultural environments places the individual in context rather than as an isolated set of symptoms (Emovon et al., 2011; Kemp, 2013). As such, the challenges of OVC in schools will be approached in cognisance of the political, social, cultural environment, to name just a few.

To minimise stress and risk, any social interventions should target the source of stress in the child's environment and aim at increasing the level of fit between the child and the environment (Christensen, 2016; McKendrick, 1990). This is done to improve the quality of exchange between the child and the environment, and help them to see challenges and factors holistically rather than looking on the child in isolation.

From ecosystem framework, interventions will be focused on all significant parts, for example, the immediate family, the neighbours, and the community as well as societal

factors. When individuals feel that their environment is not providing the necessary resources, because they are unavailable, inaccessible or non-existent and are of the opinion that they do not have strengths, resources or capability to grow and develop, they experience stress. This leads to a poor level of adaptive fit, which often leads to individuals seeking help (Christensen, 2016; Teater, 2014). Therefore, the focus is on the social processes of interactions and transactions between children and their different environments. However, it should be noted that the influence that children have on and from the environment is not static, but it evolves over a period of time, taking into consideration the historical and cultural influences (Teater, 2014). It is not a simple cause and effect, which follows a linear process, but focuses on the reciprocal relationships and interactions (Teater, 2014).

The life model approach can be a guideline to practitioners dealing with child problems to improve the level of fit between them and their environments (Tudge et al., 2009). This form of practice incorporates an understanding of the experiences of everyone within their historical, societal and cultural contexts. This helps to improve the level of fit between the child and their environment by mobilising and drawing on personal and environmental resources to eliminate stress or minimise the impact of stressors. The use of a life model approach provides practitioners an opportunity to holistically assess the client; and identify life stressors and how the client's environment is hindering the chance of alleviating the stress and returning to an adaptive person environment fit. Using the life model approach influences the social and physical environmental forces to be responsive to their needs (Pelech & Pelech, 2014; Teater, 2014). This calls for interventions to involve working with clients to change the ways in which they view themselves and the world, as well as intervening in the environment to improve relationships and interactions, and challenge blocked resources or mobilise the environment to create new resources (Tudge et al., 2009). In asset-rich environments, there are multiple resources at all different levels of the system, which provide children with different types of opportunities, whereas in a deficient environment, the opportunities for children are limited in particular OVC (Pelech & Pelech, 2014).

The explanation helps practitioners to gain a deeper understanding of the consequences environmental factors such as poverty, crime and substance abuse have on vulnerable children, and develop measures to mitigate the impact of these factors (Teater, 2014). By changing and strengthening one aspect of the system in children's environment, the whole system can be changed (Teater, 2014). This provides an opportunity to view challenges of children holistically as shown earlier, by taking into consideration the child's characteristics and the child's socialisation process within the immediate environment, such as the family as well as peers (Payne, 2014). The implication thereof is that problems are not isolated from the environment that the child comes from. The interaction that the child has with their environment influences their functioning, which is a reciprocal exchange between the child and the environment.

2.2.6 Advantages of ecosystem framework in practice

The ecosystem framework provides many advantages in practice and research. Ntombela (2004) and Tudge et al. (2009) outlined the following benefits:

(a) It bears the potential to enable practitioners to address issues of socio-economic inequalities, which affect the development of children worse than any other cause.

This helps both researchers and practitioners to have a clearer view of how social issues such as poverty, unemployment and domestic violence contribute to a child's vulnerability. In the school, for example, the child's conduct and behavioural problems are viewed in the context of the child's environmental circumstances. So, the child's education is no longer viewed from the perspective of the school only, but also includes the home, the community and society.

(b) It enables practitioners to gain a larger perspective and a more unitary and comprehensive unit of attention. This leads to a holistic and dynamic understanding of OVC and their problems, as well as their socio-cultural physical milieu and how these contribute to social problems.

When practitioners such as educators and social workers have a larger perspective on the challenges that children face, they can bridge the gap and adopt a holistic approach. They can have an opportunity to work together in collaboration and decompartmentalise interventions when addressing issues facing children, and especially OVC in this context.

2.2.7 Limitations of ecosystem framework

The ecosystem theory presents many benefits to this study when considering the contextual factors such as the lack of social support and lack of or inaccessibility to resources (Christensen, 2016). Second, the theory helps to bring into the limelight an understanding of the consequences of childhood environmental factors on children (Christenson, 2016).

However, the ecosystem theory has been criticised to be difficult to implement, as it becomes hard for programmes to uncover what systems can be targeted (MacBain, 2018). In some instances, it can be difficult to target the environment as a whole (Teater, 2014). It further lacks the motivation to change the environment and, in some cases, changing the lifestyles of people can be difficult or even impossible (Teater, 2014).

Its lack of focus on conflict and how structural factors contribute to social problems such as poverty, inequality, underdevelopment and social exclusion of individuals, families and communities presents a serious drawback (Christensen, 2016). To add to the theory`s limitation problems is its Western orientation. Ecosystem has been developed in the Western world where conditions are totally different from the context of this study. Though it aknowldges the interaction of different systems in the children`s lives, it however refer to completely different systems. In African view, a system like a family may include uncles and aunties staying in the same household as the child's, as well as neighbours who may be in contact with the child almost everyday.

It is within its limitation background that this theory could not solely applied in the study

and therefore needed to be complemented with other theories which in this case are the strength-based perspective, which is also known as asset-based approach as well as resilience theory.

2.3 THE STRENGTH BASED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.3.1 Origin of strength based theoretical framework

The strength based theoretical framework (SBTF) emanated from the strength based approach, which is a recent development in social work circles from a team in the University of Kansas, including Dennis Saleebey and Charles Rapp (Scerra, 2011; Zastrow, 2011). It was an attempt to move away from approaches that focused mainly on the pathologies of people, but instead aimed to look at the capacity and strength of people. It represents a paradigm shift away from a traditional deficit model and pathology based models. It is grounded upon the principles consistent with social constructivism and postmodernism, and a strong belief in human potential. It is closely related to resilience theory which will be discussed at a later stage.

The major contribution of the theory is its emphasis on people's self-determination and strengths (Rapp, Saleebey, & Sullivan, 2008). It concentrates on the inherent strengths of individuals, families, groups and organisations, deploying personal strengths to aid empowerment (Patel, 2015). Its focus is on the positive attributes of persons, groups or communities rather than their negative attributes (Stoerkel, 2020).

2.3.2 Relevance of SBTF to the study

The SBTF holds on to the belief that children, and their families have the strengths, resources and ability to recover from adversity (Hammond & Zimmerman 2011; Stoerkel, 2020). It acknowledges that though the environment may pose stressors for the child especially the OVC in this case, there may be resources that can be tapped into to enrich their lives. It is not focused on pathologies and the malfunctioning of children and their environment, but on their strengths, their abilities and skills as well as available resources

in the environment (Stoerkel, 2020). This provides people like teachers with opportunities, hope and solutions to look at the holistic view of OVC `s challenges rather than only problems and hopelessness (Hammond & Zimmerman, 2011; Kim & Whitehill- Bolton, 2013). When challenges are experienced, and problems and issues are acknowledged and validated, then strengths can also be identified and highlighted. This changes the story of problems, as it creates positive expectations that things can change and be different, and it opens the way for development of competencies.

It is a new way of looking at people and embraces the core belief that even if they experience problems, they have strengths, skills, resources and capacities to effect positive change, if enabled and supported to do so. Saleebey (2013) reiterates that people need support to become enabled to function optimally. The implication is that in the schools, the OVC need the support of peers, teachers and social services personnel to locate and tap into their own internal resources that will enable them to function well. Therefore, this shows an appreciation of the valuable skills and experiences children, young people and their families have in co-producing solutions to their life's challenges (Hammond & Zimmerman, 2011).

In the same notion, the communities that these children come from have resources and services that can be located and tapped to minimise risks and promote their resilience (Saleebey, 2013; Hammond & Zimmerman, 2011 & Scerra, 2011). In the absence of social services to OVC in schools, this view credited the school, teachers, parents and extended family members, peers, neighbours and traditional structures as a resource in the community, through and by whom the child can be helped. This guided the intended model to respond to the inner environment, as well as the external environment, with a view to locate the strengths, capacities and resources needed to promote positive outcomes (Wronka, 2013; Finn & Jacobson, 2013; Scerra, 2011).

The next discussion directs how social interventions from SBTF can be carried out.

2.3.4 Practice interventions in the SBTF

Practice interventions from the framework focus on identifying the strengths and assets as well as needs and difficulties of children, young people and families (Stoerkel, 2020). Daniel (2010) and Pattoni (2012) outlined the following steps that guide social interventions from this perspective:

(i) Community assessment

This is the process of identifying the strengths, assets, needs and challenges of a specified community, which may include the communities that OVC come from. The school community is also included. The strengths and assets refer to the skills, talents and abilities of individuals as well as the resources that local institutions contribute to the community. In the process of community assessment, the risk factors to children's well-being as well as protective factors are identified. In the context of this study community assessment will involve assessment of current services and structures available in assistance to the OVC as well as identifying the risk factors that may prevent them from obtaining those services (Daniel, 2010).

(ii) Risk factors

These are factors that increase the likelihood of children becoming or already being vulnerable. They can range from individual risk factors to family risk factors as well as community risk factors. In OVC, individual risk factors may include their history of vulnerability, high emotional stress, or involvement with or exposure to drugs, alcohol and tobacco (Mirza, Sudesh, & Sudesh, 2020). Family risk factors may include social isolation, family stress, separation or divorce, domestic violence and parenting stress, poor parent−child relationships and negative interactions (Mirza et al., 2020). Community risk factors include poverty, poor and underresourced schools, dangerous neighbourhoods, and community violence, lack of access to medical care, or any health and social services. These risk factors may expose children to a higher degree of vulnerability and hinder their development and socialisation process. They are often presented individually, yet co-exist and interact with one another (Stoerkel, 2020).

(*iii*) *Protective factors*

Protective factors are assets or strengths of the individuals, families and communities that protect an individual, family or community from potential risks (Farley et al., 2013). Protective factors may mitigate the likelihood of children being exposed to vulnerable conditions, and also lessen the impact of vulnerable conditions on them. Areola (2019) outlines them as follows:

Individual protective factors include factors such as a positive, easygoing temperament, good health, above average intelligence, a history of adequate development, hobbies and interests, and good peer relationships.

Family protective factors include secure attachment, parental support in times of stress, household structure, parental mentoring, positive parental relationships, parents modelling positive skills, family expectations of pro-social behaviour.

Community protective factors include access to health and mental health services, adequate housing, lack of poverty, good schools and supportive adult mentors like uncles and aunts.

2.3.5 The benefits of SBTF

In research and practice, the framework offers many benefits, as it follows a bottom-up approach, where people are given the opportunities to be partners in the process. In this study, the framework has given the researcher an opportunity to examine the challenges of OVC from the perspective of children, and to develop an intervention model relevant to their context. As already argued, children are experts of their circumstances and have the capacity to oversee their lives. The framework says: "Let us look at what people can do with their skills and resources and what people and communities around them can do in their relationships".

It is also a collaborative process between the person supported and those supporting them, allowing them to work together to determine an outcome that draws on a person's strengths and assets (Saleebey, 2013). The researcher worked in collaboration with selected OVC to define their challenges as well as their skills, resources and capacities. This was closely aligned with PAR, as it afforded children the opportunity to be active participants in the research process.

The approach is also child-centred, which was more relevant in the context of a rights-based approach, which argues that individuals and communities should be fully supported to participate in practices that affect them (Patel, 2015). The implication is that the child is the point of focus in the process of defining their problems and unlocks children's capacity to solve their problems more effectively. This will mean that they are empowered to take charge of their lives (Daniel, 2010). It allows the children to make decisions that affect their own lives and gives them an opportunity to be in control of their own lives. This is beneficial in the contribution of children's resilience, as they become empowered once they realise that they can also take charge of their own lives to effect positive change. They are no longer victims of their own circumstances, but become active role-players in the process of change.

It puts individuals and families at the heart of social care and recognises that they have a key role to play in the care of children and young people. This cannot be replaced solely by professional intervention (Edwards, Gillies, & White, 2019). The strengths based perspective argued that any form of intervention should focus on the strengths of individuals, communities, and societies, rather than their weaknesses and maladaptive functioning (Hammond & Zimmerman, 2011; Scerra, 2011). It was captured in the argument: "People, no matter how poor, disempowered, or vulnerable, have inner and external resources that can be tapped into to produce positive outcomes" (Zastrow, 2011; Wronka, 2013; Finn & Jacobson, 2013).

Tapping into the strengths of OVC gives a clearer view of why some children respond differently, even though they are experiencing the same challenging circumstances. In

the notion of the strengths-based perspective, inner resources and capacities of children and their environment can be tapped into in the promotion of resilience (Van Breda, 2017). This provides them with the opportunity to see possibilities, options and opportunities for change, and improvement to promote resilience. In the context of the study, resilience becomes a target goal for all efforts.

Literature postulates that the perspective is not easy to apply in practice, inspite of all its benefits (Colomina & Pereira, 2019). It needs one to get an entry into one's life to identify one's strengths (Colomina & Pereira, 2019). This requires practitioners to focus wholly on the individual's life to identify their strengths, which will need one to apply communication skills that will enable one to get into the internal world of the child (Colomina & Pereira, 2019). The following communication skills are crucial in enabling the process of locating the skills, strengths and capacities of children.

- *Listening skills*

The Oxford dictionary describes listening skills as the ability to accurately receive and interpret messages in the communication process (Hornby, 2018). Effective listening is a skill that underpins all positive human relationships. Good listening allows one to demonstrate that one is paying attention to the thoughts, feelings and behaviour of the other person (Tong, 2019).

- *Questioning skills*

Questioning skills involve the ability to ask and answer questions. Questioning is the key to gaining more information and successful intervention processes (Greeff, 2011). This involves asking both open and closed questions as well as probing questions. Probing is the skill of asking penetrating questions that reveal more detail about the other person, which requires that the person posing the questions has to do away with all bias or assumptions and practice active listening (Greeff, 2011). In the process of the questioning process, the strengths and resources are identified; and making them aware of those strengths.

2.3.6 Limitations of SBTF

Apart from being difficult to apply in practice as posited already, Areola (2019) posits in criticism that while it is good to focus on strengths, there should not be utter neglect of the weaknesses. As a result, SBTF can be effective, if there is a whole system approach to change, which can have a potential risk of shifting the focus away from children (Scerra, 2011). Second, there is a lament that it puts more emphasis on children's strengths, while disregarding the role played by structural forces such as socio-economic factors and incompetent government policies (Scerra, 2011). In the context of this study where poverty is entrenched it may be difficult for family members like aunts and uncles to care for children that are not theirs. Though they may be identified as strengths and resource in the OVC `s environment, their socio-economic conditions may hinder them from being of any assistance.

The following discussion is focused on the resilience theory as a third perspective that guided the study. However, it should be noted that in relation to this study, resilience was an end goal.

2.4 RESILIENCE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Resilience is the ability of individuals, families and other social systems to respond to and deal with problems without becoming dysfunctional, overwhelmed or ineffective (Garthwait, 2012). Resilience helps people survive, recover and even thrive in the face of adversity (Van Breda, 2017). Therefore, it focuses on how people bounce back after adversity. In addition, resilience can be an outcome when children adapt to extraordinary circumstances and achieve positive and unexpected outcomes. Van Breda (2017) expatiates further to see it as a process that focuses on the capacity of individuals to bounce back from adversity strengthened and more resourceful. Theron and Phasha (2015) add that children possess extraordinary abilities to achieve positive outcomes and unexpected outcomes in the face of adversity.

In this study, resilience was set as the end goal, as it is closely connected with SBTF. It

supports a move away from emphasising people's weaknesses to a renewed focus on the strengths and triumphs in the face of adversity, which is the central argument of SBTF (Soji, Pretorius & Bak, 2015; Van Breda, 2017). It posits that while people may face a range of adversities, they often find a way to surmount those challenges to cope and even to thrive (Garthwait, 2012; Van Breda, 2017). This directs the proposed model to respond to the inner environment, as well as the external environment, with a view to locate the strengths, capacities, and resources needed to promote positive outcomes (Pretorius, 2020)). Resilience can be a process where individuals are seen as having the capacity to rebound from adversity strengthened and more resourceful. It can also be viewed as an outcome where children can produce positive outcomes even when faced with difficult circumstances (Daniel, 2010; Van Breda, 2017).

Resilience revolves around three connected components, which are adversity, outcomes and mediating factors. In adversity, children's developmental pathways can be adversely affected by a range of circumstances, which may include physical or sexual abuse, traumatic incidents such as loss and bereavement, as well as socio-economic disadvantages (Daniel, 2010; Lethale & Pillay, 2013). Mediating factors of resilience are factors that promote children's resilience, such as social connections, where the child enjoys good relationships with others, for example, with peers, teachers and family (Bajaj & Pande, 2015). Social interventions that focus on strengthening resilience, should draw on the person's strengths and build self-reliance and social responsibility to assist the individual to cope with emotionally difficult situations (Bajaj & Pande, 2015).

The positive aspect in relation of resilience being an end goal in this case, is the fact that rural communities like the one of Maleboho East Circuit still holds to traditional practices where the concept of Ubuntu is adhered to (Van Breda, 2019). Ubuntu concept is embedded in our common humanness and assert that we are better when we are connected to each other (Nwoye, 2017). In Sepedi there are two idioms which say "motho ke motho ka batho" and "ngwana was Mosotho molao o tšea tseleng". This shows that these communities uphold those values which foster community connectedness and solidarity which promotes resilience (Nwoye, 2017). In that same sentiment, children may

be vulnerable and without any parental support, yet in the community there are elders who would play such role. This makes these communities generally resilient and cope with difficult situations better than their urban counterparts.

However, the researcher would like to highlight that rural communities tend to be more oriented into the culture of silence which can make children more vulnerable and not contributing to resilience. In situations where OVC may be exposed to challenges like various forms of abuse they do not normally report those cases and may sometimes choose to follow other measures which may not be helpful to the vulnerable child.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The chapter discussed the importance of theoretical frameworks in a research. The three frameworks applicable to this study were thoroughly discussed. These frameworks have worked similar to a relay where they helped and complemented each other.The first was the ecosystem framework, where the relationship of the child and their environment was explored. The relationship the child has with their environment is critical in the development processes, and it is important to attain an adaptive fit between the child and the environment. The strengths based framework was added to the ecosystem perspective as an attempt to shift away from pathology based approaches to an approach, where children are seen as the experts of their own circumstances. Resilience is seen as the end goal of all intervention efforts.

CHAPTER 3

CARE AND SUPPORT INITIATIVES IN CHILDREN'S PROTECTION

"Few things make the life of a parent more rewarding and sweeter than successful children. There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way it treats its children. Let us reach out to children". Nelson Mandela

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses care and support initiatives that were provisioned for the care of OVC in the microsystem, mesosystem as well as the macrosystem. The discussion elaborates on the legal and policy framework in the care and support of children. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children [UNCRC] as well as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child [ACRWC] are briefly highlighted, as South Africa is part of the signatories, where it committed itself to put the rights of children first. Different programmes are also discussed, which were instituted to help to create a conducive environment where OVCs are taken care of.

3.2 CHILD PROTECTION AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Children are vulnerable by virtue of them being children, and as such, they always need to be protected (Reynecke, 2018). Functioning support systems such as the family and community are crucial in protecting children. Factors that are considered to offer protection to children include informal support such as a high number of caregivers, social and religious institutions, access to role models, as well as employment rates of adults (South African Development Community [SADC], 2011).

Child protection encompasses the protection of children from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect (Mahmoudi & Mothapo, 2018). The UN Convection on the Rights of the Child Article 9 advocated for the protection of children in and out of the home (UNCRC, 1989). The ACRWC and the South African Constitution incremented the

convention and aims to mobilise all sectors of society to ensure that children are cared for and protected (African Union [AU], 1999; Constitution of South Africa Act 108 of 1996). In the notion of the Charter and the Constitution, it is every citizen's duty to play a role in protecting children and creating a safe and secure environment for them (AU, 1999; Constitution of South Africa, 1996).

In schools; educators play a critical role in recognising when a child is being abused, how to manage the child, the procedures for reporting abuse, as well as how best to deal with disclosure of abuse (Strydom, Schiller, & Orme, 2020). In the ecosystem and strengths-based framework, there were various support systems in the child's environment that could be used to care for and support OVC. They are as follows:

3.2.1 Family support system

A family is the basic unit of any society (DSD, 2001). An immediate family is the first system that the child gets exposed to. It is in this system, where the child receives love, care and support from close family members. The child's outlook and perception of life is shaped in this system (Mahmoudi & Mothapo, 2018). Having a strong supportive family relationship is a strong protective factor against psychosocial distress and it helps to increase children's mental well-being (Daniel, 2010; Dekeza, 2018; Van Breda, 2017).

A study conducted by Berglas, Brindis, and Cohen (2003) found that the level of vulnerability caused to children who have parents that are caring and supportive to their children, is low compared to those children, whose parents are less caring or supportive. These findings are confirmed by Kheswa (2017), who asserts that children who have less support from parents are more likely to be abused. When family support systems are strong, and the child is well cared for, then the exposure of the child to vulnerability is minimised. However, South African family life has been compromised by several societal factors, which include poverty and unemployment (Bezuidenhout, 2012). This may put family members in a position where they are unable to care for OVC, as they are even unable to care for their own children.

In light of this assertion, programmes targeting families should strengthen them to display these qualities to their children (Mahmoudi & Mothapo, 2018). These qualities include sharing appreciation, which is a great way to develop positive attributes, encouraging them to spend quality family time, where relationships will be formed and strengthened, and practise healthy communication (Vergottini, 2019). Parents should also promote individual accountability, where family members are accountable for their behaviour (Vergottini, 2019) and do not blame others or the community or the country/politics/the government.

It should be noted, however, that there may be unfortunate cases, where children's lives will be destabilised by circumstances out of anybody's control, such as the death of a parent or a divorce, where they will lose protection (Mutiso & Mutie, 2018; Mamotsheare, 2016).

3.2.2 Community support systems

Community support systems are community-based support systems that may be organised through systems that are in the child's environment (Openshaw, 2014). There are systems such as extended family members, friends, neighbours, religious organisations, community programmes, cultural and ethnic organisations or other support groups or organisations. Literature has outlined the following community-based support systems in a child's environment:

(a) Community networks

Community networks are associations that exist in the child's environment. They may be community-based organisations [CBOs], faith-based organisations [FBOs], non-governmental organisations [NGOs], local businesses and various departments in the South African Government (Patel, 2015).

(b) Home visits

This is the common means that is simple and easily accessible, and allows people to identify and support OVC in communities (Masindano, Wasilwa, & Singletary, 2010). However, this can be a challenge, as it depends on available resources such as volunteer staff and the amount of care that is required.

(c) Community-based organisations (CBOs)

In South Africa, there are several CBOs that have been instituted to care for OVC in the community. The goal set to establish these community networks is to render support to OVC by familiar adults and ensure that these children remain within their communities even after losing their parents (Masindano et al., 2010; Patel, 2015). These CBOs also strengthen the capacities of family and communities to care for children and empower caregivers through an opportunity to earn a livelihood (Masindano et al., 2010, Patel, 2015).

(d) Faith-based organisations [FBOs]

FBOs are among the most viable institutions in the care and support of OVC. A comprehensive study conducted by Foster (2011) on the responses of FBOs to the OVC crisis in six sub-Saharan countries, which included Zimbabwe, Malawi and Swaziland found that FBOs provide a broad range of services to OVC. They provide services such as material support, home visits and day-care centres, food support and counselling.

(e) Drop-in centres

Drop-in centre refers to a community-based service facility intended for the provision of basic services that are aimed at meeting the emotional, physical and social development needs of vulnerable children (Mahlase & Ntombela, 2011). These centres play a critical role in attending to material, pastoral and psychological needs of children who have no parents (Mahlase & Ntombela, 2011). They are well positioned to develop the capacity of local people to look after vulnerable children in environments that are familiar and child

friendly (Mahlase & Ntombela, 2011).

(f) The role of schools

In schools, educators and other support staff are well positioned to play a critical role in the care, support and protection of OVC. They can identify and recognise any change of behaviour in the child. In the notion of ecosystem and SBTF, schools are a resource or an asset and well-positioned in the care and support of OVC in communities. There is strong evidence from both literature and research studies confirming that schools are crucial in the care of OVC (REPSSI, 2009; Boothby & Melvin, 2007; Ntinda, Maree, Mpofu, & Seeco, 2014). Literature has highlighted the critical nature of the role of schools:

- Every community, no matter how poor or under resourced, has a school. Children spent most of their time at school among their peers and in the care of teachers (Openshaw, 2014).
- Schools can easily identify learners with a change in behaviour, who are not coping and showing signs of distress (REPSSI, 2009).
- Schools can be a caring environment, where all learners are encouraged to reach their full potential as human beings and where all barriers towards learning are removed (Department of Education [DE], 2001).
- Many children can be reached unlike any other means (Boothby & Melvin, 2007).
- Schools are a cost-effective way to reach children and sustainability can be maintained (Ntinda et al., 2014).
- Schools can be a point of link to specialised services for children (Openshaw, 2014).
- The school is the extension of the socialisation process of the child.
- The schools offer the child the opportunity to interact with other children and therefore formulate friendships and associations.
- In the school, the child will also formulate relationships with other adults outside the home, for example, the teachers.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education [KZN DoE] (2015) provides guidelines to

guide management and support for children experiencing psycho-social barriers in schools. These guidelines acknowledge that children experience many challenges in their education process and if these challenges are not managed, they will become psycho-social barriers that will hinder the children's full participation and success in education (KZN DoE, 2015). It advocates for the full identification of barriers that learners are experiencing. These guidelines provide a support plan that will make a difference and ensure that the learners complete their academic process successfully.

3.3 LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS GUIDING OVC CARE AND SUPPORT

The post-apartheid and democratic South Africa was faced with historical and structural nature of vulnerability in children (Bezuidenhout, 2012). The incompetent apartheid policies disintegrated family structures and created a fertile ground for the escalation of dysfunctional families (Holborn & Eddy, 2011). It is within that environment that the South African post-apartheid government responded with the promulgation of various legislations, policies as well programmes to address the vulnerability of children. In this respect, it has made a trememdous progress in addressing the challenge of vulnerable children in society. However, the researcher highlights that amidst the progressive legislation and policies instituted to deal with this issue, problems facing children continue to escalate.

The problem of OVC is not limited to South Africa; it is a worldwide phenomenon challenging the modern world. For the study's focus, the researcher discussed those factors that are only relevant to the South African context. These legislations and policies provide a framework for all protective and caring steps. They are discussed as follows:

3.3.1 The Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996

Children in South Africa live in a society with a Constitution that has the highest regard for their rights, and for the equality and dignity of everyone. According to article 8 of the Constitution, child protection from violence, exploitation and abuse is not only a basic value, but an obligation (Constitution of South Africa, 1996). However, the rising number

of children being abused, neglected and in some cases raped and killed, raises the question of whether these rights are a reality or only rhetoric (Strydom et al., 2020).

The Constitution of South Africa as endorsed provides a framework for all policies and legislations in South Africa. In it, the human rights principles as well as children's rights are heralded (Patel, 2015). It advocates equal opportunities for all people, including the right of access to education (Patel, 2015). The right of access to education is declared a basic right, irrespective of race, colour, creed and social status, and equal access is fundamental in the provision of education (Constitution of South Africa, 108 of 1996).

According to section 28 of the Constitution of South Africa Act 108, every child also has the right to basic social services and social protection, among others (DSD, 2015).

3.3.2 Children's Act of 2005

The Children Act of 2005 highlights the upholding of children's rights to social services as well as their protection from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation (Children's Act, 2005). The Act asserts that the best interests of every child should be of paramount importance. It makes provision for structures, services and means for promoting and monitoring the sound physical, psychological, intellectual, emotional and social development of children by seeking to strengthen and develop community structures. These can assist in providing care and protection of all children, and especially those in need of care and protection.

3.3.3 The Child Justice Act of 2008

The Child Justice Act of 2008 intended to bring restorative justice to children who are or were in conflict with the law. The Act provides guidance for the assessment of each child, to protect children from damaging effects of courts and prisons, and to keep the child in their families (Child Justice Act, 2008).

The Act further aimed to extend the sentencing options available in respect of children who have been convicted. The Act has a long-term benefit for children, as it follows a process where vulnerable children will be "healed" as well as those who may have been affected by a child's action. It also encourages forgiveness and rehabilitation, and looks after the needs and rights of children and victims (Child Justice Act, 2008).

3.3.4 South African Schools Act 84 1996

This Act has been promulgated to provide a system for the organisation and the governance of schools, a funding of schools that is unitary, and a schooling system that is equal and uniform across all races (South African Schools Act [SASA] 1996). This Act was intended to ensure that all children between the ages of 7-15 are in schools, and that children who cannot afford to pay school fees because of certain conditions are exempted from doing so (SASA, 1996).

3.3.5 National Development Plan 2030

The National Development Plan [NDP] 2030 states that education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty that characterises many households where these learners are coming from (National Planning Commission [NPC], 2020). It also emphasises the necessity of promoting holistic education, where specific consideration is given to the most vulnerable.

This policy acknowledges that so far, the quality of education received by most black poor children is still poor (NPC, 2020). This denies many learners access to proper

employment, which also reduces their earnings potential and the career mobility for those who get jobs. In order to remedy this situation, the policy advocates for the rendering of quality education and for the improvement of a school system, including that it must increase the number of students achieving above 50% in literacy and mathematics, and increase the learner retention rates by 90%. In addition, it calls for the strengthening of youth service programmes and the establishment of new community-based programmes to offer young people life skills training, entrepreunership training and opportunities to participate in development programmes. Lastly, it promotes the development of community safety centres to prevent crime, and it advocates for the inclusion of youth in these initiatives.

3.3.6 The Social Assistance Act 1992

The Social Assistance Act, which was amended in 1997, made provision for the payment of a childcare support grant to children under the age of 18 years (Mohale, 2019). The child support grant [CSG] is a means of cushioning children from the impact of social problems such as poverty, unemployment and inequality.

In the Maleboho East Circuit, most learners are beneficiaries of the CSG and the foster care grant (FCG), while some are supported by their grandparents, who in most cases are SASSA beneficiaries. In the face of the widespread unemployment rate of 48% in the circuit; CSG is the only means of survival for some families (Blouberg Municipality, Integrated Development Programme [IDP], 2019- 2021).

The various legislations that have already been discussed were meant to ensure that children are growing up in an environment, where their rights are upheld, and their material needs are taken care of. However, it should be noted that vulnerability of children is not limited to material needs only; children also have psycho-emotional needs that must be met.

Apart from the provided legislative frameworks, there are policies and programmes that target children in schools. The following discussion highlights the few that are in place:

3.3.7 Tirisano Plan of Action 1999

The Tirisano Plan of Action was a programme of action intended to address the impact of HIV/Aids on the education services. Its intention was to attend to both the health needs of educators and learners who have been infected or affected by HIV/AIDS (DE, 1999). Its list of priorities included raising awareness and the level of knowledge of HIV/Aids among all educators and learners, and ensuring that life skills and HIV/AiDS education were integrated into the curriculum at all levels. It further intended to develop planning models for analysing and understanding the impact of HIV/Aids on the education system as well as coordinating all programmes. However, this policy had been widely criticised that it focused only on HIV/Aids, while it neglected other contributory factors that affected many children; these included poverty and abuse (Raniga, 2010).

3.3.8 Norms and Standards for Educators 2000

The Norms and Standards for Educators guidelines outlined the different roles that educators should assume in schools (DE, 2000). This was done to ensure that all barriers to learning would be removed, and that a constructive learning environment would be provided to children to enable them to reach their optimum potential.

This view was shared by the DSD (2012), which confirmed that children do not only have material needs, but they also have emotional needs.

As children spend most of their waking life in schools, the policy sees teachers as crucial role-players in the learners' development and to be able to provide intervention in cases, where children face challenges (Kemp, 2014). Therefore, this policy outlines the roles that teachers have to play to address diverse needs of learners (DE, 2000). In these

guidelines, the teachers are called upon to assume different roles, competencies and standards to construct an effective learning environment for the learners, remove barriers to learning and communicate effectively.

3.3.9 Education White Paper 6 2001

The Education White Paper 6 was intended to promote inclusive education by removing all barriers to education (Kemp, 2013). These barriers include teaching; learning and development barriers, which may hinder the child's holistic education, and ensure that academic, psychological and emotional needs are well addressed (DE, 2001). This policy forms the cornerstone in the support of mainstreaming social welfare services in schools and advocates for social support of children (Kemp, 2013; Kemp, 2014; Reynecke, 2018; Vergottini, 2019). It further argues that all learners can access education and training, beyond their individual needs, and that all barriers that hinder learning should be identified as soon as possible, so that they may be removed (DE, 2001). The policy sought to address the needs of all learners and help steer education towards the inclusion of all learners (Hess, 2020).

However, despite being mandated to be fully implemented by 2021, implementation of this policy has been slow (Reynecke, 2018). Second, there are no clear guidelines on how it should work in practice, and there seems to be no political commitment to make it a reality (Vergottini, 2019).

3.3.10 National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support [NSSIAS] 2008

This is an additional policy that was intended to enhance the implementation of the White Paper 6 by providing strategies to shift away from the emphasis on special needs education to an inclusive form of education (Hess, 2020). The focus was on early identification of barriers to children's learning and assessing the levels of support that children need in order to reach their full potential (Hess, 2020). It focused on the needs

of all learners in South Africa, and especially those who are likely to be excluded or marginalised, and it aimed at improving the access to quality education and support for all learners (DE, 2008).

Moreover, the policy aimed to support teachers, managers, districts and parents in schools to respond to the needs of all learners, and especially those who are vulnerable (DE, 2008). It therefore provides a policy framework for the standardisation of the procedures to identify, assess, and provide programmes for all learners who require additional support to enhance their participation and inclusion in a school.

3.3.11 National Schools Health Policy 2003

The National Schools Health Policy was promulgated in 2003 to ensure that children's health needs are addressed and that they benefit from education and get the outcome of their overall well-being and development (DE, 2000). The aim of this policy was to provide the promotive and preventative health services to children. This demanded that schools' health services had to be appropriately structured and organised. However, there was evidence from literature that stated that the implementation of this policy had been slow because of insufficient collaboration of stakeholders, among other reasons (Department of Basic Education [DBE] & Department of Health [DH], 2012).

3.3.12 Integrated School Health Policy 2012

The policy was a move between the Department of Health and the DBE to collaborate their efforts in ensuring that health services are provided for learners at schools. It acknowledged that children spent most of the formative years in schools, which provides an opportunity for health and education interventions that aim to address the many health and socio-economic factors that affect the lives of children (DBE & DH, 2012). Through the application of this policy, the DH, DBE and social development made a commitment to form a close collaboration to ensure an integrated school health programme [ISHP] that benefits all learners. It further intended to provide both health and social services to all learners from early childhood to adulthood (DBE, DH, & DSD, 2012).

This provision was intended to address barriers to learning and other conditions that contribute to morbidity and mortality among learners (DBE, DH, & DSD, 2012). However, this policy requires a strong inter-sectoral collaboration of these departments as well as other educational structures, such as school governing bodies [SGB], teacher unions, civil society and learner organisations. A study conducted by Rasesemola, Matshoge, and Ramukumba (2019) found that there is still a lack of collaboration and insufficient integration; and services are still fragmented, uncoordinated and unsustainable.

3.3.13 National Draft Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy 2018

This policy was promulgated with an aim of reducing the incidences of learner pregnancy through the provision of quality comprehensive sexual education [CSE] and access to adolescent and youth-friendly reproductive health rights services [RHRS] (DBE, 2018). Second, it is intended to promote the constitutional rights of girls to education by ensuring they are not excluded from schools because of a pregnancy and birth, and to provide a supportive environment for the continuation of learning. Though the policy provides guidelines on what schools should manage, the issue of learner pregnancy is complex in that it signals a deeper social problem. Evidence has shown that many learners becoming pregnant while still teenagers, come from socially disadvantaged homes (Kheswa, 2017).

These legislations and policies provide a framework for the provision of comprehensive social and educational services in schools. However, as with most policies, there are gaps on how they are going to work in practice (Bryant, 2007; Gumede, 2019). There are no clear demarcations on who is responsible for the implementation of these policies in schools, with the result that vulnerable children continue to be exposed to vulnerable conditions (Lekalakala, 2016). In the notion of the ecosystem framework underpinning this study, children's problems are multi-dimensional and require a multi-disciplinary as well as a multi-faceted approach. Schools alone cannot solve the problems of child vulnerability.

3.4 SOCIAL PROGRAMMES FOR OVC

In schools, the government has generated several programmes with the intention to alleviate the impact of challenges that vulnerable children face. These programmes have shown to have a positive impact on the lives of children. However, several studies have shown that these programmes are still lagging in addressing problems associated with children vulnerability (Hlalele, 2015; Lethale & Pillay, 2013; Mohale, 2019).

The following section discusses and analyses the different programmes aimed at addressing the problems vulnerable children experience, and identifying the gaps that may render them only partially effective in dealing with children's problems.

3.4.1 National School Nutrition Programme 1994

The National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) has been instituted as early as 1994, with an intention to enhance learners' learning capacity through the provision of healthy meals at schools, and especially schools that are disadvantaged and under resourced (DE, 1994). This has been one of most effective programme in reducing hunger among school children, and especially those who come from poor households (Graham, 2015; Mawela, 2020; Sanousi, 2019).

Research evidence shows that the programme has improved punctuality, attendance, concentration and the general well-being of learners (Graham, 2015; Mawela, 2020; Sanousi, 2019). In some cases, there is a strong evidence of improved academic performance. However, this programme failed to recognise that poor children are coming from poor households, where basic necessities such as food may be absent (Mawela, 2020). Second, children's needs are not limited to physical needs, but their needs include social, emotional and psychological aspects (DSD, 2015).

3.4.2 Ke Moja

Ke Moja was a drug awareness campaign that targeted young people between the ages of 10 to 18 years (DSD, 2007). It intended to inform young people about substance abuse and its harmful effects, and teach them about healthy lifestyles (DSD, 2007). However, in an evaluative study conducted by Chames, Norushe, and Wessels (2009), it was found that the programme failed to meet learners' needs of psycho-social support, which was its major pitfall. It also failed to include teachers and parents as part of the programme intervention. The programme experienced financial resource management and programme coordination challenges, which led to its discontinuation (Chames et al., 2009).

