



**Subjective Experiences of Happiness: A Case for Residential Child Care Workers**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. The dissertation is being submitted for the degree of Masters of Social Science in Industrial Psychology, in the School of Applied Human Sciences, in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The non-profit sector is one that is of great importance as it responds to the needs of society, and hence gives support to various social and economic endeavours. Particularly, residential child care work is a response to the ever increasing number of children who are orphaned, abandoned, neglected and affected by the HIV/Aids pandemic. Residential child care workers provide institutional care to such children. The role of a child care worker is one that is reported to be highly pressured and involves many challenges which have the potential of impacting on the quality of care that is provided by the care giver to the children. In light of the increasing research done on the area of happiness within the workplace which shows that happiness contributes to overall organisational success and helps employees cope with challenges this study explored this construct among residential child care workers; a research area which remains under researched.

The aim of the study was to explore the subjective experiences of happiness among residential child care workers using positive psychology as a conceptual framework. The study sought to gain an understanding of the perceptions and experiences of happiness among residential child care workers through Seligman's (2002) framework of achieving happiness through pleasure, engagement and meaning. The exploration of the subjective experiences of happiness among residential child care workers was done through the use of Fredrickson's (1998) Broaden and Build Theory.

The study used a qualitative research design and residential child care workers were interviewed on their perceptions and experiences of happiness. The findings suggested that, even through the challenges that the residential child care workers faced, there was still an

overall sense of happiness that the care givers experienced in relation to their work. This was generally as a result of the nature of their work and their alignment to the overall mission of the children's home. The findings suggested also that it was through the orientations of pleasure and meaning that the greatest happiness was experienced. This experience of general happiness in their work made the residential child care workers feel as though they could deal with challenges and also contributed positively to their role as child care givers. The findings of the study contribute to the increasing body of knowledge in the area of happiness and the experiences of residential child care workers. The findings can also help managers and directors of children's homes know which aspects to encourage and cultivate in their employees for the experience of happiness and positive work relations and experiences. This can ultimately contribute positively to overall success of orphanages and children's homes, and also to the quality of care that is given to children.

## **Table of contents**

Declaration

Acknowledgements

Abstract

### **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

1.1.	Introduction and background to the study	1
1.2.	Problem statement and rationale for the study	3
1.3.	Objectives of the study	5
1.4.	Research questions	5
1.5.	Structure of the study	6
1.6.	Chapter summary	7

### **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.1.	Introduction	8
2.2.	Positive Psychology	8
2.3.	Happiness	10
2.4.	Conceptualising happiness	14
	2.4.1 Pleasure	19
	2.4.2 Engagement	23
	2.4.3 Meaning	27

2.5.	Residential child care workers	33
2.6.	Theoretical Framework-Broaden and Build Theory	37
	2.6.1 The Broaden and Build Theory in context	39
2.7.	Chapter summary	40

### **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

3.1.	Introduction	41
3.2.	Research methodology	41
	3.2.1. Research design	41
	3.2.2. Research setting and population	42
	3.2.3. Sampling	44
	3.2.4. Participants	45
	3.2.5. Data collection	46
	3.2.6. Research Instruments	47
	3.2.7. Data Analysis	48
3.3.	Ethical considerations	50
3.4.	Chapter summary	51

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS**

4.1. Introduction	52
4.2. Themes	52
4.3. Theme 1: Perceptions of happiness among residential child care workers	54
4.4. Theme 2: Positive and negative emotions experienced by residential child care workers	57
4.4.1. Positive emotions	57
4.4.2. Negative emotions	61
4.5. Theme 3: Challenges experienced by the residential child care workers	64
4.5.1. Ability to withstand challenges	65
4.5.2. Discouraged by challenges	68
4.6. Theme 4: Engaging with the children at the children's home	71
4.6.1. Desire to do more	73
4.7. Theme 5: Positive impact on the self, the children and society at large	75
4.7.1. Positive impact on the self and the children	75
4.7.2. Positive impact on the self and the children	76
4.8. Theme 6: Residential child care work perceived as a calling	79
4.9. Summary of themes	81
4.10. Summary of findings in relation to research questions	83



4.11. Summary of the chapter	86
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## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY**

5.1. Introduction	87
5.2. Synopsis of the study	87
5.3. Limitations of the study	90
5.4. Recommendations for the future	90
5.5. Contribution of the study	91
5.6. Chapter summary	91

<b>REFERENCES</b>	92
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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Letter to the gatekeeper	105
Appendix 2: Participant consent form	106
Appendix 3: Interview schedule	109
Appendix 4: Interview Transcript	113

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction and background to the study

Happiness is consistently being described as being the object of human desire, as being that which we ultimately aim for, and as being that which gives us purpose and meaning (Ahmed, 2010). In recent years the discipline of psychology, and positive psychology in particular, has shown an ever increasing interest in the area of happiness with much of its research dedicated to its conceptualisation and also how it can be achieved by individuals. It is suggested by Abdel-Khalek (2006) that, in fact, happiness may be understood as the ultimate goal of practising psychology. This seems rather fitting since positive psychology, as put forward by Sheldon and King (2001), brings forth much needed focus on the aspects of the human condition that allows individuals to flourish and happiness is central in this regard.

Throughout the years, there has been substantial research that has been done in the area of happiness which suggests that happiness has positive, valuable and long lasting advantages for individuals. For instance, Diener and Biswas-Diener (2008) put forward that happiness is very significant to an individual's health, stating that people who are generally happy actually become less sick than those who are unhappy. Also, according to Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2004), happiness has been found to be associated with numerous tangible benefits such as enhanced physical health, superior coping skills, reduced psychopathology, and even longer life. With such associated benefits, it is not surprising that the topic of happiness remains an

area of substantial interest among scholars and a goal worth achieving among individuals in society.

Within the workplace arena, the 'happiness' topic has also generated an increasing amount of focus and research. In general, there is indeed a great value of happiness in the workplace as individuals that have hopes of finding general happiness, must also be happy at work (Gavin & Mason, 2004). This interest and knowledge that is generated with respect to happiness at work has not only been beneficial to employees but also to employers as well. This is because of its association with increased productivity and hard working individuals (Fisher, 2010). Research has found that individuals who are happy at work earn more money, are better citizens at work, are more likely to work hard and are more socialible (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008).

Warr (2007) states that happiness has been linked to enhanced organisational productivity and improved outcomes. In essence, it can be gathered that the association between happiness and the workplace is largely highlighted because of the link between the construct and the ultimate goal of business; which is increased production. Taking consideration of the researched association between workplace happiness and organisational productivity (Warr, 2007), this study argued for the exploration of the construct in the non-profit sector, and particularly among residential child care workers, where the ultimate goal is not that of organisational productivity, but is that of social responsibility.

The non-profit sector is of critical importance and relevance as it provides support to and also advances a variety of social, religious and economic endeavours (Arnsberger, Ludum & Riley, n.d). Non-profit organisations (NPO's) are essential to every community and they operate mainly by responding to community and societal needs hence creating and promoting public good (Hannum et al., 2011). In particular, residential child care work is a response to the need to provide institutional care and support to children who cannot be fully cared for by their biological parents and family.

Considering the research that has been done on happiness with regard to the workplace and also the criticality of the work done by residential child care workers, it was believed that there is a great need to explore the construct among such workers.

## **1.2 Problem Statement and Rationale**

The ability for individuals working in the non-profit sector, and particularly residential child care workers, to reach their goal of social responsibility and provide institutional child care to children whose biological parents cannot, is both crucial and commendable. In South Africa and in other parts of Africa as well, the high rate of poverty and HIV and Aids infected mothers and fathers, has meant that many children have been forced to be raised in children's homes. In the year 2001, Ethiopia alone had an estimated 989, 000 children who were orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and this figure was set to have increased by the year 2010 to over two million (Carter, 2005). Meintjies et al. (2007) looked specifically at the South African context and explored residential child care among the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Western Cape and Limpopo. It was reported that of these provinces,

KwaZulu-Natal had the highest rate (23%) of children between the ages of 0-17 who were orphaned. Limpopo followed with 16%, Gauteng with 11%, and the Western Cape with 9% (Meintjies et al., 2007). In another study by Dunn and Parry-Williams (2008), it was stated that there was an estimated 369 children's homes that were registered in Malawi, South Africa, Swaziland and Zambia in 2008, and these homes accommodated 24, 340 children. If children, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, are continuously being described as 'the future', it seems only right for any nation to want to invest in those individuals who provide nurturance and care to the ever increasing number of children in children's homes.

Residential child care workers play a key role such as nurturance, care and support (Moses, 2000). This role however, has been reported to be highly stressful, where child care workers work extremely long hours, are underpaid, and are given very little recognition as working professionals (Dunn & Parry-Williams, 2008; Meintjies et al., 2007). These challenges, it is believed, could potentially decrease the morale of the workers and also impact negatively on their ability to provide optimal care to the children in the children's home. It is important therefore to look into the ways in which residential child care workers can cope with such challenges so that they could have more positive experiences with regard to their work and also enable them to give the best care to the children.

Experiencing happiness at work, as has been illustrated by numerous researchers and authors such as Fisher (2010), has the ability to help employees cope with the challenges that they encounter. It is within this context that a case is made for the exploration of the subjective experiences of happiness among residential child care workers.

This present study aimed to explore the subjective experiences of happiness among residential child care workers. This was done through the use of Seligman's (2002) framework of achieving happiness through pleasure, engagement, and meaning. Positive psychology was used as a conceptual framework. The belief is that the findings of the study will extend the body of knowledge with regard to happiness research and also that of NPO's and residential child care workers. The findings, it is also believed, has the potential of providing managers of childrens homes with information on which aspects to help cultivate and encourage in their employees. This is so to encourage more positive experiences in their line of work, deal with challenges and also provide optimal care for the children.

### **1.3 Aims and objectives of the study**

The general aim of the study was to explore the subjective perceptions and experiences of happiness among residential child care workers. In achieving this, the study had the following objectives:

- 1) Explore how happiness has been conceptualised in the literature.
- 2) Explore the perceptions of happiness amongst child care workers.
- 3) Explore the experiences of happiness amongst child care workers.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The study aimed to address the following questions:

- 1) How is happiness conceptualised in the literature?

- 2) How is happiness perceived among residential child care workers?
- 3) How is happiness experienced among residential child care workers?

## **1.5 Structure of the dissertation**

*Chapter one* has provided an introduction and background to the of study. It has made a case for the need to explore the subjective experiences of happiness in the non-profit sector, looking specifically at residential child care workers. This chapter included a discussion on the importance of conducting such a study and also the research questions that the study aimed to answer.

In *chapter two*, a review of the previous and current literature with regard to happiness is discussed and residential child care workers is given. Firstly, a discussion of positive psychology is given in order to situate the study within this paradigm. Thereafter happiness is conceptualised, unpacking each of the sub-constructs of pleasure, engagement and meaning. The study is then contextualised and a discussion on residential child care workers is given. The Broaden and Build Theory by Fredrickson (1998) is then is discussed as this provides the theoretical framework through which happiness can be explained and understood.

In *Chapter three*, a description of the qualitative research methods that were used in the collection of data is provided. This includes the research design, population, sampling, data collection procedure, research instruments, and also the data analysis. Also issues surrounding the reliability and validity of the study will be discussed.

*Chapter four* provides both the presentaion and the discussion of the results. Themes that emerged from the data are discussed and unpacked providing a link to the results and what has been contained in literature.

*Chapter five* is the last chapter and it provides a summary of the study, taking into consideration the study aims, research questions and the findings. A conclusion is thereafter made, providing insights into reccomendations for future research in this area, based on this study and the findings.

#### **1.6) Chapter summary**

Chapter one has made a case for the exploration of the subjective experiences happiness among residential child care workers. This was done by giving an introduction and background to the study. A problem statement was given, illustrating the importance of conducting such a study. Also the research aims, objectives and research questions were given. The chapter also provided an outline of the disseration, giving a brief explanation of what each chapter intends to do.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter of the study provides a conceptualisation of the construct of happiness within the conceptual framework of positive psychology. This is done through the review of past and present literature in the area of happiness. The discussion begins with a discussion of positive psychology and provides an explanation as to how happiness fits within this framework. Thereafter, what will follow is a general introduction to happiness, highlighting the increase of happiness research through the years. Happiness is then formally conceptualised as it has been understood by different scholars and researchers. This includes the unpacking of the three orientations to happiness (pleasure, engagement and meaning) as identified by Seligman (2002). Past and present literature is also given on these. Thereafter, in an aim to contextualise the study, a discussion of residential child care workers is given. Fredrickson's (1998) Broaden and Build Theory is then discussed as the theoretical framework through which to gain an understanding of happiness and its sub-constructs, pleasure, engagement and meaning among residential child care workers.

#### **2.2 Positive Psychology**

Positive psychology is an umbrella term that is used to refer to the study of positive emotions, positive character traits and enabling institutions (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005). The conceptualisation is that there are certain aspects of the human condition that enables individuals to thrive and to have a positive outlook on life and life experiences even when faced with difficult life challenges. With the unfortunate turmoil and brutality that left many

people both physically and emotionally scarred during World War II, Seligman (2004) states that psychology thereafter became a science that was devoted to healing and as a result the aspect of human flourishing was overlooked. Positive psychology is dedicated to reviving, looking into and celebrating the positive and healthy aspects of the human condition. Sheldon and King (2001) define positive psychology as “nothing more than the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues” (p. 216). The scientific nature of positive psychology indicate that it is not based on non-tested and haphazard concepts but rather that positive psychology is founded on evidence-based conceptualisations of human functioning. Research and respective findings are used to explain, support and form the foundation through which positive psychology conceptualises humans and their ability to flourish. In particular, Compton (2005) notes that one of the early accomplishments of positive psychology was actually to assist psychologists pay attention to the things were individuals were ‘doing right’. However, once psychologists started to notice the many ways that individuals succeed in life, these then became the focus of theory, research and also intervention strategies (Compton, 2005).

What is perhaps most important to note is that, according to Gable and Haidt (2005), positive psychology does not hypothesise that psychological pathologies should be looked at through rose coloured glasses. The aim is to merely study the other side of the coin. It suggests that potential for a more hopeful, productive and satisfying future can emerge for those individuals that are struggling to find their way through adversities, as well as for those who are somewhat secure but are just surviving without much joy and meaning in their day-to-day work lives (Froman, 2010). Seligman et al. (2005) state that the key and core function of positive psychology is the increase of individual happiness. Achieving happiness, according

to Seligman (2002), rests on an individual's ability to seek one of three, if not all three orientations to happiness. These are pleasure (the pleasurable life), engagement (the engaged life), and meaning (the meaningful life).

Taking into consideration the work by Seligman (2002) it is believed that positive psychology therefore provides the best suited conceptual framework through which happiness can be explored among residential child care workers. This is because this study is situated within the understanding of the importance of residential child care work and also the challenges that are experienced by the residential child care workers. Exploring the subjective experiences of happiness among residential child care workers, through pleasure, engagement and meaning, it is believed, can provide insights into how happiness can be possibly increased and encouraged among such workers. This, it is believed, can help the workers to deal with the challenges that they encounter and also help them to optimally perform their role of providing care to the children in the homes.

In order to provide a conceptualisation of happiness and how it can potentially have a positive influence on residential child care workers and consequently the children in institutional care, there first is a need to provide a general discussion regarding the construct.