3.4.3 Safe schools

The safe schools programme is a collaborative programme with schools to ensure a safe school environment that will enable successful teaching and learning (Xaba, 2014). The strategies of this programme include installing security systems, while addressing social environments by influencing learner behaviour and working with the schools to mobilise community support for safe schools (Xaba, 2014).

The researcher applauds the positive impact these measures had in creating a conducive environment for the care and support of OVC. However, it needs to be highlighted that there are serious gaps in the effect of this programme, as it neglects some other contributing factors to the problem of safety and vulnerability. Second, the programme also neglects the psycho-social issues that are related to children. They fail to take into cognisance that children do not only need material things to survive, but they also need emotional support, affirmation, psycho-social support and affection to reach a point of optimum social functioning (DSD, 2012).

Lastly, the social environment that children are coming from has been largely overlooked by the programme. In the ecosystem framework of this study, children are believed to be

products of the environment they come from and the sum of different systems in their environment. Therefore, for any intervention intended, these systems must consider the child, the family, peers, the community and the school with all its structures. For instance, for the concept of having safe schools, the questions must be asked: Is the community that the child is coming from safe? Are the families that children are living with able to nurture children to become responsible future adults? The framework strongly posits that no system exists in isolation (Germain & Gittermann, 2008; Payne, 2014). The Children's Act (2005) stated that services aimed at children should be holistic, considering their intellectual, emotional, social and cultural development.

3.5 CONCLUSION

The chapter discussed care and support initiatives related to OVC in schools. This was done to create a conducive environment for the care and support of OVC in schools. The chapter started by presenting different legislations relevant to children. The different policies were discussed and lastly, the different programmes were also deliberated upon. The role of families and schools in catering for the needs of OVC were highlighted as well as the different support systems in the child's life that can be used to mitigate the impact of their challenges.

CHAPTER 4

VULNERABILITY OF CHILDREN AND CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS

"Vulnerability is not winning or losing; it is having the courage to show up and be seen when we have no control over the outcome. Vulnerability is not weakness; it is our greatest measure of courage." Brené Brown

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the vulnerability of children in more detail. The vulnerability concept is expounded and the different dimensions of vulnerability. In addition, an overview of conditions that predispose children to vulnerability, as well as the risks and challenges associated with vulnerability at home and in schools are discussed in this chapter. While vulnerability is not confined only to children, for the purposes of this study, vulnerability of children is the singular focus. The different concepts of vulnerability of children in general, and specifically orphaned and vulnerable children are used interchangeably in the discussion.

4.2 CONCEPTUALISING VULNERABILITY OF CHILDREN

Vulnerability is not an easy concept to define or conceptualise. Literature stated that defining vulnerability can be complex and difficult, as it differs from region to region and country to country (Mwoma & Pillay, 2015; Mutiso & Mutie, 2018). It further varies from individual to individual, and therefore, there seemed to be no clear consensus on what constitutes vulnerability of children and what exactly vulnerable children are. Bright (2017), Potter and Brotherten (2013), Chereni and Mahati (2012), Tsiliso (2011), and Datta (2009) cited this dilemma and commonly asserted that "It is easier to talk about vulnerability than to define it". This difficulty in conceptualising vulnerability of children made it difficult for policies and policymakers to respond effectively to this problem.

To mitigate this dilemma, several authors attempted to generate clearer definitions of vulnerability, which in their view, referred to a physical and psychological state of being susceptible to vulnerable conditions (Chereni & Mahati, 2012; Mutiso & Mutie, 2018). The South African Institute of Distance Education [SAIDE] (2012) defined vulnerability as a person having no access or limited access to basic needs, such as sufficient and nutritious food, and lacking shelter, adequate clothing, a safe and community-involved environment that are free from abuse and exploitation. This view was shared by the World Bank (2004) that cited vulnerability as a state, where the child's survival, care, protection and development may be compromised because of a particular condition, situation or circumstance. SADC (2011) and Datta (2009) defined vulnerability as a state of the high risk of deprivation.

In this study, the researcher adopted the definition of vulnerability as involuntarily-occuring situations and conditions that place a child at a higher risk of deprivation of their basic survival and development needs, caused by a lack of care and support, while vulnerable children are children exposed to risks that may negatively affect their optimum social functioning (Phillips, 2015). This includes children who are orphaned, children exposed to domestic violence, or to various forms of abuse and extreme poverty, learners from child-headed homes, children who are living with people who are not their biological parents and those who are bullied. It can also include children suffering from one or more disabilities.

Studies indicate different types of vulnerabilities facing children (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2013, UNICEF, 2018). These include social, economic, physical, material as well emotional vulnerability. Some authors (Skinner & Tsheko, Mtero-Munyati, Segwabe, Chibatamoto, Mfecane, & Chitiyo, 2006) reiterated that children's vulnerability focuses on three core areas, which are material, emotional and social problems. Children are not the same and therefore, they do not experience vulnerability in the same manner (Visser, Zungu, & Ndala- Magoro, 2015).

A child can experience one more challenging type of vulnerability, while coping with other

types of vulnerabilities. In some cases, the child can be faced with multiple risks when considering the interconnectedness of other systems in the child's environment (Lethale & Pillay, 2013). The degree and types of vulnerability vary in each context and overtime (Visser et al., 2015). The full discussion of the different types of vulnerabilities therefore follows:

4.2.1 Social vulnerability

Brofenbrenner (2005) argued that no child exists in isolation. All children are the product of the social environment in which they find themselves. Social vulnerability is interconnected with the risks that are associated with the social environment of the child. In their social environment, there are peers and the immediate family, and if there are threats within these social groupings, then the child may be exposed to social vulnerability. Any child needs a supportive peer group and family, positive role models to follow and guidance in difficult situations to become a socially functioning person (Mohale, 2019). For example, if a child experiences stigma or marginalisation, these pose risks in their immediate environment (Skinner, Sharp, Jooste, Mfecane, & Simbayi, 2013).

Therefore, social vulnerability centres on conditions that may lead to potential harm or have negative effect on the total functioning of the child as well as the lack of the child's ability to cope with multiple stressors that are threatening their life (UNDP, 2013). These multiple stressors may evoke adverse effects that totally disrupt the life of the child permanently (UNDP, 2013). To add to that, social vulnerability may create a combination of factors that determine the degree to which the child's life and livelihood are put at risk by an identifiable event in a society (Fatemi, Ardalan, Aguirre, Mansouri, & Mohammadfam, 2017). Thus, exposure to one level of vulnerability may expose the child to other types of vulnerabilities. For example, if children grow up in a poor household, they may be subjected to other forms of vulnerabilities, such as economic and material vulnerability. This view is shared by Skinner et al. (2013) and the UNDP (2013), who posit that children are exposed to multiple vulnerabilities.

4.2.2 Material vulnerability

Children need the basic necessities to enable them to have a meaningful life and function optimally. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs that is depicted below; necessities such as food and clothing are placed in the lower rank of immediate needs (Macleod, 2020). Therefore, such basic necessities should be easily accessible if the child is to become a fully functioning person. Any lack of basic necessities such as food and clothing poses risks to the child's well-being and exposes a child to vulnerability.
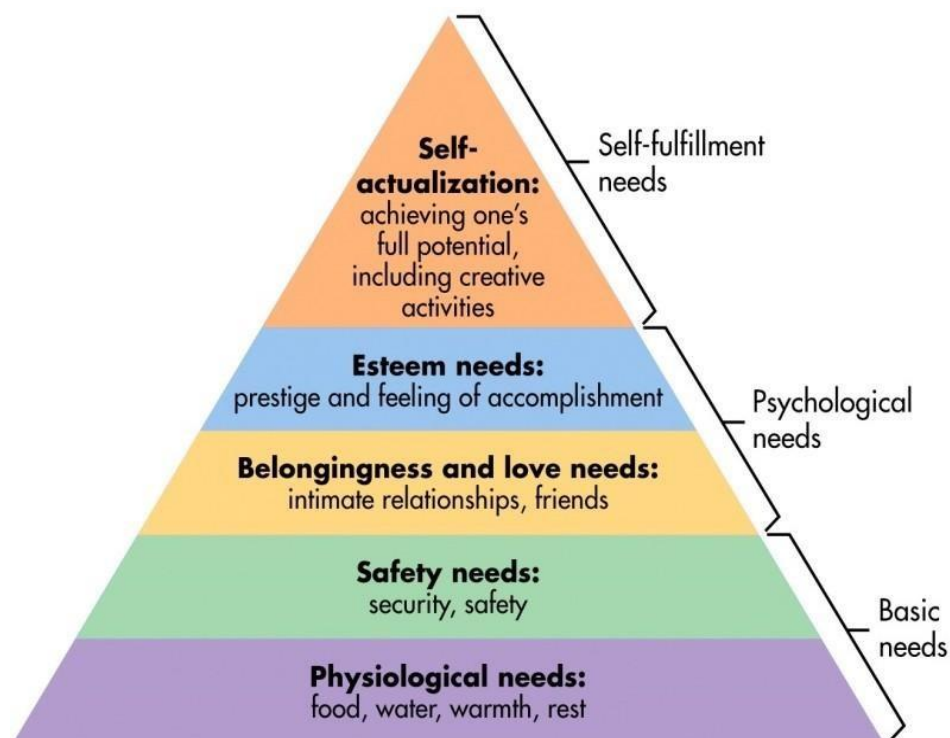
Figure 2: Maslow hierarchy of needs
        Extracted from Macleod (2020)

Vulnerable children tend to experience a number of material problems, which include that they often have trouble in accessing money, food, clothing, shelter, healthcare and education. In the school context, vulnerable children face deficiencies in material needs,

where they often struggle to buy school uniforms, stationery and other basic necessities.

Lacking basic necessities, as indicated above, has serious consequences in the psycho-social development of children. Without necessary intervention, the child may have a distorted self-image (Macleod, 2020). Also, lacking access to material items the other children in school have reinforces their perception of being less worthy, poor and not part of the class community.

4.2.3 Emotional vulnerability

Emotional vulnerability is when the child experiences a lack of caring, love and support, a space to grieve, or containment. In the researcher's practical experience, she established that vulnerable children tend to bottle up their emotions, because they do not feel they have the space to communicate (Mwoma & Pillay, 2015). They develop negative coping mechanisms, which severely affect their emotional maturity. This view is shared by Arora, Shah, Chaturvedi, and Gupta (2015), who state that emotional problems in childhood are likely to create problems in adolescence and adulthood. These problems may include poor academic performance, relationship problems and involvement in crime in some cases (Arora et al., 2015; Mutiso & Mutie, 2018).

4.2.4 Physical vulnerability

Literature defines physical vulnerability as a function of the population's location and the built environment relative to the hazard (Masterson, Stedman, Enqvist, & Tengo, 2014; Fuchs, Frazier, & Siebeneck, 2018). In the context of this study, physical vulnerability will refer to a situation, where the child has no proper place to stay or to experience any privacy. The level of physical vulnerability is increased when the housing in which the child resides is hazardous and unsafe.

The lack of proper housing and basic services such as water and electricity affect them negatively and expose them to more vulnerability. In inadequate housing, privacy can be a big issue when children must study and do their academic work. The lack of private

space thus becomes a barrier to educational success. Research evidence has shown the relationship between vulnerability and poor academic performance (Mutiso & Mutie, 2018).

4.2.5 Economic vulnerability

In Maleboho East Circuit, there is observational evidence indicating that many children in the schools are coming from economically-challenged, vulnerable households. The latest statistics have shown that about 85% of the children are living on social security (SSA, 2019). Literature clearly states that in poor households, any disruption such as a sudden job loss, life threatening illness or disability will lead to the family experiencing economic disaster (International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2020).

There are income-poor families, which are families that receive an income, but the income is so little that it cannot cater for the needs of all the children in that household (Pizzigati, 2018). In the area under investigation, more that 85% of households can be classified as income poor (Blouberg Municipality, IDP 2020-21). The remaining 15% households can be classified as asset poor (Pizzigati, 2018). These are the households that although they a have a living income, do not have enough to maintain themselves if their income were to stop for three months (Blouberg Municipality, IDP 2020-21; Pizzigati, 2018). In fact, all children in this area are economically vulnerable.

Vulnerability of children is neither static nor linear. It presents itself in different dimensions, which will be discussed in the next discussion:

4.3 DIMENSIONS OF VULNERABILITY

Vulnerability of children presents itself in many dimensions. To understand its full impact requires one to view it through a multi-dimensional lens to get a broader view of how it affects children. Therefore, the various dimensions of vulnerability are discussed in more detail.

4.3.1 Vulnerability is contextual

Different authors have reported that vulnerability differs from area to area, context to context as well as country to country (Chereni & Mahati, 2012; SADC, 2011). For example, children who are classified as vulnerable in developed countries such as the United Kingdom and the US differ dramatically from vulnerable children in developing countries. In the developed world, the concept of vulnerable children refers mainly to children who are growing up in troubled families or families at risk (Potter & Brotherton, 2013).

However, in developing countries, the concept of vulnerability of children refers to children, who do not have access to basic resources such as food, clothing, housing and healthcare (Ameyaw-Akumfi, 2013). While in developed countries, exposure to risk does not imply a threat to children's survival, in developing countries the survival of children is at risk (Mutiso & Mutie, 2018). It is common in developing countries for children to die from starvation and sicknesses that emanate from hunger and lack of care. Quite recently, 34 children were reported to have starved to death in the Eastern Cape.

In sub-Saharan Africa, many children are subjected to severe forms of poverty, famines resulting from drought, and conflicts that threaten their survival (Hlalele, 2015; Tsheko, 2011). In the conflict-ridden areas, children suffer the most. Moonga and Green (2016) define children's vulnerability in the African context as children who are at a higher risk of missing out on schooling, living in households with less or no food security, suffering anxiety and depression, and being at a higher risk of exposure to HIV/AIDS.

In developed countries such as the United Kingdom, only 2% of children are living in child-headed households, compared to the 38% of child-headed households in sub-Saharan countries (UNDP, 2019).

In sub-Saharan countries such as Kenya and Zimbabwe, children are forced to work as breadwinners after the death of their parents, while in Kenya, female children are at high

risk of being sexually abused (Hlalele, 2015). In Uganda, most vulnerable children, and especially those from child-headed homes, receive social assistance from foreign agencies (Hlalele, 2015). These children are viewed as better off than those who are vulnerable caused by other circumstances. As a result, families encourage children to live in child-headed homes.

Vulnerability of children in the South African context can be defined as involuntary situations and conditions that place a child at a higher risk of deprivation of their basic survival and development needs, caused by a lack of care and support, or blatant neglect (DSD, 2012; Phillips, 2015). Vulnerability mainly centres on the lack or deficient support systems in the child's life. In African tradition, which encompasses the Ubuntu principle of social cohesion, a child becomes a product of the whole community. The saying that it takes the whole community to raise a child is central to this concept. When a child becomes exposed to risky conditions, the extended family steps in to provide support to buffer the child from the impact of vulnerability, and in the absence of an extended family, the community in the rural areas provides support to the child (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). However, this does not automatically translate into the child being loved and nurtured, but can often lead to the child being forced to look after the household or the livestock.

In the rural context of the study, family structures have been affected by the migrant labour system, where people from rural areas migrate to urban areas in search of better job opportunities (DSD, 2021). Children are often left alone to care for themselves or remain in the care of grandparents or old extended family members, while parents work and live in the economic hubs such as Gauteng or other metropolitan areas.

The next section addresses vulnerability in the rural context. The reason why the researcher expounded this context was that researchers, who had conducted studies in rural contexts, commonly agreed that the rural/urban disadvantage continues to be an issue in the post-apartheid, democratic South Africa (Dekeza, 2018; Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012; Hlalele, 2015).

4.3.1.1 Vulnerability in the rural context

In the rural context, vulnerability of children tends to be exacerbated by the adverse conditions prevalent in most underdeveloped and under resourced rural communities. Rural communities are characterised by "backwardness" and limited access to information (Motsa & Morojele, 2017). In addition, children growing up in such rural communities experience the perennial lack of resources, limited accessibility to resources and services; and geographical isolation, while many rural people are used to the culture of silence (Motsa & Morojele, 2017; Ntjana, 2014: Openshaw, 2014, Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012). This makes the lives of these children difficult, as they are subjected to harsher physical and environmental conditions and cannot easily access resources and services that are intended to ameliorate the impact of these conditions (Hlalele, 2015).

Rural communities usually experience negative social conditions more than their urban counterparts, and unemployment is at 47% (Ntjana, 2014; SSA, 2019). In post-apartheid, democratic South Africa, rural areas continue to receive less input or funding in terms of resources and services when compared to their urban counterparts; as such rural vulnerable children experience more vulnerability and a broader range of additional challenges, such as having to work the land, look after livestock, fetch water, and so forth, than the urban vulnerable children (Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012; Patel, 2015). They are also faced with schools and all other services being extremely far from their homes, without any public transport being available. Hlalele (2015) echoed that learner vulnerability in rural settings is a serious problem, one that is rapidly growing and that learners are receiving less than is their right in a democratic South Africa.

Troubled families are exposed to two or more risks, while families at risk are characterised by several disadvantages. These conditions predispose children in these communities to various forms of vulnerabilities and to social ills such as domestic violence, substance abuse and teenage pregnancy.

4.3.2 Vulnerability is relative

A child is defined as being vulnerable, if there is a high probability relative to others in the population that a shock such as drought or a famine will cause a serious negative outcome such as malnutrition (World Bank, 2020). While all children are by nature vulnerable to some extent, they are not equally so (Jans, 2016). Children may be exposed to the same conditions, yet, they react to them differently as already shown. This explains why some children cope well and are more resilient than their counterparts though faced with similar conditions. Griffin, McEwen, Samuels, and Suggs (2011) and Makhonza (2018) state that some children grow up to become productive adults in society, despite having been faced with adverse circumstances, and this can be attributed to protective factors in the child's environment.

There is strong evidence that boys and girls react differently to risks, although there are exceptions to the rule (Action for the Rights of Children [ARC], 2020). Female vulnerable children are faced with a higher risk of psychological distress, depression and anxiety, while boys tend to exhibit delinquent and conduct problems (ARC, 2020; World Bank, 2020). Therefore, child vulnerability is relative and not absolute. The UNDP (2013) asserts that child vulnerability is downward spiral in the sense that any exposure to risk or shock can produce a negative outcome as shown earlier.

The following diagram illustrates how exposure to negative circumstances increases a child's vulnerability:
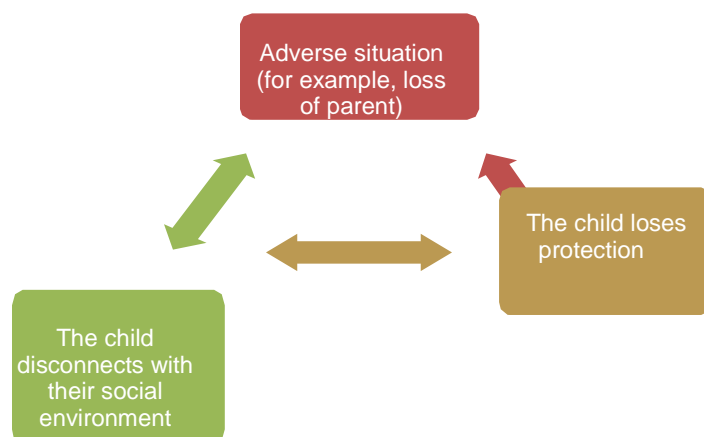
Figure 3: Exposure to negative circumstances
    Adapted from World Bank (2020)

However, it should be noted that a normal child growing up in a poor but supportive family is less likely to experience more vulnerability. Therefore, the supportive environment becomes a protective factor. Literature shows that vulnerability can have an external and an internal side (Griffin et al., 2011; Makhonza, 2018). The external side refers to risks, shocks and stressors, which the individual is subjected to, whereas the internal side refers to feelings of defenseless when faced with an adverse situation and the inability to cope with the prevailing situation (Griffin et al., 2011). This view has been reiterated by Bright (2017), Jopling and Vincent (2016), Potter and Brotherton (2013), who commonly agree that vulnerability can both be structural; which implies a condition, where a child has no control over adverse situation, or individual, where the child has limited control.

4.3.3 Vulnerability is not static

Vulnerability changes over time in the lives of vulnerable children. A child's vulnerability will vary throughout their life, according to their own and their family's circumstances.

For example, the economic status of a child or a child's family may change over a period of time (Bright, 2017). Second, a child who has been categorised as not vulnerable may become vulnerable, caused by a change of circumstances in the individual's life or family circumstances.

4.3.4 Vulnerability is individualistic

Children are complex human beings and the way they respond to risk is not the same for all of them. This implies that children also do not experience vulnerability in the same manner or intensity, as shown already. Chereni and Mahati (2012) and Daniel (2010) claimed that vulnerability varies from child to child, and that some children are more vulnerable than others. Children may be exposed to the same adverse conditions and react to them differently. Bright (2017) states "being classified as vulnerable does not indicate that children will be vulnerable". Some children cope better in adverse circumstances and become resilient over time. The following illustrations depict the various reactions of children to risk. Exposure to risk factors brings different outcomes.
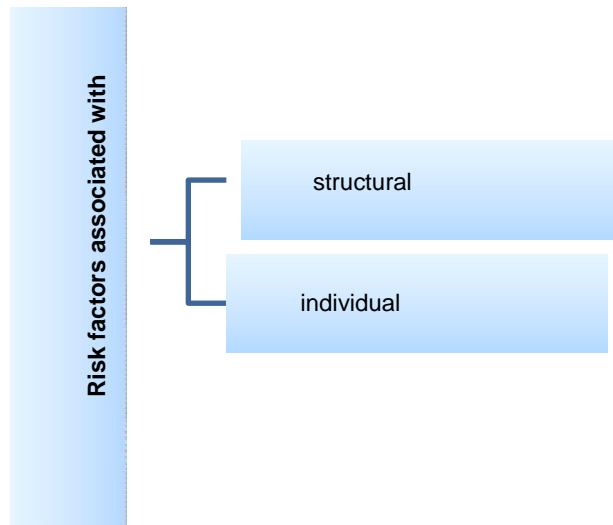
Figure 4: Child's reaction to risk

Adapted from McKendrick (1990)
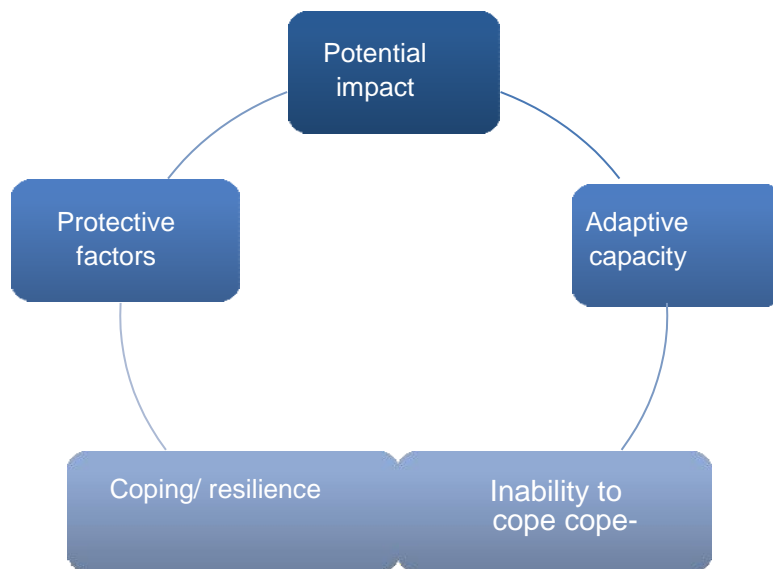
Figure 5: Different outcomes from exposure to risk

Adapted from McKendrick (1990)

The figures as depicted above show that exposure to vulnerability rests on three factors:

Exposure to risk, capacity and potentiality (Watts & Bohle, 1993). The exposure to risk referred to a child being faced with an adverse situation, while capacity is the ability to give proper response to the situation, and potentiality implies the potential to be strengthened or broken by the situation (Daniel, 2010).

Literature cited a variety of protective factors that can cushion children from the impact of vulnerability (Daniel, 2010). Among others, they are personal characteristics that contribute to resilience, self-efficacy, secure attachment, sound relationships, and resources in the schools and the wider community (Daniel, 2010; Blum et al., 2013; Daniel, 2010).

4.3.5 Vulnerability is spiral

The spiral dimension of vulnerability depicts that with each exposure to risk, the child moves down further, reaching a new level of vulnerability, and with each level, the child is exposed to a host of new risks (World Bank, 2020).

This shows that with each level of exposure to risk the child tends to be exposed to more vulnerability. These factors can overlap. Some children may be categorised as poor and the fact of living in poverty conditions may put them at a higher risk of transactional

Even an ordinary child depends on the support and supervision of caring adults.

A child in a poor household or a household with poor social network is even more vulnerable.

A shock to the household worsens the situation (one parent dies, looses his/her job, illness, disability, alcoholism, covariant shock to community...)

The child looses protection and/or is gradually forced to support him/her self.

Child disconnects completely with family and household.

sex with older people in exchange for the needed basic necessities of life (Mutiso & Mutie, 2018).

Figure 6: The spiral dimension of vulnerability
Extracted from World Bank (2020)

This is the reason why some children are faced with multiple factors of vulnerabilities, who can then be defined as multi-risks children (Phillips, 2015). If for example, the child is growing up in a poor household, the loss of one or both parents exposes the child to further vulnerability (World Bank, 2020). With each new level of vulnerability, a host of new risks are added.

4.3.6 Vulnerability is intergenerational

Vulnerability can transmit itself from one generation to another, if measures are not put in place to break that cycle. Children who are born to vulnerable parents tend to be vulnerable themselves. This is what literature cites as clusters of disadvantage (De Lannoy, Leibbrandt, & Frame, 2015). Studies have shown a correlation between socio-economic factors such as poverty to high prevalence of teenage pregnancy, the use of substances abuse by children, sexual and emotional abuse as well as domestic violence (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2018; McGrath & Elgar, 2015).

Literature argues that when children grow up with a lack of basic necessities such as proper food, they are put at a higher risk of impaired cognitive and behavioural functioning, which may result in poor educational outcomes for these children (Blum, McNeely, & Nonnemaker, 2013). If children do not perform well academically, then their prospects of successfully completing their education become inhibited. Several authors

associated the attainment of wealth to having successfully completed one's education (Blanden, 2004; Karagiannaki, 2017; Pfeffer, 2018; Yellen, 2017). Evidence has also shown that children who come from a background of advantage tend to experience success in education, as their parents will also have the necessary infrastructure and financial resources to support them during their school years (Karagiannaki, 2017; Pfeffer, 2018; Yellen, 2017). Negative structural factors may plunge children into the cycle of vulnerability.

In conclusion of this section, the researcher has presented the case that vulnerability can have many dimensions and therefore, should be addressed in a multi-dimensional and disciplinary manner. School social work has a crucial role to play in dealing with children's vulnerability and its role will be discussed hereafter. Second, in the ecosystem and strengths-based framework, all systems in the child's environment are taken into consideration. It examines their strengths that can be tapped into and enhanced, and used to promote children's resilience. Instead of focusing on the maladaptive circumstances that these children face, the individual potential of every child and their environments are unlocked, so that despite their limiting circumstances, they can become better citizens of tomorrow. The next section expounds the different categories of vulnerable children in schools:

4.4 CATEGORIES OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS

In the school setting, the categories of vulnerable children are varied and quite extensive, especially in rural schools or schools where most of the learners come from a disadvantaged background. Categories differ from context to context and there is also an overlap of categories, which implies that one child can fall into multiple categories (United States Agency for International Development [USAID], 2011). For example, a child may be an orphan, while also having some form of disability. The categories are not static, but can change over a period. Second, they are not homogenous, and the children's experiences also differ. It should also be noted that although a learner may not be categorised as vulnerable, the learner may be vulnerable at some stage in their school

career.

4.4.1 Poor children

In South Africa, an unhealthy trajectory exists between poverty, unemployment and inequality. A large proportion (above 30%) of the South African population remains unemployed (SSA, 2020; International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2020). This excludes people who are working on a casual basis, are paid below the official minimum wage or have given up looking for work. The problem of unemployment continues to perpetuate the problem of inequality and poverty that characterise our society, and especially the historically disadvantaged communities (IMF, 2020). The recent corona virus pandemic has worsened the already dire situation. Many people, who had secure jobs, lost their jobs and left many families without any means of sustenance (UNDP, 2019). This situation affected the already poor children badly. The situation was worsened as schools had to close because of the lockdown, which meant that the children who had benefited from the school's feeding schemes were left without that food to see them through the day. De Lannoy et al. (2015) asserts that "Poverty is not only experienced in the form of financial deprivation, but also through limited access to public goods such as good quality education, healthcare, clean water, sanitation, and proper housing". In rural areas, the shortage of infrastructure, resources and limited access to social services worsens the situation.

The poor always bear the brunt of marginalisation, exclusion and disadvantage (UNDP, 2013). They are used to a culture of silence, as already discussed, which perpetuates the intergenerational cycle of deprivation and poverty (Gweshengwe & Hassan, 2020). Poverty exposes learners to a number of hardships and challenges. They are exposed to hunger, poor social services and struggle to get access to quality education, which would have given them the opportunity to escape from the intergenerational effects of poverty (De Lannoy et al., 2015).

Evidence has shown that learners from poor households generally do not perform that

well in their grades. They lack the basic necessities that will enable them to enhance their educational performance. However, even if the positive contribution of the South African social security system is recognised and appreciated, these learners continue to be exposed to various forms of disadvantage, which perpetuates their vulnerability further (Mohale, 2019). Poverty is cyclical in that being poor always means a lack of basic necessities such as food, clean running water and proper sanitation, among others (Campbell, Benova, & Cumming, 2015; Dalton, Ghosal, & Mani, 2016). The following figure shows the cycle of poverty that most of the poor are trapped in.
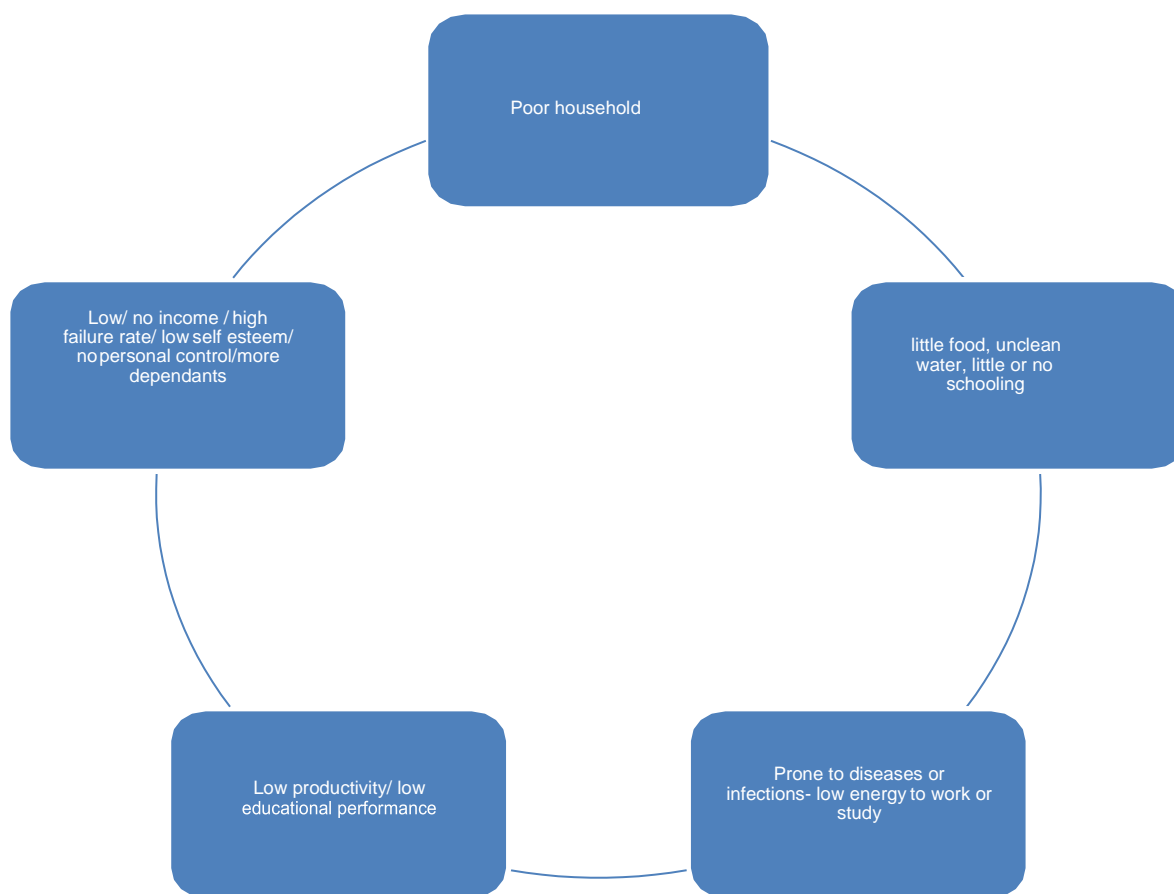
Figure 7: The cycle of poverty

Adapted from Macleod (2014)

The above figure shows that poverty produces poverty and results in intergenerational poverty (De Lannoy et al., 2015; Gweshengwe & Hassan, 2020). In cases where children come to school without having eaten any food, and will return to a home where they will get hardly any nutritional food, their survival is under threat. Lack of sufficient food contributes to ill health, which leads to chronic absenteeism from school, which compromises positive educational outcomes (Macleod, 2014). Many children survive on one meal provided at the school through the NSNP. Poor educational outcomes inhibit these children's opportunities for future employment and a stable income (Filmer & Lant, 2016; Pfeffer, 2018).

4.4.2 The orphaned children

The Children's Act of 2005 defines an orphan as a child who is under 18 years and has either only one parent or no surviving parent. However, in South Africa, which is characterised by comprehensive social security, not all children can be said to be vulnerable in terms of access to basic resources such as food, clothing and housing (Mohale, 2019), even if they are classified as orphans. While they may be vulnerable in terms of emotional and psychological attachment (Cluver, Operario, Lane, & Kganakga, 2012), orphaned children differ from other vulnerable children in the sense that they have lost one or both parents and are grieving (Chereni & Mahati, 2012; Magero, 2012). It is this grief that is not taken care of, and which evidence suggests, may cause attachment issues later in life (Chereni & Mahati, 2012; Mutie & Mutiso; 2019; Moonga & Green, 2016). Orphaned children are forced to deal with many emotional issues and are often misunderstood (Dekeza, 2018; Ameyaw-Akumfi, 2013).

In addition, orphaned children experience more problems, as they usually stay with caregivers who are not their biological parents. They are often exposed to abuse, exploitation, neglect, and a lack of the love and care they would have been expected to receive from parents (Ameyaw-Akumfi, 2013; Cluver et al., 2012). Studies have shown that they are likely to experience a host of psychological problems, especially, as they are sometimes forced to leave their birth homes to live with other people who are unfamiliar

to them (Kaur, Vinnakota, Panigrahi, & Manasa, 2018).

4.4.3 Learners exposed to violence

The South African society, and especially the sectors of society that are more challenged for one or other reason, is characterised by violence, ranging from common assault, various forms of abuse, to rape, and even murders (Brankovic, 2019). This evidence can be attributed to several factors, partially stemming from patriarchical beliefs that many people still hold on to, unemployment, poverty, and inequality as well as the unique historical past of discrimination along racial and tribal groups (Brankovic, 2019). Violence against children can include all forms of physical, mental or emotional, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse, which result in actual or potential harm to the child's health and threaten their survival (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020; DSD, 2005). Violence ranges from mild cases to severe cases such as severe injury, which may lead to death.

South African schools are no exception to the prevalence of violence. Learners commit or experience various forms of violence at school, which varies from common assault to extreme cases, where teachers or learners are killed in the sight of other learners. Because of the varied nature of violence found at schools, the researcher divided this category into subcategories.

4.4.3.1 Learners who are bullies/bullied

Bullying can be defined as any abuse of real or perceived power that targets minors or learners who are either physically smaller, have one or other disability or physical difference such as bigger ears, nose, an unusual colour hair, and so forth . Bullying can include actions such as physical attacks, purposeful alienation, spreading false rumours, verbal abuse and various forms of emotional mistreatment (Laas & Boezaart, 2014; Ngidi & Moletsane, 2018). Bullying is a form of violence, which commonly occurs in schools, yet, it is often overlooked. Many cases of bullying are not reported to school authorities nor to parents, which lead to many victims suffering in silence (Laas & Boezaart, 2014;

Ngidi & Moletsane, 2018).

The impact of bullying is so severe that it leaves children with psychosocial issues that are difficult to deal with later in life. Some children who were victims resort to dropping out of school or even committing suicide (Laas & Boezaart, 2014; Ngidi& Moletsane, 2018).

In many cases, children who are repetitively bullied at school will also automatically find themselves being bullied at work – or they turn into bullies as a form of "revenge". In this study, both the perpetrator of bullying and the bullied are regarded as vulnerable, in the sense that those who are bullying other children also have psychosocial issues that need to be dealt with. Literature indicated that bullying is commonly characterised by the following (Laas & Boezaart, 2014; Anderson, 2007):

.   ***An imbalance of power:*** Cases of bullying are characterised by an imbalance of power, where the perpetrator is bigger, has a stronger physique and is/feels more powerful than the victim.

   Repeated actions: Bullying behaviour occurs repetitively over a period of time.

   Intentional actions: In all cases, the bullying behaviour is intended to harm or intimidate the victim.

   Unequal level of effect: Bullying behaviour produces a different effect among those involved. The victim of bullying experiences a high level of emotional stress, while the perpetrator experiences a sense of power and domination (Hlophe, Morojele, & Motsa, 2017; Laas & Boezaart, 2014).

The sad part of this phenomenon is that there are quite a number of cases, where the victim is the girl learner and the bully are the male teachers who bully the learner, because of the learner's refusal to give sexual favours. Bullying signals a deeper problem.A child who bullies others may be expressing their own vulnerability, which is an indicator that

they need an intervention (Jopling & Vincent, 2016) to identify their specific problem that causes them to bully. However, the scope of this study does not allow the discussion of this phenomenon at length.