### **2.3 Happiness**

The mystery surrounding the pursuit of happiness has long been a fascination for both academics and lay people in seemingly equal measure (Write & Bonnet, 2007; Leung, Kier,

Fung, Fung & Sproule, 2011). Being happy is of great significance to most individuals and as Diener (2000) suggests, happiness has been reported to be a highly valued goal in most societies. According to Pessi (2008), there two issues which make the study of happiness particularly interesting. First, happiness is both a very philosophical and empirical matter as well as very research-oriented and every-day life related. Probably now more than ever, people are constantly encouraged to live “happy” and fulfilling lives. Life-style magazines, television programs and self help books dedicated to helping individuals deal with the “clutter” in their lives so as to make room for long lasting happiness, have grown immensely popular in recent years. Actually, the saturation of media with images and stories of happiness seems to be universal phenomena. In the UK, many newspapers have gone as far as including specials on happiness, and a BBC program called *The Happiness Formula* aired in 2006 (Ahmed, 2010). The success, continuity and relevance of these happiness-centred types of media can only lead one to make a very important conclusion. This is that people, who are the consumers of such media, are themselves fascinated by the notion of a “happy” life. As a result of this fascination, they search for means through which to both obtain and maintain happiness. Kim-Prieto, Diener, Tamir, Scollon, and Diener (2005) reported from a survey of college students in 47 countries that happiness was overwhelmingly rated as the most important of all personal values, above wealth, health, love, and similar others.

As the area of happiness becomes more popular and of great interest to researchers, it is important to have an understanding of what the construct is and why individuals see it as a goal worth achieving. Happiness, says Ahmed (2010) is ‘feeling good’. The author describes happiness as a kind of trait that individuals can develop and can be measured by how people feel. This gives the indication that happiness is subjective as people feel differently about

different things; what brings about a 'good feeling' for one individual, may not necessarily do so for another person. Similarly, Veenhoven (1984) speaks of happiness as when an individual makes up his mind about his own life. Happiness, according to Veenhoven (1984) is "the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his life-as-a-whole favourably" (p. 22). In essence it pertains to how an individual likes the life that he or she leads. It can be said thus far that happiness involves a sense of positivity and favourable judgement about one's life, and perhaps the next focus should be on the ways in which it is reported to contribute to an individual's life.

According to Diener and Biswas-Diener (2008), research that has been conducted on happiness, shows that happy people live longer, are faced with fewer illnesses, stay married longer, work harder, commit fewer crimes and produce more creative ideas. Findings such as these provide more justification and need to explore and encourage the experiences of happiness among residential child care workers. In a study done by Meintjies et al. (2007), some of the caregivers described their work as 'emotionally draining' stating that they pushed themselves and their bodies to give optimal care to the children. The researchers put forward that as a result of this, many of these workers would get sick and have to miss work. This in turn adversely impacts on the caregiver's ability to carry out their role of care giving. 'Clearly absenteeism and illness can impact on the quality of care provided with illness particularly undermining the consistency in caregiving' (Meintjies et al., 2007, p. 39). A case is hence made for the exploration of happiness among residential child care workers as it could potentially lead to an experience of fewer illnesses and workers who give off their best. Indeed Diener & Biswas-Diener (2008) posited that as opposed to viewing the construct as a

peaceful and pleasant state of mind, what research has shown is that it is rather helpful and functional.

The experience of happiness within the workplace is of great value and hence there has been an increase of research in this area (Fisher, 2010). According to Ahmed (2010), research around the topic of happiness within the work arena has been able to show that happiness is linked with increased organisational productivity and salary. With 'happy' employees being linked to greater quality service and productivity within the workplace, it comes as no surprise that a great deal of research regarding happiness is being done in the workplace arena. Experiencing happiness at work does not only produce significant personal consequences for an individual but it is also a factor of business success (Warr, 2007; Fisher, 2010).

It can therefore be inferred that happiness can be linked to increased productivity within the workplace insofar as those individuals that experience happiness at work are believed to put in more effort and dedication to their work, positively impacting on organisational efficiency and productivity. Gavin and Mason (2004) conducted a study in which they found that happiness at work was a great contribution to organisational success and commitment. Taking these findings into consideration, the experience of happiness among residential child care workers can also have the potential of contributing to the success of the running of the children's homes.

Considering the discussion that has been given on the general understanding of happiness and within the workplace, it can be said that indeed research does view happiness to be of great value to individuals and organisations as well. As seemingly elusive as the construct of happiness may appear to be, researchers and scholars have been able to provide conceptualisations through which it can be explained and understood.

## **2.4 Conceptualising Happiness**

The majority of the scholarly work under the ‘rubric’ of happiness centres on two senses of the word. The first usage is one that treats happiness as a synonym for wellbeing, or equivalently, ‘flourishing’, ‘welfare’ or ‘eudaimonia’ (Haybron, 2008). The second usage of ‘happiness’, according to Haybron (2008), is where happiness bears a purely psychological meaning which denotes some broad and typically lasting aspect of an individual’s state of mind: *being happy*. He states that the central views of happiness in this sense are hedonistic theories. As it has been previously noted, ‘happiness’ has been a subject that has interested many academics throughout history. As a result of this immense and continual interest, there have been numerous definitions and conceptualisations that have been put forward. Perhaps however, the largest divide in the conceptualisation of happiness has been between the hedonic views and the eudaimonic views of happiness (Fisher, 2010). Both these views put forward postulations of what actually is ‘happiness’ and they both also encompass elements of what Seligman (2002) points out as the three orientations to achieving happiness, i.e., pleasure, engagement and meaning.

The eudaimonic conception of happiness can be traced back to Aristotle and it emphasises the importance of being true to ones inner self (Pessi, 2008; Peterson, Park & Seligman, 2005). According to this view, true happiness is that which entails identifying one's virtues, cultivating them and living a life that is in accordance with those virtues (Seligman et al., 2005). True happiness, if one had to unpack it from the eudaimonic viewpoint, entails more than the mere attainment of instant and short-lived experiences of pleasure and gratification. It is instead, encompassing of something much deeper and most certainly more long lasting. Happiness here is about living in accordance and in alignment with one's purpose in life. The central premise of the eudaimonic philosophy is that people should strive to develop what is best within them and then use those skills and talents in service of the greater good, including in particular, the welfare of other people and or humankind (Peterson, Ruch, Beermann, Park & Seligman, 2007). The understanding is that when this is done, a person will experience true and authentic feelings of happiness which are enduring. It can be said that residential child care work services the greater good of society by being aimed at providing nurturance and care to children who cannot receive such from their biological parents and family. Hence there exists great potential for these workers to experience authentic happiness in the eudaimonic sense as this type of work is dedicated to the welfare of children.

The attribution of happiness to people, in the eudaimonic sense, is to say that their lives are going well for them and to make a value judgment about their lives (Haybron, 2008). Ryan and Deci (2001) state that eudaimonia occurs when people's life activities are most congruent or when they mesh with deeply held values and are holistic or fully engaged. They state that when this happens people would feel intensely alive and authentic. With the emphasis on meaning, purpose, full engagement and the 'true self' eudaimonia related to leading a *happy*



*life*, as opposed to *being happy*. The *happy life* seems to be more long term and a continual experience. In their article on narrative identity, Bauer, McAdams and Pals (2008) suggested that individuals with high levels of eudaimonic well-being tended to emphasise personal growth in their life stories and also they tended to view difficult life experiences as transformative experiences wherein they endured a great deal of pain but gained new insights about the self. In this sense the eudaimonic view of happiness is attributed not only to personal growth and self actualisation but also as providing a foundation through which individuals can cope with life stresses and challenges.

Often contrasted to the eudaimonic conception of happiness is the hedonic view. Waterman (1993) notes that in modern usage, the term happiness is generally considered to refer to hedonic happiness. In moral philosophy, the term 'hedonism' has been used denote that a good life should be one that is pleasurable, and in psychology term stands for a theory that pleasure seeking is the main motivator for human behaviour (Veenhoven, 2003). In this view, happiness is conceptualised as the pleasurable emotions that are experienced by individuals which are brought about as a result of them obtaining the things that they want. Hedonic enjoyment refers to the positive emotions that escort obtaining material objects and action opportunities that one desires or wishes to experience (Waterman, Schwartz & Conti, 2008).

The basic assumption of the hedonic view of happiness, according to Haybron (2008), is that an individual is happy by virtue of having a satisfactory favourable balance of pleasure versus un-pleasure; and unhappy by virtue of having a satisfactory unfavorable balance of pleasure versus un-pleasure. In essence, a hedonic balance is favourable insofar as it involves an

experience of a greater sense of pleasure or less un-pleasure, and it is unfavorable insofar as it involves less pleasure or more un-pleasure. Hedonic enjoyment and eudaimonia are often and generally contrasted against one another in the sense that whilst the former conceptualises happiness to be the positive emotions such as joy and pleasure that people obtain through the satisfaction of needs; the latter views happiness as entailing living a meaningful and purposeful life. The hedonic view of happiness as pleasure has often received great criticism in that it has often been conceptualised as making human's slavish followers of desires (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Veenhoven (2003) states that the rejection and critique of hedonism stems from the view that a lifestyle that is hedonistic contributes to happiness in the short run and not in the longer term. For instance, Waterman, Schwartz and Conti (2008) states that some of the criticisms that have been levelled against hedonism are that individuals who seek hedonism will be turned into 'contented cows' and never be stimulated to lead a better life of authenticity since pleasure is short-lived. Also through the search for hedonism, individuals, it is believed by critics, would fall prey to political manipulation as they would most probably have a rosy and glassy view of life (Waterman, Schwartz & Conti, 2008).

Whilst hedonism has often been associated with seemingly fleeting positive emotions, as critics have put it, in this study support is given to the view of the proponents of hedonism who postulate that actually, pleasurable and positive emotions have positive and long lasting effects. Veenhoven (2003) notes that hedonism can actually foster happiness. He says that hedonism has an indirect effect in that it enhances an individual's capacity to cope with the problems in life by raising an individual's tolerance for stress and through the encouragement of reality control over emotion focused coping. Also with regard to the critique that pleasure

is short-lived and therefore cannot be equated to happiness, proponents of hedonism report quite the opposite.

The frequent experience of pleasure is associated with longer-term levels of positive emotions as well as other aspects of well-being (Schueller & Seligman, 2010) and it denotes a broad and typically lasting aspect of the individuals state of mind (Haybron, 2008). Hence, the experience of happiness through the hedonic sense can have the ability of helping residential child care workers cope with the challenges that they encounter. Barford and Whelton (2010) note that the challenges that are experienced by residential child care workers can be emotionally draining and can stand in the way of providing quality care to the children.

Although eudaimonia and hedonic conceptions of happiness that have been discussed above are often contrasted against each other, this particular study views happiness in a holistic manner and views both eudaimonia and hedonism as necessary and beneficial in understanding a “happy life” in its entirety. Kringelbach and Berridge (2010) conducted research that illustrated that whilst there is a clear conceptual distinction that can be made between the two conceptions of happiness, hedonic and eudaimonic aspects however cohere together in happy people. They mention that in happiness surveys, over 80% of people rate their eudaimonic life satisfaction as ‘pretty happy to very happy’ and comparably, 80% also rate their current hedonic mood as positive. Similar findings were reported by Huta and Ryan (2009), who found that individuals who live lives that are high in both hedonia and eudaimonia had more elevated degrees of most well-being variables than individuals whose

lives were low in both pursuits. The present study, drawing from Seligman (2002) conceptualises happiness both as involving positive emotions and pleasurable experiences as represented by hedonism and also as encompassing a sense of purposefulness and virtuousness as represented by the eudaimonic conception. The belief is therefore that both the eudaimonic and hedonic conceptualisations of happiness are beneficial in the subjective exploration of happiness among residential child care workers.

Along with research and literature providing an explanation of the different perspectives through which happiness has been understood or conceptualised, it has also made contributions to the understanding of the different ways in which happiness can be created, promoted and also sustained. Within the framework of positive psychology, the view that has taken centre stage with regard to the orientations to happiness has been that of Seligman (2002), in which he proposes that it is through pleasure (the pleasant life), through engagement (the engaged life), and through meaning (the meaningful life) that happiness can be obtained and also maintained. These, as noted by Schueller and Seligman (2010) are viewed as distinct orientations to happiness, and that behaviours that fall under each orientation contribute to individual happiness. They state that very often individuals have to make trade-offs between pleasure, engagement and meaning or rely on one orientation and neglect the others; however what is important to live a 'full life' is the quest of all three.

With regard to the present study, happiness is reviewed and understood through the exploration of all three orientations (pleasure, engagement and meaning) as identified by Seligman (2002). Focusing on these orientations, according to Seligman (2002), has the

ability of giving individuals an increased chance at happiness and feeling good about themselves and their lives.

#### **2.4.1 Pleasure**

The first orientation to happiness is the pleasure life, also referred to as positive emotions. This orientation represents the view of happiness through hedonism (Ruch, Harzer, Proyer, Park & Peterson, 2010; Schueller & Seligman, 2010). According to Kringelbach and Berridge (2010), the association between pleasure and happiness has a long history in psychology. They state that this relationship was stressed in the early writings of Sigmund Freud when he put forward that individuals strive after happiness and that they want to become happy and also to remain so. Also, Huta and Ryan (2009) write that in the fourth century BCE, Arristipus argued that the ultimate goal of life is pleasure regardless of the source.

Holt and Lock (2008) define pleasure as a condition of consciousness or sensation that is brought on by the enjoyment or anticipation of that which is felt or viewed as desirable. They go on to say that pleasure is a positive emotional state that is experienced when needs or desires are fulfilled, either from external or internal stimuli. Research has put forward that when individuals refer to being happy in a casual manner, they are normally referring to this route. van Hoof, Guerts, Beckers and Kompier (2011) also define pleasure as a positive state that is characterised by positive emotions.

Gord, Gard, Kring and John (2006) point out that literature on pleasure most often focus on anticipatory and consummatory components of pleasure, even though the greater percentage of research has been done on the latter. Anticipatory pleasure has a close link to motivation and behaviour which is goal directed, leading an individual to have experiences of wanting more (Gord et al., 2006; Hanley, 2007). The understanding is that the anticipation that is brought about by cues that indicate possible rewards increases positive affect (arousal) which promotes or rather directs behaviour (Yan, Liu, Cao & Chan, 2011). In essence anticipatory pleasure involves a sense of 'wanting' as a result of the foreseeable benefits or rewards, and hence directs behaviour towards attainment. Consummatory pleasure on the other hand, is more closely linked to satiation or fulfilment of a desire (Gord et al., 2006; Hanley, 2007). It can be said that consummatory pleasure involves the feeling or positive emotions that one experiences after having obtained what it is that they desired. Often a lack or deficit of these two components of pleasure in an individual is reported to explain a condition referred to as *anhedonia*. Anhedonia can be defined as the inability to experience pleasure and this condition has been found to be a key symptom in depression (Gord et al., 2006; Yan et al., 2011; Hanley, 2007). If this is unpacked, it suggests that one of the key contributors of depression is the inability of an individual to experience pleasure. This therefore illustrates the importance of experiencing positive emotions as a route to obtaining happiness, as happiness can be viewed as the opposite of depression.

In the present study pleasure is explored through the lenses of positive psychology and particularly Seligman (2002). The stance is that continuous experience of positive emotions can have long lasting and positive effects for the individual. Seligman, Rashid and Parks (2006) state that the pleasant life is one that involves enjoyable and positive experiences that

most often produce feelings of joy; this is the definition that is used in this study. The positive emotions that are significant to the pleasant life are associated with the past, present and future. Positive emotions about the past, such as contentment, satisfaction and pride, according to Seligman (2002), can be cultivated and increased by forgiveness, gratitude and freeing oneself of an imprisoning deterministic ideology. As a way of increasing positive emotions that are associated with the past, individuals need to deal with their past through learning to forgive and also showing gratitude. Positive emotions about the future include optimism and hope and these can be increased by learning to reorganise and dispute thoughts which are pessimistic (Carr, 2004). Those which are associated with the present involve somatic pleasures and also complex pleasures (which require learning and education) (Duckworth, Steen, & Seligman, 2005).

As pleasure is represented by the hedonic conception of happiness, it can be gathered that the pleasure orientation to happiness involves the maximisation of pleasure and positive emotions and minimisation of pain or experiences and emotions of displeasure. Individuals want to maximise immediate pleasure in order to feel pleasant emotions and avoid unpleasant one (Tamir, 2009). Also, Hanley (2007) puts forward that it is important to understand that the capacity to experience pleasure differs among individuals. She states that some individuals have a much lower capacity for pleasure than others. This brings up the variable nature of pleasure in that experiences or activities that can be deemed as pleasurable to one person may not be necessary so for the next person.

In the context of work, pleasure has been reported to have a positive impact on individual's ability to recover after a period of hard work and stressful work situations. This is perhaps best exemplified in a study done by van Hoof et al. (2011) that explored the daily recovery from work through the role of activities, effort and pleasure. In relation to pleasure, the study particularly explored the pleasure experienced while engaging in job related activities and also off-job activities. What the researchers found was that both work pleasure and off-job pleasure were favourably related to employee's recovery state. It showed that the more pleasure that individuals experienced during their working day or during their off-job time, the greater their levels of vigour and the lesser their levels of fatigue.

In another study conducted by Money, Hillenbrand and da Camara (2008) it was found that pleasure did not have a significant influence to job satisfaction to work, whilst engagement and meaning had a significant influence. In the study pleasure was measured through items such as "in choosing what I do at work, I take into account what is pleasurable" and "in work I love to do what excites my senses" (other measures also centred on pleasurable experiences at work).

### **2.4.2 Engagement**

Within the framework of positive psychology, Seligman (2002) proposes that the second orientation to happiness is through engagement, which is a representation of the engaged life. As a foundation through which to explore the experiences of happiness among residential child care workers, the conceptualisation of engagement in relation to work is provided, with particular reference to the constructs of work engagement and employee engagement.



Khan (1990) first conceptualised engagement as “the harnessing of organisational members self to their work roles; in engagement people employ and express themselves physically, emotionally, and cognitively during role performances” (p. 694). Similar understandings and conceptualisations have since been put forward. Rich, Lepine and Crawford (2010) see engagement as the investment of an individual’s full self into a role, whilst Halbesleben and Wheeler (2008) view engagement as representing a “positive work-focused psychological state” (p. 242). The two latter conceptualisations of engagement given above clearly capture or can be seen as supporting the definition brought forward by Khan (1990). The harnessing of the self in work roles can be viewed as encompassing a sense of self investment with regard to work and can be seen to represent a positive psychological state as the individual is focused in his or her work rather than being unfocused and distracted.

Shaufeli and Bakker (2004) similarly defined engagement as a positive and fulfilling work related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption. Bakker, Shaufeli, Leiter and Taris (2008) state that “vigour is characterised by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest in effort in ones work, and persistence in the face of challenges (p. 187). Shaufeli and Bakker (2004) state that dedication relates to a sense of involvement with ones work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm and inspiration. Absorption has been understood to be characterised by being “fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work” (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008, p. 245). This conceptualisation of engagement as encompassing vigour, dedication and

absorption is often used to define the construct of work engagement and this present study also defines engagement as such.

For Jones and Harter (2005), engagement is indeed multidimensional in that in addition to Khan's (1990) definition which incorporates physical, emotional and cognitive dimensions and conceptualisations that associates engagement with vigour, dedication and absorption, other authors have often portrayed engagement as the extreme opposite of burnout. From the given definitions of and engagement, there is a justification to position engagement within the positive psychology framework as it involves a positive state in relation to the self and also work-related roles.

Engagement has been viewed as not only about the self with regard to work-related roles, but it also concerns the self, in relation to other individuals (co-workers) and the organisation and its values. The cognitive, emotional and physical dimensions of engagement capture this view. The cognitive dimension to engagement refers to an awareness of one's mission and role in the work environment and (Luthan & Peterson, 2002). This relates to a sense of purposefulness and understanding of the part than one plays in their work context. Emotional engagement refers to how an employee feels about his or her working conditions and also the ability to form meaningful connections with other individuals (co-workers) and to experience empathy and concern for their feelings (Kulan, Gatenby, Reece, Soane & Truss, 2008). Kulan et al. (2008) state that physical engagement is associated with the physical energies that an individual exerts in the accomplishment work-related goals. In essence, employees who know what is expected of them and understand their role, who form strong relationships with their

co-workers and managers, or in other ways experience meaning in their work, are engaged (Luthans & Peterson, 2002). In line with the mission and principles of positive psychology, Crabb (2011) makes the claim that employee engagement is a type of positive organisational practice.

Closely related to the construct of engagement is the concept of flow. Flow is characteristically measured by summing up ratings of an individual's concentration, involvement, and enjoyment during a particular activity (Vella-Brodrick, Park & Peterson, 2009). Waterman (1993) states that flow is experienced when there are high levels of challenge and individuals have the significant level of skills to cope with these challenges. When individuals are in a 'flow state' very little awareness or conscious control is necessary for action (May, Gilson, Harter, 2004). This means that individuals experiencing a sense of flow are seen as being so engrossed and immersed in their work that their actions are not brought forward by conscious control. They are viewed as losing a sense of consciousness about the self as they are immersed and deeply involved in a task or activity.

Insights into engagement and flow, according to Vella-Brodrick et al. (2009), has conceptualised this route to happiness as more than just maximising pleasure (hedonia), but that it also involves eudaimonic qualities such as personal growth. It is expected that individuals who endorse frequently entering flow achieve higher levels of success and are more productive (Schueller & Seligman, 2010) and also are more committed (Vella-Brodrick et al., 2009).

Engagement is indeed a multidimensional construct (Kulan et al., 2008). In this study however, engagement is seen as the encompassing the cognitive, emotional and physical dimensions. This means that engagement is taken to be the understanding of one's role at work, the ability to form positive relationships with co-workers and have a positive feeling about ones work, and the exerting of a significant level of energy in order to achieve work-related goals. Within the work context engagement has been reported to have positive effects. In their study that looked at the mediating role played by work engagement, Salanova and Shauefeli (2008) found that an increase in job resources (i.e. job control, feedback and variety) is related to an increase in work engagement, which in turn is related to increased positive work behaviour.

In relation to the current study, exploring engagement within residential child care workers is essential. Research done on the NPO's workforce reveals that more than a third of the non-profit group lack emotional investment in their work and also lack a shared mission with their organisation (Watson, 2009). Watson (2009) states that these workers are disengaged and this is a huge problem as such workers are less productive, put forward less effort, and also provide a lower level of service. It is with this understanding that it is believed that employees working for NPO's and more specifically, residential child care workers can greatly benefit from being engaged in their work.

### **2.4.3 Meaning**

The third orientation to happiness is meaning (meaningful life). Duckworth, Steen and Seligman (2005) state that this orientation is one that consists of the attachment to and also

the service of something that is larger than oneself. Individuals are motivated to make meaning of the information and the context that surrounds them (Wrzesniewski, Dutton & Debebe, 2003). The kinds of meaning that individuals make of certain objects, activities and relationships could be as a result of personally held values and beliefs, cultural and societal norms or knowledge. Morine (2008) states that the word meaning has two roots. Firstly from the Latin *sensus*, the word means the faculty of experiencing impressions, the faculty of knowing and of judging. From its Germanic root *summo*, according to Morine (2008), it means the orientation or direction that something takes. Chalofsky (2003) suggests three ways in which meaning can be defined, (1) having a purpose or the significance of something, (2) the intensions that one holds, and (3) identifying or clarifying the term in context. With regard to the work context and literature on work meaning, the term 'meaning' usually implies positive meaning (Rosso, Dekas & Wrzesniewski, 2010).

In this study meaning is also taken on to represent positive meaning. This study takes on the definition given by Chalofsky (2003) and associates meaning with a sense of purpose and significance that individuals experience within the workplace.

Work-meaning relates to how employees understand their experience in organisations or their place of work. Wrzesniewski, Dutton, and Debebe (2003) formally define work-meaning as the employees understanding of what they do at work and also the significance of what they do. They state that both the aspects of work meaning are associated with an employee's beliefs about the function that work serves in life, which is affected by the social context in which employees are embedded in. Work meaning therefore views work as having the potential or ability to serve a greater purpose even outside of the work context. Work-meaning is based on four assumptions; (1) that employees are motivated to derive a sense of

meaning from their activities, including work, (2) borrowing from symbolic interactionism, it is assumed that meaning is not static but instead it is an ongoing production that both reflect and shape patterns of action, (3) employees engage in continuous sense-making to distinguish what their work holds for them, and (4) further than that they act upon their relational setting at work in a motivated manner to shape the contact that they have with others and the experiences that they are likely to have (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe , 2003). From this view it can be understood that individuals inherently are meaning-making species. Since work plays such an important and central feature in human's lives, it often becomes an activity or environment through which individuals derive a sense of meaning or significance. Within the broad domain of work meaning there are three major distinct but overlapping facets; *meaning of work*, *meaning at work* and *meaning in work*. The focus of this study is predominantly on *meaning in work* or *meaningful work* as it directly reflects the conceptualisation of meaning as involving a sense of purpose and significance. Brief conceptualisations of *meaning of work* and *meaning at work* will however be given.

*Meaning of work* describes the role that role of work in a person's life, the sociological reasons why people make (Harpaz & Fu, 2002; Chalofsky, 2003; de Klerk, 2005). Meaning of work reflects the meaning that individuals attach to work. This is meaning that one attaches to work is shaped and informed by how work itself is viewed in a society. A reason why one might work, for instance, could be that working is very much a societal expectation. Also individuals could be working because work for them means obtaining a sense of status, prestige, and income. Perhaps the most famous work that has been done on meaning of work is that of Meaning of Work Research Team (1987). In their research which explored the meaning that individuals attached to their work, work was conceptually defined through five

major construct; work centrality, societal norms regarding work, valued outcome, work goals and work role identification. The majority of the research on *meaning of work* makes use of these constructs to further research in this area.

*Meaning at work*, the second facet or domain of work-meaning relates to the relationship that exists between that the individual and the organisation in terms of commitment, loyalty and dedication (Chalofsky, 2003). This relationship encompasses the individual and the organisation as a whole. This domain of work meaning looks at the meaning that individuals find while they are at work, e.g. even the relationships that they have with their fellow co-workers.

The third domain of work-meaning, and which is of particular interest of this study is meaningful work. Throughout the study the term meaningful work will be used to describe this domain.

According to Chalofsky (2003), meaningful work is work that suggests an inclusive state of being; it is the way that individuals express meaning and purpose in their lives through the activities (work) that take up most of their waking hours. For many people, work is their life. de Klerk (2005) expresses that meaningful work is about those working conditions that are supposedly motivating and includes aspects such as autonomy, task responsibility, task significance, identity, complexity, challenge and variety. Here, work is experienced by individuals as an extension and expression of the self. Overell (2008) states that the rising interest in meaningful work is as a result of the changes that have taken place in the affluent western societies and workplaces in the recent past, which may be referred to as advanced modernity, which became more pronounced in the 1970's. Chief among these changes, he states, is the

rise of 'identity', as more and more people started to ask the question 'who am I'. This has led to there being a greater focus on the issues of meaning and purpose.

Morine (2008) states that work is defined as meaningful when the subject perceives his work as having a purpose, a goal, value, or significance. This sense of purpose and meaning that individuals derive from work is not just for the enrichment and self-actualisation of the individual performing the work, but the individual uses his or her virtues to benefit other people as well. Chalofsky (2003) makes mention of a study done by Jagger (1994), in which he investigated the self-employed. The study revealed that among aspects of the prevailing work ethic, a meaningful work was the single most significant descriptor which defined the entrepreneur's sense of purpose in their contribution to the spirit of community living (Chalofsky, 2003). According to Steger, Dik and Duffy (in press), individuals that say that their work is meaningful and/serves some greater social or communal good report better psychological adjustment, and at the same time possess qualities that are desirable to the organisation. Fairlie (2011) addresses the fact that meaningful work is by no means a recently emerging construct. Both Maslow (1965) and Alderfer (1972) described the kinds of work that endorsed self-actualisation. Also he states that Lock (1976) argued that job satisfaction is a function of doing that which is personally valued.

Perceiving one's work as meaningful or purposeful and to serve a higher purpose are key defining characteristics of work as a *calling* (Steger, Dik & Duffy, in press). *The calling* is a more specific construct that falls under the wide umbrella of meaningful work. Duffy, Bott, Allen, Torrey and Dik (2012) refer to a *calling* as being conceptualised as an approach to



work that aligns with a personal meaning, is motivated by prosocial values and arises in answer to transcendent summons. They state that scholars from a variety of disciplines have found the *calling* to be consistently associated with enhanced work related and general eudaimonic wellbeing. Duffy et al. (2012) examined the relationship between living a calling and job satisfaction and the relationship between living a calling and career commitment among 201 employed adults. In this study, it was found that living a calling was strongly correlated with career commitment and job satisfaction. In essence, there is a high probability that individuals who are engaging in meaningful work, particularly a calling, will be committed to and also satisfied with their work.

Dempsey and Sanders (2010) state that in many industrialised countries, the search for work that fulfils a higher calling often leads to the non-profit sector. They state that the literature identify the non-profit sector as key sources of meaningful work and associates this sector with a sense of a higher calling. An exploration of meaning in the non-profit sector, and particularly among residential child care workers, can identify already existing experiences of meaningful work and also can help encourage for a greater experience of this. According to Wong (2012) a meaning making mindset can facilitate in striving for authentic happiness and also for overcoming adversities. Hence, through adopting a meaning making mindset, residential child care workers can have a greater potential of achieving authentic happiness and also overcoming adversities related to the line of work.

Pleasure, engagement and meaning, as has been discussed, are viewed by Seligman (2002) to be orientations to achieving happiness. These three constructs, as has been discussed, seem to

have a valuable and important place in the work arena in that they have a general ability of resulting in general well-being, helping individuals deal with organisational challenges and also impact on the overall organisational goal. In relation to the present study, these constructs can be explored amongst residential child care workers so as to gain an understanding as to how happiness is perceived and experienced by the workers.

## **2.5 Residential Child Care Workers**

In South Africa and in other parts of the world residential child care is a huge reality. Dunn and Parry-Williams (2008) define residential child care as a type of child care that is provided in a non family-based group setting. Residential child care includes children's homes that are run as family-type group homes, and provides live-in care for a number of children of no relation to the individuals running the home (Dunn & Parry-Williams, 2008; Meintjies et al., 2007). There are other type's alternative care such as foster care and kinship care, which also provide care for children in cases where immediate and biological parents cannot. Residential child care however, according to Dunn and Parry-Williams (2008), remains the most prevalent type of alternative formal care.