4.4.3.2 Learners who are members/not members of gangs

A gang is a group of three or more individuals, who engage in criminal activity and identify themselves with a common name or sign. Gang membership brings with it a host of negative consequences that disrupt the normal course of youth development (Parnell, 2013). Gang culture has permeated many schools and in most cases, it is the Grade 7 to Grade 9 learners, who are likely to be exposed to gang activities. Research evidence attributes gang culture to poverty, inequality, unemployment, and dysfunctional families and communities (Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014).

Young people may be part of a gang group or be victimised by them if they are not members. Learners who are exposed to gangs live in fear (Mguzulwa & Gxubane 2019, Parnell, 2013). Though there is always a call from the DBE through the initiative of the Safe Schools programme, many learners continue to be exposed to this kind of subversive culture and are therefore living in fear. There are cases where rival gangs attack each other and even kill a rival on the school grounds or near their schools (Mguzulwa & Gxubane, 2019; Parnell, 2013).

The presence of gangs in schools signals a deeper societal problem that needs serious attention and intervention (Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014). The failure of programmes to deal with the causal factor of this problem means that this culture will continue to be present and even escalate. Gang culture produces different effects on those who are members of certain gangs and those who are not members (Mguzulwa & Gxubane, 2019; Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014).

Those who are not members may be coerced or forced to join, and may be marginalised and attacked verbally or physically if they refuse to do so. Learners who are part of gangs

take part in a wide range of gang activities, which include drug abuse and dealing in drugs, robberies, extortion, and even gang rape and gang murders, which lead them to be in trouble with the law (Mguzulwa& Gxubane, 2019) and robs them of being hired for any meaningful job later in life, because of their criminal record.

4.4.3.3 Learners exposed to domestic violence

Patriarchy has centuries long history in SA's society. In such society, most men believe they are entitled to rule over women: their wives and daughters, and other women. They do not think it is wrong to physically control, use or abuse women when they decide to do so (Shore, 2019). In their view, women are inferior and if they marry them, then they can totally control them as they "own" them. Many black African men believe that if they paid lobola, then the wife becomes their property (Montle, 2020). Children growing up in violent homes may regularly witness parental violence and may also personally be the victims of physical abuse. To them, violence is a norm, a way to deal with or respond to any conflict. They may suffer neglect from such parents, who are focused on their violent partner or are unresponsive to their children because of their own fears of further violence or threatened consequences (Kimball, 2015; Shore, 2019).

Most learners who grew up in such homes often have feelings of low self-esteem and general feelings of despondency and sadness (Kimball, 2015). Many incorrectly believe that they are the cause of the conflicts or the violence, that it is their fault, so they feel guilty, especially so if one of their parents is severely hurt or even killed by the other one, or if one parent leaves the violent partner. They have anger issues and most resort to negative coping mechanisms (Kimball, 2015; Pingley, 2017). They are at risk of failing to cope with the demands of academic work, as they have psychosocial issues. It has become very common for learners of this category to repeat grades. Literature states that children learn much by imitating adults (Harrison, 2021; Pingley, 2017). As such, children who grow up where violence takes place, have a higher probability of becoming violent children or adults themselves, as they think that violence is an acceptable, normal form of behaviour (Harrison, 2021; Kimball, 2015).

In rural areas, where traditional beliefs are still strongly adhered to, male learners are still raised with the belief that they are there to control and dictate, to be served by girls/women, and they possess feelings of superiority over girls. It is the reason why in most rural schools, it is still common for boys to assault girl learners. Often in the rural areas, male teachers also expect girl learners to clean their homes or cook for them.

4.4.3.4 Learners exposed to community protests and violence

Violence is common in many communities and ranges from community protests, which end up being violent, to mob justice, where community members take the law into their own hands when dealing with perpetrators of crime (Brankovic, 2019; Khumalo, 2015). The sad reality about these protests is that in some cases, learners are coerced to take part in these activities and are sometimes incarcerated for having committed violent actions.

Poor service delivery protests, where community members show their dissatisfaction, commonly end up with the burning of community resources such as schools and libraries (Kgatle, 2018). What happened recently in Vuwani and Malamulele is a clear example of what is happening in these rural communities (Kgatle, 2018). The recent civil unrest in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal has also clearly shown how violent behaviour has become part of society. When community members destroy community assets such as schools, they do not consider the effects of their actions on the learners.

If their demands are not quickly resolved, learners can spend several months without being able to go to school (Kgatle, 2018). This is a sad state as many learners are those who are poor, socially and economically excluded and disadvantaged. By destroying the basic infrastructure in these regions worsens the situation these rural or poorer communities are confronted by. When clinics, schools and shops are destroyed, buses torched and roads damaged by burning tyres, it is the very communities that destroyed them that will suffer even more, as the funds are lacking to rebuild those structures.

In the Maleboho East Circuit, learners were forced to be absent from school for a whole week because of community protests in 2018 and again in early 2019 (Blouberg Today, 2019). The organisers abuse school children by using them to receive a speedy response from the government regarding their grievances. Not only does this destabilise the children's learning process and compromise their right to learning in a stable environment, it also does not speed up service delivery. Instead, it actually results in retrograde developments as funds need to be reallocated to rebuilding destroyed structures. These conflict conditions are not conducive to effective learning. When learners go back to school, their minds are negatively affected by what they experienced, and effective learning cannot take place. In the ecosystem framework, one cannot separate learners from what is happening in their families and their wider communities.

4.4.4 Learners who are child family heads (CFH)

Child-headed households are households where a child assumes the role of primary caregiver to the other child or children in the household in terms of providing food, clothing and psychological support (DSD, 2005). Learners who are family heads are normally classified under child-headed homes (CHH). In this study, they were grouped into two subcategories. They are those who have parents who reside and work somewhere else because of socioeconomic circumstances. These parents are forced to leave their children in some cases with an older child, who is supposed to look after the siblings, while the parent/parents work in places such as Gauteng or other metropolitan areas. This means they take on the parental roles to their siblings and are often supposed to make decisions that are supposed to be made by adults. They may have other frail/sick members in the household (Pillay, 2016). In another subcategory are children, who have lost both parents and have younger siblings to take care of (Lethale & Pillay, 2013; Pillay, 2016).

These two categories of children are faced with serious challenges although they are still children themselves. They are taking care of their younger siblings and other members of their households (Lethale & Pillay, 2013). Before they come to school, they must have done certain household chores (Cluver et al., 2012). They are forced to take over the parental roles, while they are still in need of parental care and support themselves (Cluver et al., 2012). Evidence has shown that learners of this category do not perform well in their schoolwork (Ikeda & Garcia, 2014). They experience a high level of emotional as well as psychological stress (Cluver et al., 2012; Mwoma & Pillay, 2015). Evidence shows that leaving children abandoned in such a manner in their formative years destabilises their developmental process, which hinders their ability to focus fully on their academic work (Pillay, 2016).

Households headed by children, following parental death or abandonment, represent a particularly vulnerable household structure (Visser et al., 2015). While older children may care deeply about their younger siblings, they may be unable to cope with the responsibility of household decision-making and have to make enormous personal sacrifices that threaten their own development (Visser et al., 2015). On the other hand, there is a documented research evidence that the existence of CHF does not imply total abandonment by family members, but may result from relatives not wanting to move in with them; children not willing to split from siblings; or children not wanting to move from their family home to prevent property grabbing (Visser et al., 2015; Pillay, 2016). Literature has shown that these children have social and emotional development that often does not match their chronological development (Mulvenney, 2017).

4.4.5 Learners addicted to substances

Globally, drug and alcohol abuse have become serious problems for societies. South Africa is no exception to this development, where society is characterised by increasing levels of drug and alcohol abuse, and most of the people involved are young children (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2014; Rikhotso, 2014). The issue of alcohol and drug abuse is aggravated by cases of widespread unemployment, which leaves

people with no visible means of support. As such they resort to selling intoxicating substances such as alcohol and dagga to make some money to live on. There are allegations of people owning fields of dagga in the communities of this circuit.

Evidence shows that young children exposed to alcohol or drugs at an early age later become addicts themselves (NIDA, 2014; Rikhotso, 2014). Consumption of these addictive substances becomes a learned behaviour. From the researcher's own observation, some learners come to school still under the influence of alcohol and dagga, while some learners get caught selling dagga on the school premises. This poses a serious moral dilemma, as people who deal with these substances are unemployed and have no other identified easy means of sustenance. In an environment where there are high figures of unemployment, there is simply no work available for even those who want to make an honest living. In a situation where people are unable to sustain themselves economically, then the question remains: What else can they do? Maybe food gardens are a healthier option, and one that can feed the families.

The ecosystem perspective posits the reciprocal relationship between the children and their immediate environment. When a child grows up in an environment where they are regularly exposed to addictive substances and where drinking alcohol or using dagga becomes a norm, then the child will take that as an acceptable behavior (Rikhotso, 2014).

4.4.6 Learners who are teenage parents

Teenage pregnancy or parenting is still a major challenge in the South African society. While the policy on the prevention and management of teenage pregnancy speaks to female learners who fall pregnant while they are still attending school, it does not address the fact that some of these female learners are impregnated by fellow teenage boys (Lekalakala, 2016; DBE, 2018).

Many teenagers fall pregnant while still very young, blamed on a variety of factors, including factors such as insufficient or lack of parental guidance (Lekalakala, 2016). There is a practical observation of learners as young as 12 years who are already pregnant. Most young girls tend to confuse sex with love, and want to have boys fall and stay in love with them, and thus become sexually active. Some even believe that if they fall pregnant, the boy will then stay with them, take care of them or marry them. Unfortunately, in nearly all cases, these boys had no intention to make the relationship permanent, and also are in no position to take care of a young family.

Apart from young girls who are impregnated by fellow teenage boys, there are those who fall pregnant by older men. These young girls come from poor households, where their precarious financial conditions force them to engage in sexual relationships with older men to get money, thus the trend of blesser−blessee relationships that have become common (Mampane, 2018; Thobejane & Themane, 2018). They do not realise that their behaviour is a tolerated form of prostitution. Many of these girls experience sexually transmitted diseases, as these older partners often have more than one partner and do not take the necessary precautions to avoid transmission of such diseases.

According to the Constitution of South Africa, these learners can continue with their studies until delivery of the baby and come back to school once the baby is born (DBE, 2018). However, these learners live under constant psychological and emotional stress (Mangeli, Rayyani, & Tirgari, 2017). They are forced to take care of their babies, while actually they also need to be taken care of (Mangeli et al., 2017; Wall-Wieler, Roos & Nickel, 2016). They are often ridiculed by the peers as they no longer fit in the category of children (Wall-Wieler et al., 2016). In most of the black communities, they are expected to join burial society clubs and engage in their activities. They have to act as if they were adults, because they are mothers, yet, they are still children because of their age. This puts them in a vacuum, as they longer fit being school children and are not adults yet either (Lekalakala, 2016).

There is practical evidence showing that even after returning to school, they no longer succeed in their schoolwork. Obviously, there are exceptions and there are very dedicated young mothers who will still manage to write their matrics and even study at a later stage. However, the dual role of looking after a baby, concentrating on school and homework, leaves them no time for any private life and having healthy relationships with their peers.

4.4.7 The juvenile delinquents

The juvenile delinquents are minors between the ages of 10 to 18 who have committed some act that violates the law (Mundalamo, 2015). These are learners in the education system who have already committed minor or serious crimes. Some are still minors and have already committed grave crimes such as rape and murder. According to the South African Police Services [SAPS]'s Crime Statistics, 736 of the 21 022 murders were committed by children between 2018 and 2019, respectively. The issue of children committing horrendous crimes signals a deeper societal problem and instability in families and communities (Mundalamo, 2015).

Literature reports several factors that contribute to children committing horrendous crimes (Van Raemdonck & Seedat-Khan, 2017). These include these children being exposed to violence in the home, as already discussed, violence in their social circles (gangs), substance abuse, and lack of proper parental guidance, among others (Van Raemdonck & Seedat-Khan, 2017). In schools, these learners are constantly absent from school to attend court cases and ultimately drop out of school.

4.4.8 Learners who are abused

Abuse can be considered as any act/inaction that has a potential risk to harm the child (under 18 years of age) or any infringement of a child's rights in terms of section 28 of the SA Constitution (Strydom et al., 2018; DSD, 2015). It can take place in many forms, ranging from physical, emotional, financial, or sexual acts, and lack of protective or

preventative action to child neglect, abandonment, and child labour.

In South Africa, a composite legal framework has been provided as discussed in the previous chapter to ensure that children are protected from all forms of abuse (Strydom et al., 2018; DSD, 2012). However, despite this legal framework, many children continue to be abused; and schools and educators are not well capacitated to deal with abused children (Mamotsheare, 2016; Osei-Agywaka, 2012). They do not possess the knowledge on how to identify abused children in classrooms or what to do in cases an abuse is discovered (Mwoma & Pillay, 2015).

Child abuse poses serious consequences to children, as they end up being emotionally broken and find it difficult to form healthy relationships with teachers and peers (Peterson, 2014). They build up barriers around themselves, making it difficult to break into their emotional world (Peterson, 2014).

4.4.9 Multiple grade repeaters and underachievers

Grade repetition is a common practice in South African schools, where learners are held back in one grade for an additional year, as they did not achieve the marks to be able to be promoted to the next grade (Walton, 2018). Studies have shown positive aspects related to grade repetition, including helping learners to gain fluency in the language of instruction, which helps them to learn more efficiently (Walton, 2018). However, the practice has also been criticised as being unhelpful, ineffective and inefficient in terms of the learner's academic and socio-emotional development (Van der Berg, Wills, Sekirk, Adams, & Van Wyk, 2019; Haidary, 2013).

Several reasons are documented to contribute to learners repeating their grades, which include psychological, social and emotional challenges that make them unable to cope with academic demands (Van der Berg et al., 2019). Repeating grades can have a serious negative impact on learners (Van der Berg et al., 2019). Observational evidence has shown that they have low morale and are underachieving in relation to their potential

academic ability. Moreover, they tend to fall asleep in class, are stressed and continuously absent themselves from school (Haidary, 2013). These children could also be tired from having taken care of siblings, looked after the household, or walked far to get to school. Their stress could be caused by their lack of money to be able to take care of themselves and their families. They fail to complete their academic work and are always late coming to school. Most learners who are classified as problematic in school are coming from this category. This grade repetition automatically means that they are older than the rest of the class.

Preliminary evidence has indicated that in one school in a class of 39 learners, all were found to have repeated a grade once or twice at some point in their schooling (Mothibe Personal interview, 2020). Most of them were found to be underperforming, lacking motivation and failing to meet the academic requirements. The implementation of the progression policy department seems to disillusion them further, as they lack the understanding of how it is applied (Van der Berg et al., 2019).

4.4.10 The disabled

Children who are disabled still have severe difficulties to access resources, and this includes being able to get to school and being admitted. The White Paper 6 for Inclusive Education (2001) advocated for all categories of children to be included in mainstream education; however, many disabled learners still face tremendous barriers in terms of specialised education and mobility (Kemp, 2013). In South Africa, disabled children still tend to attend special schools, as mainstreamed schools are not capacitated to cater for their special needs. Most of these special schools are in remote areas, where a disabled child has to travel in some cases a distance of more than 100 kilometres. In cases where a child is coming from a poor family, it means parents must hire transport, which may cost them more than they can afford or travel with the child when the child is taken to such school and when schools close.

These categories may overlap as already argued. For instance, a child may be classified as poor, yet, the child may also be neglected at the same time. Some children may have behavioural and conduct issues, because they are neglected. The negative behaviour may signal their need for help. In a school context, the child may be classified as problematic and get punished as a result, which may perpetuate the child's vulnerability. In the ecosystem framework's argument, the holistic view of the child should always be taken into consideration. As such, before the child could be given any punishment or be classified as problematic, their social environment needs to be evaluated. Mulvenney (2017) defines this in terms of "behaviour is a form of communication".

Evidence from the discussion showed that there can be many categories of vulnerable children beyond the common OVC classification. As a result, measures to deal with vulnerable children need to be holistic, multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary. The following discussion deals with the factors predisposing children to vulnerability. However, the researcher would like to highlight the fact that as defining vulnerability is complex, the factors that predispose children to vulnerability are equally complex, varied and experienced by different children in different ways.

4.5 FACTORS EXPOSING CHILDREN TO VULNERABILITY

Literature highlights various factors that expose children to vulnerability (World Bank, 2020; Chereni & Mahati, 2012). These factors are closely connected to the socioeconomic contexts in which children find themselves (Skinner et al., 2013). These factors are also closely intertwined with high-risk situations that children can be exposed to, and in these situations, the risks that the child gets exposed contributes to the child's vulnerability. The World Bank (2020) highlighted downward spiral of children's vulnerability as illustrated in section 3.3.5, showed how these factors affect each other in exposing the child to further vulnerability.

Jopling and Vincent (2016) differentiate between individual factors as well as structural

contextual factors. The individual factors are within the child's persona, while the structural contextual factors are beyond the child's control, and predispose the child to a lot of disadvantage (Ameyaw-Akumfi, 2013, Bright, 2017). These factors include poverty, parents' unemployment and domestic violence, among others. The following discussion broadly exposes these factors:

4.5.1 Individual Child Factors

Factors that predispose children to vulnerability on an individual level are those factors that are intrinsic and reside within the child. As a result, they vary from child to child, and the children's responses are also different. Thornberry, Matsuda, Greenman, Augustyn, and Smith (2016) assert that individual factors contributing to child vulnerability stem from cognitive, emotional and physical capabilities or personal circumstances. These factors determine the child's response to the stressors in their environment. In the ecosystem notion, it is what is called the adaptive fit, which will mean developing coping mechanisms and resilience. It is referred to as misfit, where it implies the inability to fit in the environment (Germain & Gittermann, 2008). Literature documents four common factors related to the child, which are age, illness, disability and special needs, and immigration background (Jans, 2016).

4.5.1.1 Age

Because of their age, lack of experience and knowledge, children are by nature vulnerable, because they need to depend on others for their survival (Jans, 2016). Evidence has also shown that children who are small in terms of physique and age tend to be more vulnerable (Jans, 2016; UNICEF, 2018). They tend to be overlooked by their peers and their small physique may make them prone to bullying instead of those who appear to be stronger and bigger (Anderson, 2007; Laas & Boezart, 2014).

4.5.1.2 Illness

Children who are chronically ill may be constantly absent from school, which will make it

difficult for them to catch up with the schoolwork (Knowles, 2013). It will also turn them into easy "victims" of bullies. Their inability to be competent in academic work compromises their functioning, as they are sometimes subjected to failure, which forces them to have to repeat grades several times (Jans, 2016).

4.5.1.3 Disability and Special needs

Disability is defined as "a condition that results from the interaction between persons with impairments about attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (Tinta, Steyn, & Vermaas, 2020). In a disabled person, the use of part of the body is so impaired that the person cannot carry out normal functions such as hearing, talking, walking, seeing or learning (Tinta et al., 2020). It may be due to congenital disturbances, communicable or non-communicable diseases and trauma or physical injury (Ameyaw-Akumfi, 2013).

Children's disabilities can include physical disability, mental disability and intellectual disability. Disabled children are more vulnerable by virtue of them being disabled. Most disabled children cannot fit in the mainstream schools, as some of them have mobility issues as well as special needs. They have to attend special schools, which may be far away from their homes, as already discussed. In addition, their disability leads to them having special healthcare needs, and a greater rate of educational and therapeutic needs, which may be unmet. They experience higher social and environmental barriers to full participation in society and also in schools (UNICEF, 2018).

In rural areas, children's disability can have a worse impact because of the mobility factor. If a child cannot walk, it becomes a burden for the caregivers, as they must carry the child or organise a special transport, which may not be affordable for many in the rural areas. Children with special needs are those who do not necessarily have a physical disability, but do have an intellectual disability, learning disability, hearing impairment, speech or poor eyesight, or mental health problems (Tinta et al., 2020). Though they do not have any evidence of any physically difference, it is difficult for them to benefit from normal

schooling. This explains why certain children seem not to grasp any taught material, no matter how they are taught or how many times something is repeated.

Children with special needs are vulnerable in terms of their own emotional and behavioural difficulties, and they are also likely to be subjected to ridiculing and bullying (Haddad, 2020). Research evidence has shown that children with special needs have adaptation difficulties to the normal school environments (Konghot, 2012). They may have emotional attachment issues or needs, and normally disassociate themselves (Konghot, 2012). They are crying for help; however, the fact that their needs are not evident, they commonly do not receive the necessary help.

In a context where there are no interventions for children who experience difficulties, these children may fail a grade multiple times, until the child drops out of school when they are over-age. The difficulty in the implementation of the Education White Paper 6 sadly implies that these children will continue to have trouble accessing any adequate education.

4.5.1.4 Immigration background

The migration of people has become a phenomenon again in the 21st century, similar to the many continental migrations that had taken place over centuries before. Groups of people, families or individuals move from one country to another, looking for a better future. The current migratory trends tend to be based on political and socioeconomic factors. In some countries, emigration is caused by wars, invasions and other violent conflicts. In other regions, emigration is caused by natural disasters, droughts or floods, poverty or a lack of a beneficial future vision. Some families migrate together with their children, while some children undertake the enormous challenge of crossing borders on their own, which has led to a large and growing number of children with an immigration background, living in South Africa.

In neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe and Mozambique, the socioeconomic conditions continue to deteriorate, which causes their people to continue migrating to South Africa in search of a better life (Willie & Mfubu, 2016). At the Beit Bridge border post, children as young as 12 years have been found to try to cross the border illegally (Willie & Mfubu, 2016).

In the Maleboho East Circuit, there are a considerable number of migrant children who are registered in the schools. Having an immigration background presents serious challenges and barriers to their education (Mahmoudi & Mothapo, 2018). They have difficulty in understanding the local language, and are forced to learn a new local language. Their situation may be perpetuated by the lack of proper identification documents or a birth certificate, both of which are necessary when registering at a school. In 2019, many learners were deregistered from local schools cause of their lack of proper documentation.

4.5.2 Structural Factors

Structural factors are factors that occur or are present in the child's environment and that contribute to the child's vulnerability. They are causal factors that the child has no control over, and in some cases, even parents or caregivers have no control over those factors. The discussion of structural factors therefore follows:

4.5.2.1 Family factors and circumstances

A family is meant to provide nurturing and care for their children, so that they grow up in a loving and safe environment to become mature individuals (DSD, 2021). However, not all families have the capacity to provide such an environment for their children. Mynarska, Riederer, Jaschinski, Krivanek, Neyer, and Oláh (2015) posit that some families are more at risk and cannot provide such nurturing or caring environment.

Jopling and Vincent (2016) identify dysfunctional families, families at risk and troubled families. In their view, these families are generally lacking an enabling environment to allow children to develop and function well. They are often chaotic, disorganised, and lack a proper value and moral structure (Jopling & Vincent, 2016). In these families, there is also generally a neglect of children (Pillay, 2011). Though there are adults in these families, they do not have either the maturity or the moral grounding for children to model their life after them (Herruzo, Trenas, Pino, & Herruzo, 2020). Unfortunately, evidence also shows that such dysfunctional families tend to have more children or a greater number of people living in one household (Herruzo et al., 2020).

In South Africa, many children are living in dysfunctional families, or families that are classified as either troubled or at risk (DSD, 2021, Kheswa, 2017). Some believe that even more than a whole generation after the end of apartheid, dysfunctional families are the outcome of the past separate development in the country, where resources and opportunities were concentrated in urban areas, while some areas (especially rural areas) were left without receiving any development or infrastructure. This forced people to migrate to urban areas to find work, leaving their families behind. Migration to the urban areas is still a major factor for rural areas experiencing no economic growth. Social factors such as poverty, unemployment, HIV/Aids, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and the increase in the number of child-headed families also tend to compromise the quality of family life (Kheswa, 2017).

There is notable erosion of family life, even in families that are said to be intact there is a noticeable compromise of family life (Kheswa, 2017). This is blamed on socioeconomic factors, where both parents work and spend more time at work than with their children. When children have little contact with their parents, because of an irregular and unstable family life, then the parent−child bond is weakened (DSD, 2021). Evidence has shown that when children are left in the care of people who are not their biological caregivers or their extended family for an extended period, the probability that they may be mistreated is high (UNICEF, 2018).

Research studies strongly suggest that children who are orphaned or whose parents are not able to care for them optimally are more likely to suffer emotional, physical and transactional sexual exploitation than all other groups of children (Hlalele, 2015; Mutiso & Mutie, 2018). Children who grow up in stable families and supportive parents, experience a strong caring environment. As a result, families that are stable, secure and possess protective factors, make their children less prone to vulnerability than children who are coming from dysfunctional families (Hlalele, 2015; Mutiso & Mutie, 2018).

In this circuit, more children live in single-parent families and evidence shows that many single parent families are poor and unstable, and lack proper family values. Preliminary evidence from one school has shown that 60% of the learners came from single-parent families (Mothibe, 2020). Children who are living with single parents are at a higher risk of experiencing physical and sexual abuse (Ameyaw-Akumfi, 2013). Studies show a strong connection between the father's absence and the abuse of children (Makofane, 2015).

Apart from single-parent families, there is an increasing number of child-headed households [CHH]. CHH are defined as those that are under the care and supervision of a person below the age of 18 years of age (DSD, 2005; Mturi, 2012; Pillay, 2016). They include households headed by children living with adults who are either very old or too sick to be responsible for the household (DSD, 2005). This situation is often caused by social and economic situations in the community of the Maleboho East Circuit as well as the broader Limpopo Province, where parents migrate to places such as Gauteng or other metropolitan centres for work opportunities. This forces their children to live in homes where there is no adult supervision, and the children assume adult roles and take care of their siblings in the absence of their parents.

Children who are living in CHH are faced with the difficulty of having to raise their siblings, which leads to their social disempowerment, increased school abseentism, which leads to their poor school performance (Pillay, 2016; Cluver et al., 2012). Literature has also

documented that CHH experience a shortage of resources, which places them and their siblings at risk of experiencing starvation and malnutrition (Pillay, 2016). Children who come from these families tend to be sickly, with inadequate access to medical care, while girls living in CHH experience all kinds of sexual exploitation while they try to provide for themselves and their siblings (Skoudal & Daniel, 2012; Pillay, 2016).

Mturi (2012) supported the view that they tended to be more vulnerable and may encounter challenges such as failure to access social services, inability to generate resources and unresolved grief. However, it should be noted that not all children living in CHH are vulnerable. Some children have strong resilience and function even better than children who are coming from families where there are both parents (Lethale & Pillay, 2013). Children's problems are vast, especially in an environment where a high number of families are unstable, or where OVC are faced with multiple risks. In these families, there are multiple factors associated with vulnerability, most of which lead to greater vulnerability (Jopling & Vincent, 2016).

The ecosystem framework postulates a reciprocal relationship between children and their environment. As a result, the problems that children experience in their home environment will eventually cascade to their education process. On the other hand, the impact that HIV/AIDS has had on families cannot be overlooked. Several research studies have indicated that HIV/AIDS has had a serious negative impact on South African families (Skinner et al., 2013). Therefore, the following discussion elaborates further on how South African families had been affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

(a)The impact of HIV/Aids on families

The HIV/Aids pandemic has affected families negatively, especially in sub-Saharan Southern Africa (UNICEF, 2009; UNDP, 2013). Many parents died from AIDS or AIDS-related illnesses, leaving their children with no-one to look after them. Though the infection rate of HIV/AIDS has been reduced in many countries; its impact on families, communities and societies will still be evident in many years to come.

Children living in households where a parent or both parents are living with HIV/AIDS are faced with various forms of difficulty (Skoudal & Daniel, 2012). They often must care for their sick parent and are faced with the thought of the possibility of their parent dying. In some cases, they witness their parents dying (DSD, 2012; REPSSI, 2009). This leaves the children with a deep, long-lasting trauma, and emotional, cognitive and psychological scars (Cluver et al., 2009; REPSSI, 2009). The scourge of HIV/AIDS compounds the problem of children's vulnerability. Many children are left with one or no parent, while in some cases, they had to deal with their ailing parents. Having to care for parents while still young, also leaves children with deep emotional scars, which causes psychosocial issues later on in their life (Cluver et al., 2012). The long-term sickness and eventual loss of a parent or both parents exposes children to a wide range of abuse (Skinner et al., 2006). It also creates feelings of hopelessness, fear, self-blame, despondency and desperation in these children.

This situation is worsened by the fact that children do not receive any intervention after the death of a parent or parents (Cluver et al., 2012). For many children, life has to continue as normal after the loss of their parents. Without any intervention, children lose the meaning of life. In cases where there are no adult caregivers after the loss of a parent or parents, the older child will be forced to take on the adult role and care for their siblings. In worst cases, they are forced to leave their family home and relocate to live with other relatives. Evidence shows that these children are in some cases subjected to sexual abuse, as well as financial abuse, where young children are forced to work for their food (Mutiso & Mutie, 2018; Pillay, 2016).

4.5.2.2 Parent or caregiver factors

These are factors that are located within the parent/s. The ability to have children is not an indicator of the capacity to parent children (Makofane, 2015). Therefore, parental factors can either mitigate or aggravate children's vulnerability. The following discussion posits several parental factors:

(a) Personality characteristics and psychological well-being

Literature documents that children who are growing up with parents or caregivers who have low self-esteem, poor impulse control, suffering from depression, anxiety and anti-social behaviour are exposed to a higher risk of vulnerability than children whose parents do not possess those factors (Ameyaw-Akumfi, 2013; Knowles, 2013). The mental state of the parent determines whether they will be able to provide a nurturing environment for the children to become responsible adults (Knowles, 2013).

(b) History of maltreatment

Children whose parents have experienced maltreatment at some point in their lives tend to face the same fate as their parents did (Knowles, 2013). Studies confirm that individuals with poor parental role models find it difficult to meet the needs of their own children (Makofane, 2015). Evidence shows that parents who have experienced abuse tend to abuse their children (Ameyaw-Akumfi, 2013).

(c) Substance abuse

Evidence has also shown that substance abuse can interfere with the parent's mental functioning, judgement, inhibitions and protective capacity (Lander, Howsare, & Byrne, 2013). This leads them to neglect the needs of their children. They spend money on addictive substances instead of their household expenses or get involved in criminal activities to cover the cost of their addiction (Ameyaw-Akumfi, 2013; Da Mota Ribeiro, 2016). Literature shows a strong association between substance abuse and ill-treatment of children (Knowles, 2013; Lander et al., 2013). Many children, whose parents abuse alcohol, report cases of both physical and sexual abuse, which exposes children to become more vulnerable (Parolin, Simonelli, Mapelli, Sacco, & Cristofallo, 2016). Studies confirm that parents who abuse alcohol are three times more likely to abuse their children either physically or sexually (Lander et al., 2013; Parolin et al., 2016). Moreover, the use/abuse of alcohol can influence the parental discipline choices and child rearing styles and often lead to violence (Knowles, 2013).

(d) Attitudes and knowledge

As already discussed, having children does not indicate that the parent or caregiver possesses parental knowledge. Negative attitudes and attributions about a child's behaviour and inaccurate knowledge about the child's development may result in unrealistic expectations from the child and increase the vulnerability of the child (Knowles, 2013; Satyarthi, 2018). It should also be noted that parents with mental health problems can aggravate their children's vulnerability.

(e) Age of the parent

Children born to very young mothers are likely to be more vulnerable than their counterparts (Knowles, 2013). Young mothers tend to be poor, less educated, lack support and information about child development, which exposes their children to vulnerability.

(f) Isolation and social exclusion

Literature has shown that parents who are isolated and have few support systems around them tend to maltreat their children more often than do parents who can count on their support structure (Knowles, 2013; Satyarthi, 2018).

(g) Domestic Violence

In South Africa, violence against women and children is a serious problem. This is the reason why the "16 days of activism against women and children" initiative is highlighted every year to conscientise society about this plight. There are many reports of horrendous violence that is committed against women and children. Domestic violence is a structural problem that involves broader issues of power and unequal power relations (Dunkle, Jewkes, Brown, Gray, & McIntryre, 2004; Danga, 2008). In a rural context, people tend to hold onto traditional systems, traditions and values, which have been found to be a contributory factor to domestic violence.

Children in violent homes often witness parental violence, and this negatively affects their psychosocial functioning. Domestic violence produces harmful emotional consequences (Dunkle et al., 2004; Danga, 2008). The consequences of children witnessing one of their parents being abused are severe and are often overlooked and misunderstood (Dunkle et al., 2004; Singleton, 2015).

(h) Parent child interaction

Families involved in maltreatment of a parent or a child seldom reward their children for positive behaviour, while they display strong responses to their child's negative behaviour (Ameyaw-Akumfi, 2013). Children who have parents who are less supportive, affectionate, playful and less responsive are more likely to be vulnerable and have attachment issues later in life (Pillay, 2012).

4.5.3 Contextual factors

The context or environment where the child grows up can expose children to factors that cause their vulnerability. Children adapt and fit into the environment they find themselves in. For instance, a child who grows up in an environment where gangs are prevalent, will accept gang culture as normal. The contextual value system is critical in child development (SAIDE, 2012). This section will address the contextual factors on both the communal as well as the societal level in which the children find themselves.

4.5.3.1 The community

The family, the peers and the schools are the children's immediate community. If the community is closely-knit and a caring culture is promoted, children will be cushioned and therefore develop strong resilience, even though they could be categorised as vulnerable (SAIDE, 2012). The school community is critical in the total development of the child, based upon the reasons that were cited earlier in the discussion. Based on the researcher's observations and experience, even OVC, who were faced with severe forms

of vulnerabilities, developed well in a caring school environment and later became responsible citizens. It is within this framework that a school-based model will be essential in helping the school to be better equipped to help OVC. However, the vulnerability of children may be aggravated by school environments that are less caring or supportive.

4.5.3.2 The society

In any society, there are factors that will have an impact on the people who live in those societies. The way that society is structured, its socioeconomic status, belief systems, norms and values as well as policies can directly or indirectly affect the way children are reared. A society that is characterised by mass poverty tends to care less about its children. The following discussion addresses societal factors that can contribute to children's vulnerability.

(a) Poverty, unemployment and inequality

Societies that are classified as poor tend to experience multiple vulnerabilities (Phillips, 2015). Evidence has shown that social ills such as domestic violence and substance abuse, among others, are common in poor societies. In South Africa, an unhealthy trajectory exists between unemployment, poverty and inequality. In an environment where more than 30% of the population are classified as unemployed, and a large segment being unemployable because of lacking skills, many societies are subjected to poverty and that is the reason why South Africa is named as the most unequal society in the world (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2013).

Societies that are characterised by high levels of unemployment are generally poor and faced with multiple risks (Phillips, 2015). Besides widespread poverty and unemployment, there is usually also a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS (Phillips, 2015). These multi-risks communities pose threats to the well-being of their children and negatively affect their development and functioning (Dawes, Bray, & Van der Merve, 2007).

In the Maleboho East Circuit, which is under the jurisdiction of the Blouberg Municipality,

the situation is even worse, where around 48% of the population remain unemployed (Blouberg Municipality IDP 2021-21). Statistics show that around 75% of South African black children live below the poverty line (SSA, 2019; UNDP, 2019). Many children suffer the adverse cycle of intergenerational poverty, which is difficult to break in the environment of poor education, high unemployment rates and social inequality (De Lannoy et al., 2015). This results in the perpetuation of social exclusion, which hinders these children to have the same chances as children coming from well-off families.

Many authors agree on the interconnectivity between poverty and vulnerability (Dekeza, 2018; Hlalele, 2015; Tsheko, 2007). They commonly assert that poverty exposes children to vulnerability (Bright, 2017). Poverty is an indicator of the lack of access to resources and income opportunities (UNICEF, 2018). The poor are often exposed to serious risks and are defenceless against the various forms of deprivation. According to the International Labour Organisation [ILO], poverty cannot only be defined only as being the lack of Income, but also the lack of access to healthcare, education and other services (ILO, 2020). Evidence had shown clearly that poor people are prone to greater health and safety risks, which result in children experiencing barriers to learning, as well as physical, intellectual, neurological and sensory difficulties (Landsberg, Kruger, & Swart, 2011).

Though poverty exposes children to vulnerability, this does not indicate that all poor children are vulnerable; however, poverty increases the risk that exposed children will be more vulnerable (Heruzzo et al., 2020). The parents or caregivers' struggle to meet the basic necessities of life also affects the children negatively. Second, the various levels of poverty can cause family stresses and frustration, which in turn, can result in punitive or aggressive behaviour towards children, as well as abuse (Mohale, 2019). In addition, overcrowding, which is usually associated with poverty, can expose children to sexual abuse (Makofane, 2015).

(b) Incompetent policies

Effective and relevant policies are essential when aiming to ensure that the children's rights are observed. However, in an environment where policies are not child-friendly, they may make children even more vulnerable. Policies have to be part of the development of child programmes that are meant to help children. The South African Government has developed competent policies and legislation that many authors agree are child-friendly and ensure that children's rights are observed. They have been fully discussed in Chapter 2. However, they have been highly criticised for lacking guidelines on how they are going to be implemented in practice. Second, they are confusing practitioners on the relevant functions, who must do what and the applicable accountabilities (Reynecke, 2018). Many authors have criticised the South African Government as not having the political will to implement its own policies (Kasiram, 1993; Kemp, 2013; Kemp, 2014; Ntombela, 2011; Reynecke, 2018).

(c) Gender stereotypes

Rural communities are commonly characterised by backwardness and holding on to traditional values, which still regard and treat women as inferior to men (Ntjana, 2014). There are traditional practices such as ukuthwala in some cultures, where girls as young as 15 are forced into marriage with older men (Machaka, 2019; Jokani, 2018). Girl children are still seen as sub-citizens who have no rights and are compelled to do the household chores under the command of their husband, father, uncle or other male family member. This negatively lowers women and girls' self-esteem, self-worth or self-confidence. This situation perpetuates and even increases the likelihood that girl children are more vulnerable than boy children.