There are many reasons, sociopolitical and economic, that many children are left with no choice but to be put in children's homes and cared for by residential child care workers. A study conducted by Meintjies et al. (2007) suggested that widespread abuse, neglect and abandonment are major reasons that children enter residential care settings, with HIV/Aids and poverty being part of a complex causal pathway. In South Africa and other parts of Africa, poverty is a massive and consequential factor that undermines many parents ability to provide even basic human necessities, such as food and shelter, for their children. As a result

of this, it is often seen as the ‘best thing to do’ to send a child to a residential care setting where children will receive such necessities. Dunn and Parry -Williams (2008) also report that mothers and fathers are dying because of HIV/Aids. In some cases extended families are unwilling to take in the orphaned children or are themselves living in dire poverty and therefore are unable to feed an extra mouth.

Providing institutional care for children who are orphaned, neglected and/or abused is not something that is confined to South Africa or Africa alone. A study done by Carter (2005) revealed that the issue surrounding the ever increasing rate of HIV/Aids infected individuals which leads to many children being put in children’s home is one that is prevalent in central and eastern Europe as well. The study specified that the rate of children entering residential or children’s home in central and eastern Europe had increased dramatically between the years 1980 and 2005. With residential child care being ubiquitous in the world over, there is a great need to bring to the forefront the experiences of those who are tasked with the responsibility of providing the care to the children and how they experience happiness in such a critical and often overlooked profession (Barford & Whelton, 2010).

Moses (2000) puts forward that very little is known about residential child care workers and the characteristics that enables them to perform their role optimally. The author claims that one of the major reasons for this neglect rests on the de-emphasis of the child care role as a non-specialist and para-professional supportive function in residential child care setting. Child care workers have not been given much recognition as working professionals and hence not enough credible research has been dedicated to their experiences. “There is a

danger that child care workers will continue to be overlooked as a priority research focus” (Moses, 2000, p.114). Along with being neglected by researchers, child care workers are also overlooked by other professionals and society at large. According to Barford and Whelton (2010) child care workers face a substantial amount of difficulty with regards to gaining respect from society as well as from individuals in other professions. This is rather concerning especially taking into consideration the important role that the child care workers play in the lives of the vulnerable children and in society at large. In most instances, this role of care giver is often carried out by child care workers under conditions which are not always the best.

Research done by Meintjies et al. (2007) revealed that a large number of child care workers, whether they were rotating shifts or were full time workers, work extremely long hours. Also, with regards to those workers who were not working on a full time basis, a twelve hour shift is normally a standard practice. Child care workers in the Western Cape, according to study, worked such long hours that it impacted on their health with illness undermining the consistency of care that they provide. Remuneration, or rather a lack of, is also another area of concern. As a result of residential or children’s home being NPO’s, child care workers, so it has been reported, do not earn a sufficient and ‘livable’ salary. Child care workers, as reported by Barford and Whelton (2010), often receive wages that are, put simply, ‘inadequate’ and sometimes even appalling. Along with poor and insufficient compensation and extremely long working hours Meintjies et al. (2007) identified poor working conditions, training that is inadequate, and lack of support as other factors that possibly stand in the way of child care workers performing their role to their optimal level.

The concerns highlighted above are not only confined to residential child care institutions and its employees, but these are issues which seem to be common across NPO's in general. Hannum et al. (2011) put forward that NPO's seek to do public good and that they foster community engagement and participation. The authors state that these organisations respond to the needs of the community and hence play a very critical role in society at large. For NPO's to continue to be in existence however, it can be said that it's workforce is an essential asset. With that being mentioned, McMullen and Schellenburg (2003) mention however that NPO's are faced with great challenges in that increasingly such organisations are expected to meet up to an extensive range of demands but are not being provided with the necessary resources to meet these demands. As a consequence of this, according to the authors, NPO's must find ways of doing 'more for less' and this often includes placing paid employees under strains of increasing workloads, lower wages and also job insecurity.

It is important to put forward however, that even though there seems to be evident challenges that are faced by the NPO workforce and residential child care workers in particular, research has found that many of these workers still experience a sense of 'happiness' from their work. For instance, Hannum et al. (2011) reported that individuals who work within the non-profit sector often are drawn to the sector because of their passion for the mission that the non-profit sector stands for. The researchers found that most of the workers within the non-profit sector often report high levels of intrinsic motivation and associated positive emotions, such as joy, to their work. This can be associated with the firm orientation to happiness as identified by Seligman (2002).

Also, according to Dempsey and Sanders (2010), the scholarly accounts often identify non-profits as chief sources for work which is more meaningful and one that is associated with pursuit of a higher calling. This would mean that some of the employees within the non-profit sector, feel that their work is truly something that they were meant to be doing, maybe even seeing it as an extension of who they really are. This is associated to Seligman's 'meaning' approach to happiness. Hannum et al. (2011) point out however, that whilst working in such a sector can be emotionally fulfilling and can bring about positive emotions, the emotional fulfilment is much more difficult to obtain especially when one feels financially unstable. They go on to say that if for instance, if an individual has worries about not being able to pay the rent or bills, than it is highly unlikely that meaningful work will keep them happy.

The discussion on residential and child care workers given above, call for more research to be done in the area of wellbeing with regards to these workers. Their line of work is believed to be of great significance and benefits society at large. Hence it is imperative to explore the ways in which they experience happiness (with regards to pleasure, engagement and meaning) and also to look into the factors that stand in the way of them experiencing it.

## **2.6 Theoretical Framework- The Broaden and Build Theory of Positive Emotions**

Past research has shown that happiness can be explained and understood through the use of the Fredrickson's (1998) Broaden and Build Theory of Positive Emotions. According to the

theory, seemingly momentary positive emotions, such as joy, pride, contentment that represent the pleasure route to happiness, not only have beneficial effects on health and wellbeing, but also long term profits by building enduring personal resources (such as intellectual, physical, social, psychological) that can act as a buffer for future stressors (van Hoof, Geurts, Bekkers, & Kompier, 2011).

Fredrickson (2004) states that positive emotions have a complimentary effect in that it broadens people momentary thought action repertoires, widening or expanding the array of thoughts and action that come to mind. The frequent and ongoing experience of joy, for instance, has the ability of strengthening an individual's social support networks and through creativity can lead to creative problem solving in day to day life and/or production of art (Carr, 2004). In essence, it can be said that 'joy' has the potential of contributing to personal development. Fredrickson (2001) states that typically, an emotion begins with an individual's assessment of the personal meaning of some event. It is this appraisal or meaning-making that triggers a cascade of emotions (meaning orientation to happiness). Meaning, according to the theory, is also helpful when faced with stressful situations. According to Fredrickson (2004), one way that individuals can experience positive emotions during times of adversity is by finding meaning in ordinary events and in the adversity itself.

Research that was conducted by Catalino and Fredrickson (2011), gave supported to the Broaden and Build Theory, with results showing how positive emotions have the ability of building enduring resources over time. The study was conducted to explore how is it that that flourishers are able to thrive. Results indicated that relative to those individuals who did

not flourish or were depressed, individuals that flourished were those who experienced positive emotions in everyday pleasant events such as helping others, learning, spiritual activities etc. What was important and more related to the present study, was that the findings suggested that the greatest experience of positive emotions that lead to flourishing was associated with doing something to help or assist other individuals. Assisting and being of service to others can be linked to meaning, as has previously discussed. Catalino and Fredrickson (2011) state that on average, the positive emotional boost that a flourisher received when engaged in helping others was more than double than non-flourishers and in turn flourishers were able to, over time develop a cognitive resource of mindfulness.

### **2.6.1 The Broaden and Build Theory in Context**

In exploring happiness (pleasure, engagement, and, meaning) amongst residential child care workers the Broaden and Build Theory (1998) provides a suitable theoretical framework. The experience or frequent experience of positive emotions it is believed, can allow residential child care workers to build durable resources that can in turn impact positively on their work of caring for abandoned, abused and/or neglected children. Also through finding meaning and being engaged in their work, residential child care workers can be able to find personal fulfilment and also cope with the challenges that they are faced with at work. The results of this study can assist managers in having an understanding of the residential child care workers with regards to how they experience happiness in order to know which areas to encourage and help cultivate in the workers.



## **2.7 Chapter summary**

Chapter two included a review of past and current literature relating to the topic of happiness and residential child care workers. What was concluded was that happiness is something that most individuals in society seek to experience; in fact it can even be seen as a goal that many individuals aim to achieve. It is no wonder then, that the topic of happiness is a massive and relevant concern of positive psychology, as positive psychology is primarily focused on the aspects of human condition in which people are able to be their best and experience positivity. Pleasure, engagement and meaning as identified by Seligman (2002), are all very important orientations to achieving happiness. Research with regards to happiness within the workplace has shown that employees, who are able to experience positive emotions, engage in their work, and/or find meaning in their work are more productive and can deal with the host of work challenges that they face on a daily basis. As a result, the exploration of happiness, looking at pleasure, engagement and meaning, amongst residential child care workers, will not only bring about awareness about their experiences, but also provide information about how to find ways of increasing their experience of happiness with the workplace so as to provide optimal care to children in children homes. The next chapter provides a discussion on the methodology that was used in the collection of the required data.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter of the study addresses the methodology that was used in order to gain the relevant information that was required to successfully conduct the study and to answer the research questions. It provides explanations and descriptions of the type of research design used, the research setting and population, how data was collected, and the instruments that were used during data collection. It also provides an explanation and description of how the data, after having been collected, was analysed and interpreted.

#### **3.2 Research Methodology**

##### **3.2.1 Research design**

The study was conducted through the use of a qualitative research design. Qualitative research involves the exploration of events within their cultural, social and political context, and it probes deeper into the lives of individuals, seeing the world from the participant's perspective (Ulin et al., 2002). In qualitative research, in-depth understanding of the social phenomena is looked at from a holistic view rather than in fragmented components. Also, qualitative research takes into consideration the meaning that individuals attach to social phenomena and how the social phenomena are interpreted by the individuals (Bryman, 2004).

The qualitative design was thus appropriate for this study as the general aim was to gain an understanding of and also explore the subjective experiences and perceptions of happiness among residential child care workers. In achieving this, it was imperative that there was an in-depth exploration of how the child care workers interpreted and experienced happiness by looking into pleasure, engagement and meaning. Taking into consideration of the context of residential child care work was important. According to Bryman (2004), qualitative research greatly acknowledges the socio-political context of the participants.

Understanding the context was particularly important in this study. This is because the non-profit sector, in which residential child care work is situated, fundamentally operates to support a number of social, religious and economic endeavours, and not to acquire profit (Arnsberger, Ludum & Riley, n.d). Particularly, residential child care workers provide care and nurturance to children whose biological family cannot. Hence it was important to explore and gain an understanding of the perceptions and experiences of happiness among the residential child care workers, taking into consideration their work context and how it would have impacted on these experiences. Qualitative research was thus also suitable in this regard.

### **3.2.2 Research setting and population**

The study was conducted in a children's home in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, referred to from now on as Organisation X. Organisation X is a non-government organisation that was established in 1905. It was developed through a need to provide substitute care to orphans, destitute children and children with parents who were unable to care for them. The organisation recognises the importance of early intervention, preventative work with children

and families, as well as family reconciliation. This organisation was chosen as the research setting for this particular study because the researcher felt that she could easily access the organisation as it was situated close to where she lived and also studied. As a result of this, the researcher could make all her appointments on time and even make more than one trip to the organisation in one day.

The children, who access the programs that are found in Organisation X, come from all over Kwa-Zulu Natal. The organisation is responsible for the care of 82 vulnerable and orphaned children. There are 25 residential child care workers employed at Organisation X. The organisation accepts donations from the community. These can be in the form of school fees for the children uniforms, food, water and electricity, birthday presents, clothing etc. Organisation X also receives funding from a variety of donors. These are established businesses that provide sponsorship and funding to the organisation so as to assist in the caring of the children. There are a number of employees that are employed in Organisation X. These include the director, residential social workers, child care manager, resource developer, secretary and residential child care workers.

The manager of Organisation X was contacted telephonically and was briefed about the study and the researcher's intentions of interviewing some of the child care workers at Organisation X. Before a decision was made, the manager at Organisation X requested that the researcher also send an email outlining the intentions of the research as discussed telephonically. This was so the manager could discuss the matter with the relevant stakeholders at the

organisation. About a week after the requested email was sent to Organisation X, there was a response from them indicating that access into the organisation had been granted.

It was then suggested by the manager at Organisation X, that the researcher attend one of the weekly meetings, which takes place every Monday morning, in order to brief the residential child care workers about the study and request for their participation. At the Monday morning meetings the child care workers gather to discuss the events of the week, raise their concerns and also brief the managers on relevant and important issues pertaining to the children. The researcher accepted this invitation. During the meeting the residential child care workers were briefed about the study and its significance by the researcher. The manager then informed the researcher that an email would be sent to her with all the names and contact details of the interested child care workers. A few days later, this was honoured and the researcher began to contact the interested participants to set up interviews with them.

### **3.2.3 Sampling**

Purposive sampling was used to choose the study participants. This type of sampling involves deliberately choosing participants that will be able to provide the required and relevant information (Terre Blanch, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). When using purposive sampling, it is not the population's willingness to participate in the study that forms the basis for selection, rather individuals are chosen because their experiences and knowledge is relevant to the study. Whilst it was recognised that the entire population in the targeted children's home plays an important role, this study confined itself to those employees with specific child care

responsibilities, otherwise known as child care workers. All of the participants were of the Black African race and requested that the interviews be conducted in IsiZulu.

### 3.2.4 Participants

The sample consisted of nine participants. There was diversity with regard to the gender of the participants, however all the participants were of the Black African race. The researcher had hoped to have sample that accounted for diversity with regard to race, however, all the residential child care workers at Organisation X were of the Black African race. Below is a table containing the biographical information of the nine research participants.

**Table 1**

*Demographic Information of Participants.*

<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Years of Service</b>
25	Male	Child care worker	2 years
22	Male	Child care worker	1 year and 6 months
32	Female	Child care worker	5 years
28	Male	Child care worker	8 years and 2 months
29	Female	Child care worker	Contract worker

46	Male	Child care worker	9 years
42	Female	Child care worker	10 years
32	Female	Child care worker	2 years
39	Male	Child care worker	8 years

### 3.2.5 Data collection

The main aim of the study was to explore and understand the subjective experiences and perceptions of happiness among residential child care workers. After the researcher was given the names and contact details of the individuals who were willing to participate in the study, they were contacted telephonically in order to set up the interviews. The researcher set the relevant time and dates according to the schedule and availability of the child care workers. All of the interviews were conducted before 2pm as this was the period that the children were at school and the participants felt that there would be fewer distractions. The children who were present during the interviews were those who were too young to attend school and also those who were feeling unwell and hence stayed behind to recover. Although there were instances where the interview has to be paused so as to allow the residential child care worker being interviewed to attend to the children, this did not negatively impact on data collection.