(d) Social norms and values

The value that society puts on its children determines the level of vulnerability children will experience. In a society where children are highly valued and measures are in place to ensure the protection of children (Openshaw, 2014), vulnerability should be lower among children. In South African context, and as already discussed in the previous

section, laws and policies have been put in place that uphold children's safety; unfortunately, South Africa is ranked high in terms of child crimes (SSA, 2019), crimes committed by children and against children. This is a sure signal that there is no cohesion between policies and laws, and the actual practice. There is still the approach that crimes will be punished, instead of trying to prevent the crimes from being committed. Also, the rights of the criminals are often taken more seriously than the rights of the victim, which results in high levels of underreporting of crimes, especially those committed against women and children.

There is confirmed evidence that there are many risks and challenges facing vulnerable children (Ngonyama, 2014). These risks and challenges may inhibit these children's opportunity to function well and build their own future (Nkosi, Haman, Naicker, & Mathee, 2019).

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed in detail the extant literature regarding the vulnerability of children. It started by conceptualising child vulnerability and presented that vulnerability has multiple dimensions, which thus may need social interventions that are multi-dimensional. The discussion categorised vulnerable children and the factors that contribute to child vulnerability. The factors included individual factors, which referred to being internal factors, and to contextual factors that negatively affect children's overall the social functioning.

CHAPTER 5

DISCOURSE ON THE CHALLENGES FACING OVC IN SCHOOLS

"This work is my last baby. It was born into me when I was conscientised of the plight of OVC in the early 2000, when HIV/AIDS deaths were at their peak and ravaging our communities. It was heartbreaking to see many children losing their parents and being plunged into the demise of looking after themselves and their siblings. …Children taking care of other children, losing the joy of childhood to carry the burden of parenthood. Nothing in my teaching career has prepared me for this. It is what made me decide to become a social worker, because I wanted to make a difference, however small, to the lives of these children". Pheladi wa Pitsi le Lebese"

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter presents a detailed discussion on the challenges facing children. The discussion starts by providing a picture of the extent of the problem of OVC in South Africa to give a background regarding these challenges. The background is followed by the actual challenges of these children, which include psychosocial problems, challenges in their homes, and those experienced at school. In the child's interaction with their environment, there is an exchange as well as reciprocity. This implies that the experiences of children in the micro, meso or the macro environment will eventually affect their experiences in the school environment.

5.2 THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM OF OVC IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa has been ranked among one of the countries that reported a high prevalence of HIV infections. This led to the emergence of a large sector of OVC, which has serious consequences both on a social and an economic basis (Pillay, 2016). UNAIDS (2017) indicates that HIV/AIDS created an unprecended human and development crisis.

Research studies have found that the HIV/AIDS pandemic was the leading cause of children losing their parents, which lead to increased vulnerability of children (Mbatha, 2015; Ntuli, Sebola & Madiba, 2020; Tsiliso, 2011). Evidence from both research and literature has shown that poor, young and single parents are at the highest risk of dying from HIV/AIDS elated illnesses, often leaving their young children behind (UNICEF, 2018). There are cases, where even the remaining extended families are so poor that they cannot afford to take on an extra burden of raising another child. The loss of parents because AIDS has a negative impact on children, and creates significant changes in the family structure (Pillay, 2012). It is associated with destitution, reduced access to schooling and stigma (Ntuli, Mokgatle, & Madiba, 2020; Motsa & Morojele, 2017). Children are placed at a greater risk of malnutrition, illness and early school termination (Ntuli et al., 2020).

A qualitative study conducted by Skinner et al. (2013) found that OVC in South Africa are more vulnerable than their counterparts in other countries, for example, Uganda, Malawi and Swaziland, as many of them do not have birth certificates, access to food, access to clothing and a school uniform, less access to clean running water, and that they are less likely to attend school regularly. The findings are confirmed by studies conducted by Hlalele (2015) and Marongwe, Sonn, and Mashologu (2016).

This places the OVC problem as one of the major social challenges facing the post-apartheid, democratic South Africa. However, this problem is not only confined to South Africa, but affects the whole of sub-Saharan Africa (Kharsany & Karim, 2016; Motsa & Morojele, 2017). Dekeza (2018) reiterates that the OVC problem is one of the social challenges that the modern world is dealing with currently. The latest statistics indicate that of the 18 million children in South Africa, 3, 8 million children have lost one or both parents (SSA, 2020). This figure excludes children who have become vulnerable by other social factors.

These children are subjected to poverty, hunger and instability, among other factors, more than those children who are not orphaned (Skinner et al., 2013). Despite the decline of

HIV/AIDS deaths, the impact of the disease continues to be felt. Lombe, Mabikke, and Enelamah (2020) assert that sub-Saharan Africa has continued to experience a disproportionate loss of individuals in their most productive years, raising the concerns of the welfare of the surviving members of their families. The inability of extended families to care for such children and the unprecented levels of poverty forms the basis of the growing challenges faced by the OVC.

In a study calculating the living conditions of South African children, it was found that around six of every ten children are vulnerable in some way or the other (Maluleka, 2020). Multiple vulnerabilities have been found to be higher among rural children than their urban counterparts. Limpopo Province ranked higher in multiple dimensions of vulnerability at 82,8%, followed by the Eastern Cape at 78,7% (Maluleka, 2020). Gauteng and Western Cape are ranked more positively, reflecting 33, 6% and 37, 1%, respectively (Maluleka, 2020). These statistics confirm the view that children in rural areas are more vulnerable than their counterparts in urban areas.

In historically disadvantaged population groups, children's multi-dimensional vulnerabilities are found to be higher, even though this does not differ among the adults of the vulnerable population groups (Maluleka, 2020). Studies have shown that vulnerability tends to be higher among children compared to adults living in similar circumstances (Makhonza, 2018; Mutiso & Mutie, 2018). Moreover, vulnerability has been found to be higher in children who are double orphans; single orphans; whose parents are unemployed, and children who are coming from families where many adults are unemployed (Maluleka, 2020).

Vulnerability in children inhibits their opportunity of becoming fully functioning adults. Maluleka (2020) asserts that children who experience multiple dimensions of vulnerability will miss out on the key aspects of their lives that should help them develop and reach their full potential, including an education, easy access to clean water, access to healthcare services and a sense of feeling safe. However, this is not to negate the role that resilience plays in children. Many children can bounce back, despite their vulnerable

conditions, and become fully functioning adults (Beasley et al., 2003; Van der Vegt, Essens, Wahlström, & George, 2015).

5.3 CHALLENGES AND RISKS FACED BY OVC

Literature documents that OVC experience a myriad of challenges and risks both at home and at school (Magero, 2012; Hlalele, 2015; Ngonyama, 2014). These challenges and risks may inhibit their opportunity to function well and therefore build their own future (Nkosi et al., 2019). The challnges and risks include emotional, economic, and social challenges. These challenges can translate into negative or positive outcomes, depending on the child's capacity to be resilient. For the purpose of this study, the challenges were categorised into psychosocial challenges; challenges at home, and those experienced at school.

5.3.1 Psychosocial experiences and challenges

While most interventions aimed at OVC focus on the material needs of OVC, there is strong evidence from research studies that OVC suffer from psychosocial problems, which are often overlooked, as the OVC tend to internalise problems (Mbatha, 2015; Sebola, 2019; Zwane, 2013). In a research study by Ntuli et al. (2020), it is shown that OVC tend to internalise depressive symptoms they suffer from, such as hopelessness, self-isolation and sleepless nights, lack of peace, constant pain and suicidal ideation. They experience a strong feeling of sadness and anger, because of their disadvantaged environmental condition (Makhonza, 2018; Skinner et al., 2013).

When parents die, children do not only miss their physical presence, but also many positive things they provided them with when they were alive, such as love, guidance, care and protection (Alem, 2020). Not having parental or adult guidance often leaves them feeling helpless and hopeless, especially when they have not received any psychological support to help them cope with the death of parents or caregivers (Ntuli et al., 2020; Warnick, 2015). They commonly deal with stigmatisation, victimisation and intimidation (Motsa & Morojele, 2017; Mutiso & Mutie, 2018). Anxiety, depression and

stress appear to be common among OVC. Pillay (2012) added that they have low self-esteem. They also have difficulty with social relationships and behaviour (Skinner et al., 2013). Some common psychosocial issues experienced by OVC are discussed below.

5.3.1.1 Stigma and discrimination

OVC are in many cases stigmatised by their peers. They may be stigmatised, because it is suspected that their parents died of HIV/AIDS or because they are so poor that they cannot buy or have access to the basic necessities of life (Seruwagi, 2012; Masuka & Banda, 2012). Their books are not covered, because they lack simple items such as book covers. They lack proper uniforms, which leads to them being laughed at by their peers. This leaves them with emotional scars that may be worsened when they decide to drop out of school. Magero (2012), Motsa and Morojele (2017) cite that OVC suffer emotionally and this will most likely also affect their academic performance.

5.3.1.2 Rejection

A study conducted by Boadu, Osei-Tutu, and Osafo (2020) states that OVC are faced with rejection and consequently, they experience feelings of loneliness. They experience rejection when their parents die and leave them behind with no-one to care for them. Alem (2020) supports the view and reiterates that OVC experience intense feelings of rejection and despair, and need social support, ranging from emotional to material support. When these children are left in the care of caregivers, they become negatively affected when they perceive the lack of caring or unfair treatment in comparison to the caregiver's biological children (Alem, 2020).

These feelings are intensified when these children are forced to fend for themselves after the loss of their parents. Evidence shows that these feelings may proceed to develop into clinical depression, which may have long-term effects on these children's health and development (Alem, 2020; Boadu et al., 2020).

5.3.1.3 Isolation

Vulnerability isolates children. They are isolated when their parents die, leaving them to care for themselves. They are isolated when they are forced to relocate from their original household to go and live with their extended family members who are strangers to them. Alem (2020) asserts that in many cases, OVC have no-one to share their feelings with and this compounds their sense of loneliness and helplessness. If adaptation to their new circumstances is difficult, they may suffer with attachment issues, inadequate social skills and mental health difficulties later in life (Alem, 2020). This poses a serious challenge to the caregivers who must look after them, especially those who may not understand the psychosocial issues the OVC are dealing with.

5.3.1.4 Grief

OVC deal with a lot of constant grief which may sometimes be prolonged. Studies have shown that OVC are often misunderstood, as they are grieving (Magero, 2012; Boadu et al., 2020). The lack of support during the grieving process and inadequate support to adjust to the new circumstances of having to live without their parents, may lead them to be severely depressed (Sebola, 2019). It is this grieving process that results in psychosocial issues in their life.

To many children, their life is forced to continue as normal after the loss of their parents and they are not given time to grieve for the loss of their mother or father. They constantly remember the death of their parent, especially if it was their mother who died, and often feel as if it "happened yesterday" (Ntuli et al., 2020). They experience a difficulty forming a relationship with guardians, as they have this firm belief that things would have been different if their mothers were still alive (Ntuli et al., 2020). In a qualitative study by Ntuli et al. (2020), it was established that young orphans think things would be very different if their mothers were around to show them love, support, and to provide for them, care and encourage them.

5.3.1.5 Discipline

Attributed to the many challenges OVC often deal with in their formative years, most of them end up having problems with discipline, which are related to their early childhood and life experiences. Ndaita (2016) asserts that teachers are dealing with problems of indiscipline, insubordination and disruptive behaviour among the children. Studies conducted by (Masekoameng, 2018; Segalo & Rambuda, 2018) agree that teachers are dealing with issues of indiscipline on a daily basis. The larger part of the teachers' time should be used to teach, instead it is spent disciplining learners. This is confirmed by Wolhuter (2020), who asserts that there are many maladjusted children in school.

South Africa is unique because of its historical past, and has a high prevalence of children not living in the same households as their biological parents. This is partially based on the historical migrant labour system, although most men tend to still migrate to the cities in the search of employment. Other reasons for children living without their parents are caused by poverty, and low marriage and cohabitation rates, among others (Hall & Sambu, 2017). When children are not taught discipline in their childhood years, then they do not understand boundaries and basic rules of appropriate behaviour. This results in discipline issues facing the many learners, their teachers and later their employers, who will not tolerate indiscipline. In the latest statistics by Children Count, it was established that 43% of all children live only with their mothers, whereas 29% live with neither of their parents. In families that are classified as poor, only 30% live with both their parents (Children Count, 2019).

The absence of parents in the home has been found to contribute to social problems such as substance abuse, sexual abuse, and teenage pregnancy, among other problems, which contribute to the lack of discipline among children (Alem, 2020). Several studies have shown that cases of indiscipline start with the family background, where a child may undergo some psychological experiences that may affect their discipline behaviour, if not taken care of (Alem, 2020; Ngwokabuenui, 2015; Wolhuter, 2020).

South Africa has seen worst cases of indiscipline, where children become so violent that they attack and kill their own teachers and peers. In 2018, 2019 and 2020, there were cases that shocked the whole country, of learners killing their own teachers and fellow learners (Wolhuter, 2020). Some of these children bully their fellow learners. This leaves other children so traumatised that those who cannot go for a counselling process, are left with deep and permanent emotional scars. The worst-case scenario is when the traumatised children commit suicide or drop out of school.

5.3.2 Challenges at home

OVC come from poor households, and their challenges affect their whole life. Literature documented several challenges that are present in these homes.

5.3.2.1 Lack of personal space

OVC commonly grow up in poor households, where there is a likelihood of overcrowding and limited or a lack of resources (Nkosi et al., 2019; Daniel, 2010). This subjects these learners into having no personal space, and no proper place to study or sleep (Tanga, Khumalo, & Gutura, 2016). In rural households, overcrowding may be a norm, where more than five family members are "squashed" into one room. Overcrowding conditions have been associated with unhygienic conditions, lack of proper sanitation and sexual abuse (Tanga et al., 2016).

A descriptive study conducted by Pillay (2011) found that most OVC live in houses that had broken windows, doors and roofs, which threatened their safety from weather and criminals. It was normal for them to sleep on the floor, with a single blanket, since luxuries such as beds, tables and desks for doing their homework were beyond reach in their impoverished contexts (Pillay, 2011). Despite these negative circumstances, some

children were more resilient and coped well with their academic work. There are children who will stay at school until late hours to use the school's lights and the space to study, as there may be no space or electricity at home.

5.3.2.2 Food insecurity

Food security is a serious challenge facing OVC. Though there are positive contributions brought through the intervention of the social security assistance, most families survive on a meagre grant, which may not be sufficient (Mohale, 2019). Children may lack even the most basic necessities of life. The money is not enough to pay for food, clothes and school expenses. Research evidence has shown that because of the poor conditions, OVC are subjected to a higher risk of malnourishment and stunted growth because of insufficient food intake (Magero, 2012; Mwoma & Pillay, 2015; Mutiso & Mutie, 2018). Some resort to stealing to meet their personal needs (Mutiso & Mutie, 2018). Households with less food security are at higher risk of suffering from anxiety and depression (Magero, 2012).

5.3.2.3 Risk of sexual exploitation

Most OVC grow up in households that are overcrowded and they are at high risk of being abandoned, neglected and forced to fend for themselves (Mutiso & Mutie, 2018). In some cases, one may find several generations staying together in one household. This puts the young OVC at risk of sexual exploitation by family members or people they know, or maltreatment and various forms of abuse as indicated already (Ncanywa, 2015). In school, they are likely to become involved in transactional sex with their own teachers (Mampane, 2018; Ncanywa, 2015). In most cases, children do not report such incidences, which results in them suffering in silence (Ncanywa, 2015)). There are some cases, where the perpetrator of abuse is a breadwinner in the family; if he is reported, then the family will be subjected to hunger, or he will decide to stop providing them with food.

5.3.2.4 Teenage parenthood

Studies have shown that OVC face a harsh reality of becoming parents while still teenagers (Garwood, Gerassi, Jonson-Reid, Plax, & Drake, 2015). This is caused by the social conditions that these children are subjected to in their immediate environment. OVC tend to face neglect and lack proper parental care, which puts them at risk of being sexually exploited (Chung, 2018). The sexual exploitation leads them to become mothers, while still young, naïve and inexperienced.

5.3.2.5 Drug and alcohol abuse

Children growing up without proper parental support and who are neglected are likely to abuse drugs and alcohol (Khosa, 2018; Rikhotso, 2014). Evidence has shown that most of the children who spend time in shebeens are from families that are troubled, overcrowded and dysfunctional (Khosa, 2018; Nkosi et al., 2019; Rikhotso, 2014). To a child who has psychosocial issues, the abuse of drugs and alcohol offers to them a temporary escape from the pain they are experiencing.

5.3.2.6 Lack of positive role models

Children need people to look up to someone, a role model, for positive inspiration and a person who will groom them to become better adults (Fayyaz, 2018). Positive role models are crucial in the child's development, as they show young people how to live with integrity, optimism, hope, determination and compassion (Fayyaz, 2018). In an environment where they have no-one to look up to and aspire to be like them, they grow up with a void and lack some skills or capacities to make them better future citizens, especially those who are growing up in child-headed homes.

5.3.2.7 Caring for siblings and sick parents

Literature indicates that OVC are in many cases forced to take on adult roles long before they should have to (Maila & Mabasa, 2021; Pillay, 2016). In cases where a parent or

caregiver is working away from home, the oldest child must carry the heavy responsibility of caring for smaller brothers and sisters or sometimes also frail grandparents (Lathale & Pillay, 2013). This becomes a heavy burden on the child, who also has academic demands to meet.

5.3.2.8 Lack of care and affection

Children need care and affection, especially in their crucial development years. In Maslow's pyramid of hierarchy of needs (Macleod, 2020), the need for care and affection comes at the third level. This shows that for a child to be a fully functioning psychological and emotional being, they must have people who care for them and are affectionate towards them. Studies have shown that OVC normally experience neglect, abandonment or abuse (Hlalele, 2015; Saraswat & Unisa, 2017; Tsheko, 2007).

The situation may deprive them of the care and affection, which they need in order to develop fully. The lack of care and affection creates attachment issues later in their lives, as already discussed. However, not all OVC suffer from a lack of care and affection. In some cases, though, there may be parents or caregivers caring for them and showing them affection, but they lack the resources to be able to provide everything that is needed.

5.3.3 Challenges at school

Schools can make a positive contribution to OVC, especially when the concept of a caring school is the norm. As already discussed in 3.2.2 of Chapter 3, schools can play such positive role, since children spend an average of eight hours a day in that environment. However, rural schools experience a shortage of human and material resources, which can perpetuate the learners' vulnerability.

In a study conducted by Pillay (2011), it was evidenced that the main concerns of OVC centred on their relationship with other learners and their teachers. They indicated that they were mocked by other learners, because of their poor socioeconomic circumstances. Some were laughed at when they did not have a proper school uniforms. Some teachers

did not understand the circumstances in which the learners live, and seemingly did not care enough to find out more about the learners' backgrounds. These challenged learners will have books that are not covered, because they lack simple items such as book covers. Teachers expect them to do homework, but these learners do not have the space or electricity to do the work at home. They do not have money to buy candles. Some teachers obviously do not take cognisance of the plight of OVC and instead, they compare them with other learners who have more resources.

Literature has elucidated the following challenges and risks that are experienced by OVC in schools. They face many problems in their educational environment and their actual learning or studying environment (Calis & Calis, 2015). There are children who are coming from troubled families, families at risk, child-headed homes, to name a few. Some children have experienced troubled family relationships, been exposed to bad influences/bad friends, suffer from low motivation and low self-esteem, while some are bullies or victims of bullying (Vergottini, 2019). This shows the complexity of the situation of vulnerable children.

5.3.3.1 Poor standards within the schools

Rural schools face a range of challenges that are unique to their environment, which compromise the quality of education that vulnerable children receive (Du Plessis, 2020). In the Maleboho East Circuit, there are schools that never achieved an average of 50% in matric pass rate over a period of ten years. One school recorded a 10% pass rate in 2018. Overall, rural schools do not have good teachers or well-qualified and motivated or committed teachers, they lack parental interests in education, and they have insufficient funds and a lack of resources that could enhance the quality of teaching (Openshaw, 2014, Du Plessis, 2020).

5.3.3.2 Lack of social supportive personnel

In these rural schools, there are no social support personnel, as indicated earlier. There are no social workers, psychologists or therapists. Teachers have to handle all children as if their experiences are the same. There is a lack of checks and balances on the part of the DBE to ensure that OVC receive psychosocial support (Hess, 2020; Kemp, 2014; Mwoma & Pillay, 2015).

The failure of the DBE to mainstream social support services in schools placed the education of poor and vulnerable children in a detrimental position. While affluent schools manage to employ supportive qualified personnel through the funding by parents, poor schools, and especially rural schools, continue to function without any internal or external social support. This contradicts what the Education White Paper 6 advocated regarding the removal of all barriers towards education (DE, 2001; Hess, 2020). The report on the implementation of the Education White Paper highlighted that managers and teachers are not equipped to address the learners' support needs (DBE, 2015). In that context, the policy remains non-functional and reduced to a piece of paper. This is a sad situation, as children need both emotional, psychological and social support if they are to realise their optimal educational outcomes.

The common evidence of vulnerability in schools is irregular school attendance by these learners and that they are late for school (Mboweni, 2014). OVC are consistently absent or bunk classes. Practical evidence points to the fact that they have to do a lot of chores such as bathing and preparing their smaller siblings for school or having to do a range of household chores before coming to school (Mboweni, 2014, Pillay, 2016).

In cases where their parents, siblings or caregivers are sick, they have to stay away from school, because they have to take them to the clinic. Sometimes, it is just truant behaviour as there is no adult supervision at home. Studies have found that frequent class absenteeism applies to most of them (Mwoma & Pillay, 2015; Mutiso & Mutie, 2018).

5.3.3.4 Poor educational opportunities

In schools, OVC face a myriad of challenges ranging from being teased about not having a uniform to stigma and discrimination, which inhibit their ability to perform at their best and achieve success in their education. Girls are at risk of becoming teenage mothers, while boys face the challenge of being involved in drug and alcohol abuse or drawn into gang activities (Toska, 2020, Laurenzi, Roberts, Cluver & Sherr, 2015). At home, many of the OVC must care for their elderly caregivers or their siblings (Pillay, 2016). They do not have enough time to concentrate on their academic work, which ultimately compromises their academic performance. They carry the psychosocial burden of caring for their family members, while they need to attend to their schoolwork. Practical evidence has shown that most of them end up failing their grades. Failure breaks their morale and ultimately leads them to drop out of school.

The challenges and risks that OVC face, have serious consequences and may increase the problems they will face later in life. A study conducted by Toska et al. (2015) confirmed that they are at a higher risk of impaired cognitive functioning and behavioural development in comparison with their counterparts whose circumstances are different. Which correlates with the earlier studies conducted by Cluver et al. (2012) and Tsiliso (2011), who established that they may experience long-term negative consequences, which may include low self-esteem, low levels of life skills, learning disabilities and disturbed social behaviour, among other problems. The challenges also cause a long-term impact on the cognitive, emotional, social and psychological functioning of the individual (Ameyaw-Akumfi, 2013; Blum et al., 2013). However, the researcher holds the view that this is not gloom and doom for all the children's future. In the notion of the SBTF, there are assets in these children's environment that can be tapped into to promote their resilience. A study conducted by Makhonza (2018) on the promotion of resilience found that resources such as sports and recreational facilities can be protective factors.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The chapter discussed the challenges faced by OVC at length. The chapter started by painting a picture of the extent of the problem of OVC in South Africa. The discussion identified that rural conditions increase the vulnerability of children. This was proven by the high figures of vulnerable children in Limpopo Province and the Eastern Cape, which are predominantly rural provinces. The chapter closed by addressing the challenges faced by OVC in their individual lives, in their homes as well as in their respective schools. These challenges are aggravated by the lack of social supportive personnel in schools and the poor standards in these schools, among the other problems. This chapter has provided evidence from the literature that the lack of infrastructure and resources in rural areas continues to disadvantage children in the democratic South Africa.

CHAPTER 6

THE RELEVANCE OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK IN RELATION TO OVC

"All children have the right to a name, food to eat and a decent place to live. All children should be looked after when they are sick and grow up with love, affection and security. Handicapped children have a right to a special treatment and education. All children have a right to free education and should be protected from neglect and exploitation. All children should never have to fear arrest and detention". Declaration of Children's Rights.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter discusses the role of school social work as a specialised field of social work in practice. The discussion starts by presenting a historical view of school social work, to provide a background of why school social work is a necessity in the environment where the challenges facing learners are growing. The researcher also provides an assessment of the state of social services delivery in schools which, in her view, is not satisfactory. The discussion continues to illustrate the different roles and functions the school social work can perform in the context of the school. The execution of these roles and functions can assist to ameliorate children's vulnerability and ensure that children are well cared for in schools. This caring environment can enhance their learning and remove most of the barriers they experience in schools and their homes. Moreover, school social work can create an opportunity for social workers who can collaborate with other professionals in dealing with issues facing children. Lastly, the researcher includes different models informing effective school social work in practice. These models intend to inform practitioners on the approach they can use to assist schools in executing their mandate.

6.2 THE HISTORICAL VIEW OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK

The profession of social work is primarily concerned with the promotion of social change, problem solving in human relationships, and empowerment and liberation of people to enhance their well-being (National Association of Social Work [NASW], 2016; Kemp, 2013; Kemp, 2014). Its historical origin is embedded in the need to prevent the onset of

social problems, protect the vulnerable and the weak in communities. It further intends to address and treat social problems in cases where problems have already started (Patel, 2015). The goal of all intervention efforts is to assess the person in their environment to empower so as to attain a person in environment fit.

School social work is a specialised field of practice intended to be practised in a school setting and devoted to school-going learners and their families (Pretorius, 2020: Reynecke, 2018). This specialised field is aimed at dealing with issues facing learners in schools, and especially OVC in this case, and the challenges they face. It differs from generic or clinical social work, as its focus is on enabling learners to make maximum use of the academic, developmental and social opportunities afforded to them in the school setting (Kasiram, 1993; Ntombela, 2004; Kemp, 2013; Kemp, 2014; Chigondo, 2019). Historically, this specialised field grew out of concern for vulnerable children who are also underprivileged. It came about as an effort to bridge the gap between the school, the home and the community in the care for children who may be experiencing distress (Chigondo, 2019). In summary, school social work was instituted to promote a culture of care, support, learning and developing human potential to cater for the needs of all learners. It also confirmed that learners have diverse needs apart from their educational needs.

In the global context, school social work has been intergrated in schools as early as 1906 in the United States of America [USA] (Constable, 2016). This positioned the US as a leading role-player in the development of school social work. In 1955, school social work was instituted as a specialised field in social work (Constable, 2016). This step was followed by other developed countries such as Canada, Sweden, Norway, Germany and Hong Kong (Kemp, 2014) also adopting the discipline. The main intention of intergrating social work in schools was to address the needs of learners, families, the school and the communities, with the specific goal of supporting the marginalised, the vulnerable and the disadvantaged (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2013; Openshaw, 2014). However the researcher would like to highlight that though the practice of school social work is incorporated in countries like the USA and UK] to name a few, not all schools

have done so. Some schools adopted school social work while others use the services of psychologists and school counsellors. This shows that even in the developed world school social work is not yet a uniform and standardised practice.

In the African context, Ghana and Nigeria have been leading in the intergration social work in schools (Constable, 2016). However, in other parts of Africa such as South Africa, social work services in schools are still lacking. Chigondo (2019) confirmed and has shown that in countries like Zimbabwe despite its critical necessity it is still an uncommon practice. Unlike mainstream teaching, which is basically meant to educate learners through the transmission of information and knowledge, social work is historically meant to bring about social change and support or protect the poor, the marginalised and the vulnerable (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013; Openshaw, 2014).Therefore, targeting vulnerable learners in schools remains the true mandate of school social work.

6.3 THE STATE OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa, the need for social work services in schools was highlighted in the early 1970s (Kemp, 2013). Social work academics such as Kasiram (1993), Ntombela (2004), Kemp (2013) and Kemp (2014) added their call in support of the need for this service to learners. Other NGOs, for example SAVF supported the call and continued to advocate for these services to be offered (Kasiram, 1993; Ntombela, 2004; Kemp, 2013; Kemp, 2014; Reynecke, 2018; Vergottini, 2019). This call was based on the concern for vulnerable children who were most often also underprivileged, marginalised and socially excluded. School social work has the potential of enabling learners to make maximum use of the academic, developmental and social opportunities afforded to them in the school setting. However, what literature provides as a rationale for social services delivery in schools seems to be mostly rhetoric. After the attainment of democracy in South Africa, several efforts were made to intergrate social work in schools. In 2008, the South African Council of Social Services Profession [SACSSP] instituted school social work as an area of specialisation. This was reinforced by the Social Work Indaba of 2015, which also advocated for the need

of collaborative partnerships with other stakeholders for improved social service delivery in schools (SACSSP, 2015). Despite these efforts, the country-wide implementation has remained a challenge, which is worsened by the challenging social conditions in South Africa (Reynecke, 2018; Vergottini, 2019).

The following table shows steps that had been undertaken in various provinces regarding the provision of social services to vulnerable children in schools. This presents a comparative provincial analysis of the availability of school social services.

Table 2: Comparative analysis of provincial state of school social services

Name of province	Number of social workers	Location
Western Cape	166	Provincial office (1) District office (79) Special school (65) SGB positions (21)
KwaZulu-Natal	14	Provincial office (1) District Office (12) School of Industry (1)
Free State	32	Provincial office (1) District Offices (7) Special Schools (15) Schools of Industry (4) SGB positions (5)
Gauteng	Unsure	District offices, special schools and SGB positions
Northern Cape	4	District offices (4)
Mpumalanga	4	District offices (4)
Eastern Cape	46	District offices (46)
Limpopo	180	One year contract as learner support agents
North West	**2**	District office (1) Special school (1)

Adapted from Vergottini (2019*)*

The table as depicted provides comparative analysis of the state of school social work on according to province. Looking at the Western Cape Province for example, numbers shows as if there is substantial progress but considering the fact most social workers are at district offices which is 79 in this respect. The problem with this scenario is that at the district level there are no learners to cater for. They only provide crisis intervention but cannot render day to day social services to learners. It is only in special schools where social workers are based in schools. The other 21 social workers are for private schools where they are hired by school governing bodies [SGBs]. In all public schools there are no social workers. This scenario is replicated in all other provinces where the only social workers available are located in the district offices. North West Province records only two social workers; one for the whole province while one is stationed in a special school.

In the Limpopo Province though, it appears as if there is a high number of school social workers, however in reality there is none. Appointees are not social workers but are appointed as learner support advisors on a temporary basis (Vergottini, 2019; Pretorius, 2020). They do not render social work services as such, but only act to provide emotional support for vulnerable learners, help them to access social services as well as keeping their records. Moreover, they are based at circuit offices with little contact to vulnerable learners.

Sadly put, there are no social services for vulnerable learners in schools and this paints a bleak picture worsened by an environment where the number of OVC and other vulnerable learners continues to grow. Kemp (2014) and Reynecke (2018) assert that school social services are necessary to ensure that learners' rights to quality education are fully realised. Despite these calls and many educational and social benefits that school social work can bring, there seems to be a lack of political will from the government or the specific relevant government departments to institute social work in schools (Du Plessis, 2020; Reynecke, 2018; Vergottini, 2020). This compromises the rights of these children to be able to access quality and comprehensive education, taking cognisance of their special needs, which the Constitution of South Africa of South Africa 1996 Act 108 advocates for.

6.4 THE CONNECTION OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK AND EDUCATION

Many research studies have raised concerns about the growing number of orphaned and vulnerable children in sub-Saharan Africa (Mwoma & Pillay, 2015; Tsheko, 2007; Wood & Goba, 2011). In South Africa, statistics classified most children as vulnerable. Many of these children are still in school. The large numbers of learners in school who are orphaned and vulnerable places an important focus on school social work for dealing with this massive societal challenge. In the ecosystem perspective, schools are not isolated from the community and families (Germain & Gitterman, 2008; Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2018). They exist in reciprocal relationships with each other. The quality of these relationships determines the type of experience children will have in schools and how they are capacitated to make optimal use of the learning environment.

Schools generally experience the escalation of behavioural problems such as bullying, violence, indiscipline, absenteeism and delinquent behaviour among learners, which highlights this critical need. In the view of the proponents of school social work, the discipline is critical towards the goal of assisting learners to realise their academic results as it provides a multi-disciplinary approach (Stadler, 2017; Chigondo, 2019). This can also help in tackling learners' bio-psychosocial problems and provides them with supportive services within and outside the school (Calis & Calis, 2015; Ntombela, 2004; Vergottini, 2019).

They further assert that the service can deal with the following issues affecting learners in schools:

- Home and family-related problems;
- Failure of children to comply with school requirements;
- Psychosocial problems, including fear, anxiety, depression and conduct disorder, among others;
- Chronic diseases, physical challenges and mental health problems (Calis & Calis, 2015; Kemp, 2013).

Chigondo (2019); Kemp (2014) and Ntombela (2011) added to the list of the many advantages that school social work can provide by enhancing the capacities of schools to increase their academic accomplishments and in this manner, bridging the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged schools in terms of academic performance. Underperforming learners can be helped to make them more functional. Reynecke (2018) asserts that conduct and behavioural problems can be dealt with in a school by using a multi-faceted approach. In the study`s context the school social worker is well positioned to coordinate with communities to make the school a better environment which will improve the experience of OVC in schools.

These assertions highlight that school social work has many advantages, which can benefit children, schools and communities. However, the challenge remains as long as there are no social services offered in the schools. In the absence of social services in schools, the assumption can be made that OVC remain unsupported, marginalised and excluded. This seriously impairs their opportunities to benefit fully from the offered education and limits their ability to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty that many learners are subjected to (De Lannoy et al., 2015; Murdoch, 2017). They are thus also deprived of their human rights to benefit from education as advocated in Education White Paper 6 (Du Plessis, 2013; Kemp, 2014).

Therefore, school social work is well positioned to bring children on board, who have psychological, social and emotional impairment, so that they can function better and will be able to perform on a par with other children. Kumar (2017) states that school social work is a pedagogical necessity, because the child is too complex to warrant that education should only happen through the teachers.

6.4.1 The roles and functions of school social work

The role of school social workers is to assist educators to be able to execute their work

in an optimal environment.

Therefore, the provision of social services is secondary to the primary mandate of the school. School social workers enhance the learning process of learners by enabling them to function and learn better in a conducive school environment (Kemp, 2013). This guides their practice at the micro level, where interventions are targeted towards individual learners, the mezzo level, where they are targeted at small groups such as peers, and the macro level, where their efforts are targeted at societies to produce change (Kemp, 2013; Reynecke, 2018). In their interaction with learners in the school environment they assume the following roles and functions as outlined by Chigondo (2019), Allen- Mears (2015).

- ***Direct counselling with individuals, groups and families:*** School social work in this role will include casework or counselling individual learners, parents and families, as well as groups.
- ***Advocacy:*** In this role, social workers are advocates for children and their families and ensure that children's rights are fully realised. They also act as advocates for parents to establish a relationship with the school. They can play the advocacy role in the implementation of inclusive education.
- ***Consultation:*** They can consult with other stakeholders who are role-players in education for the benefit of the learners.
- ***Community linkage:*** They link learners within the school with the community and other resources in the community. They can also play a role in the promotion of first parental involvement as well as community involvement in education.
- ***Interdisciplinary team coordination:*** School social workers form part of of interdisciplinary teams by providing information from a thorough assessment of learners. This usually includes information from collateral sources. As part of interdisciplinary teams, they can render services in the form of active participation, support for learners who experience barriers, consult with other stakeholders, share knowledge and skills, and develop specific programmes.
- ***Needs assessment:*** They play a role in assessment and interpretation of

identified needs as well as indicated problems experienced.

- ***Programme and policy development:*** School social workers can assist in the development of programmes and policies that affect learners. At the macro level, they facilitate change by aiming to influence policies that are for OVC children (lobbying function) and where there is an implementation gap; they can also help to fast-track the implementation process.

Apart from these roles and functions as outlined above school social workers are well equipped to deal with various challenges faced by children. Their training in social work gives them a unique set of problem solving skills to provide innovative solutions to complex problems (Chigondo, 2019). As such their intervention in the lives of OVC can bring a great contribution to these learners and mitigate those challenges to reduce poor academic performance. In the context of this study social workers can assist the school population in various ways by applying specific skills. Despite the OVC, schools have a wide variety of vulnerable children as discussed in Chapter 4. They range from teenage parents, deliquents, perpetrators and victims of bullying, multiple grade repeaters to name a few. So social workers can render both counselling and therapeutic services and help them to cope better in their difficult situations. For those that are child family heads the social worker can provide solution based therapy where the focus is to assist them to generate solutions compatible with their unique individual circumstances. In that way they will be helped to deviate from focusing on problems to solutions. On the other hand there are multiple grade repeaters who need task orientated therapy to empower them to manage their school work better.

When school social workers assume these roles as articulated above, learners especially the OVC will be provided with a caring environment, where their needs are identified and addressed. As these services are well coordinated; the implementation of inclusive education can be possible and any barriers experienced by these learners can be removed. This is to ensure that all children including the OVC have equal access to holistic education despite their challenging socio- economic background (Hess, 2020; Lauricella & MacAskill, 2015; Ntombela, 2011). School social workers can be of

assistance to educators when learners who are in need of social work services are screened, identified and assessed (Kemp, 2014; Vergottini, 2019). This will help to uphold the notion of full-service schools as advocated by White Paper 6 to change from theory to practice (Motitswe, 2014).

6.4.2 Models for school social work practice

Garthwait (2012) described a model as a blueprint for action, which describes what happens in practice in a general way (Garthwait, 2012). It further provides a useful structure for contacts with clients, yet a model is neither rigid nor absolute (Garthwait, 2012). Literature posits different models that are used in social work practice, which include crisis intervention, solution based models and task centred models, among others (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2018). There are also models that are relevant in the context of the schools to assist the intervention processes in the school setting.

Literature documents different practice models that can be used in schools (Allen-Meares, 2015). According to Kasiram (1993), practice models are useful, as they allow one to step back a while and view practice against a theoretical backdrop. Sosa, Cox, and Alvarex (2020) present the approach of viewing a model as a scheme or map for making sense out of the real world or the practice situation. Garthwait (2012) stated that models are of practical significance for diagnosing and planning for further intervention. Children are often victims of societal forces and structural forces that are outside their control. Thus, knowledge of different models can assist school social workers to have a point of departure when dealing with issues affecting learners.

The following table presents a brief overview of different models of practice, which is followed by a discussion of these models. These models are provided as a guideline to inform school social workers to envision which approaches will be most suitable by taking into consideration the school's context.

Table 3: Models of school social work practice

Model	Traditional Clinical	School Change	Community School	Social Interaction
Focus	Individual learners with social and emotional problems in the microsystem which the learner is linked	The school environment: dysfunctional school practices and incompetent policies are dealt with	Multi risks communities characterized by widespread poverty, community violence and prevalent alcohol and substance Abuse	Reciprocal influences of the acts of individuals andgroups; barriers to good communication between individuals and groups
Goals	Effective functioning of learners/ groups to encourage optimal use of the school experience	Alteration of dysfunctional school practices	Development of community understanding and support of the school; development of programmes to assist the disadvantaged learner and alleviation of conditions that perpetuate deprivation	Identification and removal of barriers to reciprocal interaction and development of mutual aid systems
Target system	Learners and their families	Learners, parents/ caregivers; teachers, support staff and	The community surrounding the school, the school	The interaction field

		SGB's	population and the school as an Institution	
Views of sources of difficulty	Learner psychosocial issues emotional difficulties; dysfunctional families and difficult parent- child relationships	Dysfunctional school practices	Poverty; disadvantage., deprivation and school personnel who lack understanding of the effects thereof	Dysfunctional relationships among the school, community and learners

Adapted from Kasiram, 1993

6.4.2.1 The traditional clinical model

The traditional clinical model focuses its interventions on the learner and their family, without producing any major disruption to formal school activities (Frey, Alvarez, Sabatino, & Lindsey, 2012; Kasiram, 1993). The practice interventions emanating from this model intend to support learners who have social and emotional difficulties (Frey et al., 2012).

In the view of the researcher; the model can be effective, as long as the source of the problems lies within the child and interventions are aimed at improving the functioning of the individual and not the institution, which may be the family or the school. Social practice emanating from this model may choose to work with learners in groups of learners with similar problems (Constable, 2016; Openshaw, 2014). For example, in the case of OVC, the school practitioner may classify them in their categories, for example, multi grade repeaters can be grouped together and a social intervention developed for this category. This may result in identifying problem clusters, which may point to the need for a fresh

approach with a broader focus (Allen-Meares, 2015; Kasiram, 1993).

However, this model has been criticised as putting too much emphasis on the learners' deficiencies, which this study intended to move away from. A survey conducted by Kelly, Frey, Thompson, and Klemp (2015) concludes that focusing on the deficits of individuals misdirects change efforts and may not respond to the real challenges. Allen-Meares (2015) support the sentiment and cite that it puts too much focus on the individual as if deficits occur mainly within the individual. Branson (2019) states that the model does not consider the impact other systems have on the life of learners. Based on these sentiments, the researcher arrived at the conclusion that the model presents a challenge if used in isolation, as it disregards structural factors such as poverty and other problems in the family or society, which contribute to learners' vulnerability. Other factors that are at play in the family, the school and the communities are not taken into consideration, and may need the model to be integrated with other models.

6.4.2.2 School change model

The model's focus is the school as an institution needs to change the environment and conditions of the school (Kasiram, 1993; Allen-Meares, 2015; Kelly et al., 2015). There tend to be several dysfunctional school practices that can include a shortage of teachers and social support personnel, incompetent policies, or the inability to implement some policies (Tancred, Paparini, & Melendez-Torres, 2018). Social practices emanating from this model are carried out at the meso level, where the intention is to change the school environment and how it functions. This is an approach to school-wide reform that aims to improve the school's performance as well as all the learners' achievement and outcome by creating a coherent and focused school-wide effort (Tancred et al., 2018).

Alderson (1972) in Kasiram (1993) identified four key elements that educators and school social workers can collaboratively use to bring about positive change in teaching and learning at a school.

- Setting and sharing goals;

- Having indicators that measure success;

- Seeking assistance by capable others;

- Leadership that supports.

In view of the model, schools as community social centres strive to address the needs of a community beyond the traditional role of schools (Branson, 2019; Samberg & Sheeran, 2000; Valli, Stefanski, & Jacobson, 2013). Its proponents argue that schools should be the centre of a community, providing beneficial social services and serving as a place for intra-community dialogue (Branson, 2019; Nicely, 2016). Kasiram (1993), Allen-Meares (2015) and Valli et al. (2013), in support of the argument, assert that it holds the promise for disadvantaged and deprived children to be better taken care of, and ensures that their ignored needs are respected. Regarding the use of this model, the researcher posited that the model provides many opportunities to address the learners' needs, and especially of those who are vulnerable, stigmatised in schools and academically excluded.

In the context of the growing number of OVC in schools and the challenges that confront them, the proponents of the model emphasise that it provides benefits that can enhance the social work practice in schools (Welsh, 2000). Kumar (2017) states; schools are becoming the main public institutions for social development. This calls for schools to change from being traditional centres that focus solely on the educational performance of their learners, while they disregard other factors that either directly or indirectly affect the learners' performance. This requires a whole new approach to schooling in South Africa, which has been already advocated by Education White Paper 6. However, the model has been criticised for having a too narrow focus on the school as a source of dysfunction, while it disregards other factors occurring on the macro level (Allen-Meares, 2015; Welsh, 2000). Schools have to cope with issues such as insufficient funding and insufficient manpower, which is not within the school's power or ability to change; especially the poor schools that cannot generate funds to hire extra staff.

6.4.2.3 Community school model

The community school model concept is grounded in the principle that all learners, families and communities benefit from strong connections between the educational and local resources, support structures and people (Kasiram, 1993; Valli et al., 2013). The community school model focuses on the relationship the school has with its community, and especially the deprived and disadvantaged communities (Samberg & Sheeran, 2000).

The community school model represents a place-based strategy, in which schools partner with community agencies and allocate resources to provide an integrated focus on academics, healthcare and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement (Valli et al., 2013; Samberg, Sheeran, & Nicely, 2016). This model demonstrated its potential to be a dynamic tool to address the issues and problems facing the individual communities (Samberg & Sheeran, 2000).

Though the model provides many benefits to schools, especially those that are in multi-risks communities, it is heavily criticised for being too non-directive to offer any real guidance to the practitioner (Nicely, 2016; Valli et al., 2013). Van Breda and Sekudu (2018) add that its emphasis on intervening at the level of all relationships may be too vague and unhelpful (Van Breda & Sekudu, 2018). In summary, the researcher was of the view that following only one model may not respond to the total needs of learners, but that a combination of all the models might be necessary to respond to the learners' needs.

6.5 CONCLUSION

The chapter discussed school social work and its relevance to the problem of OVC in schools. The discussion highlighted school social work as a critical service for marginalised groups in schools, especially for vulnerable children. The chapter provided the history of social work and gave an overview of school social work in South Africa. The

chapter discussed the role and the functions of school social work in relation to the vulnerability of learners. The last section discussed the different models of practice for school social work, which provided a map or scheme to guide school social work. From the discussion, it was evident that OVC and the necessity of school social services are closely intertwined. School social work remains a critical service to mitigate the impact of learners' vulnerability. The different models of practice can inform practitioners on how to deal with the challenge of vulnerable children.

CHAPTER 7

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

"He who does not know one thing, knows another". African Proverb

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research methodology related to this study. In a scientific study, methodology refers to the application of specific procedures used to systematically solve a research problem (Chilisa, Major & Khudu- Peterson (2017). Babbie and Mouton (2012) asserted that it is the specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process and analyse information about a topic. In this study, the topic was the challenges that OVC face in the schools of the Maleboho East Circuit. The methodology selected for this study was intended to explore in depth these challenges in order to describe them. Therefore, the procedures applied were to gather information about the challenges of OVC. Jansen and Warren (2020) refer to it "as the how of any given piece of research". In their view, it is the way a researcher systematically designs a study to ensure valid and reliable results that address the research aims and objectives. Simply put, the research methodology enabled the researcher to answer the research questions aimed at achieving the study's aims and objectives.

The following were the focus in this chapter: the research paradigm, research approach, research methods, research design, population, sampling techniques and sample, data collection and data analysis procedures; quality criteria and ethical considerations.

7.2 RESEARCH PARADIGMS

Research methodology resides in paradigms that, according to Chilisa and Kawulich (2012) are a way of looking at and understanding the world. De Vos, Schultze, and Patel (2021) postulate all scientific research is conducted within a specific paradigm. In their

view, it is important for the researchers to decide within which paradigm they will be working with. The importance of the research paradigm is to provide a step by step guide about how the research proceeded and how the researcher managed to answer the research question or attained the research objectives (Babbie, 2016; Niewenhuis & Smit, 2012).

Scientific inquiry is aligned to broad paradigms, which are positivism and interpretivism. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) view it as a particular way of thinking that is shared by a community of scientists in solving problems in their field. Ellington (2019) expands on the subject and states that paradigm represents the commitments, beliefs, values, methods, outlooks and so forth, across a discipline. Chilisa and Kawulich (2012) summed it up as a way of describing a world view that was informed by philosophical assumptions about the nature of social reality, which is what one believes about the nature of reality. For this study's purpose, the researcher selected the interpretive paradigm.

7.2.1 Interpretive paradigm

The interpretive paradigm holds the belief that it is important to look at the unit of investigation as individuals with feelings, thoughts and will (Chilisa et al., 2017). Therefore, the purpose of investigation in this study was seeking to understand the world of human experience (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). Ontologically, it held the subjective epistemology that accepts multiple meanings about phenomena (Sefotho, 2016). Therefore, in its position, reality is not objectively determined but socially constructed (Sefotho, 2016). To understand the individuals being researched, the researcher must be in their social contexts. This is usually done by means of observing and interviewing the individuals in their natural environment; and thus, the researcher and the object being researched cannot be separated.

In order to understand individual behaviour, one must first understand their belief and value systems that influence their particular behaviour (Neumann, 2014). The Bronfenbrenner ecosystem perspective postulated that individuals and their natural contexts cannot be separated (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017).

In the ontology of the interpretive paradigm, social reality is influenced by multiple perspectives (Cohen et al., 2017). This implies that people experience and interpret occurrences in their lives differently and in order to "understand how people construct meaning with multiplicity, one has to enter their world and observe it from the inside through direct experiences of people" (Maree, 2016). In Maree's argument, there are assumptions that anchor the interpretive paradigm as outlined below:

- Reality is not objectively determined by a social construct.
- Human life can only be understood and observed from an external reality.
- The human mind is the purpose source of meaning.
- Human behaviour is affected by knowledge and the social world.
- The social world does not exist independently of human knowledge.

7.2.1.1 Epistemological issues related to the study

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012). Epistemologists study the nature, origin and the scope of knowledge, the epistemic justification, the rationality of the objectives, and various related issues. Ellington (2019) contends that epistemology is the study of the debates about ways in which people know things and have knowledge. He further classifies two categories of epistemology, which are empiricists and rationalists. In the empiricists' argument, all knowledge arises through a sense of perception, while rationalists believe knowledge arises through reason alone (Grover, 2017).

Epistemology looks at how one knows reality, the method of knowing and the nature of reality (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012). In addition, it assumes the relationship between the knower and the known (Ellington, 2019). For the purpose of this study, the researcher adopted the interpretive epistemology, as the investigation was done on human subjects. In the opinion of the researcher, adopting a scientific approach such as positivism, which disconnects the researcher from the subjects of investigation, was found to be unsuitable to achieving the objectives of the study. The in-depth knowledge and experience gathered from participants was crucial in this study.

In the argument of interpretivism, knowledge is personal, subjective and unique (Babbie & Mouton, 2012). Furthermore, the world is made up of people with their own assumptions, intentions, attitudes, beliefs, values and experiences (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011; Bless Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013). The implication was that the researcher needed to understand the meanings participants gave to their actions. It was therefore necessary for the researcher to enter their world to gain an understanding of their individual interpretation of the world around them. It was crucial to identify and interpret their interaction and interpretation.

In social inquiry, knowledge is subjective, and therefore produces subjective relationships between elements of inquiry (Maree, 2016). It is generated through observations and learnings made subjectively by a human observer. This explains the suitability of this paradigm to unpacking life experiences of OVC, as they face challenges subjectively in the school context. The methodological design and data gathering instruments such as interviews and focus group discussions within the PAR approach gave the researcher an opportunity to interact with OVC and principals to explore and describe the challenges OVC face in schools.

7.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Scientific research is mainly qualitative or quantitative. While the quantitative approach is deeply rooted in positivism, qualitative research is rooted in interpretivism. The study

followed a qualitative approach, which argues that all human beings are engaged in the process of making sense of their life worlds. They are constantly interpreting, creating, and giving meaning to define, justify and rationalise their actions (Babbie, 2016; Macdonald, 2012). Social science research should take into cognisance that people are continuously constructing, developing and changing the everyday interpretations of their world (Bless, Higson- Smith & Sithole, 2013).

The approach enabled the researcher to gain a first-hand, holistic understanding of the phenomena of interest by means of a flexible strategy of problem formulation and data collection, shaped as the investigation proceeded (Khupe & Keane, 2017). It allowed the use of a variety of methods to acquire an in-depth knowledge of how the persons involved construct their social world (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013). It is a more flexible approach, as more data is gained and the research questions and data collection methods may be shifted accordingly. Lastly, data analysis can be done throughout out the whole research process.

The ecosystem postulates the exchange principle and reciprocal relationships in the interaction process between the child and their environment. This means that challenges are not limited to one context only. Whatever the child experiences in one context, eventually has an impact on their experiences in another context. While the present study was aligned to the qualitative approach, the researcher opted for participant action research (PAR). A PAR is a qualitative approach that has a participatory element and offers the researcher an opportunity to collectively involve all role players in the research process (Strydom, 2021a; Sendall, McCosker, Brodie, & Hill, 2018).

Macdonald (2012) defined PAR "as a systematic collection and analysis of data for the purpose of taking action and making change by generating knowledge". Pain, Whitman, and Milledge (2010) and Scheinder (2012) saw it as a collaborative research process, where education and action are used to gather information to be used for change on social or environmental issues. PAR is also regarded as an approach that is relevant to grassroots development interventions and encounters, especially in underprivileged rural

populations (Bagele, 2012). The PAR method is regarded as being more responsive to the needs and opinions of local people. Its emphasis on the bottom-up approach is believed to be an alternative to approaches that are technocratic and top-down. It is a reflective and cyclical process.

However, PAR is criticised for lacking detail as to how it actually works in practice or what components are necessary to justify a claim that PAR was implemented despite its many advantages (Babbie, 2016). To add to its problems is the fact that it is practised in an increasingly diverse number of fields and can come in a variety of forms (Babbie & Mouton, 2012; Strydom, 2021a). However, despite these highlighted shortfalls, the PAR status and application continues to rise and attracted the researcher to adopt this approach (Strydom, 2021a). The researcher acknowledges that no research approach is without limitations. To counteract these limitations the researcher detailed all the processes to be followed during the research process; used sampling methods to draw a sample and lastly, aplied data collection methods and tools to prove that indeed PAR was used.

7.3.1 Rationale behind selection of PAR

In this study, the researcher selected the PAR approach as she was of the view that it provided an opportunity to follow a bottom-up, person-centred process, where participants had the opportunity to identify and define the challenges in their environment and how they are affected (Macdonald, 2012; Sendall et al., 2018; Strydom, 2021a). There is evidence from the literature that OVC are often voiceless and internalise their feelings; therefore, the PAR method afforded them the opportunity to participate fully during all stages of the research process. When they tell their experiences and stories they got the opportunity to verbalise their feelings and were then empowered in the process,

The approach aligned well with the ecosystem and strengths-based perspective, as the focus was on the experiences of the child, the meaning and constructs they attach to

those experiences, and it examined the relationship between the child and their environment. In addition, it enabled the researcher to tap into the strengths and resources in the same environment, which provided the information necessary to promote the resilience of children.

PAR afforded the researcher an opportunity to conduct an in-depth investigation by using methods such as interviews, group discussions as well as observation. This was helpful in this study, as the focus was on the OVC, their challenges, and the inherent strengths and resources of these learners and their environment. Second, the researcher had the opportunity to enter into the life- world of participants where she also was a learner. This produced change as the participnats no longer saw themselves as victims of their situation, but were now co- researchers and while the researcher became a co-participant. It is the reason why the approach is highly valued in studies where the intention is to implement change in a particular community, neighbourhood, school or organisation, using it as a point of departure (Chilisa, 2012; Schneider, 2012).

PAR seeks the collaboration by all participants, who are often engaged in socio-political changes (Healy, 2014; Barbera, 2008). Though PAR is basically a qualitative approach, it also allows ordinary people to collaborate in partnerships during the whole research process, while it defines their problems and seeks to effect changes to their problems.This liberated research from the conventional prescriptive methods, which was important for this study's purposes (Macdonald, 2012; Granosik, 2018), because its focus was on the OVC, who are mostly a voiceless, marginalized and stigmatised group in society. It also moved social inquiry away from a linear and effect process to a participatory framework that considered the contexts of people's lives (Schwartz-Shea, 2011). This was a cyclic process of research, reflection and action, which meant that the data collection process was followed by reflection. This led to further inquiry and action for change (Granosik, 2018).

7.3.2 Epistemological and methodological principles underpinning PAR

Literature cites several principles underpinning PAR as a research approach. Babbie and Mouton (2012), Denzin and Lincoln (2017), Healy (2001), and Schneider (2012) highlighted the following principles to enhance the conceptual knowledge of PAR practitioners. For this study, three principles were important and are outlined below:

(a)The researcher assumes the role of a change agent

PAR is commonly employed when working with groups of people who belong to the lower social classes and are marginalised. Such communities are usually poor, underprivileged or socially and economically exploited or oppressed (Macdonald, 2012; Sendall et al., 2018). On the other hand, most research or development projects are carried out by well educated people or people coming from advantaged groups or even professionals (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013). So the outcome may be compromised, especially when it is carried out by a researcher coming out of the community. In this case, PAR was initiated to address such problems. The voiceless peripheral position of OVC in society was an important condition that PAR aimed to address. In addition their perceived lack of power or disempowered status in society was also emphasized as participants form part of grassroots groups that are often viewed as underdeveloped and backward. This is relevant to the rural African contexts of this study. Even though the process in this case was to collect data, it was also to to produce change in the OVC by giving them an opportunity to look beyond their circumstances and difficulties and to their inner strengths and opportunities in their environment.

(b)The role of participation

PAR puts a lot of emphasis on participation or collaboration between the participants and the researcher, who is integrated fully and actively in the whole research process from outset and throughout all the phases (Granosik, 2018; Sendall et al., 2018). In this regard, participation meant bringing together diverse participants to work together on problems and solutions (Pain et al., 2010). It should be noted that participation in PAR was not a linear process in which phases could be demarcated consecutively. It was a cyclical

involving action and reflection as shown already, which involved a learning process for everyone involved. In the process of the research, the disempowered OVC in this case were empowered by being given a platform where they can talk about their experiences, define their problems and solutions; in that way to creating their own transformation. PAR acknowledged that the problem originated in the community itself and has to be defined, analysed and solved by the community itself. The OVC knew their challenges and what solutions were relevant to their contexts.

(c)PAR becomes a democratic process, allowing for the participation of all people

The process makes it equitable and liberating for all people involved, and thereby discards the oppressive and debilitating conditions (Macdonald, 2012; Barbera, 2008). In the process, people gain freedom and are enabled to express their full human potential. In this study the process provided OVC with the ability to create a greater awareness in individuals of their own resources that they can mobilise for their own self-reliant development. This connected well with the SBTF, as the process led people to self-discovery.

7.4 RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods aim to find solutions to research problems. These methods are planned, scientific and value-neutral (Niewenhuis, 2016; Maree, 2016). The function of research methods is to provide the collection of relevant information with minimal expenditure of effort, time and money (Niewenhuis, 2016; Flick, 2011). In the study`s context research methods helped the researcher to collect samples and data to find a solution to the problems which were the challenges that OVC faced in their schools. Second, they informed how the objectives of the research study were to be achieved, the methods of data collection to be adopted, the source of data or information, the tools for data collection and the data analysis.

Research methods come in these typologies: exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, constructive and empirical research. For this study's relevance, only two forms were

considered in more detail.

7.4.1 Exploratory research

Exploratory research is a type of research adopted for a problem that has not been clearly studied or defined (Stebbins, 2011). It helps researchers to determine the best research design, data collection method and election of subjects. In the notion of Babbie (2016), exploratory research is used when problems are in a preliminary stage and researchers try to gain familiarity with an existing phenomenon and wish to acquire new insights into it to define a more precise problem statement. The author adds that it is used when a topic or issue is new, and data is difficult to collect. It is flexible and can address questions of all types, which include the "what, where, when, why and how" (Stebbins, 2011). In this study, the researcher was interested in understanding the challenges that OVC face in schools. Therefore, the researcher opted for this type of research to explore the challenges as they had not been clearly defined, especially in this context.

7.4.2 Descriptive research

Descriptive research is usually aligned to quantitative research, where numbers are used in the description of information (Fluet, 2021). Many researchers used descriptive research successfully in qualitative studies, as it allows one to employ observations, case studies as well as focus groups when gathering data. Descriptive research is almost similar to exploratory research, but differs in terms of the goals to be achieved (Nassaji, 2015). The goal of descriptive research is more concerned with the "what" rather than the "why or how" (Nassaji, 2015). The researcher adopted this type of research method, as it enabled her to observe and describe the OVC's behaviour without investigating the relation between specific variables of cause and effect.

7.5 RESEARCH DESIGNS

Research needs a plan or design of how one is going to execute it. The plan is a blueprint that is required for its effective and efficient execution (Maree, 2016; Flick, 2018).

Research design forms the foundation of the entire research process, as it addresses the planning of a scientific inquiry and also helps the researcher to conduct this work easily and in a systematic manner (Ogletree & Kawulich, 2012).

The appropriate research design helps the researcher shape the strategy to derive at information or data from participants (Ngulube & Ngulube, 2015; Scholtz, 2021). In addition it assists the researcher to achieve the aims and objectives of the research and guides the data collection process. For the purpose of the study, the researcher opted for a case study research within the exploratory-descriptive designs because this type of research are usually field studies done in the natural settings of participants. In that setting the researcher has little control over the variables which is important in a PAR study like this one. Literature posited different types of case studies, which are discussed below:

7.5.1 Case study research

A case study provides a detailed examination of the actual experiences of participants in the real life that identify and describe their specific characteristics (Goundar, 2012). Instead of gathering large volumes of data to identify patterns across time and location, case studies gather detailed data to identify the characteristics of a narrowly defined participants. Case studies often focus on unusual or interesting cases that challenge assumptions, add complexity or reveal something new about a research problem, rather than aiming to describe generalisable facts (McCombes, 2015).

Yin (2004) defined a case study research method as empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. Crowe (2011) later postulated it as a research approach that is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context. Rashid, Rashid, Warraich, & Sameen (2019) cite it as an appropriate research design when one aims to gain concrete, contextual, in-depth knowledge about a specific real-world subject.

When analysing the definitions as given by different authors, the researcher arrived at the conclusion, which motivated her choice of this design to achieve the goal of the study.

- A case study takes place in the natural settings of participants which in case was their where they spent their days and their challenges are experienced. This allowed no natural disturbance to the participants which could have affected the credibility of the data derived. The researcher obtained information by practical observations, dialogues and informal conversations in their contexts.
- Second, it provided for an opportunity to conduct an in-depth investigation. When the researcher was of the view that the participant had not said enough, she used other methods such as probing and commenting to facilitate the participants to elaborate.

7.5.2 Rationale for choosing the case study method

In the view of the researcher, case study research was the most appropriate design to use for the study, as it was conducted in the small geographical area of the Maleboho East Circuit. Also, the participants in the investigation did not comprise a large population. Moreover, this design allowed the researcher to explore and understand complex issues such as vulnerability of children and the challenges they are facing (Rashid et al., 2019; Zainal, 2007). This was prominent, especially in the context where community issues such as the problem of the rising numbers of OVC and the resulting problems for them were to be addressed. In summary, the case study provided the researcher with an opportunity for a holistic approach and in-depth investigation of the problem in question.

However, the researcher did not ignore the fact that the design is widely criticised for lacking rigour, which is a way of establishing trust or confidence in the findings of a research study. Yin (2014) cites in support of the view that too many times, the researcher may be sloppy and allow biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions. Another weakness in their view is the use of the small number of

participants, which provides a very small base for scientific generalisation. Lastly, it takes long, is difficult to conduct and generates a massive amount of documentation that needs to be managed and organised well to minimise problems. Despite its identified weaknesses, the researcher was still of the opinion that the case study approach remained the only relevant research method to generate data needed for this study because of these benefits it provides.

- The study was conducted within the context in which the phenomena take place. This contributed positively to the authenticity of the data, as the researcher had other means of verifying the data through observation to eliminate bias. There was no major disturbance in the life of participants while the process took place in their natural contexts.
- Data was obtained in their real-life environment, which helped in the explanation of the complexities of real-life situations. This was instrumental in this case, as vulnerability is difficult to conceptualise, as already discussed.
- It helped to explore the "what and how" of a phenomenon, which in this case was the vulnerability of children.
- A case study research design within PAR provided the researcher with a strong combination of approaches to collaborate with participants and enable them to share their views on the challenges they face as OVC.
- It gave an opportunity to delve deeper into the real-life world of these participants (Yin, 2014).

7.5.3 Types of case studies research design

Literature revealed different types of case study research as well as several types of participants (Crowe, 2011; Yin, 2014; Zainal, 2007). The discussion of each type is elaborated upon below:

7.5.3 1 Intrinsic case study

In an intrinsic case study, the researcher examines a case for its own sake. A person, a specific group, occupation or department or organisation may be investigated for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the individual case, where the case is of its primary interest. Its main purpose is not to understand a broad social issue, but merely to describe the case being studied (Crowe, 2012; Fouché, 2021). It is done commonly, when the purpose is to want to know more about a particular individual, group, event or organisation, which means the specific case is dominant.

7.5.3.2 Instrumental case study

The instrumental case study is applied when the purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding of a social issue (Yin, 2014). An instrumental case study's primary goal is to better understand a theoretical question or problem. When utilised, it enhances the understanding of a particular issue being examined. The case is of secondary importance, but it allows one to gain a greater insight into the theoretical explanation that underpins the issue (Fouché, 2021; Yin, 2014). Therefore, the case becomes a better vehicle to better understand the issue (Fouché, 2021; Yin, 2014; Zainal, 2007).

The researcher selected a small group of subjects to examine a case to provide insight into a particular issue. For the purpose of this study, the instrumental case study was adopted to gain a better understanding of the challenges that OVC face and deep insight into the issue of their vulnerability. This helped to generate an appropriate response to this social issue.

7.5.3.3 Collective case study

In a collective case study, the researcher is interested in a group of cases to draw comparisons between cases and concepts, so that theories can be extended and validated (Yin 2014; Zainal, 2007). In the process, the researcher coordinates data from different sources, which may be different departments, a hospital or university.

A collective case study is set to augment the instrumental case study, but it also attempts to address an issue, while also adding to the literature base that helps researchers better conceptualise a theory (Baxter & Jack, 2010). Grima- Farell (2017) expand the parameters of collective study and suggests that in a collective study, the one issue of concern is again selected, but the researcher selects multiple cases to illustrate the issue. In relation to the study the researcher has chosen participnats from two schools to study this phenomenon in question which is the challenges that OVC face.

7.5.4 Categories of case study

Case studies are classified in different categories. Yin (2014) and Zainal (2007) noted three categories that are exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. McDonough and McDonough (2014) add other categories, which are interpretive and evaluative case studies. For this study's relevance, only two categories were expatiated, which was exploratory and descriptive case studies.

7.5.4.1 Exploratory case study

An exploratory case study investigates distinct phenomena characterised by a lack of detailed preliminary research (Baxter & Jack, 2010), and any phenomena in the data that serve as a point of interest to the research. Such study aims to find answers to the questions of what or who and is often accompanied by data collection methods that include interviews, questionnaires and experiments (Baxter & Jack, 2010). Exploratory case study designs should be applied when the goal of the study is to understand how a phenomenon takes place. Concerning the present study, the researcher intended to explore the challenges that OVC face in schools, and to investigate the factors that contribute to children's vulnerability, thus, she adopted the exploratory case study method was more appropriate.

7.5.4.2 Descriptive case study

A descriptive case study is used to analyse certain sequences of events that happened

sometimes in the past (Hill, 2017). A descriptive case study attempts to present a complete description of a phenomenon within its context (Hill, 2017). It focuses on one event in isolation, with no attempt or presupposition to generalise the results to other situations (Yin, 2014).

A descriptive case study is set to describe the natural phenomenon that occurs within the data in question. The goal set by the researcher is to describe data as it occurs. McDonough and McDonough (2014) suggest that descriptive case studies may be presented in a narrative form. The challenge of a descriptive study is that the researcher must start with a descriptive theory to support the description of a phenomenon or story. If this fails, there is a possibility that the description lacks rigour and that problems may occur during the project.

7.6 DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

The study was conducted in the Maleboho East Circuit, which is situated in the Capricorn North District of the Limpopo Province. The Maleboho East Circuit is under the jurisdiction of the Blouberg Local Municipality in the Capricorn District. The following map shows the location of the study area in the Blouberg Municipality, with the location of the circuit within the Municipality.
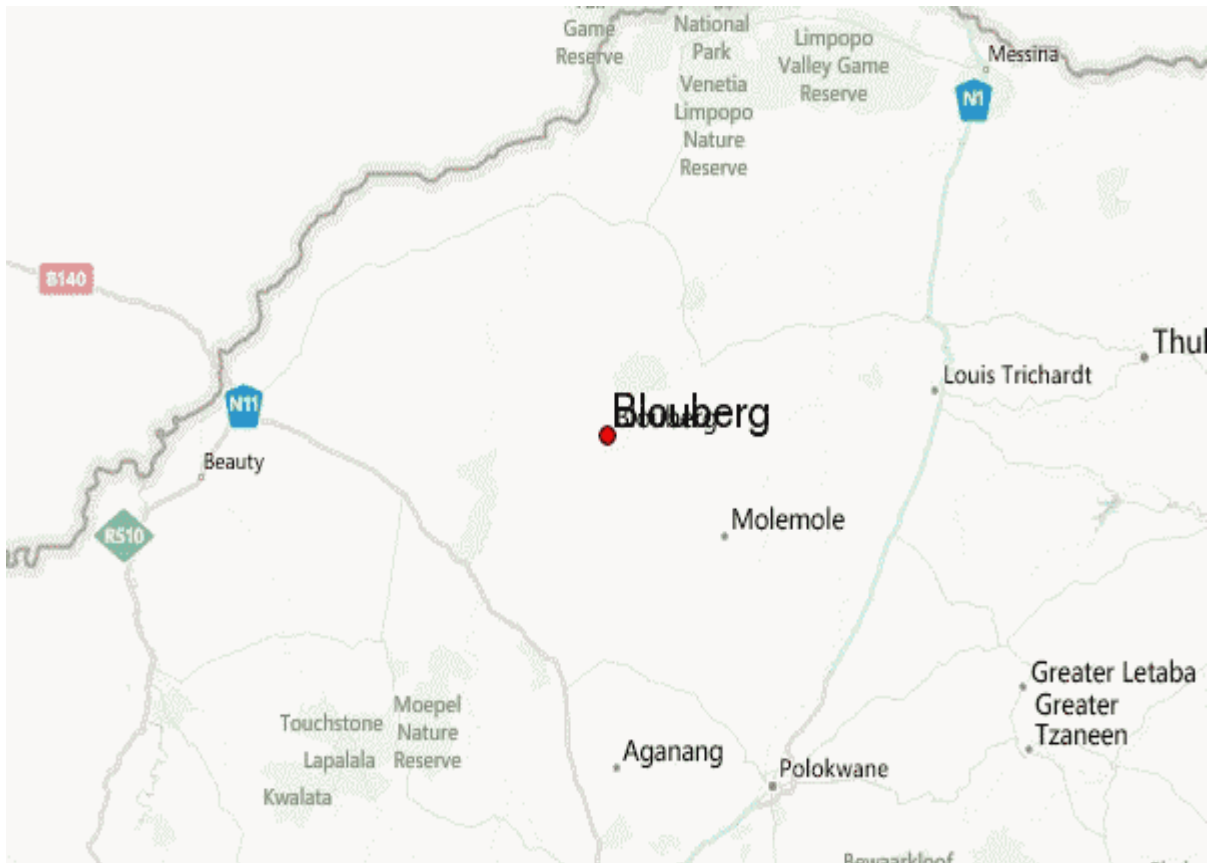
Figure 8: A map of the Blouberg Municipality, showing where the Maleboho East Circuit is located.

Extracted from www.googlemaps.co.za

Many households in this municipality survive on social security (Blouberg Municipality IDP, 2020-2021). The Maleboho East Circuit is situated on the eastern side of the Municipality. It has about nine secondary schools. Over a period of five years, these schools achieved an average performance of 55% in their matric results. The schools are Malusi, Mankgakgatla, Maphutha, Marumofase, Matswake, Ralekwalana, Ramatema, Raphatlha and Tema. One school was closed because of its chronic underperformance, which led to parents moving their children to other neighbouring schools. Two schools

have recorded a continuous underperformance over the period of five years, while others's results were fluctuating. For the purpose of this study, only two secondary schools were selected, because they record a higher number of OVC and an underperformance spanning the continuous period of five years.

7.7 TARGETED POPULATION

Sefotho (2016) defines a population as a set of entities in which all the measurements of interest to the researcher are represented. Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013) refer to the population as a set of elements that the research focuses upon and to which obtained results should be generalised. Banerjee and Chaudhary (2010) added that a population was an entire group of persons or elements that have at least one thing in common. Summing up, the population is the total number of persons in which the research is interested.

This study was focused on the investigation of the challenges that OVC face in schools. Therefore, the population referred to all OVC in the two sampled schools who fitted in the category of vulnerable children, as discussed previously. However, the researcher chose to focus on the Grade 10 and 11 OVC, based on the assumption that they had been in school for a longer period, could therefore relate their stories better and respond better to interview questions. In addition, the researcher would not have to deal with some ethical issues related to studies with young children. However, the total number of OVC in these two schools was difficult to demarcate because of the difficulty in conceptualising vulnerability as well as the large number of specific OVC categories.

7.8 SAMPLING METHOD AND SAMPLE SIZE

A study of the entire population is seldom possible for reasons of time, access and cost. Sampling is the use of a subset of the population to represent the whole population, and a process of selecting observations (Turner, 2020). Taherdoost (2016) describes it as selecting any portion of a population or universe as being representative of that population or universe. Chiromo (2006) defined a sample as a group or subset of the population

selected from the whole population. Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013) refer to it as a subset of the whole population that is selected to be investigated by a researcher and whose characteristics are generalised to the entire population. The use of a sample is an effort to understand the population in which the researcher is interested. However, Pollock (2011) cautionioned on the use of a sample and stated that it is not an end in itself, but rather a means of helping one to explain some facet of the population. The researcher then applied conventional sampling to interview the principals of the two schools, who supplied the researcher with information of learners who fitted the selection criteria and were potential participants for the research process (Strydom, 2021b). The choice was influenced first by the fact that principals were easier to contact, as they are the gateway for entry into every school, and second, because there was no selection criterion for participation when using this sampling method (Babbie, 2016). However, the principals did not participate in the whole research process but acted as gates to gain access to their schools and helped the researcher to get information on the number of OVC in their schools and how are they being assisted at school level.

Research literature cites two broader categories of sampling methods: probability sampling, which is based solely on randomisation; and non-probability sampling, which is without conducted randomisation (Strydom, 2021b). In this study, the researcher employed the non-probability sampling method, which is defined as the sampling technique where the probability of any member being selected for a sample cannot be calculated (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013). Its core characteristic is that samples are selected based on the judgement of the researcher. It has the advantage of being faster and more cost-effective, because the sample is usually known to the researcher (Strydom, 2021b). The selected participants tend to be those who respond quickly as they have a high motivation level to participate.

The researcher selected both the purposive to select two schools and focus group participants. The conventional sampling techniques was used for two principals. This was done out of convenience as principals were the first people one would talk to when entering at a school.

The reasearcher employed the purposive sampling method, which was entirely based on the researcher's judgement to select two secondary schools from the same community, which are in proximity of each other as already shown (Strydom, 2021b). The inclusion criteria for selecting the schools were as follows:

- Schools that have the highest number of OVC;
- Schools located in multi-risk communities, as discussed in the study;
- Schools with learners who are exposed to high-risk conditions;
- Schools that have seen underperformance of matric results for a consecutive period of five years.

The population targeted for the study comprised all Grade 10 and 11 learners in the Matswake and Maphutha Secondary schools in the Maleboho East Circuit, situated in the Capricorn North District, Limpopo Province. The researcher used purposive sampling to select 13 learner participants. The selection criteria for learner participants were:

- Learners who fitted into the OVC category;
- Learners in Grade 10 and Grade 11;
- Learners who were willing to participate in the study.

Th researcher highlights that in PAR sampling is not a prerequisite however in this case she opted to use a sample to counter some limitations of PAR as shown already and also due to the following reasons:

- Maleboho East Circuit has 10 secondary schools of which has nearly similar rural characteristics, as she needed develop criteria to include some while exluding some as not all schools can be studied.
- Secondly, in the selected schools there is a considerable number of OVC. And they could not all be included so she needed to have a sample of participants with most characteristics required for the study.

7.9 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring data in a systematic manner that helps to answer the stated research questions and evaluate the outcomes (Rubin & Babbie, 2013). In the study, the researcher applied two qualitative data collection methods.

7.9.1 Personal interviews

Personal interviews were conducted in the first stage of data collection with principals, using semi-structured interviews. The interview schedules (Appendix E, refer to the list of appendices) guided the semi-structured interviews with the principals of the two selected schools to derive at information about learners who were potential participants in the investigation.

7.9.2 Focus group interviews

Learner participants participated in focus group discussions during the problem identification and formulation stage. Both semi-structured and unstructured interviews were relevant to the context and approach selected for this study. The interview schedule (Appendix F, refer to the list of appendices) was used to guide the semi-structured interviews.

The study did not have key informants on the basis that it was focused on the challenges that they experience in schools not on their challenges in general. However, the researcher notes that in the ecosystem orientation of the study the challenges OVC face in their home or in their communities will eventually affect their experiences at school.