The interviews were conducted at Organisation X. Before each interview, the researcher briefed the participant about the research and the participant was given a consent form to sign (See appendix 2). This form basically noted that the participant was not forced to be

interviewed and also that the participant agreed for the interviews to be recorded. The interviews took between thirty minutes to an hour.

### **3.2.6 Research instruments**

Information relevant to the study was collected in two ways. The biographical questionnaire (see Appendix 3), was used to collect the biographical information of age, gender, race, and the participants length of service at Organisation X. The biographical information was beneficial during the interpretation process as it assisted in exploring and also determining whether the factors of age, race and length of service impacted on the child care workers perceptions and experiences of happiness.

It is suggested by Bryman (2004) that in qualitative research there is an extensive reliance on interviewing. Interviews can be thought of as a way of obtaining information or data from participants through conversation. In this study, information was gathered through the use of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews is a kind of interview where the researcher prepares his or her questions for the participants to answer prior to the actual interview, however, as the interview progresses the researcher may ask other questions that may have not been initially prepared (Bryman, 2004). The interview questions for this study were developed through the use of Seligman's Approach to Happiness questionnaire which was adapted from the context of life in general to the workplace (Money, Hillenbrand & da Camara, 2008). This questionnaire measures each of the Seligman's (2002) orientations to meaning, i.e. pleasure, engagement and meaning. Since this was a qualitative study, the researcher adapted the questions contained in Seligman's Approach to Happiness questionnaire to fit a qualitative research design (see Appendix 3).



Through the use of semi-structured interviews, child care residential workers were able to verbally express their perceptions and experiences relating to happiness in an in-depth manner. The structure of order in which the interview was conducted at times differed from one interview to the next. This was as a result of the responses that were given by the participants which allowed the researcher to probe further if clarity was required or of the researcher basically needed additional information. This is a strength of semi-structured interviews; its allowance for flexibility in the interview process.

The trustworthiness of this study was addressed by looking into issues such as credibility, transferability and dependability. Credibility relates to whether the study actually measures what it is intended. Credibility was ensured in this study by using Seligman's (2002) framework of achieving happiness through the orientations of pleasure, engagement and meaning. The Orientations to Happiness questionnaire by Seligman (2002) also contributed to the credibility of the study as it provided the basis through which the interview schedule was developed. Transferability, which refers to whether the findings can be applied to other situations (Shenton, 2004), allowed the findings of the study to be generalised to other organisations within the non-profit sector.

### **3.2.7 Data Analysis**

The aim of the research was to explore the subjective experiences of happiness among child care workers. This was done through an exploration of how happiness has been conceptualised in literature and also looked at the perceptions and experiences of happiness

among the workers. In analysing the data that was obtained from the interviews, thematic analysis was used. Thematic analysis is a method that includes the identification, analysis and reporting of patterns or themes in data (Braun & Clark, 2006). Analysis of data using thematic analysis involves a constant moving back and forward between the entire data set, the extracts being analysed and the analysis that is being produced (Ulin et al., 2002). This allows for a sense of flexibility, which is highly required in qualitative research. Holloway and Todress (2003) thematic content analysis is one of the oldest and also one of the most commonly used types of data analysis methods. In fact, the authors states that it should be seen as a foundational method for all qualitative analysis.

Braun and Clark (2006) point out that a great benefit of thematic analysis in analysing qualitative data is that it provides a flexible and useful research tool which potentially provides rich and detailed, yet multifaceted accounts of data. In the present study, thematic analysis hence provided a great level of flexibility allowing a sense of back and forth movement between the data that was obtained until the most important and relevant themes were identified. Thematic analysis hence allowed there to be links made between the identified themes and also between the pleasure, meaning and engagement as perceived and experienced by residential child care workers. Also, thematic analysis proved to be beneficial and appropriate for the current study as it allowed for the use of, in this case, Fredrickson's (1998) Broaden and Build Theory to make sense of the happiness and the experiences and perceptions of the residential child care workers.

In analysing the data that was obtained from the interviews with the residential child care workers using thematic analysis, the researcher followed six steps. Firstly, the researcher has had to transcribe each of the interviews verbatim. All of the interviews were conducted in

IsiZulu and hence the researcher had to translate them to English. It should be noted that because of the differences in expressions and meanings between the IsiZulu English languages, the interpretation and analysis of the data could have been impacted. The meaning of what the participants were saying may have been lost or not accurately captured when translating from IsiZulu to English. Transcribing the interviews assisted the researcher in remembering exactly what had transpired during each of the interviews, capturing in writing exactly how the participants had responded.

In the second step the researcher, taking into consideration all the transcripts, generated initial codes from the data. All of the transcripts were read and the similarities in the responses of the residential child care workers were given codes. Also codes were given to any information that was deemed to be of particular importance and relevant to this study.

After these codes were developed, themes were developed from them. The themes were then re-read, and refined until the researcher was satisfied. The themes also had to be defined and given names. Thereafter the data was interpreted, using quotes from the transcripts and available research and literature. Thematic analysis was found to be a valuable data analysis method for this study as it allowed for a detailed account of the experiences of happiness through the identification and exploration of the themes that emerged from the data obtained.

### **3.3. Ethical considerations**

Prior to the commencement of the recording of each interview, all participants were briefed about purpose of the study. The participants were informed that they were not forced to participate in the study and could withdraw at any point. The participants were also assured

of confidentiality and that the study was not in any way meant to harm or disadvantage them. Permission was also requested from the participants to tape record the interviews.

The participants were assured that their actual names would not be revealed at any point in the research, and if need be, pseudo-names would be used. The researcher informed the participants that only the researcher would have access to the interview material, and that their colleagues and other participants would not be able to access these

### **3.4 Chapter summary**

Chapter three outlined the methods that were used to obtain the data that was relevant to be able to answer the research questions. The study made use of a qualitative research design based on the design's ability to obtain rich and detailed data. Research participants were employees at organisation X and purposive sampling was used in order to obtain information which was relevant and important to the study. The research participants were interviewed on a one-on-one basis at organisation X using semi-structured interviews. The interviews took about 40 minutes to an hour each. After the data had been obtained, it was then translated verbatim and analysed through the use of thematic analysis.

## **Chapter 4**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter of the study involves an analysis of the data collected with the aim of exploring the subjective experiences of happiness among residential child care workers. Through the use of thematic analysis there were six themes that emerged from the data.

#### **4.2 Themes**

The five themes that emerged through the analysis of the data that was obtained from the residential child care workers were:

- Theme 1: Perceptions of happiness among residential child care workers
- Theme 2: Positive and negative emotions experienced by residential child care workers;
- Theme 3: Challenges experienced by the residential child care workers;
- Theme 4: Engaging with the children at the children's home;
- Theme 5: Positive impact on the self, the children and society at large
- Theme 6: Residential child care work being perceived as a calling.

Some of the major themes indicated above have sub-themes which are further used to explore and expand on the research findings. Below is a table containing the major themes and their sub-themes that emerged from the data.

**Table 2**

*Table Containing the Major Themes and Sub-themes*

Major Themes	Sub-theme(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceptions of happiness among residential child care workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No sub-theme</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive and negative emotions experienced by child care workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive emotions</li> <li>Negative emotions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenges experienced by the residential child care workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to withstand challenges</li> <li>Discouraged by challenges</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging with the children at the children's home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desire to do more</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive impact on the self, the children and society at large</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive impact on the self and others</li> <li>Positively impacting society at large</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residential child care work perceived as a calling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No sub-theme</li> </ul>

The themes and sub-themes that are contained in Table 2 are discussed in this chapter with supporting quotations. The quotations represent verbatim responses that were given by the residential child care workers during the interview process. The following codes were used to identify the transcripts of each participant:

- The transcripts from the residential child care worker were represented by the letter 'C'.

- The order in which the child care worker was interviewed will be represented by a number in front of the 'C'. For instance, if a quotation from the first interviewed participant is used to support a theme or statement, the code that is given is 'C1', and if a quotation from the second interviewed child care worker is used, then the code will be 'C2' etc. Below is a discussion of the themes.

### **4.3 Theme 1: Perceptions of happiness among the residential child care workers**

Soanes and Stevenson (2006) define perceptions as “the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses...a way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something” (p. 1063). In other words, perceptions relate to how something is understood and/or interpreted by individuals by means of the senses or mind. The findings of the study suggest the residential child care workers do share somewhat similar understandings of what happiness is. Through the use of thematic analysis, it was revealed that residential child care workers have a positive view of happiness, even giving examples of when they were at their happiest when at work.

The findings suggest that the residential child care workers include positive emotions in their understandings of happiness. For instance, when asked about his understanding of happiness is C1 stated, “*Happiness for me is just being able to feel and experience joy. It is about feeling alive*”. Similarly, C2 suggested that happiness for him was about “*Feeling good in general, in what you do and also in who you are, mmmm, it is just about feeling joyful*”.

For C7, happiness was related to the manner in which individuals approached things and situations in life. She stated, *“If you are a person that approaches things in a negative manner then you will not be happy, but if you approach them in a positive manner than you will be happy”*. For this individual, happiness is understood to be what is experienced when one has a general positive outlook on life and situations. C8 went on to say that *“happiness for me is loving life and hmmm, also loving what you do. Your life has to have meaning, ja what you do has to have meaning, it is very important”*. As can be seen from the response from C8, meaning is an important aspect in order to experience happiness.

Residential child care workers, as suggested by the findings, understand or perceive happiness to be associated with the experience of positive emotions such as joy. This perception of happiness seems to be one that is common among individuals in society. For instance Argyle (2001) stated that when individuals are asked to give a definition of happiness, they may report that they are experiencing a positive emotional state such as joy, or satisfied with life as a whole or maybe part of it. Similarly according to Nettle (2005), people generally perceive happiness to be a state which involves positive emotions and feelings. Not only are the perceptions of happiness somewhat similar among individuals, but literature also tends to define it as a positive emotional state. In giving a definition of a ‘happy person’, Boehm and Lyubomirsky (2008) stated that *“a happy person is someone who frequently experiences positive emotions and examples of positive emotions are joy, satisfaction, contentment, enthusiasm and interest”* (p. 101).



Some of the residential child care workers, in giving their understanding and perceptions of happiness, gave examples that were related to their work. For instance, C3 stated that, *“hmmm,, how can I say this, for me I can relate happiness to when I can maybe help a child and actually get to see a change, yes for me it is happiness, it makes me happy”*. C6 expressed that, *“For me, happiness is the thing that I feel when I am able to see a child, who maybe was in trouble when they got here, but as the time goes I see the child making the right decisions, jah, to me it is happiness to see that”*. It is suggested, by these findings, that residential child care workers also understand happiness to be something that is experienced when one is able to help or assist others in a positive manner. With regard to their work, this is being able to be a part of helping the children at Organisation X to make positive changes and decisions.

The dominant issue that has risen from the first theme is the relation or link that is made between happiness and positive emotions such as joy for instance. As suggested by the findings, the residential child care workers, in giving their understanding of happiness, gave examples and descriptions of positive emotions. Indeed positive emotions are the cornerstone of Fredrickson’s (1998) Broaden and Build Theory. According to Fredrickson (2001), *“positive emotions serve as markers of flourishing, or optimal well-being”* (p. 218). When interpreted, this means that when individuals flourish, experience a sense optimal well-being, or happiness, it is normally indicated by the experience of positive emotions. It is the continuous experience of positive emotions that gives individuals a greater chance of experiencing happiness in their lives (Fredrickson, 2004). It can thus be assumed that the residential child care workers have come to understand or perceive happiness in relation to

positive emotions because of their continuous experiences of such emotions in their line of work.

#### **4.4 Theme 2: Positive and negative emotions experienced by residential child care workers**

Understanding and exploring basic human emotions remains an important aspect of psychology and more specifically of positive psychology. According to Compton (2005) the relationship between positive emotional states in particular and well-being is an important and basic theme in positive psychology. The findings suggest that the majority of the residential child care workers experiences positive emotions in relation to their work, whilst two of the child care workers expressed negative emotions.

##### **4.4.1 Positive emotions**

The majority of the residential child care workers, when asked about how they felt about their job, expressed that they felt quite good about it, associating their job with positive emotions. C1 stated that, *“I love it and I just love being with kids. I love it because I see how it makes them happy and in turn that makes me happy as well”*. Similarly C2 expressed that, *“My job brings me joy”*. Also expressing a sense of joy with regard to C9 to his work, C9 stated, *“If I had to come up with come up with an activity for the kids and they happen to enjoy it and are impressed by it, that brings me joy and I am happy. If it happens that they have not enjoyed it, then I feel as though I went wrong somewhere”*.

From the findings it can be concluded that some of the residential child care workers at Organisation X, experience a sense of love and joy, which can be classified as positive emotions, in relation to their work of providing care to the children at the home. Seligman et al. (2006) defined the pleasure orientation to happiness as one that involves experiences which were positive and enjoyable, most often producing emotions of joy. This suggests that the emotions of joy and love, that are expressed and experienced by the residential child care workers, is a positive experience, and one which can be said to impact positively on their care giving role. This can be exemplified through a quotation from C3 who expressed that she felt joy and was happy about her role as a child care worker. She stated, *“I am happy about my job, and I am happy about the role that I play in their lives (children), it brings me joy”*. According to a study done by Gavin and Mason (2004), employees who are happy with their job and who are happy at work, contributed to the overall organisational success and commitment. The findings hence suggest that the residential child care workers who express and experience positive emotions and happiness in their care giving role actually have the potential of contributing to the overall success of Organisation X. This would mean that happy child care workers and those who experience positive emotions such as joy can be effective in caring out their care giving role, providing the necessary care to the children and hence contributing to the value of the children’s home.

What is important to note about the findings is that the positive emotions that were expressed by the residential child care workers is of a result of being able to be of assistance to the children at the home, and in seeing the children happy as a result of their care. Again, C1 is quoted to show this. He said, *“I love it and I just love being with kids. I love it because I see how it makes them happy and in turn that makes me happy as well, it is about the kids”*.

The findings suggest that the residential child care workers are able to experience positive emotions, such as joy, through the knowledge that they are contributing to the welfare of others lives, and in this case, the lives of the children at the home. Seligman (2002) classified positive emotions into three categories: those associated with the past, the present and the future. Particularly, when considering the types of positive emotions which are associated with the present Carr (2004) puts forward that there are two classes of these; those pleasures which are momentary and those which are more enduring. The momentary pleasures are bodily in nature and most often come through the senses. According to Carr (2004) feelings that are derived from sex, delicious flavours and beautiful perfume fall in this category. However, pleasures which are much more enduring are different from the momentary bodily ones. The more enduring pleasures are said to be much more gratifying and can be classified as higher order pleasures (Seligman, 2002). Higher order pleasures can be said to involve experiences which feel good but are more cognitively complex and tend to have a more longer lasting effect on the mood (Compton, 2005). These, according to Compton (2005), involves how experiences are interpreted and made meaningful by individuals. The findings thus suggest that the positive experiences are experienced by the residential child care workers are those which can be classified as higher order pleasure. It can be said that the child care workers attach some meaning to their care giving role and being able to positively impact on the lives of the children. As C6 states, *“If I had to come up with come up with an activity for the kids and they happen to enjoy it and are impressed by it, that brings me joy and I am happy”*.