7.10 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

During this stage, the researcher brought order, structure, and meaning to the mass of

collected data (Babbie & Mouton, 2012; De Vos, 2021). The researcher used thematic content analysis to focus on opinions and views of participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2012). Content analysis is a research technique used to determine the presence of certain words, themes or concepts within some given qualitative data (Bengston, 2016). By adopting this method, the researcher analysed the presence, meanings and relationships of certain words, themes and concepts. Content analysis can be categorised into two general types, which are conceptual analysis and relational analysis. While conceptual analysis examines the existence and frequency of concepts in data, the relational analysis takes conceptual analysis further by examining relationships among concepts in the data (Bengston, 2016). In relation to this study, the researcher employed inductive relational content analysis.

7.10.1 Thematic content analysis

The researcher adopted thematic content analysis, as it allowed for more describing interpretation of the data. It allows the researcher to find repeating patterns, or themes in qualitative data. Furthermore than that it provides for an opportunity to focus on concepts, opinions and experiences of OVC paricipants in this case.

In the context of the study, data analysis proceeded as follows:

- Familiarisation with the collected data

During this stage, the researcher familiarised herself with the mass of collected data, which in this study were derived from interviews and focus group discussions, conducted to gain an overview of the collected data. Data analysis is time consuming as such the researcher excluded the participants at this stage as it was not convenience to do include them due to their tight schedule.

The researcher listened to the recorded data, studied the field notes to familiarise herself with key ideas and recurrent themes, and made notes of them.

- Coding of collected data

The researcher grouped patterns and words derived from the data into meaningful units and categories, and identified categories to which she coded certain words or segments of the data.

- Generating themes, sub themes and sub sub themes

After the coding of key words and words from the data, the researcher explored and analysed the concepts to develop themes, sub themes and sub sub themes.

- Coding of relationships

In this step, the relationships between concepts were coded by assigning labels to the relationships, indicating their meaning and visually mapping the analysis in networks.

- Analysis and interpretation of data

This included the analysis of the coded data by examining the relationships between the variables relevant to this study.

- Drawing conclusions

The researcher then drew conclusions. The conclusions derived from the analysis helped the researcher to make recommendations and develop a responsive model.

7.11 QUALITY CRITERIA

In research, it is crucial that data be rigorous and trustworthy. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the data collected is credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable. In PAR, the process includes the collective effort of all participants, achieving trustworthyness together with the researcher. These criteria are expatiated below:

7.11.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to compatibility between the constructed realities that occur in the minds of participants and those that are attributed to them (Anney, 2014; Babbie & Mouton, 2012). As PAR requires the investigator to stay in the research field over a period, this

afforded the researcher the opportunity to check whether there was a change in the gathered information. The following step was taken to ensure credibility:

Member checks; wherein data and interpretations were continuously and collectively tested by the researcher and participants. The researcher continuously gave feedback to participants to check whether what is captured was accurate. It was like an action reflection process to test the accuracy of the researcher`s interpretation with participants`s views.

7.11.2 Transferability

This refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied to other contexts or with other participants (Anney, 2014; Babbie, 2016). To ensure that data is transferable, the researcher elucidated the entire research process, from data collection and the context of the study to the production of the final report, to enable other researchers to replicate the study in other contexts (Anney, 2014; De Vos, 2021). The choice of the purposive sampling method also helped to enhance transferability, as the same selection criteria can be used in other contexts. For this study, the researcher was of the view that findings can be transferred to other similar contexts.

7.11.3 Dependability

Dependability indicates the stability of findings over time. The researcher and participants collectively conducted audit trails to cross-check all the collected data (Anney, 2014).

7.11.4 Conformability

Conformability is about ensuring that findings emerge from the collected data and not the proposition of the researcher. The collective application of audit trails was used to address this criterion.

7.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THIS STUDY

Research involves an intrusion into people's privacy and requires them to reveal information about themselves. Thus, research should be conducted in a highly ethical manner (Ogletree & Kawulich, 2012). In consideration of this, the researcher strived to conduct this study in such a highly ethical manner according to what was prescribed by the University's Code of Ethics and what was acceptable in practice. Thus, researcher always took the responsibility to be honest and respectful of the individuals (especially considering that they are minors), who participated in this research. The ethical aspects relevant to the study are stated below:

7.12.1 Permission to conduct the study

To ensure that the research was going to be conducted in a highly ethical manner, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee of the University of Limpopo (Appendix K) and Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics (Appendix I) before commencing with the data collection. Second, permission to conduct the study in schools was obtained from the Limpopo Department of Education (see Appendix G, H and I).

7.12.2. Informed consent and voluntary participation

All potential participants in the study who were not yet 18 years of age were requested to sign an assent form (see Appendix A) in the presence of their caregivers/parents to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. Those who had already passed the age of 18 signed the consent form (see Appendix B). Before the participants could sign either the assent or the consent forms, the researcher explained to them the purposes of the research, the activities expected of them, their voluntary participation, as well as their right to withdraw from the study at any stage should they so wish (Smith, 2010).

Parents and caregivers were also requested to give an informed consent after full explanation of the purpose of the study (see Appendix C) as these learners are still in their care.

7.12.3 Protection from risk and harm

As far as the researcher could ensure, there were no risks or harm associated with the study. Participants were at the utmost protected from any undue intrusion, distress, indignity, physical discomfort and personal embarrassment (Babbie, 2016). The information shared in the discussions was age relevant and in accordance with the purpose of the research (David & Sutton, 2011). Second, participants were duly informed that participation in the study was voluntary; and their right to withdraw at any time in the research study was protected.

When any problematic issues arose during interviews and discussions, the researcher respected the participants's right not to participate or to withdraw from such topics (David & Sutton, 2011; Ogletree & Kawulich, 2012). If any participants showed any signs of distress about the research process or the information shared in the discussions, then debriefing sessions were conducted thereafter. However, as this study was targeted towards OVC, where several studies have shown that they have psychosocial issues, the researcher anticipated that some participants may display signs of emotional difficulty (Osei-Agyakwa, 2012; Phillips, 2015; Tsiliso, 2011). There was one learner who displayed signs of emotional stress; being a qualified social worker, the researcher conducted debriefing and counselling sessions after the study with the individual. After the first counselling session, the researcher believed that no further counselling sessions were needed.

7.12.4 Anonymity and confidentiality

All information derived from this study was confidential. In both the assent and consent forms, the issue of confidentiality was addressed and by signing the forms; the participants and the researcher agreed to keep all information shared in the discussions confidential.

Since the discussions were recorded, the researcher used tags in different colours to

identify the participants. Participants' names were only known to the researcher (Babbie, 2016).

7.12.5 Respect and human dignity

The researcher maintained respect and human dignity of all participants, especially as some participants were still minors. Further than that, any practice that is unfair, shows prejudice or discrimination was avoided. The issue of anonymity and the children's right to withdraw from the research process at any time were meant to address the participants' respect and human dignity (Chilisa, 2012).

7.12.6 Truthfulness and honesty

The research was done with participants who were in a school. Therefore the researcher maintained truthfulness and honesty in her interaction with participants which aligned well with oral communication principles that were stressed in African families and communities.

7.12.7 Deception of participants

All participants participated in the study on a voluntary basis. Therefore, the researcher did not withhold information nor give incorrect information to ensure participation (Ogletree & Kawulich, 2012).

7.13 CONCLUSION

The chapter discussed in detail the research methodology used in the study. The interpretive paradigm was discussed and its relevance to this study. The study was a qualitative PAR study, using a case study method. The chapter elaborated on sampling and data collection procedures as well as procedures for data analysis. It concluded by discussing quality criteria and ethical issues related to this study.

CHAPTER 8

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

"In the past, jobs were about the muscles, now they are about brains, but in the future, they'll be about the heart." Minouche Shafik

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings, analysis and interpretation of the data collected from participants in the study. The data collection process took place under COVID-19 lockdown regulation alert level three. As a result, there were forced changes in the data collection process. Initially, the researcher had planned to have one combined focus group discussion with the participants of two selected schools. The process of data collection proceeded with personal interviews with principals of the two schools purposively selected and the focus group discussions with the OVC participants. Data collected was therefore analysed according to themes, sub-themes and sub-sub-themes that were generated with an intention to respond to the goal of this study as well as its objectives.

This study was anchored around existing theories. These were the ecosystem theoretical framework, which generally postulates the interrelatedness of all systems in children's lives; the strengths-based approach, which posits that children have inner strengths, capabilities and assets to enhance their resilience. These theories were integrated in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

In total, one personal interview was held with each of the two principals, and five focus group discussions with OVC participants. COVID-19 protocols, such as wearing of masks, sanitation and social distancing were observed. The research findings generated from the personal interviews with the principals and focus group discussions with OVC participants are presented in this chapter. The demographic information of participants is presented

starting with that of the principals in Table 4. The information regarding the total number of OVC is presented in section 8.2.2 and for OVC participants in section 8.2.3.

8.2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

8.2.1 Principals

The two principals of the two selected schools are new appointees in the posts and in the one school, the principal assigned her deputy to assist in the interviewing process.

Table 4: Demographic details of principals

Participant	Gender	Age	Duration in the School	Designation
1	Male	54	6 months	Principal
2	Male	30	5 years	Deputy Principal

8.2.1 OVC participants

In the rural schools, many children have one form of vulnerability or the other. For example, they may not be orphans, but fall into the category of poor children. In one school, out of a total of 343 learners, 77 learners are orphans. Some are maternal orphans, while the majority are paternal orphans. Likewise, in the second school, out of 419 learners 84 were classified as orphans. For the purpose of the study, the researcher purposively selected participants who have multiple dimensions of vulnerability. As such, she selected double orphans, whose vulnerability has overlapping dimensions.

Table 5: Demographic details of OVC participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Grade	Type of orphan	Years in grade	Child headed household	No.of employed people in the household
1	Male	22	10	Double	2	Yes	0
2	Male	17	10	Double	1	No	1
3	Male	18	10	Double	2	No	1
4	Male	18	10	Double	2	Yes	1
5	Female	18	10	Double	2	No	2
6	Female	17	10	Double	1	No	1
7	Male	23	11	Double	3	Yes	0
8	Male	22	11	Double	3	Yes	0
9	Male	22	10	Double	3	No	1
10	Male	19	11	Double	2	Yes	0
11	Female	18	11	Double	1	No	1
12	Female	18	11	Double	1	No	1
13	Female	16	10	Double	1	No	1

The demographic details of participants provided personal information of the research participants. In one school, the data collection process was interrupted by the immediate closure of schools because of the COVID-19 lockdown, and commenced after the reopening of schools. For this study, it was important to know the types of orphan and the number of years in a grade. Five of the learner participants were family heads. Moreover, they were repeating their grades either for the first or second time. In addition, most participants' age was not in accordance with the grade they are in. This was indicating that they might have repeated some lower grades in their school career.

Most of these learners came from households that are poor. This is evidenced by the number of people who are unemployed in their household. Unemployment of able-bodied

people is one major contributing reason of household poverty. This may well relate to what Ikeda and Garcia (2012) argued that children from a poor background are more likely to repeat their grades and seem not to benefit from academic activities.

8.3 EMERGED THEMES, SUB-THEMES AND SUB SUB-THEMES

The following section presents the findings of the study that explored and described the challenges faced by OVC in the schools of the Maleboho East Circuit with the aim of developing a multidisciplinary model that would address these challenges. Analysed from the partipants' responses, the researcher developed themes, sub- themes and sub sub-themes to bring order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data in this study. The findings are substantiated with the voices of participants and where possible, integrated with literature. From their views the following themes were generated which were psychosocial issues, material needs, life at home, challenges at school, risks and coping as well as intervention strategies which are captured in the table.

The following table presents the themes, sub-themes and sub sub-themes as captured in the study and are elaborated in the dioscussion that follows it:

Table 6: Themes, sub-themes and sub sub-themes of the study.

Themes	Sub-themes	Sub sub-themes
1.Psychosocial issues	Emotional issues	Difficult temperament and anger
		Deep thinking and suicidal thoughts
		Loneliness and isolation

	Social issues	Lack of parental guidance and adult supervision
		Recognition and approval
		Lack of trust and confidence
		Social stigma
2. Material needs	Lack of basic necessities	
	School necessities	
	Lack of personal space	
	Transactional relationships	
3. Life at home	Discrimination	
	Home responsibilities	
	Nobody`s child	
	Blaming	
4. Challenges at school	Inability to cope with the demands of school work	
	Latecoming and absenteeism	
	Lack of understanding of OVC	
	Difficulty in forming relationships	
	Poor performace	
	Grade repetition	
	Lack of support services in schools	

5. Risks and coping mechanisms	Risks
	Coping
6. Intervention strategies	

8.3.1 Psychosocial issues

Findings indicated that they are psychologically distressed and suffer from issues such as anxiety, prolonged grief, psychosomatic problems and depression, among many other symptoms. In some instances, they also have to deal with stigma and discrimination. The situation is worsened when their parents may have died of HIV/AIDS.The responses from participants allude to this view and identify several psychosocial issues that confront them. These issues are discussed below under two sub-themes, which are emotional and social issues. There are also sub-sub-themes under both the emotional and the social issues. They are discussed and supported by the actual words of participants:

8.3.1.1 Emotional issues

Data collected from paricipnats revealed that OVC deal with several emotional issues which proves that they are troubled and fragile children, They need a lot of support and proper handling. The responses from participants allude to this view and identify several psychosocial issues that confront them.

These issues are discussed below under two sub-themes, which are emotional and social issues. There are also sub-sub-themes under both the emotional and the social issues. They are discussed and supported by the actual words of participants:

Findings reveal that OVC have many emotional problems. They are emotionally broken and often do not know how to handle and manage their emotions. In some instances, their emotional problems affect their social relationships. In their responses they highlighted the following emotional issues; difficult temperament and anger, deep thinking

and suicidal thoughts and loneliness and isolation. They are then discussed:

- **Difficult temperament and anger**

The responses from participants indicated that OVC tend to have emotional issues such as anxiety, depression and distress. This results in a temperament (or temper) that is difficult to deal with by others, as their anger that is unexplainable.

The following words of participants capture this sentiment:

> "S*ometimes, I just get angry. I get angry because I cannot change my situation. I am angry because I have no one to talk to. I am angry because I don't have the things that I need and there is no one to tell*".

She then continues:

> "*This anger is not limited to one person. I get angry at any person I come across. I also get angry at teachers. I blame other people for my misery*".

This difficult temperament is associated with internal anger they are feeling. It is like a cycle, where they get angry and behave in a certain way, which other people find difficult to deal with. This repels the very people who are supposed to care for them, as they may be lacking a proper understanding of what the children are going through.

Phillips (2015), in trying to explain the source of this anger, argues that it is emanating from the fact they do not have adequate care and protection. This relates well to what the study's participants articulate. A study conducted by Sebola (2019) attributes this anger to unresolved grief that is not expressed. Makhonza (2018) asserts that the change they experience after the loss of their parents makes them react with anger, which is worsened by the fact that their survival, care, protection and development become compromised because of the expressed anger.

A participant reveals the feelings of anger and frustration they experience when they see family members change after the loss of their parents:

"People we were trusting before we lost parents change; and you will be surprised and have nothing to do. This leaves us with frustration and anger".

It is as if anger becomes the natural response, because they feel hopeless and helpless, as there is nothing much that they can do to change to their situation. Children need adults to protect them. In the absence of caring and protective adults, they react by being angry. Literature declares anger issues as being a result of the grief that cannot be expressed as already articulated.

- **Deep thinking and suicidal thoughts**

Findings from the participants' responses reveal that they are preoccupied with thinking. In their view, their lives revolve around thinking. They think about their parents, especially when they believe that caregivers are not treating them well. When the thinking becomes too much, then suicidal thoughts and the temptations of taking drugs creep in. This is shown by their words as follows:

"We think too much about our parents, especially when we face challenges. "Sometimes you think, maybe if I go and get drugs I may desensitise myself not to think too much about my problems. I don't have anyone to take care of me. I am feeling lost. So, drugs is an escape to the pain I am feeling".

Another participant from a child-headed home shares the view regarding the source of deep thinking and suicidal thoughts:

"The situation is worsened when I don't have food. And there is no one to tell that there is no food. You think and think that it is better to commit suicide to escape the

pain".

Another participant corroborates the views of the other participants:

> *"We think deep, especially when you think that you are not treated right. You think that maybe they do this way, because they know that your parent is not present".*

In one of the schools, one participant highlights it this way:

> *"We think deep when we are hurt deeply. Sometimes, my caregiver nags me and tells me about what my mother used to do when she was alive. I get so hurt".*

Studies confirm that OVC are likely to be more often depressed than other children, by virtue of being orphans and vulnerable as a result (Saraswat & Unisa, 2017; Makhonza, 2018). A study conducted by Schenk, Ndhlovu, Tembo, Nsune, Nkhata, Walusiku, & Watts (2008) in Zambia found that children who grew up in vulnerable contexts are more likely to experience traumatic events, feelings of worry and stress, irritability, sadness and they have difficulty in concentrating. This view is shared by a study conducted by Sebola (2019) in South Africa, who asserts that OVC show a higher level of depression than their counterparts.

When these psychosocial issues overwhelm the learners, they tend to feel suicidal or entertain suicidal thoughts. This correlates with what was revealed in a study conducted by Mbatha (2015), which states that some OVC attempt suicide after the loss of parents.

This constant worry by OVC is sometimes also caused by them feeling overburdened, since these children were forced to carry the responsibility of adulthood while still young. Some of them are family heads, which implies they are carrying the burden of family responsibility. They find it difficult to meet the expectations of coping with taking care of the home and school at the same time. In the researcher `s observation some OVC tend to day dream ans sleep in class. It may be due to the fact that they are both mentally and

emotionally tired.

- **Loneliness and isolation**

Findings show that OVC often experience feelings of loneliness and abandonment, which make them isolate themselves even further. They long for their parents when they see other children with their parents. In their view, they sometimes feel lost:

"I feel lonely when I see what other parents are doing for their children and start to have a wish that maybe if my parents were still alive, I could be having the things I want".

Another participant adds:

"There are things that need your parent; they don't need any other person".

"In some cases, you will be with your friends who start to tell you about the things they do with their parents and what they do for them. You then start to feel lonely and long that you could be having your parents to talk about. When you feel like that, you start to isolate yourself, becauseyou feel you do not fit in their conversations".

However, another participant gives a different view, which shows that OVC do not react the same to their vulnerability. This confirms what was discussed in the section 4.3.4 of Chapter 4; vulnerability is individualistic and it shows that some children display strong resilience. They will be happy no matter what has happened to them (Pillay, 2016). This view is captured in these words:

"Some of us are fine even though things are not well. They will socialise with other children as if all is well. But inside, they will be having feelings of loneliness".

Several studies agree with these findings and reveal that after the loss of their parents, these learners experience prolonged pain, sadness, anxieties, fear, loneliness, despondency and deep-rooted and persistent anger towards their mother (or father) for dying (Mbatha, 2015; Ntuli et al., 2020; Zwane, 2015). Even for those who may not have known their parents, they persistently but silently long for their dead mothers or fathers. They persistently think about their mothers or fathers, and how difficult life is without them and how life could have been different (Dekeza, 2018).

This relates to what a similar study by Saraswat and Unisa (2017) identified in orphanages in India, where most of OVC feel lonely and often helpless. In addition, they identified stress, depression, yearning for parents, and emotional instability, among others, as some of psychosocial issues they experience. This confirms what has been asserted earlier that children not only have material needs, but do have psychosocial needs. Howver in the researcher`s practical observation there are others who find a way of improving their lives. Though they have feelings of loneliness, they find ways of coping by socialising with other children.

8.3.1.2 Social issues

Findings indicate that OVC have several social issues that confront them. Their responses generate the following social issues:

- **Lack of parental guidance and adult supervision**

Participants believe that they need parental guidance, which unfortunately, many of them did or do not receive. Their responses indicate that they come across challenges, especially when they have to make decisions. Sometimes, they feel overwhelmed by the

pressure exerted onto them from peers to take part in activities that led them into trouble. The importance of parental guidance in the development of children cannot be overemphasised. Parental guidance boosts a child's abilities and strength (Chinwuba, 2019). They help them to make right and informed choices (Ross-Gray, 2020). It is also key in shielding them from danger and discrimination, because they provide the appropriate support and guidance (Chinwuba, 2019; Ross-Gray, 2020). This makes the learners confident and ready for any obligation that may arise in their lives. Children strongly need parental guidance to become socially functioning adults.

Participants' views continue to confirm their need for parental guidance, which literature already asserted. In their view, living without parents exposes them to many wrong decisions, which were influenced by peers. Their views are reflected in these words:

"We engage in bad activities like drugs, because we have no parents".

Others support the learner:

"We don't account to anyone".

"Sometimes we get into trouble, because of the pressure from our friends".

"We are prone to commit grievous acts like stealing, because we have no one to guide us".

These quotes show the learners' struggle if they lack the moral sense of right and wrong, because of the lack of parental guidance. This view is shared by Stogsdill (2019), who asserts that when children experience different types of social difficulties, their idea of morals and knowing right from wrong becomes confused and they tend to develop poor values or simply lack morals in general. Their following of the leading of peers, in most cases, got them into trouble.

Another participant shows their vulnerability to commit criminal acts is sometimes motivated by their lack of resources.

"Our peers influence us to do wrong things and because I have no resources and no one to account to, I follow.

Children need a lot of support from parents, teachers and other support structures to become responsible future citizens. They need physical, social, mental, emotional and spiritual support. Lack of support can lead to emotional deficiencies, which may be difficult to deal with in their later years (Stogsdill, 2019). They may suffer from social disempowerment, which may become worsened by other social factors such as poverty (Hlalele, 2015). Among these participants, there are those who have other adult caregivers who guide them and fill that gap, though they lack parental guidance. However, the worst environment is where these learners have to stay alone, with no adult figures or good role models in their lives, and where they do not have any adult supervision at home.

In the same sense, as important as parental guidance is, so is adult supervision critical in children's development. Children who grow up without any mature adult in their household are exposed to many risks. They may be exposed to living without food, proper shelter, may be violated sexually or fall victim to drug abuse (UNICEF, 2018, UNAIDS, 2017). In this case, adults are not understood to be children who have reached the age of 18 or 20, but adults who are mature, capable, who have a job or a regular income and who are capable of looking after children.

Participants indicate that they need both parental guidance and adult supervision at home. They believe that staying alone expose them to many social ills.

Their views are as follows:

"We are still children and need parents to watch over us".

"There are things that need your parent. For example, how to choose friends".

"As children … because of peer pressure, we sometimes do wrong things and there will be no one to account".

"When friends entice us, we do … because we know there is no one to correct you".

The importance of parental and adult supervision cannot be over-emphasised. Children need adults as role models, whom they can imitate and learn from (Robbins, Stagman, & Smith, 2012). In the context where children are staying alone, they grow up with that void. They grow up with no one to mould them to become better citizens of tomorrow.

One participant repeats the sentiment to reflect this critical need:

"We are still young. Peers often influence us to do certain things, because we don't have resources and there are no parents to account and it is easy to follow them".

In support, other participants reiterate:

"We engage in all illegal activities like drugs and we end up getting into trouble".

"O šala ka gare ga melatokalebaka la bagweraka gore ga go na motho wa go go hlahla".

"We need parents to share our lives with. Parents are irreplaceable".

"Sometimes we go to school functions and you have achieved in a certain area like sports. When the other parents celebrate their children, wena, you find that there is no one to celebrate you".

- **Lack of trust and confidence**

Findings indicate that participants strongly think that people are not trustworthy, so they choose to internalise their feelings and not tell anyone about their feelings. In their view, they do not have trust in the people they are living with, their friends and even teachers. Evidence from the views shared by participants suggests that their lack of trust and confidence in people is based on their perception of themselves as being different from other children.

"I don't trust anybody. I can talk to you now, because you are not staying here in my village. But I cannot tell any person who is staying in my village".

When asked whether friends are not better, this participant strongly responds in this manner:

"No, motho ke motho. She will take your things and tell others".

Others corroborate this attitude in support:

"Well, if we get professional therapists, yes we can talk to them. But we won't confide our secrets to any person".

"How do you tell a person that you have slept hungry"?

"People can't keep secrets. You will tell him or her and he will go to another person and say this is a secret … it will go just like that. Soon, everybody will know about your problems".

When asked if they cannot tell their teachers about their challenges, one participant responds:

"We are children and sometimes we misbehave. What if you misbehave and the teacher gets angry and starts to reveal your secrets in front of other learners?"

As a therapist, I was challenged by the sentiments these learners are experiencing. Confidentiality and trust are of utmost importance in any helping relationship. This clearly shows that teachers may not have the basic skills in assisting OVC. However, they cannot be blamed either, because they have not been trained in counselling.

On their lack of confidence, participants share their views in the following words:

"Our situation is different from other children, as such, it makes us feel that we are different from them".

"We do not have confidence in ourselves nor the people that are around us".

- **Recognition and approval**

Findings from one participant indicates his need of parents to recognise and approve him, especially when there are achievements to be celebrated. His views are captured as follows:

> *"There are things that need your parent to recognise you and give you their approval when you do well. Sometimes you win a competition at school or parents' meeting and other children come with their parents".*

- **Social stigma**

Findings indicate that OVC suffer from social stigma. The social stigma is worse when it is suspected that their parents may have died of HIV/Aids. In some cases, they are ridiculed because of what their parents used to do. In their responses, they reiterate the view and recall that they are mocked by the people in the community, while some say that they are even told stories about what their parents used to do. This becomes hurtful and frustrating when the people who are telling them these stories are their immediate caregivers.

These responses from some participants highlighted their experiences:

> *"Sometimes, when you do something at home, they nag you and tell you about the things that your parent used to do. This becomes so painful, because I was not there when my mother did those things and it is not nice hearing that".*

> *"Sometimes, when we walk along the streets, people tell us bad things about our parents and they are no longer here to defend themselves".*

> *"We are mocked because we don't have what other children are having".*

Participants indicate that not only is stigma a problem, but the issue of mocking is problematic. Pillay (2018) agrees with the issue caused by teasing and mocking, and adds that the majority of OVC are often mocked by other learners, because of their socioeconomic circumstances. Mocking can have negative psychological effects on children, especially OVC, whose self-confidence is already lower than that of other children. If they are emotionally attacked or disturbed at school, while they have no-one to confide to when they arrive at home, it means they have to carry the burden alone. In most cases, caregivers are preoccupied with their own burdens. This explains some of the reasons why most OVC tend to internalise their emotions and are preoccupied with deep thinking. This can result in a host of psychological and medical issues, which may eventually lead to how they interact with others and see themselves.

8.3.2 Material needs

Evidence from this study have shown that OVC often grow up without meaningful material support. In the rural context of these participnats the situation is worsened by the rural circumstances of unemployment, poverty and inequality. Most participants reported to come to school hungry while some sleep on a hungry stomach.

From the participnats`s views the following sub-themes were generated in this theme; lack of basic necessities, school necessities, lack of personal space, and transactional relationships. They are discussed below:

8.3.2.1 Lack of basic necessities

Some participants live in child-headed households; some have once dropped out of school, because of the problem of lack of basic necessities, hoping to find employment to relieve their distress. However, they returned back to school, though over-aged, as they failed to secure any employment.

Their responses indicate the struggle they face daily to have access to the basic necessities such as food and clothes:

> *"Sometimes, we don't have food and it becomes difficult to tell other people that you don't have food. That is why it's easy for us to engage in criminal activities like stealing from Indian shops, when friends entice us and do to get resources. And you may find that after stealing from Indian shops … around … you get caught and get arrested. Your schooling will be at … stake and there will be no one to pay for your bail. It is a serious problem".*

They reveal that sometimes, the lack of basic necessities goes as far as the lack of food leading to severe hunger. The lack of food is detrimental to both the physical and psychological development of the children (Macleod, 2020). Lack of food may also lead to poor health, which will negatively affect their schooling.

Their views are as follows:

> *"Sometimes, we come to school hungry, we only balance with one meal provided here at school".*

When asked whether they get money for lunch; one participant replies:

> *"Other times, I am given five rand and in some cases I don't get anything".*

However, the problem of hunger is not attributed solely on the lack of basic necessities such as food. Participants give a different view on the problem of hunger.

> *"In some cases, when we fail to finish all home duties, we are denied food as a form of punishment and it means you have to sleep without food".*

Two participants support the view:

"There is a situation where they give you all the duties at home. If you complain and refuse to do those duties, you are denied food and you will sleep hungry".

"I sometimes go without food, because there is none at home and how do I tell people that I don't have food".

South Africa has a comprehensive social security system, which can make one assume that children are no longer going hungry (Maluleka, 2020). However, the participants' reports provide a different picture and suggest that they do face hunger at some point in their lives. Several reasons are attributed to the situation, such as poverty and punishment, among others. Though customs and traditions expect children to perform some household duties, it becomes a problem when children have to work hard at home and at school and then do not receive food, because their survival depends on it and second, adults may take advantage of their vulnerability (ILO, 2020).

What makes matters worse is that in the lives of these children, the lack of basic necessities is not limited to food only, but also includes other basic categories that are necessary for their survival. Their views suggest the following:

"Sometimes, our caregivers don't give us life's necessities like clothes and they say that they don't have money. Wena, you see that they do, because when their children ask them, then they give them. It is just they don't want to spend it on you".

On the other hand, there is evidence that suggests that not all children are mistreated by their caregivers. Some participants indicate that there are good caregivers, who take good care of them, but that they are limited by their socioeconomic status. This participant reflects a different view:

"My caregivers do try to give me what I need, it is just that we are many. This creates a problem, where one has to wait for a long time to get needs met. I understand their situation, because I also can see that there are many of us".

The lack of basic necessities makes the lives of these children difficult. It can affect their physical and mental health. In these contexts, vulnerabilities are commonly overlapping. Though caregivers may have a desire to meet the needs of all their children, they are limited by their socioeconomic conditions. It may be the reason why in some instances, they disregard the children that are not their own, because their resources are limited. The role of poverty in worsening vulnerability cannot be ignored. Poverty subjects people to many hardships and vulnerabilities (Mamotsheare, 2016; Moser, 2013). Research studies have found that increased poverty exerts more pressure on the already burdened families, and having to care for extra children is difficult (Moser, 2013; Pillay, 2016).

8.3.2.2 School necessities

Participants highlighted that there are things they need at school, which they cannot have. In an atmosphere of the lack of basic necessities such as food and clothes; meeting school necessities becomes a huge challenge.

These responses highlight this challenge:

"Sometimes, at school they ask us to bring Typex. This becomes very difficult as some of us do not have parents".

On the lack of a uniform another participant shares this sentiment:

"We come to school with a torn uniform".

Another participant states this view, which is supported by other participants:

"Sometimes, when we need things for the school, we are told to go o ye o iphandela".

This participant continues:

"When it is Fridays, I must start to look for jobs to do in the village during the weekend to generate an income. If I don't get a weekend job, I must go and cut firewood to sell them for school necessities".

Another female participant corroborates with this view:

"In the mind of a young girl like myself, you cannot fully comprehend what o iphandela really means. That is why some of us go and engage in transactional sex with older men, so that they give us money for necessities. This puts us at risk of diseases and getting pregnant at a young age".

Another adds her view:

"That is why some of the orphans end up dropping out of school, as the burden becomes too much to bear. Being a child and having to go to school while fending for oneself is too much for a child and unbearable".

Even though the SASA makes provision for non-payment of school fees, the money catered by the norms and standards is not sufficient to cover all the school necessities (Smiley, Omoeva, Sylla, & Chaluda, 2012). So, schools ask parents for assistance in materials such as Typex, money for paying security personnel and the other necessities such as school uniforms. This means that in practice, education is not free. There are things needed besides the school fees. Money for stationery, school trips and extra

classes is needed. This becomes an extra burden to the household that is already burdened and poor. In South Africa, schooling is free for learners attending schools that are categorised on quintile one and two; however, schooling continues to be expensive for some learners, especially for those who are poor. Learners need proper uniforms, stationery and sometimes money for co-curricular activities.

8.3.2.3 Lack of personal space

Two participants from the same family revealed that they do not have enough space at home, especially in the morning, when they are supposed to prepare themselves for school. Their responses show that they only have one room and there are many people living in the household.

They report:

> *"It becomes quite difficult at home in the mornings".*

> *"In our home, we stay with our elder siblings doing matric. Because they come to school earlier than us, we wait for them until they are finished. After they are finished, it is then that I can start to prepare myself for school. In some cases, it will be so late that we don't manage to finish in time. As a result, we come to school late and teachers don't understand us, when we try to explain some of the reasons of our late coming".*

The brother adds:

> *"Sometimes, because they see us coming to school late, they think we are not serious with our school work. One teacher once told me that I will fail. I indeed failed and now I am doing Grade 10 for the third time. I am so discouraged, because it is like I will never get out of Grade 10".*

He deliberates further on the issue:

"This problem of lack of space affects us negatively. We don't have our own space to do homework".

The lack of personal space has been highlighted as one of the reasons why OVC never perform better in school (Gwandure, 2009). It may not only be the lack of space to prepare oneself to come to school, but also for doing homework and having a warm bed to sleep in. OVC`s households face an obstacle to adequate housing and living conditions. Studies show that adequate housing is associated with a child's social, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being and development (Gwandure, 2009; Mutiso & Mutie, 2018).

8.3.2.4 Transactional relationships

Evidence from the sentiments of participants have shown that in some instances the OVC got involved in transactional relationships with oldermen in order to have their material needs met. The views of participants supported the notion of being coerced into transactional sex:

"As OVC, we have so much material needs. We lack many necessities. We find ourselves in relationships we never intended to have".

"When a caregiver tells you to go o iphandela; you go and sometimes, it may not be the best decision for your life. Some of us already have babies we never intended to have".

"You end up regretting your actions and some of our actions can no longer be changed".

Transactional relationships have a tremendous negative impact on growing girls. They affect their psychosocial functioning that creates an environment where they have difficulty in relating positively to the opposite sex at a later stage in their lives (Mampane, 2018). In the worst cases, they develop a distorted view of the opposite sex, and their lives are caught up in a cycle that is difficult to break.

8.3.3 Life at home

The ecosystem theoretical framework strongly posits that childrens's experiences at their home eventually affect their performance at school, as already discussed in Chapter 2. It portrays a reciprocal relationship between OVC and their environment, as already discussed. Therefore, the OVC's experiences at school cannot be separated from their home experiences. In the South African context, the majority of orphans are cared for by their extended families, but there are those who stay alone or are family heads, caring for their siblings or ailing grandparents.

Most of the participants indicate that life at home without their parents is not easy. They co-generate the following sub-themes in their discussions: discrimination, home responsibilities, nobody's child, blaming.

8.3.3.1 Discrimination

Participants agree that life in their respective homes is not easy, as they do not receive the same treatment from their caregivers as they treat their biological children. As most of these participants are in their teenage or early adulthood stage, they are overtly conscious of the different treatment:

"We are not treated the same and this is the reasons why we have internal issues and think deep. In some cases, you may think taking drugs may help".

"The treatment we get from caregivers is not the same as with their children".

"In some cases, you find that when it is the birthday of biological children, they buy stuff like cake, snacks and a nice cola drink. And when it is your turn for a birthday, they don't buy a cake. They may buy an inferior cola drink like tweeza. You observe and see the difference".

"They give their children gifts in secret and when you ask, you are not answered well. Sometimes, when they give money for lunch box, they give me only five rand and their children will be given ten rand. Sometimes, caregivers don't give us what we ask from them, but they give their children when they ask them".

"This increases our pain, because you think deeply about the way your mother used to treat you and how they treat you at the moment".

"Even the people that you used to trust turn their backs on you".

The issue of OVC being discriminated against connects with what other research studies have cited. After the death of their parents, they are often taken in by people who are not their biological relatives. There is a Sepedi idiom that says, "A cow cannot lick the calf that is not its own". It becomes difficult for the caregivers to treat these children the way they treat their own children. A research report by UNAIDS (2010) revealed that these children are often denied food or they received less, were denied school fees and forced to do more work at home.

8.3.3.2 Home responsibilities

Findings indicate that participants are feeling overwhelmed by the home responsibilities and this makes their lives burdensome. In fact, this emerges as the key challenge in their discussion. Being responsible for all or most of the housework compromises their education, as they do not have enough time to study and do their homework. However, some have developed resilience capabilities and remain at school after the classes are over to complete their homework and study there; it also provides them with the necessary space, access to electricity and sometimes even to the internet.

Second, evidence shows that the burden of having to do all the housework (cooking, cleaning, doing the washing and ironing, and so forth) and being responsible for the whole household compromises their development as children. Their circumstances deny them the opportunity to enjoy their lives as young children, to be able to play, enjoy friendships, and learn the fun aspects of life. Their views confirm this sentiment:

"When you arrive at home, you find all home responsibilities waiting for you. And they tell you before you eat, you must complete a list of chores and by that time you finish, you are so hungry. After eating, you must go to fetch water, then wash dishes and later cook. By the time you are finished all the home chores, you are so tired that you can't concentrate on your studies and homework".

"After school, you must do dishes, ironing, fetch water and cook. They send you to the Indian shops. When you finish, it is late and you say I will see the homework tomorrow. Tomorrow there is no time".

"You are given more chores. During tests, we are unable to study, because there is so much to do".

"School work is difficult".

"This is the reason why we perform poorly at school".

"In some cases, when you try to sit down to do school work, they send you somewhere or tell you to do something. When you finish or come back, it is late and you will be wanting to sleep. You have not done your homework and studied your work. The next day, teachers at school will be wanting their work and you have not done it. It becomes overwhelming".

"We are always working".

"It feels like sometimes we are working for food, because they will say to you before eating do this and that".

When asked whether there is a rooster at home for home duties and whether others also help, this participant responds:

"There is; but the problem is that when the biological child does not perform his role according to the stipulated responsibilities, then you are the one that is being blamed".

"We fail to do homework because of the duties we do".

Participants confirmed that they are burdened by these home responsibilities. This concurs with the work by Nelson and Christensen (2009), stating that vulnerable children have more responsibilities in home contexts. Observational evidence proves that this has an impact on their academic performance. The findings from a study conducted by Motsa and Morojele (2017) correlate with these sentiments and assert that vulnerable children have too much to do in the home contexts. This means that by the time they finish their home chores, they are too exhausted to be able to still do or concentrate on their schoolwork. Studies have also found that children who grow up in rural areas tend to work

more than their urban counterparts (Hlalele, 2015; Motsa & Morojele, 2017). They may have to collect water and firewood, and their school is also far away, and they have to walk there in most cases (Hlalele, 2015). Because they are still children, they find it difficult to meet the expectations placed upon them by their caregivers and school.

8.3.3.3 Nobody's child

Findings showed that OVC often feel lost and think that they do not belong to anyone or anywhere. They feel sad when they hear other children talking about their parents and what they did for them.

"It becomes sad when we see other children with their parents and wena, you don't have. So, you feel lost and think you are nobody's child".

"We admire other children when they are with their parents".

"We admire also what their parents are doing for them and wena, there is no parents to do good things for us".

However, two participants provided a totally different view to show that life in their respective home is different and that not all caregivers are the same:

"There is support at home. They cook and clean. When I come back from school, I eat and concentrate on doing my homework and study".

This confirmed what was argued in the literature chapter that there are protective factors as well as risk factors for children (Daniel, 2010; Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2016). When protective factors in the life of the child are at play, then the risk factors are minimised and the child will grow up and become more resilient.

8.3.3.4 Blaming

Participants lamented that they are blamed for everything that goes wrong in their households. When items are damaged or not done accordingly to the caregivers' expectations or instructions, they are the ones that suffer the blame:

> *"We are blamed for everything at home. When a young child breaks a glass, for instance, you will be blamed that you were neglecting the child".*

> *"We are blamed when duties are not completed at home".*

> *"When things get damaged, like when children will break glass, you are the one to be blamed, even when you were not there".*

These findings from the participants' responses resonated well with what many studies reveal, where they state that life becomes difficult for children once they lose their parents (Sebola, 2019; UNAIDS, 2017; UNICEF,2009; Zwane, 2015).

8.3.4 Challenges at school

The study has argued previously that no child exists in isolation implying that all experiences in the children's lives at home eventually also affect the experiences at school. People and their physical, social and cultural environment are understood within the processes of mutual reciprocity and complementary exchanges of resources. The experiences OVC have in the schools must be viewed with the lens of the context they are coming from. If there is an adaptive fit between the child and systemic functional requirements in their life, then life will be without challenges or have minimal challenges.

The findings garnered from the present study show that there was no adaptive fit between them and their environment, or it is a very poor fit. As a result, they experience challenges at school that make their lives at school unpleasant, because of intimidation, teasing or bullying, or difficult, because they cannot cope with the school's demands. This explains why most of the participants have repeated classes and are over-aged in relation to their current grade.

The following sub-themes are discussed as referring to their challenges at school. They include their inability to cope with the demands of schoolwork, they often come to school late or are even absent, they do not experience an understanding of OVC problems, they find it difficult to form positive and lasting relationships, and are faced with the results of poor performance and grade repetition, and a lack of support services in schools.

8.3.4.1 Inability to cope with the demands of schoolwork

Schoolwork can be taxing on the mind of learners, especially if they arrive at school already tired and without any food in their stomachs. They are expected to have a positive mindset and be focused. Findings from the interviews with the principals indicate that OVC do not cope with most of the schoolwork. They do not do their homework, they copy other learners' work and sometimes try to complete their homework during the lessons of other teachers during the day, because they could not do their homework at home. In some cases, learners were given school projects that needed the assistance of parents or caregivers at home. For OVC, it became a difficult, if not impossible order to accomplish, as there is no-one to assist them at home. The learner participants' state:

"We do so much at home that we fail to do homework".

"Teachers do not understand, when they find us not having done their work".

"They sometimes think we do it deliberately, but the issue is that we cannot cope".

"After you're finished with all your duties at home, you become so tired that it becomes difficult to concentrate on your studies".

This shows how difficult it is for children to juggle both schoolwork and household responsibilities. Their inability to complete their schoolwork implies that they will not succeed in school. Marongwe et al. (2016) posit that in a school setting, these children end up being frustrated and frustrating teachers. They are frustrated, as they feel that nobody understands the predicament they find themselves in. In addition, they are frustrated, because they are not matching up with other learners, and so start to look like failures.

Many teachers are also frustrated, mostly because of the lack of capacity or resources to support these learners who come to school troubled, "shabby" and emotionally and psychologically troubled (Marongwe et al., 2016).

There is strong evidence from the literature that OVC face many barriers in education (Kemp, 2013; SAIDE, 2012). These barriers hinder their chances of seeing meaningful progress at school. It is one of the reasons why many advocates of school social work highlight the need of mainstreaming of social services in schools (Kasiram, 1993; Kemp, 2013; Ntombela, 2004, Ntombela, 2011). It could also indicate the urgent need for aftercare being available to all children free of charge, where they can first eat a healthy lunch, and then complete all their "homework" under supervision, while there is available space, electricity, maybe electronic equipment and access to the internet or other study material. When children feel that they matter, are taken seriously and looked after, they are also keener to commit themselves to their tasks. Keeping them in a safe school environment for longer also reduces the likelihood of exposure to crime and drugs, or exploitation, as long as they can be home before it gets dark.

8.3.4.2 Late coming and absenteeism

The tendency to come to school late is signal to a deeper social problem, which many studies have highlighted. In rural schools such as the ones in the Maleboho East District, there is scholar transport available, which has helped to reduce the late arrival of learners and their absenteeism. However, in the two schools that participated in the study, the problem of late arrival persisted. Many factors seem to attribute to the trend. There are those learners who are not beneficiaries of scholar transport, because of the specific criteria requirements. Principals explained that many of the learners arriving late at school belong to the category of OVC, and especially those who are staying with elderly caregivers and who come from child-headed homes where they first have to look after their younger siblings.

Literature attributes late coming and absenteeism of children to several factors. Mutiso and Mutie (2018) assert that OVC attend school irregularly, because of sickness (and not being able to buy medication), the lack of a uniform, hunger and their inability to pay the school fees or buy the stationary. They come to school late, because they first have to take care of their elderly caregivers. Sometimes, they are forced to do home chores such as cooking, cleaning and bath their siblings before coming to school. Motsa and Morojele (2017) expand further and explain that vulnerable children have so many responsibilities at home that it make it nearly impossible for them to meet the expectations of the school.

The responses confirm the argument:

"We sleep late and as such wake up late. That is the reason we come late to school. When we try to explain to teachers the reasons for our latecoming, they don't understand".

"When I wake up late, I sometimes decide not to come to school at all, because I'll

find the school gates locked".

In my practical observations at schools, late coming, chronic absenteeism and their way of dressing were indicators of learners who are vulnerable. This observation is in line with evidence from the literature, which asserts that late coming and absenteeism are indicators of children's vulnerability. This is attributed to the fact that some of them are the heads of the families who are supposed to complete several home duties before coming to school (Babedi & Pillay, 2019; Maila & Mabasa, 2021).

This late arrival at school creates a problem for them, when the school calls the parents or caregivers to correct the behaviour. Some of these children have no-one to write them a letter of apology or explanation for the school. One participant voiced his frustration as follows:

> *"Teachers sometimes tell you to call your parents to come to school, because you are routinely coming to school late. And you have no-one to call. Sometimes, you think it is better if I just drop out school".*

This highlighted that the problem of learners' late arrival and irregular attendance emanates from both individual and structural factors. It should therefore be viewed holistically, and not as the problem of the child alone (Jopling & Vincent, 2016). However, this does not negate the fact that there are learners who are habitually truant and manipulate the system, but there are those who have genuine reasons for arriving late, and they are in need of holistic assistance and intervention.

8.3.4.3 Lack of understanding of OVC

Findings showed that there is a general lack of understanding of the OVC's situation among teachers. It also indicates that these teachers have never conducted home visits, to take stock of where and how these learners have to function. Responses from participants show evidence that other people, and especially teachers, do not understand

what it means to be OVC. They say that their challenging situation at home is exacerbated by the treatment they receive from teachers. Their responses below reflected their view:

> *"Teachers love the children coming from well-to-do families. We, who come from poor families are disregarded".*

> *"Teachers do not treat us the same".*

Another participant shared another view, which the researcher finds very disturbing, and thus, she conducted a debriefing session with the learner after the interview.

> *"They tell us painful words. One teacher once told me that I will fail. And indeed, I failed twice. Now I am doing Grade 10 for the third time and I am not even sure whether I will pass at the end of the year. I am demoralised. I come to school, because they said I must come".*

These responses indicated that even at school, there was a gap in the understanding of the OVC's needs and their needs from the teachers. Similar to how many caregivers do not understand the plight of OVC, teachers also seem to unfairly compare them to other children who live in better social circumstances (Dekeza, 2018; Pillay, 2018) and do not have to cope with all these challenges. Masitsa (2008) pointed out that the reaction from some teachers often demotivates OVC from succeeding in schools. Motsa and Morojele (2017) also comment on the teachers' misconceptions of OVC. They postulate that some teachers mistreat vulnerable children, because they expect them to be able to meet their expectations regarding studying and homework in the same way as all other children. When these children fail to meet their expectations, they regard them as being lazy, incapable and irresponsible. Out of their own frustration, they then ridicule, scold and punish these learners, instead of finding our first-hand what their circumstances are.

UNAIDS (2017) assert in support of the view that some teachers are not sympathetic to the plight of OVC, based on their own ignorance. They yell at them, make fun of them or chase them out of their classrooms. This is a sad reality for these children, and it shows how deeply many of them are misunderstood. However, it should be noted that not all teachers react the same way. There are those who are kind and considerate. Some even go as far as catering for their school resources. While on the surface, it could be assumed to be a problem of the schools, it can actually be reduced to the fact that teachers generally do not seem to understand these vulnerable children. On the other hand, it can also be assumed that most of these teachers do not have the basic skills to be in a position to assist these children in an emotional, psychosocial or other manner of support.

8.3.4.4 Difficulty in forming relationships

Findings from the views of participants indicated that OVC find it difficult to form relationships with other leaners who were having parents. They showed that they cannot easily socialize with them as they feel excluded when they talk about their experiences with parents. The views of participants captured this sentiment:

"At school, it becomes difficult to associate with other children who have parents, as they always talk about how their parents treat them and do beautiful things for them and you have nothing to share with them".

"Sometimes, we prefer to be alone to avoid arousing feelings of longing for our parents".

Thse sentiments as shared by participants confirmed how difficult it is for OVC to relate well with other children who may have parents or who are not poor as they are, or who do not have to be in charge of all the household chores. This hinders their socialization process.

8.3.4.5 Poor performance

Findings from this study found that the vulnerable children and especially OVC, do not perform well at school which is attributed to the many household responsibilities they have to attend to. Some of them are household heads and are responsible for the whole household, as well as taking care of their siblings, while some stay with their old and frail grandparents who need care.

> *"After our arrival at home, we do dishes, cook and iron our uniforms and sometimes, they send us to the Indian shops to get some stuff. By the time we get finished, it is already late and you are also tired. Eventually, you won't have time … you will say, I will do it tomorrow. Tomorrow, also you won't have time".*

> *"We finish our chores late. By the time you get finished, you are also tired. The only thing you want is sleep".*

> *"The challenges we are facing affect our education".*

Most of these children come from poverty-affected households. Education is the only vehicle that can be used to break the cycle of poverty that these children are tied to. Therefore, failure to see progress in education means that the cycle of poverty will continue. This greatly diminishes their opportunities to become meaningful citizens of tomorrow.

8.3.4.6 Grade repetition

Responses from principals indicated that many children who are repeating grades come from the category of vulnerable learners. For example, if one examines the selected sample, three participants are repeating their grade for the third time, five are repeating their grade for the second time, while seven are in their current grade for the first time.

This is also reflected by the age of some participants. While some may not be repeating the present grade, they might have already repeated some earlier grades. Grade repetition can result from academic failure and unsatisfactory progress, resulting in insufficient examination marks to advance to the next level. Literature explains both positive and negative consequences of grade repetition; on the positive side, it can help children master language proficiency as well as Mathematics skills, while parents or caregivers regard it as costly and encouraging dropout rates and lower educational attainment (Sylla et al., 2015; Van der Berg et al., 2019).

Though some experts believe that it is a good solution if the learning objectives are not achieved, the problem is that most children who repeat their grades are likely to come from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds, where the parents or caregivers have low educational attainment and sometimes even low measures of intelligence (Sylla et al., 2015). Such caregivers or parents are incapable of assisting the learners with any homework or tasks they have to conduct for school. Grade repetition can perpetuate a cycle of disadvantage in these children. Thus, the provision of aftercare, where homework can be completed under qualified supervision, would take care of such challenge.

8.3.4.7 Lack of support services in schools

Findings derived from the discussions with principals' show a lack of supportive mechanisms for either OVC or troubled children in schools. The lack of support services is based on the fact that there is no support personnel and even if teachers might want to help, many of them feel already overburdened by large classes and will thus not be willing or able to take on any extra work of supporting these learners.

Here are the views of one principal:

"There is nothing that we do as a school for these children. In fact, we do not have as yet identified this category of learners at the moment".

"When you speak like this, it is like you are conscientising me with these learners, because we have incidences, where learners just drop out of school for no apparent reason. We will hear after a long time about the challenges he was experiencing. One of our learners dropped out of school and later committed suicide. It is painful, because we never tried to find out what his problem was".

This response by the principals shows that there is no support for these vulnerable children at school. They are treated in the same manner as the other learners, which allowed no room to identify and address their challenges. Other studies also identify that OVC are treated the same way as other children in terms of the school's expectations (Motsa & Morojele, 2017).

In one of the schools, minimal efforts are made to identify and categorise these learners, but there are no support initiatives for them. The record of their situation is merely kept for administrative purposes. Though there are teachers who are willing to support the children, they have so much curriculum work that they have no time to intervene. They also do not have the necessary skills to manage any intervention.

The impression gained from the interviews with the principal/vice-principal in the two schools is that there are no supportive services available for vulnerable children in schools. If the children stay alone at home, or in challenging living conditions, and there are no supportive services available at school, then those children are left "abandoned" to their own resources and inner resilience to rise above the conditions they are faced with in those environments.

8.3.5 Risks and coping mechanisms

There are many risks associated with being an OVC. Findings showed that OVC are faced with risks such as high failure rates, high dropout rates and getting involved in anti-social or even criminal activities. Hage (2012) supported the view that OVC face harsh situations. These risk factors expose them to hardships and barriers towards a meaningful

learning process, which compromises their academic performance (Kemp, 2013). On the other hand, rural contexts are often credited as they still hold on to traditional customs, where neighbours keep a watch over children that are staying alone. Although these children are at a higher risk of being confronted with issues such as neglect, other risks such as sexual abuse and burglary tend to be less frequent, although children who are faced with absolute poverty and starvation tend to succumb to crime and prostitution merely to survive.

8.3.5.1 Risks

Findings from the words of participants have shown that OVC are faced with several risks which are captured;

> *"We are staying alone. There is always a risk that something bad may happen to you".*

> *"We are a higher risk of engaging ourselves in ill activities like illicit drugs".*

> *"Our chances of dropping out from school is so high".*

The findings here confirm that they are at a higher risk compared to other children of engaging in anti-social activities. Some of anti-social activities is tendency to be involved in drugs and substance abuse as alluded. In the view of the researcher this compromises both their physical, psychological and social development. In some instances they start to use this illicit drugs and substances while still youngand their bodies have not developd to an extent of enduring harmful substances. Moreover if children start to engage in substances at an earlier age there is high probability that they will never make it in their academic work.

8.3.5.2 Coping

However, there is another side to the vulnerability of children. Though the discussion

reveals the serious challenges and risks that OVC are faced with, there are learners or children, who manage to survive against all odds. The study thus anchores on the argument that though OVC are faced with multiple difficulties, many of them have the necessary inner strength, resilience and will to survive to produce positive outcomes for their lives.

In my practical observation, there are those who are joyful, positive and resilient. They relate well with other children and are motivated in their studies. This is what Beasley et al. (2003) and Makhonza (2018) put forth, "People are born with resilient attributes". Despite their hardships, many children are or learn to be resilient and overcome difficulties to grow up to lead productive lives. They are creative and instinctively decide on their own coping mechanisms:

> *"We try to cope with the situation, because we know our mothers are not here to assist".*

(a) Self-talk

Self-talk is a person's internal dialogue derived from a subconscious mind (Holland, 2020). It can produce many benefits for people who are under severe stress, especially when it is positive self-talk. Some of its benefits are to improve the general well-being of a person as well as greater life satisfaction (Holland, 2020):

> *"I sometimes talk myself, because I know that things cannot change. It makes me feel better to move on with my life".*

(b) Journaling

Another participant reveals that she used journaling to deal with her situation. She shares her thoughts as follows:

"I have a book where I write my experiences. And at times, as I write about my feelings, I will be crying. But this helps me, because after writing those feelings, I feel better".

Another participant supports her and also states that she has a journal where she writes about her feelings.

Though journaling is not meant to replace therapy for children, it can be a form of "ventilation" for those whose emotions are overwhelmed. Journaling can be a great form of therapy for children who have psychosocial issues. Literature confirms that journaling can help one to create meaning and feel better (Ritchie, 2017). In addition, it can also help those who have experienced trauma and loss (Ritchie, 2017). OVC have experienced loss in their young lives, so journaling could help them to create meaning out of their situation.

On the other hand, participants also recall negative ways of coping, where, because of too much pressure, they end up dropping out of school or using drugs. Dropping out of school to seek employment so that they could care for their siblings, is one of the main coping strategies that older children use. However, dropping out of school robs them of their future goals of getting an educational qualification and being able to support themselves and their family in future.

One participant reveals his experiences:

"After I lost my parents, I faced a situation where I was left all alone, with no-one to care for me. I ended up dropping out of school after failing Grade 11. I tried to find employment, but I could not. I was doing only odd jobs with a little salary. At the end, I thought I was not helping myself either; that is why I came back to school".

The findings reveal that OVC try in many ways to cope with their situation. This confirms other literature that most people are naturally endowed with the ability to cope with

adversity (Maila & Mabasa, 2021; Makhonza, 2018), as long as there are protective factors and a nurturing environment that help to deal with their situation.

8.3.6 Intervention strategies for OVC in schools

The researcher aligned this study with a PAR methodology, which gave participants an opportunity to be involved during all steps of the research process. When asked what their suggestions are to improve their welfare in school, they suggest the following:

"Our schools need people whom children could talk to when they were overwhelmed. There must be a space to share our pains and frustrations".

"There must be empowerment sessions, where we can have opportunities to engage in activities that would improve our self-image. As OVC, we have a poor image of ourselves, and we need sessions that would make us have a positive view of ourselves".

"Schools should have programmes such as Adopt a child, where people such as our teachers could be available so that we can relate with them".

"Talk sessions, where we could be given an opportunity to talk, because in most cases we do not talk about our experiences".

"Support groups could be very helpful to us. They could offer us a place to support each other and breathe".

"Schools should assist us to access counselling services to help us go through our emotional experiences".

"There must be a material support portal in schools, where we could go when we have serious material needs".

The suggestions as shown above revealed ways which OVC suggest could make their experience in schools better. For example, they have shown need for several counselling services, talk sessions and adopt a child programme amongst others. Some schools have adopt a child programmes however they fail to produce any meaningful outcome as teachers are already burdened with their academic duties.

Counselling services are critical to OVC and can help them resolve their personal and psychogical problems. Findings from this study and other studies have already shown that OVC are dealing with a lot of emotional problems. Literature provides many benefits of counselling which among others include greater self acceptance and self esteem and the ability to change self defeating behaviours as well as management of emotions especially anger (Reese, 2021). A study conducted by Nzeleni (2015) confirmed this view and asserted further that counselling services are crucial to lifelong learning of learners.

Findings also revelaled the need of support groups in schools. Support groups provide an opportunity to OVC have talk sessions. Second they provide an opportunity for the healing process to take place especially in cases where they are dealing with loss of parents. As a result they can be helpful to children going through psychological and emotional challenges(Gerrity & Delucia-Waack, 2006)).However this view shows a serious concern especially when one looks at the complexity of academic programmes which may not cater for such specialized services in schools like support groups.

8.4 CONCLUSION

The chapter presented, analysed and discussed findings derived from the responses of participants in this study. From their views, themes, sub-themes and sub-sub-themes were generated which formed the core of the analysis and discussions. Some of the themes included psychosocial issues, material needs, life at home and challenges at school. The study identified that OVC dealt with many psychosocial issues. They dealt with anger, feelings of being lost and isolation, among others. They reiterated that they

still dealt with social stigma at home, in the community and in their schools. On the other hand, they lacked many basic necessities and were forced to carry on with their lives without things that could make their lives easier. In their perception, their lives in their respective households were difficult, as they often thought that they were not treated well by their caregivers, while they had to deal with the burden of household chores every day. This extra burden of many household duties had a negative impact on their academic w

CHAPTER 9

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

"The power of statistics and the clean lines of quantitative research appealed to me, but I fell in love with the richness and depth of qualitative research." Brené Brown

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the challenges faced by OVC in the schools of the Maleboho East Circuit of the Capricorn District, Limpopo Province. The study was anchored on three theoretical frameworks, which were the ecosystem, strengths-based and resilience theories. The study followed the PAR approach within the qualitative design to explore the challenges of the OVC in schools by using an instrumental case study.

In Chapter 8, the findings of the study were presented, analysed and interpreted. Findings were also supported by the quotes, presenting the participants' actual words. This chapter exposes how the aim of the study and thus the objectives of the study were achieved. The key findings of the study are presented, and conclusions drawn. Finally, recommendations are made on how OVC can be assisted more effectively in these schools.

9.2 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to explore and describe the challenges faced by OVC in the schools of the Maleboho-East Circuit, in the Capricorn District, of Limpopo Province to develop a multi-disciplinary model. The aim of this study was achieved through the following objectives:

Objective 1

- To identify the categories of vulnerable children as well as the determining factors that make children vulnerable.

The discussion of this objective is divided into two sections. The first section refers to the categories of vulnerable children.

This was presented in Chapter 4 of the literature chapter and in the findings of the study in Chapter 8. In the rural school context, there were many categories of vulnerable children. They were poor children who came from impoverished homes. They might have one or even both parents, but their parents might not be employed. They were vulnerable in terms of a lack of material resources and basic necessities. They might be cushioned by the presence of the parents; as such parental factor became a protective factor.

There were those who had lost their parents and were forced to be family heads and caring either for their siblings or elderly caregivers. They dealt with a lot of problems, which made it difficult for them to succeed at school. They tended to fail grades, were forced to repeat grades multiple times, and thus, were over-aged, stigmatised and demotivated. They started to exhibit disciplinary problems based on their level of low morale.

The study identified different categories of vulnerable children, but the OVC seemed to be overlapping in multiple categories of children's vulnerability. Many factors made children vulnerable. Findings confirmed that the OVC were the most vulnerable, and faced with multiple dimensions of vulnerabilities, which other research studies highlighted. Though they did not show any evidence of being victims of domestic violence, there was evidence of abuse from the treatment they received at home. They were subjected to many challenges unlike all the other categories of vulnerable children. They were facing multiple vulnerabilities and multiple hardships in their homes, the community and their schools.

- To determine factors contributing to vulnerability of children

This objective was addressed in section 4.6 of Chapter 4 and section 8.3 of Chapter 8. The factors that contribute to children's vulnerability revolved around both individual and structural factors. Individual factors were issues such as the child's own temperament, which might be difficult for caregivers to manage, but also the learner's age, disability and immigration background, whereas structural factors included family circumstances.

There were families that tended to make children more vulnerable. For instance, in cases where families were impacted by HIV/AIDS, there might be severely sick members and the child was forced to care for their ailing family member/s. Child-headed households, where children were acting as family heads and children from single parent households experienced many challenges, especially if a family member had died from AIDS. Factors that cause vulnerability in children can include the children's household, their communities, their peers and their respective schools. There are also societal factors such as inappropriate or insufficient policies and programmes, policies that are not implemented to cater for the needs of these children, and certain cultural beliefs.

Contextual factors contributed to vulnerability, where children were living in communities that were affected by widespread poverty. Although many factors contributed to children's vulnerability, evidence showed that poverty ranked high in exposing these children to vulnerability. Most of these children came from impoverished homes, where resources were scarce, resulting in a serious competition for resources. Often, there was no warmth and affection in those households, as the struggle for resources was always prominent. Participants felt that they are being discriminated against when it came to allocation of duties and resources. They were denied some of the basic necessities and they were convinced that the discrimination against them was happening because of the absence of their mothers. However, the real cause of many of the problems was poverty and thus that resources were limited. In the face of poverty, most caregivers found it easier to cater for their own children, while disregarding the children that were not their own.

Poverty, a lack of resources and discrimination as well as feeling isolated made some OVC drop out of school prematurely, with a hope of finding employment to ameliorate their situation. However, this continued to expose them to further vulnerability, as they did not have the skills and the level of education that would enable them to secure decent employment. Some resorted to drug usage to escape the frustration of their situation.

Other contextual factors included the societal customs that made children more vulnerable. In these societies, gender stereotypes were still common, where girls were burdened with the majority of the household duties, while boys did less work. On the other hand, they also suffered from social stigma and alienation in their communities, instead of the communities protecting them. In schools, there was no support from the school's systems or the teachers, who were in most cases not even aware of the challenges OVC faced or their needs. Teachers did not understand their problems and had not been to their homes to be able to assess the causes of the problems. This confirmed the view that vulnerability begets vulnerability, as these children were subjected to further vulnerability in their schools. Findings confirmed insufficient protective factors in the communities and schools to help the affected OVC to become resilient.

The conclusion drawn was that various factors played an important role in making children vulnerable. There were individual factors, but in most cases, the factors are more structural and there was nothing children could do to change their situation. The researcher concludes that the impact these factors have on children continues to marginalise, disadvantage and exclude them further. Therefore, interventions that were in place partially addressed some problems while neglecting other issues that they were dealing with.

Objective 2

- To determine high risks and challenges faced by orphaned and vulnerable children.

This objective was addressed in section 5.3 of Chapter 5 and section 8.3 of Chapter 8. The participants reported that they are faced with many challenges in their communities and schools, and the challenges they face in their homes. They complained about the many duties they were forced to do in their homes. In their view, their lives were taken over by the household chores and having to look after siblings and elderly caregivers, and did not leave them any time to do their homework for school or to study.

In addition, they revealed the social stigma and rejection they suffered in their communities and in the worst cases, even their extended families. They were stigmatised and ridiculed on account of what relatives would say their now deceased parents used to do. In schools, the lack of support or even recognition of their problems marginalised the children further. Teachers viewed them as uncooperative as they came to school late, did not do their homework or were often absent. They did not try to establish the reasons for such behaviour and instead, they ridiculed and punished them. They compared them with the other children who were coming from normal families. As a result, their experience in school was most often negative. They failed in their schoolwork, repeated grades several times and tended to be above age in relation to the grade they were supposed to be in.

The scenario as revealed by findings connected well with the main argument of the ecosystem theory, which postulated the interconnectedness of systems in the children's lives. It is therefore impossible to separate the performance of OVC in school with their experiences in their homes.

The other risks associated with being an OVC was the risk of failing, as they did not have enough time to do their academic work. They were at a higher risk of dropping out of school, because of the lack of progress in their grades. Moreover, female OVC were found to be at a higher risk of being involved in transactional sex with older men, thereby putting

themselves at risk of transmission of STIs and HIV/AIDS. They also put themselves at risk of falling pregnant, while they were still teenagers, thereby exacerbating their vulnerabilities further.

To address the challenges these children were facing; a multi-dimensional approach is needed.

Objective 3

- To develop a multi-disciplinary school-based model from a strengths-based perspective.

This objective was fully realised in Chapter 10 of the study. The development of the multi-disciplinary school-based model was guided by the findings of the study. It would be intended to guide caregivers, peers and teachers to assist these learners.

9.3 SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS

The study employed thematic content analysis generating themes, sub themes and sub sub themes from the views of participants. The findings of the study are summarised in the following section.

9.3.1 Relationship between poor performance and social problems

Findings derived from the discussions with the OVC participants showed a direct relationship between poor performance at school and social problems at home or in their community. The demographic information of participants established that most participants were still in lower grades, below the level they should have achieved according to their age. Second, most came from the households that comprised at least some unemployed individuals. In some families, no-one had work. Unemployment was found to be the major contributor of households' poverty. Poverty has a negative rippling effect on children, and especially those who are OVC. Hlalele (2015) asserts that poverty and violence remain the two key features subjecting children to more vulnerability.

Most OVC – but not all − achieved lower academic performance at school than children who lived in better-off or so-called "normal" families. Their preoccupation with the death of their parents, the isolation they felt based on the loss of friends, and undertaking the additional work of caring for elderly caregivers and siblings, or casual weekend jobs, and having to take care of themselves after the death of their parents made it difficult for them to concentrate on schoolwork or while they are at school. Many reports found them to be thinking deeply, interpreted as daydreaming, being tired and even falling asleep, coming to school late and infrequently, arriving unprepared and being nonresponsive in classrooms.

9.3.2 Psychosocial problems

OVC have to deal with many psychosocial problems, which literature and these findings confirmed. The emotional problems became worse by the fact that they tended to internalise issues and endure their suffering alone. They commonly resort to a culture of silence.

Their responses showed that they dealt with a lot of emotional issues such as having a difficult temperament and anger. They were angry at people and at their challenging lives, the fact that their parents "left them" to have to cope on their own, and their frustration abiout their inability to change their situation. It was as if they were also angry at themselves for not having power to change their situation. In some cases OVC get angry at their mothers for dying and leaving them.In addition, they dealt with other issues such as loneliness, isolation and rejection. This showed that OVC need a lot of emotional support and none was provided. This explains the reasons why orphaned children are vulnerable and susceptible to long-term emotional problems such as unmanaged anger, depression, isolation and anxiety because of their failure to resolve their sense of loss. Intervention efforts such as NSNP and scholar transport were limited, as they mainly targeted their material needs and were not open to all OVC, while these initiatives neglected the psychological aspect of these children. Moreover, these intervention efforts were in themselves not sufficient. For example, NSNP catered for only one meal per day.

This meant that those children who stayed alone and had no means of sustenance were forced to survive on that one small meal per day.

On the other hand, their problems were also not limited to the psychological aspect of their lives. There was a whole range of other social issues that they were confronted by. The issue of social stigma and marginalisation was a common occurrence. Some highlighted that they were stigmatised by the very people who were supposed to protect them, for example, their immediate family members. They were often ridiculed and mocked by their peers, some community members and some teachers. This explained their lack of trust and confidence in people.

Whenever they had to cope with challenges such as a lack of food and other necessities, they would decide to rather suffer in silence, than seeking help from other people, because they felt embarrassed to have to admit that they had no food and also believed that people were not trustworthy. Therefore, any intervention initiative must start by building their trust and confidence in people. The erosion of trust had made them to lose confidence in other people as well as in themselves. They also lamented their need of parental guidance and supervision. They were of the opinion that life without the guidance of parents negatively affected them in relation to the choices they were making. They blamed some of their wrong choices on the fact that they were not supervised or guided. They also displayed a great need for recognition and approval from people surrounding them.

9.3.3 General lack of basic needs

OVC often grew up in impoverished and disadvantaged environments. They were forced into a life of hardship, which in many instances hindered their full participation in education. There was evidence from literature that the majority of children who attend school irregularly and have learning difficulties are part of the OVC category (Alem, 2020).

Findings showed that these children lack many material resources. The issue of hunger is still common in their lives. Not only food is their problem; they also lack many basic necessities that would improve their lives. The lack clothes, a complete school uniform and other school necessities remained a challenge to their schooling and led to them being teased or mocked for having torn items of clothing. Moreover, some OVC lacked a decent place to stay. In some instances, they were living in a one roomed house together with their siblings. They had no private place to study, bath or cook. The lack of proper housing is a serious barrier to the well-being of children (Mutiso & Muti, 2018; Skinner et al., 2013).

9.3.4 Burdened lives

The findings showed that life in their respective households was challenging. They lamented the many household duties they were supposed to attend to every day. In some cases, they had to work in the morning before coming to school, or go to sleep late at night to finish all duties that were allocated to them. This denied them an opportunity of a good night's sleep so that they would be refreshed for the next day's schooling. This might be one of the reasons why they were continuously tired and not performing well at school. On the other hand, some participants also lamented over the treatment they received from their caregivers, where preferential treatment was given to the biological children. Some OVC were fortunate and indicated that they were treated well. They understood their predicament, but the caregiving family's problem was that they were poor and unable to meet all their material demands.

Regarding their schools, they highlighted some of the challenges they were facing. They found it difficult to form relationships with their peers who had parents and were able to report on positive times spent together, as that made them to feel alienated and lonely, and they felt they could not relate well to them as they had no-one to talk about.

9.3.5 Social support services in schools

In the majority of all South African public schools, there are no social support services. Despite the comprehensive policies such as the White Paper 6 and SIAS advocating for inclusive education, implementation of this policy remains a huge challenge. Principals also highlighted the need for social support services to vulnerable children at schools. They were saddened by the fact that some ended up dropping out of school and resorted to suicide. It made them believe that society at large was failing these children. On the other hand, they were also frustrated by the fact that these children were not progressing and blamed their lack of capacity to assist these children at school. It was a challenge to them, since children spent most of their time at school. However, social support services would only be able to address the emotional aspect of these learners.

More needs to be done for them, such as providing an "aftercare" classroom, where these learners can study, complete their homework and receive another meal all under qualified supervision. Assistant teachers or retired teachers and principals could fill these positions. These learners would then be able to return home without still having to worry about their school work and could give their full attention to the tasks at home. It would also assist the poor learners who come from child-headed households or have to look after young siblings, if there could be crèche or nursery school facilities linked to the school, so that their siblings would be under supervision, while the older individual is attending school.

9.4 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN

From the findings derived from this study these conclusions were drawn:

(a) The OVC remained educationally excluded in schools as they could not cope with the demands of the schools together with the demands made of them at home. They were faced with many challenges, which included the lack of understanding from teachers to chronic late-coming and absenteeism. They continued to fail and repeat grades without necessary intervention to establish the reasons for their failures, which would lead to them to eventually dropping out of school. It seemed

no one really cared about these children or the scenarios they had to cope with at home. Without the necessary interventions, these children's future will be doomed.

(b) Schools are populated by multiple categories of children who need more than education. Since the categories of children vary and are increasingly complex, it is concluded that the education system is not holistic enough in its approach to these learners' needs to cater for the challenges these learners face.

(c) Findings revealed that OVC, among the categories of vulnerable children, were the most vulnerable group. The most challenging aspect is that the interventions geared towards them seemed not to be addressing the real problems of these children. Thus, it is concluded that the measures that were there were insufficient and not addressing the real challenges.

(d) Social factors such as poverty had a negative impact on them. Being an orphan and having to face the harsh reality of poverty was devastating.

(e) The loss of parents at a young age robbed the OVC of the opportunity to live normal lives. At school, they continued to be excluded and marginalised, as they were seen to be "different". Caused by their emotions of anger, frustration, lonliness, lack of trust, and feeling overburdened, their behaviour is complex and teachers find it difficult to deal with them.

The researcher concluded that the difficulty of implementing the White Paper 6 and SIAS compromised the quality of education and continued to marginalise and exclude these vulnerable learners further. Therefore, these policies were reduced to a piece of paper that needed political will to make it a reality.

9.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Reflecting on what the participants of this study revealed; the researcher presents the following recommendations. These recommendations are informed by literature as well

as empirical evidence:

9.5.1 Recommendations for the government

(a) As a custodian of child welfare, the government must ensure that the implementation of the White Paper for Inclusive Education is fast tracked. Policies cannot exist merely on paper, but must be implemented to transform the lives of the intended beneficiaries.

(b) Now that social services and education have been joined into one government department, it should be easier for government to allocate qualified social/child welfare personnel and ensure that established directorates for child welfare and inclusive education are operational and functional.

(c) The mainstreaming of social services in schools is of a critical nature. Government should provide the political leadership and will, and prioritise this essential service to learners, as children are the citizens of tomorrow.

(d) Government should provide a cooperative environment that is conducive for multi-sectoral collaboration between departments that are concerned with the welfare of children, for example, education, health and social development.

(e) School curriculums should not only focus on the intellectual aspect of learners, but should involve activities that are intended to empower them to become more resilient.

(f) Government must have programmes to empower teachers and capacitate them to acquire a better understanding of OVC and the challenges they are facing.

9.5.2 Recommendations for schools

(a) Schools should change from being "ordinary" or even worse, non-performing centres for education and instead, become caring schools, where every learner,

irrespective of their background, will be afforded an opportunity to succeed in education to become a capable, capacitated future citizen.

(b) Schools should create an environment where programmes such as Adopt a child programme will be used to help vulnerable children to have an adult voice in their lives. These can be used to monitor the learner psychologically and emotionally, and to monitor their progress in academic work.

(c) Teachers should be capacitated not only through workshops, but further study on how to identify troubled children and how to make an entry into their lives and support them. It should also be compulsory for teachers to visit each learner's home at least once a year, to assess in person what the learner's background is like and if any special interventions will be necessary. This can be undertaken together with a social worker or an assistant teacher or any other suitable person.

(d) Schools should encourage teachers to orientate themselves in basic counselling skills such as listening, empathy, reflecting and clarifying, among others.

9.5.3 Recommendation for families

Families that are deemed troubled or at risk should be given more support. This will require the welfare sector to have programmes targeting the families where vulnerable children grow up and offer them more support.

9.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study has shown that OVC face many challenges that negatively affect their educational performance. Once some of the recommendations are implemented, the study should be repeated to examine how these steps changed their situation. A pilot project could be implemented and researched to monitor how the lives of OVC have been improved.

CHAPTER 10

A PROPOSED MULTI- DISCIPLINARY SCHOOL-BASED MODEL FOR OVC

"Let us protect and support our children and they will have the world in their hands."
M Kemp

10.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings of this study revealed that OVC face many challenges, which hinder their chances of benefiting from the normal school system in the same way that other children can benefit. In an environment, where school social services were absent, there was a need for an intervention model for these children. Literature showed that children's needs for mental, emotional and behavioural care were unmet (Freeman, Simonsen, McCoach, Sugai, Lombard, & Horner, 2016). Without such intervention, these children are at a greater risk of dropping out of school, succumbing to substance abuse, risky sexual behaviour, violence and more severe mental health difficulties.