This meaning that results in the residential child care workers experiencing positive emotions seem to be associated with their love for working with children, being able to play a positive

and meaningful role in the children's lives and also seeing the children themselves experience such emotions. A study done by Benze (2005) gave evidence to the existence of such worker well-being in the non-profit sector. The results of the study gave confirmation to the traditional view that workers in the non-profit sector experience a greater sense of satisfaction and overall well-being with respect to their job with the workers associating positive emotions such as love when speaking about their jobs.

People working in NPO's are generally seen to be motivated and drawn to the sector because of a sense of social responsibility and wanting to make a difference in any way that they can. This was elaborated in a study done by Dunn and Parry-Williams (2008) which found that many of the residential child care workers are drawn to the profession because of a deep seated desire to make a difference in the children's lives. This, at times, could be as a result of their own unfulfilled childhoods. In turn these workers, according to Dunn and Parry-Williams (2008), feel a genuine sense of love for their job, despite the challenges that they encounter on a daily basis.

What can be concluded from the sub-theme of positive emotions in relation to the non-profit sector and more specifically residential child care workers is that such workers do indeed experience emotions such as love and joy. More importantly, and associated with the experience of positive emotions, is the interpretation of the meaning of their job of providing child care to the children at the home. The Broaden and Build Theory by Fredrickson (1998) does indeed seem to give support to the above findings. As previously noted in chapter two, Fredrickson's (1998) Broaden and Build Theory encompasses a meaning component to the

experience to positive emotions. According to Fredrickson (2001), an emotion typically begins with an individual's personal meaning of some event and it is this meaning-making that actually triggers a cascade of emotions. Also Fredrickson (2001) puts forward that positive emotions can be created and/or increased through engaging in activities which are intrinsically motivating and through which individuals can enhance their level of empathy towards others. This can be seen as the very nature of residential child care work.

#### **4.4.2 Negative emotions**

Even though the majority of the residential child care workers expressed positive emotions to the role that they played in the children's home, two of the workers expressed emotions which were negative. These workers communicated that whilst they indeed understood the importance of the work that they do, their experiences however, had somewhat discouraged them and led to them experiencing negative emotions.

In describing how she felt about her work C5 stated, *"I feel ok about my job, it's just that it is also frustrating, I believe that if you work with kids you both need to be comfortable with each other and not frustrated with one another. But it is frustrating most of the time. For instance, I can tell a child to do something, and the child can respond by refusing in a rude manner. The child can even turn around and ask what am I going to do about the fact that they are refusing"*. The findings suggest that when the children are being perceived as being disrespectful to the care givers at the home, it can bring about emotions of frustration for the care givers. Frustration can be classified as a negative emotion. There is also a sense of helplessness that is experienced by the care givers as they realise that they are not the

children's biological parents and hence the children at the home do not have to necessarily listen to them. In illustrating this C5 went on to say, "*When they ask me what am I going to do about the fact that they do not want to do what I have asked them, I turn around and tell them that nothing, because there is really nothing that I can do*".

Moses (2000) states that residential child care workers, with increasing frequency, have to deal with 'acting out' adolescents who behave in a manner that is dangerous to the environment, the child care workers, and also to other children in the homes. This can discourage the child care workers and also, to a great extent, can lead to feelings of frustration even if they had initially entered the profession out of love (2000).

From the findings, it is also suggested that in some instances, the child care workers, at the beginning of their careers as residential child care workers, do experience positive emotions. However, though experiences which were perceived as negative by the child care worker, this positivity began to fade. C9 expressed, "*I enjoyed it when I first started working here but as time went on the enjoyment faded. When I first got here (started working at the home), the environment and the people made me happy to be working here and I enjoyed it, but now that has faded.*

Carstens (2007) conducted a study which also gives support to the experiences of negative emotions by child care workers in instances where the initial emotions were that of positivity. He made the observation that many of the child care workers come in happy, enthusiastic and enjoying the work and then have to deal with kids who are depressed, drug addicts and who

are in trouble with the law. A few years later these kids leave the homes doing and also feeling much better whilst the child care workers are left drinking heavily, getting divorces and have negative and depressing associations with their jobs.

It is important to note that experiencing negative emotions does not necessarily mean that an individual has an overall negative outlook on life. Some negative emotions, according to Diener and Biswas-Diener (2008), are actually functional and we ought to experience them from time to time. The authors state that the danger is not necessarily experiencing them because in all honesty we all do, but the danger lies in getting too comfortable with them in such a way that they rival our positive emotions in frequency and also in intensity.

It can be concluded that residential child care workers do experience negative emotions in relation to their work, even though the negative emotions were expressed by the minority participants in this particular study. Experiencing such negative emotions however seems to be very much a common reality due to the nature of the work in residential child care. However, as Fredrickson's (1998) Broaden and Build Theory would explain, the consistent and continuous experience of such emotions actually produce grave problems for an individual. Instead of broadening thought-action repertoires, Fredrickson (2001) states that prolonged negative emotions narrow an individual's attention and can lead to problems such as anxiety, phobias and stress. From the research findings and the supporting literature it would seem the negative emotions can have an adverse impact on the goal of providing child care if child care workers experience such emotions on a continuous basis.



The discussion of both positive and negative emotions that has been given above will further be extended in the discussion of *challenges faced by residential child care workers* which makes up the next theme. The extension of the topic includes how emotions, both negative and positive, as expressed by the residential child care workers impact on the perception and experiences of the challenges that the workers encounter.

#### **4.5 Theme 3: Challenges faced by residential child care workers**

Whilst the majority of the interviewed residential child care workers did indicate and express that they were happy in their job and experienced positive emotions, they also however expressed that they did face many challenges. An interesting finding was that the workers who had expressed positive emotions felt as though could cope with the challenges. One child care worker, who were experiencing negative emotions with regard to their work, felt as though she could not handle the challenges and hence were looking for other employment outside of residential child care.

The main challenges that seemed to be common amongst the child care workers related to insufficient salary and long working hours. C4 stated, “*We work long hours and also the money is not good. You go the ATM, you take out our money maybe twice and that’s it, it is finished*”. C5 spoke particularly about the long that they worked as residential child care workers and how, at times the long hours made it difficult for her to go home and be with her own family. She said, “*We work very long hours, as I am talking to you now it is Friday afternoon and I started work at 8am. I am only meant to finish work and return home on Monday morning, however I will not be able to do so since I am working again on Monday*”.

*evening and it would not make sense for me to travel home by taxi in the morning only to return to work a few hours later". C6 also expressed the challenge with respect to the salary that they earned as child care workers and stated, "The money is not enough so you are not able to look after your family"*

The findings seem to support the literature on the experiences of residential child care workers and workers within the non-profit sector in general. McMullen and Schellenberg (2003) state that the non-profit sector often faces the problem of not having enough staff. As a result of being short staffed, those employed in the sector often find themselves shouldering heavier workloads and working longer hours. With particular reference to the South African context Dunn and Parry-Williams (2008) found that indeed many workers who were employed in the child care field were overburdened with too many responsibilities and hence worked extremely long hours. As a result of this, the workers could not fully provide the required care to the children as they were fatigued. In the same study, the authors also found that residential child care workers were poorly remunerated to which they made a call for staff salaries to be enough to constitute a living wage. According to Fredrickson's (1998) Broaden and Build Theory, individuals who experience constant positive emotions in their daily lives actually, over time, build resources which help them to deal with challenges and difficulties.

#### **4.5.1 Ability to withstand challenges**

As previously noted, the findings suggest that the residential child care workers who experienced positive emotions, were the ones who felt as though they could cope with the

challenges that was experienced within the field of residential child care. Some of the workers, even though acknowledging that there were challenges that came with their work, still expressed an overall sense of 'being happy' in their work.

C2 stated, *"I love my job, even though it is challenging but I enjoy it. I have always wanted to work with kids"*. C3 expressed that even though she did not earn well, she was still happy about her role as a child care worker. She said, *"I am happy because of the work that I do, even though it does not have enough money in terms of salary, I work with kids who do not have much, so I am happy about the role that I play in their lives. I play sort of like a mother figure role to them"*.

According to Brown and Yoshioka (2003) the very nature of the non-profit sector places an expectation on employees to work for the cause rather than the paycheck. So instead of placing focus on the salary at the end of the month, it is believed that employees are encouraged to pay focus rather, to the cause of impacting society in a positive manner and also illustrate social responsibility. "It is the expressive benefit (participating in something one believes in) that attracts and may retain paid and even unpaid employees in nonprofits. The presence of a salient mission reminds employees of the purpose of their work" (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003, p. 6). It can be gathered workers in the non-profit sector remain in this sector, even through challenges such as insufficient pay, because there is a sense of alignment to the general mission of the sector.

The long hours that the residential child care workers had to work in order to fulfil their role was also expressed as a challenge by many of the care givers. However, even through the acknowledgment of this as a challenge, there was still a general sense of positivity in relation to the role of a child care workers. For instance C6 stated that, *“I love and enjoy my job, even though I am unable to see my own family as much as I want to, but I love my job”*.

A study conducted by Barford and Whelton (2010) which explored burnout in child and youth care workers gives support to the existence of positive emotions even when child care workers were faced with difficulties at work. The study found that although the child care workers were physically and mentally exhausted because of challenges with pay, wages, unruly children and other colleagues, the child care workers still experienced and felt a high degree of pride and accomplishment in their work (Barford & Whelton, 2010).

The findings suggest that the mission and the goal of working with and helping the children in the children’s home is what drives the residential child care workers. The residential child care workers did not deny the existence of challenges, however the mere fact that they were working with the children brought about a sense of positive emotions for them and also made the challenges bearable for them. What seemed to keep them going, even through the expressed issues relating to long hours and low salary was the ‘happiness’, ‘love’ and ‘enjoyment’ that they experienced in their profession and also the ability to make a difference.

These findings are supported and can be explained by Fredrickson's (1998) Broaden and Build theory. The theory, puts forward that the frequent experience of positive emotions has the ability to broaden and build coping strategies by building enduring personal resources for an individual (Fredrickson, 2001). This can explain why residential child care workers who experience positive emotions, even though are faced with many challenges, can cope with the adversities and still remain in this line of work.

#### **4.5.2 Discouraged by challenges**

One of the residential child care workers, it was found, who had expressed negative emotions towards their work communicated that she could not effectively deal with the challenges that were encountered. Given the opportunity, she expressed that she would find alternate work outside of residential child care. She stated, *"The challenges have not been easy but I grow from them. But I cannot lie and say that working with kids is something that I want to do for the rest of my life. You enter certain things and you discover whether you qualify or not and for me I have realised that I cannot work in this place forever as child care worker. I wish to continue working with kids, but maybe as a nurse and not what I am doing now. The challenge is that I did not anticipate this career being so difficult"*.

The findings indicate that there is a sense of discouragement that the worker experiences. This discouragement has been brought about by the unanticipated difficulties of residential child care work which seem to have made the participant come to the decision that she cannot continue in this line of work. Savicki (2002) conducted a study which explored stress and coping among child and youth care workers in which findings suggested that indeed at times

the challenges faced by such workers can often lead them seeking other types of employment. The study found that the combination of low salaries, inadequate training, lack of support and poor working conditions and a difficult and challenging working environment has resulted in tremendous turnover with the child care field.

Negative emotions and the inability or difficulty of coping with stress can be explained by Fredrickson's (1998) Broaden and Build Theory. The theory, when used in the context of the study and this particular sub-theme would put forward that negative emotions actually narrow a person's thought-action repertoires (Fredrickson, 2004). Instead of helping build resources that can enable the individual to cope with challenges and stress, as positive emotions do, continuous experience of negative emotions poses a problem in that it stands in the way of individuals realising their potential to deal with challenges.

The findings, with regard to the theme *challenges faced by residential child care worker*, highlighted that residential child care workers experienced a great deal of challenges and difficulties in their line of work. These challenges mainly related to the issue of working extremely long hours and also not being paid a livable and sufficient salary. Even though these challenges were expressed, some of the workers still experienced positive emotions and felt as though they could deal with them especially since they were committed to the overall mission of the organisation. The struggle to deal with the challenges was expressed, particularly from the participant who had expressed the negative emotion of frustration toward her work. This, as a result of the challenges that she faced, felt as though

she could not cope any longer and that she would gladly take up another position, outside of residential child care if it was available.

The Broaden and Build theory by Fredrickson (1998) proved to be effective and important in explaining how positive emotions have the ability to broaden and also build personal resources which can enable the residential child care workers to deal with the challenges. The theory also illustrated how negative emotions actually can stand in the way of dealing with the difficulties. Fitzpartick and Stalikas (2008), in describing both both positive and negative emotions through Fredrickson's (1998) Broaden and Build theory stated "negative emotions helps you focus on a tree without being distracted by the forest, while positive emotions allows us to step back and appreciate the forest without focusing on the tree. When interpreted this means that negative emotions can stand on the way of someone seeing the entire picture, as they do not broaden the one's thought-action repertoire and accommodate other perspectives. Positive emotions on the other hand, helps individuals see the bigger and broader picture, 'hence being able to the forest', because thought action repertoires become broadened, allowing for other ways of viewing situations. This can perhaps explain why the residential child care workers who had expressed negative emotions in relation to their work felt as though they could not effectively deal with the challenges that they encountered as child care workers. On the other hand, it can be assumed that those residential child care workers who experienced positive emotions in their work felt as though they could withstand the challenges. This is because the positive emotions broadened their thought-action repertoires allowing them to see the bigger picture, which is the positive impact they have in the children, and not be discouraged by the challenges.

#### **4.6 Theme 4: Engaging with the children at the children's home**

Seligman (2002) proposed that engagement is the second orientation through which happiness can be obtained. When asked about whether they felt as though they were engaged in their work, some of the residential child care workers expressed that they were engaged, stating that they always engage and involve themselves with everything that the children are doing. The workers also expressed that they even at times go an extra mile by continuing the child caring role even on their days off. C1 stated that, *“always try to engage myself with the kids here and the things that they like doing. You need to engage yourself in things that you see has an impact in their lives”*. Also, in expressing that he feels as though he is engaged in his work does not allow his personal issues to stand in the way of his work, C4 said, *“What I can say is that I am engaged in my work. When I am here I do my best for the kids and forget what has happened to me in my personal life”*.

Findings from a study conducted by Barford and Whelton (2010) reveal that indeed some, even though not the majority, of the workers within the child care profession do experience a sense of engagement in their work. The study which explored burnout, often defined as the opposite of engagement, amongst child care workers revealed that although residential child care workers experienced great challenges related to the nature of their profession, there were still those workers who were still engaged in their work.

The findings also suggest however, that whilst acknowledging that there were instances where they were engaged in their work, some of the child care workers also expressed that not always fully engaged. For instance C2 stated, *“It can be difficult to remain engaged when*



*I am going through personal things*". C2 particularly gave acknowledgement of the fact that it is personal issues which stands in the way of him fully experiencing a sense of engagement in his work. C6 said that, "*Some days I am engaged in my work, and others I am not The challenges that I face here sometimes makes it difficult to be engaged in your work*". Similarly C8 expressed that, "I am engaged in my work, maybe not 100%". These findings suggest a lack of engagement from some of the residential child care workers as Shaufeli and Bakker (2004) states that engagement involves a sense of self investment in the work role where the individual is fully focused in her or her work, rather than being unfocused and distracted.