The discussions with the participants revealed the gaps in the provision of social services in schools. Therefore, schools remained greatly challenged to provide supportive mental health services to the learners, while they were promoting academic achievement (Freeman et al., 2016). To ensure that all learners in the schooling system have equal access to education and all barriers are removed, other interventions are needed, beyond what government has already implemented such as the NSNP and scholar transport. These approaches were helpful, yet insufficient in addressing the host of OVC needs as they focused on the physical needs and disregarded psychological needs.

10.2 THE ROLE OF SOCIAL POLICY

Any well-functioning government needs competent social or public policies to address the diverse needs of its people. Policies are aimed to respond to some of the challenges that face society. In South Africa, the advent of democracy in 1994 was followed by a

formulation of many policies intended to address social disparities. These policies have been heralded as effective; however, many authors and research studies identified the many challenges are still part of South Africa's policies (Gumede, 2019; Hoeyi, 2021, Brynard, 2007). In their notion, there is also a notable gap between policy formulation and policy implementation. Some of the challenges they highlight as hindering policy implementation are as follows:

10.2.1 Top down approach

In many instances, policies were formulated by experts in their respective fields, who are not orientated towards the real environmental conditions relating to the issues that policies were intending to address. They followed a top-down approach wherein experts decided on what should work for people at the grassroots level. The challenge with this type of approach was that in some instances, these policies failed to address the real issues of concern that were affecting the learners.

10.2.2 Lack of or mismanagement of resources

Although the lack of resources might be pointed as a hindrance to the effective implementation of policies, there was evidence that in most cases, it was not a lack of resources, but rather mismanagement of such resources.

10.2.3 Lack of political commitment and leadership

Policies need political commitment and leadership for successful implementation. However, literature lamented over leaders who seemed to have no interest to put policies into practice, for various reasons (Maduku & Osehi, 2018).

10.2.4 Lack of coordination among departments

South Africa still lacks efficient coordination between the various government departments. Officials who tried to initiate the implementation process would eventually

give up their endeavours, because there was no support from senior officials to make them a success.

10.2.5 Inefficient administration and corruption

Inefficiency and corruption are known obstacle that hinder the process of policy implementation. South Africa is rated as one of the most corrupt countries in the world and the rate of corruption permeates every level of the private and public sectors.

10.3 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The White Paper 6 for Inclusive Education of 2001 was formulated with the intention to address the needs of vulnerable learners in schools as discussed in section 3.3.9 of Chapter 3. Its goal was to remove barriers towards equal access education. Some of its objectives were outlined as follows:

- To develop an inclusive education and training system that will uncover and address barriers to learning;
- To build a caring and supportive school environment that takes cognisance of individual challenges;
- To diminish barriers to teaching, learning and development;
- To facilitate the restructuring of educational institutions into three types of facilities: ordinary schools, full-service schools, and special schools or resource centres;
- To offer a continuum of support in these facilities for learners who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion.

Since the inception of this policy in 2001, it faced difficulties in its implementation. The introduction of NSSIAS in 2008, which was meant to fast track its implementation, did not change matters. Reflecting on the participants' views, there was still a gap between the policy and what was happening at the grassroots level. Empirical evidence proved that vulnerable learners still faced many barriers and the policy did not have the intended impact on their lives. A report compiled by the Department of Education (2015) identified

that only the Western Cape, Gauteng, Free State and North West provinces had made notable progress in the policy implementation, and there was an evidence of improved learner performance (DBE, 2015). Limpopo is predominantly rural, and continued to lag behind the policy's implementation, which disadvantaged vulnerable learners further.

The following challenges were highlighted as hindrances towards the implementation of these policies:

- Funding: Studies show the reluctance of government to fund the directorates that are responsible for fast-tracking this policy (Gumede, 2019). There seems to be no political will from the government to commit itself in this regard;
- Lack of consistency in the identification of learners with social barriers and special needs. This was proven when the researcher was at the research sites, where learners had not been profiled;
- Full-service schools were still not established;
- There were no well-functioning and fully capacitated provincial directorates to successfully drive the implementation process.

Against this background, the researcher believed that there is no need for a new policy. The difficulty faced when aiming to implement this policy stems from the same source that many South African policies face. A policy needs clear guidelines on how it must be implemented, where and when it must be implemented and the deadlines for each step. Most important, however, the will to allocate specific funds and clear responsibility and accountability for each step in the process. Second, it needs the political will from government leaders to put structures in place that will fast-track the implementation process of this policy. Without such clear parameters and accountabilities, learners will remain vulnerable and this will continue to be a limiting social factor in schools. Their education continued to be compromised. This background provided the researcher with an imperative to develop a multi-disciplinary model that is school-based.

10.4 THE PROPOSED MULTI-DISCIPLINARY SCHOOL-BASED MODEL

Against this background, the researcher informed by the participants` contributions developed this model as a tool to ensure that OVC as well as other children receive a continuum of care and support in the environment where they find themselves. In this case, it is in their schools, where they spend most of their waking time. This model is in alignment of the Bronfenbrenner ecosystem theory, which stresses 'a person in context' that underpinned the study (Adams, 2012). Its position is that all systems in people's lives are interconnected. The strengths-based perspective focuses more on the strengths of people rather than their deficiencies. It is used to tap into the strengths of the systems in the children's lives to improve their living conditions through the development and enhancement of their resilience.

In the model, the child is a point of departure and the role of teachers is critical in all intervention efforts. Teachers remain the primary professionals whom children meet outside their homes. However, the success of teachers depends on collaboration of different stakeholders on different levels, as there will be instances where specialised social services will be needed outside the school. Yet, the model is designed in such a way that it will be user-friendly for lay people who are not trained in therapy, for example, teachers. It is a support plan with the following objectives:

- To provide an intervention strategy to learners experiencing psychosocial challenges;
- To make a positive difference in vulnerable learners' lives and minimise the impact of social problems on them that they are exposed to;
- To retain vulnerable learners in the school system for the appropriate years/grades;
- To provide a support base for learners that will assist them to achieve positive educational outcomes.

10.4.1 Basic features of the model

In section 6.3 of Chapter 6, the researcher highlighted different models that guide school social work practice. However, the model presented in this section is an intervention model that could be used in different school environments. This implies that the model can be used in schools that might have adopted a school change or social interaction model of school social work practice. The model is intended to empower teachers to be proactive and intervene effectively with learners who experience psychosocial problems.

In the void of school social services, the model resembles the following features, which will make it easy to be practised. Therefore, the following features apply:

10.4.1.1 User-friendly

When models are complicated, they deter people from following them and as a result, they may end up not benefiting the intended beneficiaries. Therefore, this model is easy to learn, understand, use and deal with. It can be used by any lay person such as teachers, caregivers and even peers. It is intended to enable those wanting to intervene to do so safely, effectively and efficiently, while at the same time, they enjoy the experience of being able to help.

10.4.1.2 Context-specific

The model is suitable for the school context. It is intended to use the available resources that are relevant to the context of this study and circumstances that are prevailing for the children's lives. It may also be used in other contexts, but some adaptations may be needed.

10.4.1.3 Bottom-up

The child is the point of departure in this model. All intervention efforts are informed by

the child's situation and circumstances. In cases where the child's situation is complex, other specialised disciplines will be added. This is different from the top-down approaches and provides a broader knowledge base. In this way, there is an acknowledgement that the children know best about their situation (Chambers. 2013).

The following diagram presents the multi-disciplinary intervention process for a child who experiences psychosocial distress. The school, the family, the civil society and government are all collaborating in different phases to ensure that the children's needs are met in schools.
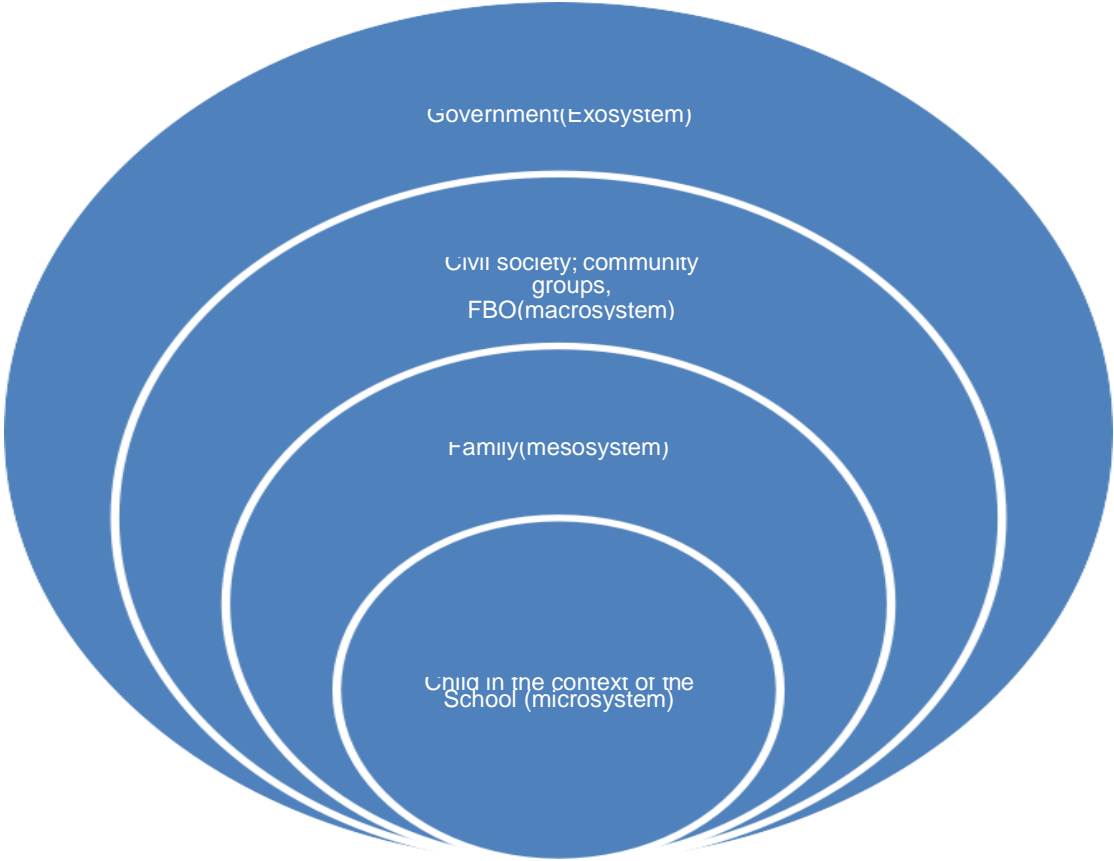

Figure 9: The proposed multi-disciplinary school-based model for OVC

The above diagram shows the proposed model that comes in four collaborative layers.

The first layer shows the child who experiences psychosocial challenges in the school environment. This marks the starting point of the intervention process in the child. There may be noticeable behavioural change in the learner. In this case, it may be chronic absenteeism, late arrival at school or underperformance, among other indicators of social problems. In the interaction of the teacher and the learners, they identify the exact barrier the learner is experiencing that has a negative effect on the learner's participation and achievement.

According to Bronfenbrenner's theory (2005), the child and the school are the microsystem, where there is an exchange principle, and the quality of exchange determines whether the child will experience adaptive fit or misfit (McKendrick, 1990; Tudge et al., 2009). Second, the theory postulates the interconnectedness of all systems in the child's life (Kirst-Ashman, 2018). Therefore, the child is not an isolated individual, but a product of what is happening in their household or community. The interactions that occur in their immediate environment either encourage or discourage the fulfilment of the child's needs.

In the strength based approach, the school becomes a resource in the environment of the child where they can be assisted. According to the model, instead of focusing on the lack of social supportive personnel in the school, the school and teachers are a resource that can be tapped to aid the troubled OVC to improve their well-being. Therefore, schools are put in a position to transform from ordinary to caring schools, interested in the welfare of children. In the notion of the ecosystem, the school as a component in the environment of the child can respond to the needs of in-school OVC (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Relationships and networks within and outside the school should therefore be good enough to facilitate the fulfilment of the OVC's needs.

The second layer referred to the child's family, which according to Bronfenbrenner, was the meso system in the context of the study (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). In the context of thie study the layer can extend to include extended family memebrs like aunts and uncles as well as neighbours. The problems learners experience at school, are interconnected to

other systems in the children's environment. Teachers cannot effectively handle the learners' challenges in isolation, without engaging with other role players in the life of the child. Bronfenbrenner (2005) argued that children exist in a reciprocal relationship with their environment and the process is functions according to an exchange principle. This means that the learners' behaviour or the challenge do not happen in isolation. As such, what teachers may be seeing in the learners' behaviour and performance may be a product of what is taking place in the family.

The children are an extension of what is happening in their families. If the family experiences problems, the behaviour of the child will point to that. In the interview of teachers with parents/caregivers, identified barriers can be clarified, to predispose, reinforce and classify enabling factors. This is a layer where information is gathered and assessed through interviews with parents/caregivers and insome instances neighbours. Other teachers, for example, senior teachers or an SMT member, may be engaged to obtain a holistic view of why the learner is presenting these difficulties. The information may be both formal and informal. This will help the teacher to have a better opportunity to identify and assess the psychological, social, emotional and educational barriers the child is facing, and the nature of assistance required. What happens in this layer informs what is going to happen in the next layer.

The third layer of the model presents civil society, which in this case involves the broader social groupings such as the traditional authorities, the church, CBOs, FBOs and the NGOs, among others, which are part of the complementary process. In many communities, there are services that are at the disposal of the school. There are drop-in centres the child can be taken to, as well traditional kraals, CBOs and FBOs. These are organisations that can be engaged at the macro level to help those children that are destitute and, in some cases, staying alone. They can assist these learners with a range of services from home visits to mentoring services. Some FBOs also offer projects such as Adopt a child programme, where members of local religious bodies are encouraged to take vulnerable children in their care by providing them with moral and character-building programmes and provide them with school uniforms.

This study has identified traditional kraals, CBOs, FBOs and NGOs as critical outreach organisations that have the aim of improving the welfare of in-school OVC; hence, they are an integral component of the proposed model. NGOs can support schools through sponsoring school feeding schemes, assisting with the provision of uniforms, and forming partnerships with the community and schools in projects aimed at supporting OVC. Such linkages and relationships are of great value in enhancing the welfare of the OVC in schools. This does not yet seem to happen at present, as they interviewed OVC did not mention any such intervention or were the beneficiaries of such projects.

The model posits that there may be cases where targeted interventions that are more specialised are required for those OVC who have serious psychosocial challenges. In those cases, the engagement of the local social worker may be required at this layer. Apart from rendering counselling and therapeutic services, the social worker can assist the school further by rendering the services that will enhance the family to function better, by offering family support services, family-centred services, intensive family preservation services or crisis services (Strydom, 2012). The responses of participants have shown that they still experience social stigma from community members, and therefore, the engagement of the social worker at the macro level will place the person in a position to render services targeted at the community, for example, supportive services for community members and community-based structures and organisation as well as educational services (Strydom, 2012). They can also play an advocacy role in cases where the engagement of external resources is needed, and collaborate with other sectors such as health in the care of OVC (Kasiram, 1993).

The fourth layer is the exosystem layer, which is the system that affects the children, though it is not directly involved with the children (MacBlain, 2018). Government, as part of the exosystem, can play a critical role in empowering schools to respond to the needs of OVC. They can adopt a pro-OVC approach and promote a curriculum that is inclusive of all learners, irrespective of their background and challenges, while assisting OVC to be able to perform at the same level. The role of teachers in the schools is critical in the care

of OVC; therefore, government can empower and capacitate teachers through workshops (and home visits of learners, especially those who face challenges) to gain a better understanding of OVC, and respond appropriately to their needs in the school setting. Further than that, government is well positioned to ensure that the implementation of the White Paper 6 becomes a reality by ensuring that directorates for inclusive education are fully operational and functional.

10.4.2 The implementation phases of the model

Literature presents different phases of interventions when social workers intervene in the lives of clients (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2018). However, the model in not meant to deviate completely from the usual phases of intervention of social work, which commonly includes engagement, assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation, among others, but it is meant to be user-friendly for any person, enabling them to apply it when helping troubled children.

The following diagram shows how the proposed model can be implemented. This diagram is meant to enhance the diagram shown in Figure 9 and provide clear guidelines on how to implement the model.
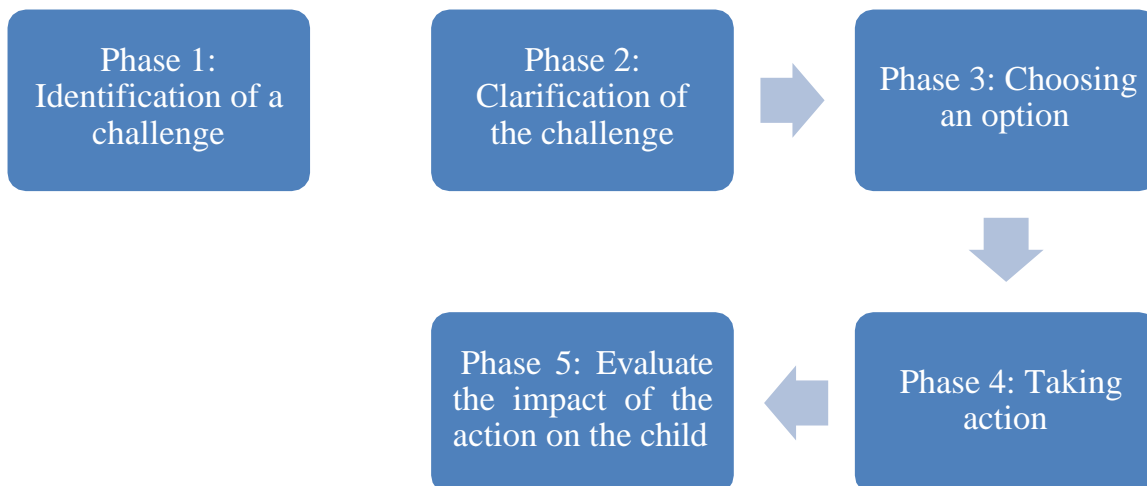
Phase 1: Identification of a challenge

Phase 2: Clarification of the challenge

Phase 3: Choosing an option

Phase 5: Evaluate the impact of the action on the child

Phase 4: Taking action

Figure 10: Implementation phases of the model

Adapted from Kirst- Ashman & Hull, 2018

10.4.3 Role-players in the intervention process

For any model to be effective there must be clear guidelines on who does what and at what stage. This is important, especially in a school context, so that it does not remain a theoretical solution, but will be translated into practice. The teachers remain in the forefront of the implementation of this model. However, caregivers, neighbours and peers can implement the model with ease. Other stakeholders, for example, traditional kraals, CBOs, FBOs, NGOs and local social workers enter the process at a far later stage.

10.5 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE MODEL TO SOCIAL WORK AND EDUCATION

Social work remains the profession at the forefront of the fight for social justice, human rights and social development (Strydom, 2012). Its targeted groups are the poor, the stigmatised, the marginalised and the vulnerable, and the goal is their protection (NASW SA, 2016). Therefore, the welfare of OVC in schools is one of the profession's primary concerns and school social work is mandated to cater for the need to improve the lives of OVC and other vulnerable learners.

The study established the lack of social support services in schools and the absence of school social work, which left the OVC and other vulnerable children in schools unsupported and even more vulnerable. The study also proved that OVC were not progressing well in their education. The proposed model is in line with the ecosystem theory of Bronfenbrenner (2005), which argued the interconnectedness of all systems in a child's environment and the strengths-based theory that shifts away from pathologies to the strengths in the child 's environment (Tudge et al., 2009; Saleebey, 2013).

In the absence of social services, the proposed model intends to bridge the gap and ensure that though there are no school social work services in schools, the needs of OVC and other vulnerable children will not be ignored. The proposed model calls for a multi-sectoral collaboration between different disciplines such as education, civil society, social work and government to improve the welfare of OVC and other vulnerable children in schools. This can make a positive contribution to education, as the model will ensure that emotional and social barriers are addressed and removed wherever possible, and all learners are given the opportunity to benefit fully from and within the education system. Thus, by applying the various recommendations and the model, this has the potential to improve the academic performance of all learners, reduce the failure rate, the cost of repetition and avoid school drop-out from occurring, which was seen as the current solution by many learners.

In the social work sector, the model improves the delivery of social services to all people, including OVC. Second, it improves the multi-sectoral collaboration between educators and social workers. Teachers become the extension of social workers in schools, and thereby make social services more accessible to all learners. The model also proposes the involvement of other civil structures and establishes linkages between all structures in the environment of the child. In the opinion of the researcher, a collaboration of this nature will help to improve the welfare of children and promote their resilience.

10.6 CONCLUSION

The chapter presented a multi-disciplinary model for assisting OVC in dealing with challenges they face in schools. This was done to respond to the fourth objective of the study, which was to develop a multi-disciplinary school-based model to cater for the needs of vulnerable children that aimed at minimising the impact of challenges these learners face and that hinder their educational performance and progress. Using the model will enable vulnerable children to be assisted by all the structures in their immediate community.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE

WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

PARTICIPANT`S NAME:…………………………………..DATE:………………………
Researcher:……………………

TITLE OF THE STUDY
An exploratory Study on the Challenges Faced by Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in the Schools of Maleboho East Circuit of the Capricorn District of Limpopo Province to Develop a Multi-Disciplinary Model

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explore the challenges faced by OVC in the schools at the Maleboho East Circuit in order to develop a multi disciplinary model.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

I will be invited to be part of a research process, to participate in focus group discussions and to be part of the development of a multi-disciplinary model. I will sign this form in the presence of my parent/ caregiver. I understand that the focus group discussion will be recorded and there will be transcripts of interviews. The CDs and transcripts will be kept in a secure place and will be heard only for research purposes by the researcher. Once the research has been completed, the CDs and transcripts will be stored at the University of Limpopo and will not be used by the researcher or any other researcher without my informed consent.

RISK AND DISCOMFORTS

I take note that there are no known risks or discomforts associated with the research project. Should there be any identifiable risks or harm I may choose to withdraw my participation in the study.

BENEFITS

I understand that there are no direct benefits for me in participating in this study. However the results of this study may provide insight and knowledge on how to assist orphaned and vulnerable learners in schools.

PARTICIPANT`S RIGHTS

I understand that my participation is voluntary, I can choose not participate in part or the entire study and that I can withdraw my participation at any stage without penalties.

CONFIDENTIALITY

I understand that all information shared in the focus group is confidential. I agree to my best ability not to disclose any confidential information. I will treat such information with the degree of care that in needs.

I …………………………. (participant`s name) understand my right as a participant in this study. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I fully understand what the study is all about and how and why it is being done. I understand that there is no compensation involved for my participation. Signing this form does not mean I give up my legal right and I understand that I will also have a copy of this assent form.

Participant`s signature…………………………   Date:……………………………

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM FOR LEARNERS ABOVE 18 YEARS

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

PARTICIPANT`S NAME:………………………………..DATE:………………………
Researcher:……………………

INFORMED CONSENT

TITLE OF THE STUDY

An exploratory Study on the Challenges Faced by Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in the Schools of Maleboho East Circuit of the Capricorn District of Limpopo Province to Develop a Multi-Disciplinary Model

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explore and explore the challenges faced by OVC in the schools at the Maleboho East Circuit in order to develop a school based model.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

I will be invited to be part of a research process, to participate in focus group discussions and to be part of the development of a multi disciplinary model. I understand that the focus group discussion will be recorded and there will be transcripts of interviews. The CDs and transcripts will be kept in a secure place and will be heard only for research purposes by the researcher. Once the research has been completed, the CDs and transcripts will be stored at the University of Limpopo and will not be used by the researcher or any other researcher without my informed consent.

RISK AND DISCOMFORTS

I take note that there are no known risks or discomforts associated with the research project.

BENEFITS

I understand that there are no direct benefits for me in participating in this study. However the results of this study may provide insight and knowledge on how to assist orphaned and vulnerable learners in schools.

PARTICIPANT`S RIGHTS

I understand that my participation is voluntary, I can choose not participate in part or the entire study and that I can withdraw my participation at any stage without penalties.

CONFIDENTIALITY

I understand that all information shared in the focus group is confidential. I agree to my best ability not to disclose any confidential information. I will treat such information with the degree of care that in needs.

I …………………………. (participant`s name) understand my right as a participant in this study. I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I fully understand what the study is all about and how and why it is being done. I understand that there is no compensation involved for my participation. Signing this form does not mean I give up my legal right and I understand that I will also have a copy of this consent form.

Participant`s signature…………………………   Date:……………………………

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS
CONSENT FOR MY CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

PARENT/ CAREGIVER`S NAME:……………………DATE:…………………….

CHILD`S NAME:……………………………………

Researcher:……………………
INFORMED CONSENT

TITLE OF THE STUDY
An exploratory Study on the Challenges Faced by Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in the Schools of Maleboho East Circuit of the Capricorn District of Limpopo Province to Develop a Multi-Disciplinary Model

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explore the challenges faced by OVC in the schools at the Maleboho East Circuit in order to develop a school based model.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

My child will be invited to be part of a research process, to participate in focus group discussions and to be part of the development of a multi disciplinary model for OVC. I understand that the focus group discussion will be recorded and there will be transcripts of interviews. The CDs and transcripts will be kept in a secure place and will be heard only for research purposes by the researcher. Once the research has been completed, the CDs and transcripts will be stored at the University of Limpopo and will not be used by the researcher or any other researcher without my/ my child`s informed consent.

RISK AND DISCOMFORTS

I take note that there are no known risks or discomforts associated with the research project.

BENEFITS

I understand that there are no direct benefits for my child in participating in this study. However the results of this study may provide insight and knowledge on how to assist orphaned and vulnerable learners in schools.

PARTICIPANT`S RIGHTS

I understand that my child`s participation is voluntary, He/ She can choose not participate in part or the entire study and that He can withdraw his/ her participation at any stage without penalties.

CONFIDENTIALITY

I understand that all information shared in the focus group discussions is confidential, will not be disclosed and treated with the degree of care it needs.

I ……………………………. (parent/ caregiver`s name) voluntarily consent my child to participate in this study. I fully understand what the study is all about and how and why it is being done. I understand that there is no compensation involved for his/ her participation. Signing this form does not mean I give up my legal right as a guardian and I understand that I will also have a copy of this consent form.

Parent/caregiver`s…………………………..   Signature…………………………….

Date:……………………………

APPENDIX D

LETTER OF REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SCHOOLS

Enquiries: Ntjana NE   17 Flamboyant Street

Cell No: 0823866441   Makhado

                                                                      0920

The Head of Department

Limpopo Department of Education

Polokwane

0700

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE TWO SCHOOLS IN MALEBOHO EAST CIRCUIT.

I am hereby requesting permission to conduct research investigation in two schools of your department in Maleboho East Circuit of Capricorn District.

I am PhD student of University of Limpopo and as part of the requirement for completion of this degree I am required to conduct research investigation. My research topic is: An exploratory Study on the Challenges Faced by Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in the Schools of Maleboho East Circuit of the Capricorn District of Limpopo Province to Develop a Multi-Disciplinary Model.This will require me to investigate the views of OVC in schools to develop an intervention model.The envisaged model will help practitioners in assisting this category of learners at school to enable them to perform optimally.

Hoping for a positive response.

Yours faithfully

Ntjana NE

APPENDIX E

<div align="center">

SECTION A

</div>

Interview schedule for personal interviews (Principals)

The researcher will introduce herself to principals and explain the purpose of the study. Anonymity and confidentiality will be addressed at this stage.

Interview questions will proceed as follows:

1. What is the total number of learners in your school?
2. How many can be categorized as orphaned and vulnerable?
3. Are there any visible signs which identify OVC?
4. What measures are in place to deal with OVC in your school?
5. In your knowledge what risks and challenges do these learners face??
6. In your view what can be done to help orphaned and vulnerable children?

SECTION B

2. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF PRINCIPALS

2.1 Please furnish the following: Indicate with an X

Age:

35-45	46-55	56- 65

Gender:

Male	Female

Number of years in the school:

Number of OVC in each grade:

Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12

APPENDIX F

<div align="center">

SECTION A

</div>

Interview schedule for focus group discussions (Learners)

The focus group discussions will proceed as follows:

The researcher will introduce herself to participants and explain the purpose of the study. The issue of confidentiality and anonymity will be addressed at this stage. The participants will be notified that the discussions will be audio- taped. To avoid the issue of language barrier the researcher will use a vernacular.

For the sake of smooth running of the process the researcher will together with the participants lay down ground rules. Participants are given name tags for easier communication. There will be separate schedule for each group of participants.

Interview questions are as follows:

1. What is your understanding of a vulnerable child?
2. What are reasons or factors which makes children vulnerable?
3. What are the challenges that orphaned and vulnerable children face in their homes as well as at their schools?
4. What high risks conditions or situation do OVC face on a daily basis?
5. What do you think should be done to make the lives of OVC better school?

SECTION B

2. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF LEARNERS

2.1 Please give the following details. Indicate your appropriate response by writing an X

2.1 Age

15- 16 years	
17- 18 years	
19 + years	

2.2 Gender

Male	
Female	

2.3 FAMILY BACKGROUND

2.3.1   How many people are staying in your household?

2.3.2 Describe your relationship with them:

2.3.3 Give the total number of your siblings:

2.3.4 How many people are employed in your household?

```
┌─────────────────────────┐
│                         │
└─────────────────────────┘
```

2.3.5 Give the number of people who are unemployed in your household:

```
┌──────────────────────────┐
│                          │
└──────────────────────────┘
```

2.3.6 Give the total number of people receiving social grants in your household:

```
┌──────────────────────┐
│                      │
└──────────────────────┘
```

2.3.7 What is the total estimate your total family income:

R1000- 2500	
R2500- 4000	
4000-6000	
R6000 +	

2.3.8 Type of residence:

One room(rondavel)	
RDP house	
House with multiple rooms	

2.4 EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

2.4 1 Give the grade you are in:

2.4.2 Number of years in a grade:

1 year	
2 years	
2 Years	

2.4.3 Subjects that you are doing and performance levels:

KAROLO YA A

PHETOLELO YA DIPOTŠIŠO GO YA LELEMENG LA SEPEDI

DIPOTŠIŠO TŠA BARUTWANA

Dipoledišano tša sehlopha di tla sepela ka tsela ye e latelago:

Monyakišiše o tla itsebiša go batšeakarolo le go hlalosa morelo wa dinyakišišo. Taba ya bosephiri le go se itsebagatše e tla otlollwa ka yona nako ye. Batšeakarolo ba tla lemošwa gore dipoledišano di tla gatišwa. Go tla bewa melawana go dira gore tshepedišo e tšwelele gabotse. Batšeakarolo ba fiwa matlakalana a maina a ba tla šomišago fela ka nako ya dipoledišano.

1. Na go ya ka wena ngwana yo a sego maemong a maleba ke ofe?
2. Ke mabaka afe ao go ya ka wena a dirago gore bana ba ikhwetše ba le mabakeng a mabjalo?
3. Na ke dihlotlo dife tšeo bana ba babjalo ba lebanego le tšona malapeng a bobona gotee le sekolong?
4. Ke dikotsi dife tšeo di ka hlagelago bana bao bophelong bja bona bja tšatši ka tšatši?
5. Na o gopola gore ke eng seo se ka dirwago go kaonafatša maphelo a bana ba bjalo?

KAROLO YA B

3 TSHEDIMOŠO YA BARUTWANA

Kgopelo ya tshedimoso ye e latelago. Laetsa maemo a gago ka go somisa leswao la X

3.1 Bong

Mošemane	
Mosetsana	

3.2 Mengwaga ya gago

15-16 years	
17- 18	
19+	

3.3 Efa palo ya batho bao o dulago le bona?

3.4 Laetša setswalle sa gago le bona:

3.5 Efa palomoka ya bana bao o tšwetšwego le bona:

3.6 Ke batho ba bakae ba ba šomago lapeng la geno?

3.7 Efa palo ya batho ba ba sa šomego lapeng la geno:

3.8 Efa palo ya batho bao ba hwetšago mphiwafela wa mmušo:

3.9 Akanya gore lapa la geno le ka ba le na le letseno le lekae ka kgwedi.

R1000- 2500	
R2500- 4000	
4000-6000	
R6000 +	

TŠA LAPA

3.10 Mohuta wa ntlo wo le dulago ka go ona:

(rantabola/ kamora e tee)	
Ntlo ya RDP	
Ntlo ya go ba le dikamoro tše dintši	

TSHEDIMOŠO YA TŠA DITHUTO

3.11 Efa mphato wo o lego ka go ona:

3.12 Mengwaga ya gago ka mphatong woo::

Ngwaga wo mote	
Mengwaga ye mebedi	
Mengwaga ye meraro	

3.13 Dithuto tšeo o di dirago le kakaretšo ya meputso ye o felago o e hwetša:

APPENDIX G

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

TO: DR MC MAKOLA

FROM: DR T MABILA

CHAIRPERSON: LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (LPREC)

DATE: 27th MAY 2021

SUBJECT: THE CHALLENGES FACED BY ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN(OVC) IN THE SCHOOLS OF MALEBOHO EAST CIRCUIT OF THE CAPRICORN DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE: TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY MODEL

RESEARCHER: NTJANA NE

Dear Colleague

The above researcher's research proposal served at the Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee (LPREC). The ethics committee is satisfied with the ethical soundness of the proposal.

Decision: The research proposal is granted full approval and ethical clearance.

Regards

Chairperson: Dr T Mabila

Secretariat: Ms J Mokobi

Date: 07/06/2021

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref: 2/2/2   Enq: Makola MC   Tel No: 015 290 9448   E-mail:MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za

Ntjane NE
17 Famboyant street
0920

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. The above bears reference.

2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research has been approved. Topic of the research proposal: **"THE CHALLENGES FACED BY ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN(OVC) IN THE SCHOOLS OF MALEBOHO EAST CIRCUIT OF THE CAPRICORN DISTRICT ,LIMPOPO PROVINCE:TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MULTI DISCIPLINARY MODEL "**

3. The following conditions should be considered:

3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.

3.2 Arrangements should be made with the Circuit Office and the School concerned.

3.3 The conduct of research should not in anyhow disrupt the academic programs at the schools.

3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially the fourth term.

3.5 During the study, applicable research ethics should be adhered to; in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: NTJANE NE

Cnr. 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X9489, POLOKWANE, 0700
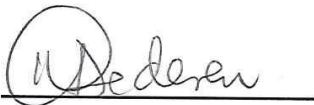Tel: 015 290 7600, Fax: 015 297 6920/4220/4494

The heartland of southern Africa - development is about people!

3.6 Upon completion of research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.

4 Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter at Schools/ Offices where you intend conducting your research as an evidence that you are permitted to conduct the research.

5 The department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.
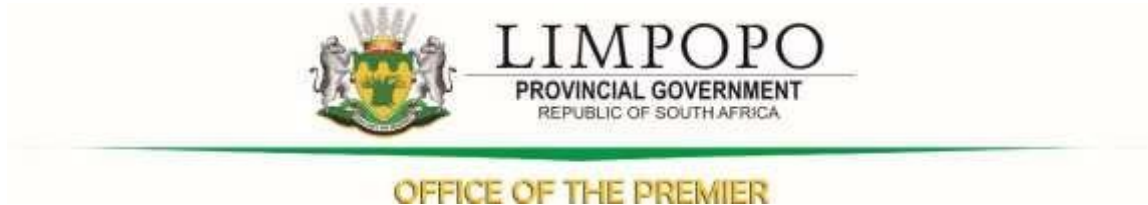
Best wishes.

Dederen

06/07/2021

Dederen KO

Date

Head of Department

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: NTJANE NE

Office of the Premier

Research and Development Directorate

Private Bag X9483, Polokwane, 0700, South Africa

Tel: (015) 230 9910, Email:
mokobij@premier.limpopo.gov.za

LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL

RESEARCH ETHICS

COMMITTEE CLEARANCE

CERTIFICATE

Meeting: **27th May 2021**

Project Number: LPREC/38/2021: PG

Subject: The Challenges Faced by Orphans and Vulnerable Childrens (OVC) in the Schoolsof Maleboho East Circuit of the Capricorn District, Limpopo Province: Towards the Development of a Multi-Disciplinary Model

Researcher: Ntjana NE

Dr Thembinkosi Mabila

Chairperson: Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee

The Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee (LPREC) is registered with National Health Research Council (NHREC) Registration Number **REC-111513-038.**

Note:

    i.   **This study is categorized as a Low Risk Level in accordance with risk level descriptors asenshrined in LPREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**

   ii.   **Should there be any amendment to the approved research proposal; the researcher(s)must re-submit the proposal to the ethics committee for review prior data collection.**

  iii.   **The researcher(s) must provide annual reporting to the committee as well as the relevantdepartment and also provide the department with the final report/thesis.**

  iv.   **The ethical clearance certificate is valid for 12 months. Should the need to extend the period for data collection arise then the researcher should renew the certificate throughLPREC secretariat. PLEASE QUOTE THE PROJECT NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.**

APPENDIX J

Barbara Wood
Tel: +27 44 873 5145
cell: 082 9022 571
E-mail: woodlandsmedia@gmail.com
8 Suikerbossie Street
Bergsig
George 6529
Western Cape
South Africa

To whom it may concern

Editing Certificate

I, Barbara Wood, hereby confirm that I am a registered professional researcher and editor and have edited the following academic document:

An exploratory study on the challenges faced by orphans and vulnerable children in the schools of the Maleboho East Circuit of the Capricorn District, Limpopo Province, to develop a multi-disciplinary model

By

NGWANAMONTJANE EGLESIA NTJANA

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in
SOCIAL WORK

in the
Faculty of Humanities
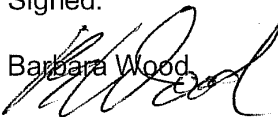(School of Social Sciences) (Department of Social Work)
at the
UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

Supervisor: Dr MR Manganyi; Co-Supervisor: Dr SF Rapholo

April 2022

Signed:

Barbara Wood

APPENDIX K

University of Limpopo
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email:makoetja.ramusi@ul.ac.za

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 10 December 2020

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/408/2020: PG

PROJECT:

Title: An Exploratory Study on the Challenges Faced by Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in the Schools of Maleboho East Circuit of the Capricorn District, Limpopo Province to Develop a Multi-Disciplinary Model

Researcher: NE Ntjana
Supervisor: Dr MR Manganyi
Co-Supervisor/s: Dr SF Rapholo
School: Social Sciences
Degree: PhD in Social Work

PROF P MASOKO
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: **REC-0310111-031**

Note:
i)   This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
ii)   Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
iii)   PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

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