Indeed Watson (2009) puts forward that whilst there is a small percentage of NPO workers who are reported to be engaged, what disturbing and problematic is the high degree of disengaged workers. The author states that NPO's are responsible for taking care of the most vulnerable groups, which are the children, the aged, the sick, and as the result the nation should be led to creating the most engaged employees. According to Watson (2009), if the creation of work environments in which NPO employees are highly engaged and feel a general excitement about their work, it would increase the impact that they serve. The residential child care workers who did acknowledge to not always be engaged in their work stated that this was often a result of experiencing personal issues and also the challenges at work.

#### 4.6.1 Desire to do more

Waterman (1993) put forward that engaged employees have a desire to go above and beyond work expectations in order to fulfil their role in the organisation. The present study found that indeed some of the workers who had expressed that they were engaged in their work, also put forward that they do go the extra mile and even do things which are not in their job description. For instance C1 stated, *“I also try to engage with the boys, maybe those who love music, I talk to the deejay’s and see if maybe they can help them. I do this even when I am not suppose to eb working”*. Sometimes there is even the desire to do more even if one does not know what they can do as C7 expresses, *“At times I do not know what else I can do but I always try to find out. If I can do more then I do it”*.

In their report, which included the ways in which to increase employee engagement in the non-profit sector, Accenture (2012) reported that a high 97% of employees that are most-highly engaged are willing to go the extra mile in order to their job well. Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and out outsourcing company. With regards to the represent study, it can be concluded that one of the ways that the residential child care workers go the extra mile is related to being of service to the children even even when there is not a written and formal expectation to do so by the organisation. In illustrating this C1 stated, *“Even on my weekends off. I sometimes come back here to take the boys that are interested in music and take them to the people in my community who are invloved in music. So basically I think about them even when I am home.”* Moses (2000), suggest that whilst the workers do feel a sense of pride and positivity about themselves when they put in that extra effort, residential child care generally are of the view that their job invloves caring and being there for the children at all times, even if it is beyond formal working hours.

It is important to note that the residential child care workers that expressed that they were engaged in their work had also expressed that they experienced positive emotion in relation to their work. Fredrickson's (1998) Broaden and Build Theory provides the clarification of the role of engagement in relation to the broadening of an individual's thought-action repertoire and building various types of resources. According to Salanova, Schaufeli, Xanthopoulou and Bakker (2010) engagement, just like positive emotions, represents a positive affective-motivational state where it has the ability to broaden an employee's thought-action repertoire and build enduring personal resources. The authors state that engaged employees that are intrinsically motivated to fulfil their work-related goals, as can be said about residential child care workers, will look for and create resources in their environment in order to fulfil their goals. This can be used to explain how the engaged residential child care workers are able to engage the children in their (the workers') environment or community, as C1 described, and be able to assist them outside of the working environment.

It can be concluded that there is a sense of engagement that is experienced by the residential child care workers. Also, there are also those care givers who acknowledge that they are not always engaged in their work due to personal issues and the challenges that they face at work. Engagement, in this context, involved not only a creation of a positive relationship with the work context, the children and in activities that they enjoyed, but also propelled the workers to go an extra mile and being there for the children even outside of formal working hours.

## **4.7 Theme 5: Positive impact on the self, the children and society at large**

In exploring Seligman's (2002) third orientation to happiness, which is meaning, the residential child care workers were asked to give and also describe the meaning that their work brought in their life. For the workers that were interviewed, this appeared to be a rather touchy and heartfelt aspect to their work as most of them seemed to express a sense of genuineness, great interest and personal identification with the meaning of their work in their lives. The sub-themes that are discussed in relation to this theme are that of *Positive impact on the self and others* and also that of *Positively impacting society at large*.

### **4.7.1 Positive impact on the self and the children**

Meaningful work involves engaging in work that does not only benefit oneself, but also has the ability to benefit other individuals as well (Duffy et al., 2009). With regard to the meaning that their work had in their lives C1 expressed that along with giving him an opportunity to work with others, the role of a child care worker also developed him as an individual as well. He expressed, *"To me, this work means a lot, it has given me growth. You know when I first came here I was young, almost 21. I find myself learning more about life, even the life that I have never lived. This has made me even more interested in people in general and understanding them individually"*. Similarly C7 said, *"It means so much to me, my role to help young people. I am here to help but I also learned so much from them"*.

Research related to the non-profit sector and particularly residential child care seem to support the notion that individuals who enter these fields find their work meaningful as a

result of them being able to be of assistance to others and also in turn help to develop themselves. A study done by Moses (2000) found that many child care workers experienced meaning in their work and felt that they had something of personal value to contribute to the lives of the children that they cared for. The sources of meaningful work, as was found in research conducted by Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) was ‘developing and becoming self, unity with others, serving others, and expressing self’ (p. 499).

The findings suggest that the residential child care workers find meaning in their work due to the very nature of the work as it provides them with opportunities for personal growth and insight. It can be concluded that this growth involves a sense of learning more about themselves and also the children that they care for. Also, as Morine (2008) states, the sense of purpose and meaning that individuals derive from their work is not just derived from experiences of self-enrichment but from also benefiting others as well and contributing to their welfare. It can even be said, from the findings, that the sense of personal growth is intricately linked to or is a derivative of being able to impact on the children’s lives. Hence meaning and growth is derived from being involved in ‘serving’ others and, in this context, serving the children.

#### **4.7.2 Positive impact on the self and the children**

Along with also experiencing personal growth and being able to impact the children’s lives, the residential child care workers also describes being able to have a positive impact in society at large was also meaningful to them. Park, Peterson and Ruch (2009) state that the meaning orientation to happiness is one in which which individuals feel a sense of connection

to something larger than oneself. Also, it can be said, it involves being involved in the service of something greater than oneself, as echoed by Duckworth, Steen and Seligman (2005). The community and society at large and having the ability to bring about positive change and have an overall positive impact on it, as the residential child care workers expressed, can be viewed as 'serving something greater other than the self'. In expressing how his work his work is meaning because it contributes to society at large C4 stated, *"My work is meaningful because it brings about change. We actually are able to take in young people, who maybe are using drugs and are under peer pressure, and we assist them, this in turn impacts on the community"*. In a simmlar vein, C7 expressed, *"it helps the community and the people in the community are interested. We might not be the kids biological parents but we treat them as our own by helping them. They are happy that there are places like this where the children atre protected. So it has a good impact in society"*.

In her study which explored the reasons as to why individuals choose to be residential child care workers, Moses (2000) found that many of the workers described the drive to provide a social service and also contribute to the future generation, which are the children. It can be said then, that whilst experiencing meaning can be the outcome of work that the child care workers do, the desire to experience meaning in their work by impcating society and the 'future genereation' can also be seen as the driving force that actually leads some workers in to into this line of work. Simillar findings were reported by Doenges (2011) who explored meaningful work in student military veterans. The findings were that for many of the service members who found their work meaningful, the motivation to join the army had been impacted by the desire to 'serve ones country' which also indicates a desire to serve the community.

Whilst on the issue of the community and the impact that the residential child care workers have in the community, the caregivers were also asked about their opinions about how they thought the community perceived the work that they did as child care workers. This question was asked just to get a sense of whether the residential child care workers felt as though their work was being appreciated by the community and whether this would somewhat have an impact on their experience of meaning and overall well being. This was an important aspect to explore as authors such as Moses (2002) and Meintjies et al. (2007) state that even though many of the residential child care workers experience a sense of meaning in being able to positively impact the community, some members of the community do not recognise the caregivers as professionals and do not respect them as such.

The findings do indeed suggest most of the caregivers felt as their work were perceived both in a positive light by some members of the community, and in a negative light by other community members. In expressing how he felt as though some people did not respect their work as child care workers C1 expressed, *“It pains me when I see a donor, maybe they have come here to donate and they have a tendency not to refer to us as child care workers and say that we are house fathers or house mothers. This means that they do not recognise the work that we do; we are child care workers and not house fathers and mothers”*. It can be seen here that the perceived disrespect by members of the community or donors, as expressed by the care giver, is related to the care giver being given a label of “house mother” or “house father”. The use of these labels, the findings suggest, to the care giver is a sign that they are not being respected as professional child care workers. This “pains” the care giver.

Also in explaining how some people do not refer to them as child care workers C8 said, *“sometimes I feel as though others look down upon on the work that we here as caregivers and they just see me as a nanny since I am working here and that doesn’t make me feel good”*. This care workers however went on to say that whilst some people did not recognise what they do, there are those individuals in the community who did give their work recognition and respect, and this brought about happiness. She said, *“ It makes me feel good, for them to see what we are doing. It makes me feel happy”*. Also C2 stated, *“It makes me feel happy because at time you feel as though your work goes unappreciated, so when they express that we are doing good it is good”*.

The findings suggest that there is an overall sense of meaning that is experienced by the residential child care workers. This meaning is associated with their work not only providing opportunities for self development but also opportunities to contribute to the welfare of the children and society at large. There is a sense of happiness that is experiences when the child care workers are able to contribute positively to the community and when this is recognised by members of the community. A sense of meaning is important to the experience of happiness, as individuals experience sense of positivity and happiness when they engage in activities which they view as meaningful to them (Fredrickson 2004).

#### **4.8 Theme 6: Residential child care work perceived as a calling**

One of the residential child care workers associated their work with a calling. The calling can be seen as a construct that further explains and elaborates on the understanding of meaningful



work. The calling is characterised by perceiving ones work to be meaningful and also have a sense of higher purpose (Steger, Dik & Duffy, in press).

C4 had first set foot in a children's home when he was asked to come and fix the computers. During his time at the home he came into contact and communication with some of the children and the staff saw that he has the patience required to work with children and encouraged him to train as a child care worker, which he did. C4 expressed that growing up he had always wanted to work with children and have an impact in their lives. He said that, "*I feel that I was meant to do this job, to me it is like a calling*". In associating the way that he got involved in child care work to some divine intervention he went on to say, "*It wasn't a mistake that I landed this job, the computer thing was a sign for me to start working here and to tell me that this is the way*".

Moses (2000) found that 16% of the residential child care workers in her study described their entry into child care work as a form of divine intervention that guided them to fulfil their calling. Literature does indeed put forward it is not uncommon for individuals that are employed within the non-profit sector refer to their work as a calling (Dempsey & Sanders, 2010). In another study conducted by Doenges (2011) it was found that as the presence of a calling is a good predictor of meaning in life and happiness. According to the study, individuals with low prestige jobs have the ability of approaching their work as a calling the same way as individuals with higher prestige jobs (Doenge, 2011). It can be said that residential child care workers do have the ability of experiencing or approaching their work

as a calling, thus increasing their potential of experiencing meaning and happiness in their line of work of providing care for the children in the home.

#### **4.9 Summary of the themes**

There were six themes that were identified after having analysed the data through the use of thematic analysis. The first theme that emerged from the data was “*Perceptions of happiness among residential child care worker*”. This theme relates to how the residential child care workers perceived or understood happiness. The findings suggested that residential child care workers perceived happiness as a positive emotional state which is characterised by positive emotions such as joy. Also they saw happiness as encompassing a sense of meaning in life and also in what one does.

The second theme that was identified was ‘*Positive and negative emotions experienced by residential child care workers*’. This theme discussed both the positive and negative emotions that were expressed and experienced by the residential child care workers in relation to their work of providing care for orphaned, abandoned and neglected children in Organisation X. The majority of the residential child care workers expressed that they experienced positive emotions in their work, and expressed an overall sense of ‘love’ for their work. On the other hand, two of the residential child care workers expressed that they were experiencing negative emotions with regard to their work. This, as was expressed by the two care givers, was as a result of the unanticipated challenges they encountered in their line of work.

The third theme was '*Challenges faced by the residential child care workers*'. In this theme it was discussed that there was a general acknowledgment of the challenges that was faced by the residential child care workers. These challenges mainly pertained to the long hours that the care givers worked, which normally meant that they had very little time for their own family, and also low wages. However, those residential child care workers who had expressed an overall sense of happiness and positive emotions with regard to their work expressed that they felt as though they could withstand and overcome the challenges. On the other hand, those two residential child care workers who had expressed negative emotions, felt as though they could not face the challenges and instead felt discouraged by them.

Theme four was '*Engaging with the children at the children's home*'. This theme related to the engagement of the residential child care workers to their work and also with the children at the children's home. The findings suggested that some of the residential child care workers did experience a sense of engagement in their work. However on the other hand, the findings also indicated that at times it was difficult for the residential child care workers to remain fully engaged because of the challenges that they encountered. Also the findings indicated that the residential child care workers also felt a need desire to be able to more, or be of more assistance to the children at the home.

Theme five was '*Positive impact on the self, the children and society at large*'. This theme related to the meaning that the residential child care workers found in their work. The majority of the child care workers expressed a great sense of happiness and meaning in their

work because their work has a positive impact and influence of themselves as individuals, the children at the home, and also in society at large.

Theme six was '*residential child care work being perceived as a calling*' and it also pertained to the meaning that the residential child care workers found in their work. The findings suggested that one of the residential child care workers perceived his work as a calling, stating that he felt that he was born to do this job.

#### **4.10 Summary of the findings in relation to the research questions**

##### **4.10.1 How is happiness conceptualised in literature?**

It can be concluded that the literature, particularly that related to positive psychology and Seligman (2002), conceptualises happiness to be a positive state that results when individuals chooses to follow the orientations of pleasure (the pleasant life), engagement (the engaged life), and meaning (the meaningful life). According to Seligman (2002), whose framework to achieving provided a foundation for this study, individuals can choose to follow one of the three orientations in order to experience and increase happiness, however a full life is lived when individuals follow all three orientation. The pleasant life is associated with the experience of emotions, which when experienced continuously in life, can result in happiness and also has the ability of building life-long resources for the individuals which can assist an individual cope with challenges (van Hoof et al., 2011; Fredrickson, 2004). The engaged life involves a state where individuals are engrossed and absorbed in their work that they lose themselves in it and hence are not conscious of any distraction around them (May, Gilson & Harter, 2004). The meaningful life involves the experience and increase of happiness through

attachment to and also being of service to something greater than oneself (Duckworth, Steen, & Seligman, 2005). This includes being of service and benefiting not just yourself, but others as well, often experiencing an activity or role as an extension of oneself. This orientation is associated with the eudaimonic conception of happiness which involves experiencing happiness as result of not only developing what is best within ourselves, but to also using our talents for the greater good, contributing to the welfare of others (Peterson et al., 2007).

#### **4.10.2 How is happiness perceived among residential child care workers?**

The findings suggest that the child care workers have a generally positive perception of happiness. Some of the care givers, expressed that they understood happiness to be a sense of feeling good and life, yourself and in the things that you do. Other residential child care workers associated happiness with joy, stating that happiness for them is experiencing this positive emotion. Also happiness was also perceived to encompass a sense of meaning. Here happiness was perceived to be as a result of having a sense of meaning in life. There seems to be some alignment between how happiness is conceptualised in literature and also how it is perceived by the residential child care worker. This is with specific reference to happiness being a positive state, encompassing positive emotions and the importance of meaning in the experience of happiness.

#### **4.10.3 How is happiness experienced among residential child care workers?**

The overall findings suggests that residential child care workers do experience happiness in their work. Most of the residential child care workers expressed that they were happy in their work, associating positive emotions such as joy and love to sense of happiness that they

expressed. This sense of happiness that the child care workers expressed was found to be as a result of the perceived significance of their role and of the service that they provided to the children. The positive emotions were also experienced by the residential child care workers when they saw that the children that they cared for were happy. Some of the residential child care workers even stated that they were happy in their work. Research does indeed support that many workers in residential child care tend to experience such emotions because they genuinely feel that they are playing a positive role in others' lives. Fredrickson's (1988) Broaden and Build theory does state that the ways in which to experience and increase positive emotions is through engaging in prosocial behaviours and activities. Engaging in prosocial behavior can be said to be in the very nature of the work of residential child care workers.

What was interesting was the apparent link to the experience of positive emotions and the ability to cope with challenges. The residential child care workers that had expressed that they were experiencing positive emotions also expressed that they felt as though they could cope with the challenges that they faced. This also seems to provide support to Fredrickson's (1998) Broaden and Build theory and to authors such as Hoot et al. (2011) who state that experience of positive emotions increased the experience of individual happiness and also builds personal resources that enabled individuals to cope with challenges faced.

Also, it was found that there was also experience of negative emotions amongst the residential child care workers as two of them expressed a sense of frustration with respect to their work, stating that the love, enjoyment and happiness for them had faded. These workers

felt as though they could not deal with the challenges and as a result would take alternate employment outside of residential child care. The findings also suggest that the child care workers experienced happiness as a result of finding meaning in their work through contributing to the children's life and in society at large.

#### **4.11 Chapter summary**

Chapter four has provided a representation and discussion of the research findings. There were six themes that were identified and discussed in this chapter. These were: a) Perceptions of happiness among residential child care workers, b) Positive and negative emotions experienced by residential child care workers; c) Challenges experienced by the residential child care workers; d) Engaging with the children at the children's home; e) Positive impact on the self, the children and society at large; and f) Residential child care work being perceived as a calling. Each of these themes was discussed through the use of verbatim response of the residential child care workers. Also, in order to further discuss and expand on the identified themes, literature pertaining to each theme and the Fredrickson's (1998) Broaden and Build Theory was discussed. The chapter also provided a general summary of the findings. Lastly the chapter provided a summary of the research findings in relation to the research questions of the study.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This study explored the experiences and perceptions of happiness amongst residential child care workers. Using positive psychology as a conceptual framework, the study explored happiness through the use of Seligman's (2002) framework of achieving happiness through positive emotions, engagement and meaning. This chapter of the study includes a conclusion to the entire study, providing a summary of each chapter. The chapter also includes the limitations that were experienced in the study and the researcher's recommendations for future research.

#### **5.2 Synopsis of the study**

Chapter one provided an introduction and research background of the study. A case was made for the exploration of happiness among residential child care workers, as previous research from researchers such as Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2004) showed that the experience of happiness at work resulted in positive outcomes for the individual and the organisation. These positive outcomes include employees contributing to the overall success of the organisation (Gavin & Mason, 2004) and also results in employees being able to cope with the challenges that they face (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). Taking into consideration of the importance of the work that employees within the non-profit do, and particularly residential child care workers, it was believed that happiness could also impact positively on their role as care givers and also help them cope with the challenges that they faced.



Chapter one also outlined the study objects and research questions that the study wished to answer.

Chapter two of the dissertation provided a review of past and present literature that is available in the area of happiness and residential child care workers. Firstly, discussion of positive psychology was given in order to situate the study within this paradigm. Thereafter happiness was conceptualised, unpacking each its sub-constructs of pleasure, engagement and meaning. The study was then contextualised and a discussion on residential child care workers was given. The Broaden and Build Theory by Fredrickson (1998) was then discussed as this provided the theoretical framework through which happiness was explained and understood.

In *Chapter three*, a description of the qualitative methods that was used in the collection of data was given. The study was conducted through the use of a qualitative research design. The research sample for this study was chosen through the use of purposive sampling as it allowed the researcher to obtain the data that was relevant to the study. Semi-structured interviews were used as a method of collecting data, with an interview schedule providing the researcher with a set of questions that guided that interview process. The analysis method discussed was through the use of thematic analysis.

*Chapter four* provided both the presentation and the discussion of the results. The themes that emerged from the data were; *Perceptions of happiness among residential child care workers; positive and negative emotions experienced by residential child care workers;*

*challenges experienced by the residential child care workers; engaging with the children at the children's home; positive impact on the self, the children and society at large; and residential child care work being perceived as a calling.*

The findings of the study suggest that the residential child care workers generally have positive and similar perceptions of happiness, often associating positive emotions such as joy in their understanding of the construct. The findings also indicate that the residential child care workers also experience happiness in their work and this is as a result of them being able to play a positive and meaningful role in the lives of the children and society at large. It was found that although the residential child care workers acknowledged the challenges that they faced in their line of work, because of the happiness and meaning that their work brought into their lives, most of them felt as though they could withstand the challenges. However, the findings did also reveal that at times, the challenges can stand in the way of the residential child care workers experiencing happiness in their work. As the findings indicated, those child care workers who expressed negative emotions with regard to their work, also felt as though they could not be able to deal with the challenges. These findings bring about awareness to the experiences of residential child care workers and the factors that can allow them to perform their role of child care workers optimally. This is because, as suggested by the findings, the residential child care workers who expressed an overall sense of happiness and positivity in their work of caring for the children at the home expressed a desire to do more for the children.

### **5.3 Limitations of the study**

One of the limitations of this study was that there was a lack of research and literature which specifically looked at the experiences of happiness among the residential child care workers and employees within the non-profit sector in general. This meant that there was a lack of direction and guidance with regard to the issues that needed exploration in the area of happiness in the non-profit sector and among residential child care workers in particular.

Also, it can be mentioned that the findings are based only on one particular race, as all the study participants were of the Black African race. This could mean that the findings cannot necessarily be generalised throughout all the races as there could be differing understanding and experiences of happiness among other races.

### **5.4 Recommendation for future research**

It is recommendation that more research be done on the area of happiness, within the non-profit sector, which specifically uses a positive psychology framework. This can eventually lead to a construction and conceptualisation of themes which can form the basis and guides the exploration of happiness, not just in the residential child care field, but within the non-profit sector in general. Also, other researchers within this area may contribute considerably by looking into gendered and cultural experiences of happiness of residential child care workers. This would help to give an understanding and explanation as to whether residential child care workers from different cultures and/or genders experiences happiness differently and also explore the similarities.

Also, for future research in this particular area, it is recommended that there be diversity with regard to the races of the research participants. By gaining insights from different races, it is believed that researchers can be able to obtain a bigger picture of the experiences of residential child care workers with regard to happiness.

### **5.5 Contribution of the study**

The findings of this study adds to the body of existing knowledge in the area of happiness. It also provides and expands on the positive experiences of residential child care workers. It is believed that the study can provide the relevant knowledge to the managers of children's home. This is because managers can acquire knowledge as to which factor to cultivate and encourage in their employees in order to help increase the experience of happiness within the employees in the child care profession. This can have an overall positive individual and organisational impact, contributing to the quality of the care that the residential child care workers provide to the children.

### **5.6 Chapter summary**

Chapter five has provided an overall conclusion to the study. It has provided a summary of each chapter and also gave a final conclusion of the research findings. The chapter has also included the limitations that were encountered by the researcher and the recommendation for future research in the area of happiness among residential child care workers. The chapter concluded with the significant contribution of the study.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Letter to the gatekeeper**

To whom it may concern

My name is Zamakhoza Khoza and I am a industrial psychology Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, 4041, Durban, South Africa. I am conducting research on the experiences of happiness among community care workers. I will particularly be exploring experiences of pleasure (positive emotions related to work), engagement (engagement in work), and meaning (the meaning that is derived from work). I am asking permission to gain access into your organization and gain insights on the abovementioned from some of your employees. I am requesting permission to interview them.

Each interview will take about 40 minutes-1 hour and I will need your permission to use audio-tape recorders to capture the discussions. The identity of the organization and the participating employees will be kept anonymous and the results obtained from the study will be kept confidential.

For more information about the study, you can contact me on 072 0883623, email [zamakhozak@yahoo.com](mailto:zamakhozak@yahoo.com) and/or [207512897@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:207512897@stu.ukzn.ac.za)

Your consideration of my request will be greatly appreciated.

Kind Regards

Zamakhoza Khoza

Masters in Industrial Psychology

University of KwaZulu-Natal

## **Appendix 2: Informed consent form**

### **“Subjective experiences of happiness residential child care workers”**

Good Morning, /afternoon/evening, my name is ZamaKhoza Khoza. I am an Industrial Psychology Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. I am conducting research on the experiences of happiness among community care workers. I would like to speak to you only if you agree to speak to me.

This discussion will take about 40 minutes-1 hour. I will ask you to talk about your roles and experiences working as residential child care workers. I will ask about your experiences of happiness, particularly about pleasure, engagement and meaning in relation to the work that you do. I will need your permission to use audio-tape recorders to capture our discussion.

All information that you give will be kept confidential. The information collected will be stored in my office and only research assistants working with me on this project will have access to it. Information will be used for research purposes alone and raw data will be destroyed as soon as the study is completely over. Also, I will not use your actual name or designation in reporting the findings of the study but will use disguised a name to make sure that no one links the information you have given me to you.

You will not be given any monetary payments for participating in the study but your department/ organisations/ community/ the government will benefit from this study immensely. The results help on the understanding of how non-profit organizations, and particularly community care particularly community care workers perceive and experience happiness. This will raise awareness, especially since your work as community service providers is critical and very much necessary.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right not talk to us if you do not want to. If you agree to take part in the study, we will ask you to sign a form as an indication that we did not force you to participate in the study. Please note that you will not be at any disadvantage if you choose not to participate in the study. You may also refuse to answer particular questions if you don't feel comfortable answering them. You may also end the discussion at anytime if you feel uncomfortable with the interview. In case you want to withdraw information given after the interview, you can call me on 072 088 3623(Zamakhoza Khoza) or my supervisor on Mrs Shanya Reuben on 021 2602861.

**Appendix 2: Informed consent form continued....**

I \_\_\_\_\_ have read the information about this study and understand the explanations of it given to me verbally. I have had my questions concerning the study answered and understand what will be required of me if I take part in this study.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**IsiZulu Version**

Incwadi Yemvume

Mina, \_\_\_\_\_ Sengfundile mayelana nokuqethwe inhlobo noma ngiyaqonda izincazelo zenhlobo njengoba ngazisiwe futhi ngachazelwa ngazo ngomlomo. Isiphenduliwe imibuzo yami ngalenhlobo, ngakho ngiyagonda ukuthi yini ebhekeke kimina uma ngiba yngxemye yalenhlobo

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Usuku: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Appendix 3: Interview schedule.**

#### **Section A: Biographical Data**

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your race?
4. How long have you worked for this organisation?

#### **Section B: Interview questions**

- 1) What role do you play in this organisation?
  - Can you please tell me about the tasks/duties that you do fulfil on a day to day basis in this organisation?
  - How do you feel about performing these tasks/duties?
- 2) What are your perceptions and experiences of pleasure in relation to your work?
  - Before doing your daily tasks at work, do you perhaps think about whether it will bring about positive emotions?
  - Would you say that good work for you means work that is pleasurable?  
Elaborate
  - Would you say that life is too short to do work that makes you postpone the pleasures that life can bring?
- 3) What are your perceptions and experiences of engagement in relation to the work that you do?
  - Can you describe to me a time when you feel absorbed in your work?
  - When performing your daily tasks at work, how would you describe the level of distraction from things happening around you?
  - When caring for the children in the home and fulfilling other work related goals, can you say that time passes without you noticing?
  - Can you perhaps comment on your level of self-awareness and consciousness whilst doing your work?
- 4) What are your perceptions and experiences of meaning in relation to work?



- How do you feel about your work in relation to the meaning that it has in your life?
- How do feel society views the work that you do?
- How do you feel about your work and the impact that it has in society?
- Would you say that your work is in line with your personal values?

## **Appendix 4. Interview Transcript**

Transcription 4

Age: 28

Gender: Male

Service: Since 2004, September

**Z: What brought you to work here?**

P: Basically I had always wanted to help kids. Actually I how I came here, was that I was hired to fix computers at another child care institution and I ended up volunteering there. They saw that I actually had the passion for kids and said that I could train to become a child care worker. I took the opportunity to do the training for a year. And from there I applied here and I was hired in September 2004.

**Z: What role do you play here as a child care worker, your duties?**

P: I ensure the smooth running of the ADP (Adolescent Development Program) and I also ensure that young people follow their routine. Also the kids that are having problems I talk to them, I am passionate about that.

**Z: How do you feel about your job?**

P: I enjoy my job, its nice. At the end of the day when you see the kids graduating and succeeding, you feel that you have made a difference.

**Z: So would you associate your job with positive emotions, or pleasure?**

P: Yes, but sometimes there are negative ones. We work long hours, and also the money is not good. At times the money issue brings our passion down, we feel that the company is not looking out for us. Especially at the end of the month, you go to the ATM, you take out money maybe twice and that's it, it finished.

**Z: How absorbed are you in your work?**

P: I can say that I am engaged at work, as when I am here I do what is best for the kids, I forget what has happened to me in my personal space. And the same when I am at home, I take my mind of work.

**Z: putting in more effort?**

P: Yes, that happens most of the time. I work in the moment. At times even when I realise that it is not my time and I should not be working, I but do because I see that it is needed.

**Z: How mindful are you about the time when you are at work?**

It depends on what I have planned. But it does not happen all the time. I know that I should be here until 4pm.

**Z: When you say that it depends, it depends on what exactly?**

P: It depends on maybe that day I have to go and meet someone, like today I am looking at the time and when I am going to knock off because I am going to see my child.

**Z: What meaning does your work have in your life?**

P: My work for me is about making a difference and that is what drives me, even though I do not get paid well at the end of the month. My passion is to make a difference and making an impact.

**Z: And when you do make that impact, how does that make you feel?**

P: I feel really driven to do more. I see that they have really been troubled and they are caught in substance abuse and are at a stage where they are confused. But sometimes you see a difference that the child has made when looking at how the child was when they first got here and now. Seeing progress motivates you and there is something inside you that feels like you can keep doing more.

**Z: How do you think that the community views what you do as a child care worker?**

P: Well I have to say that child care is something that is not recognised by the community because at times they say that we are social workers, but we are not, we are child care workers and we are proud of that. I work in the space of young people and people do not see us in the right view. But others do appreciate our job. And others think that we just cook and wash dishes, but there are so many other things that we do.

**Z: So the community is divide, having those who appreciate what you do and others who do not, how does it make you feel when people show an appreciation of what you do?**

P: It makes me feel good and right and those who do not appreciate, I understand that they are misinformed about our profession.

**Z: How do you feel that the work that you do impacts society?**

P: It brings about change. We actually get young people, who maybe are using drugs and are under peer pressure and we assist.\

**Z: Would you say that the values that you hold are in line with the work that you are doing here?**

P: Yes, it is something that dreamt of when I was young, I had the passion. Also growing up in a large family where you really do not get the one on one care. So I have always said that when I grow up I do not want to have lots of kids, il just have one and then help other kids, and that came true.

I actually wanted to be a social worker, and then did a course in accounting but I didn't get a job. So I ended back with the dream of working with kids. So I and living what I have always wanted. I feel that I was meant to do this job

**Z: Do you feel that the work that you do has a higher purpose?**

P: Yes is does. The job that I do makes a positive impact. It wasn't a mistake that I landed this job the computer thing was a sign for me, to get me working here and tell me that this is the way.