



PSYCHOSOCIAL EXPERIENCES OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

by

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A Research Dissertation

Submitted in full fulfilment of the academic requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

In the discipline of Educational Psychology

In the School of Education,

College of Humanities, Edgewood Campus,

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Supervisor: Doctor Visvaranie Jairam

2022

DECLARATION

I, Jayshree Thilakdhari (210 517 610), hereby declare that this research dissertation, entitled *‘Psychosocial Experiences Of Foundation Phase Teachers In South Africa During The Covid-19 Pandemic’* is my own work and has been submitted in full fulfilment of the academic requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the discipline of Educational Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

- i. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
- ii. This dissertation has not been submitted in whole or in part for any degree or examination at any other university.
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 - vii. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussion.

.....

Signed

ETHICAL CLEARANCE



15 July 2021

Mrs Jayshree Thilakdhari (210517610)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Thilakdhari,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00002974/2021

Project title: Exploring psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic

Degree: PhD

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 17 June 2021 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 15 July 2022.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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INSPIRING GREATNESS

SUPERVISOR'S AUTHORISATION

The Statement by the Supervisor:

In my capacity as the student's supervisor, I, **Doctor Visvaranie Jairam**, agree to the submission of this research dissertation.

.....

Signed

ABSTRACT

This research dissertation entitled '*Psychosocial Experiences Of Foundation Phase Teachers In South Africa During The Covid-19 Pandemic*' presents an exploration and understanding of the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This phenomenological research study supports the value of experiences and was aimed at generating in-depth information to deeply understand the psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. This research study was conducted with a specific group of six foundation phase teachers from 3 provinces in South Africa, namely: KwaZulu-Natal; Gauteng and Western Cape. Purposive sampling was chosen alongside, availability and convenience of the research participants.

This qualitative study is located within the interpretivist paradigm and uses phenomenology as the research methodology. This allowed the researcher to understand the psychosocial experiences of the foundation phase teachers in South Africa from the perspective of the research participants at a particular point in time: the Covid-19 pandemic. Multiple methods of generating data were used for this research study, which included: semi-structured interviews, collage inquiry and metaphor drawing. The data generated allowed the researcher to produce rich and thick information of the research participants.

The Psychosocial Development Theory was used as a theoretical framework to offers lenses in exploring and understanding the psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. Collage Portraiture was used as an analysis tool to support and enliven the analysis, and Vignettes were presented through themes and sub-themes.

The research findings indicated that foundation phase teachers in South Africa have knowledge and understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic, experience a variety of challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic, and need intervention strategies to support them during the Covid-19 pandemic. The analysis of this research study revealed that the research participants negotiate their psychosocial experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic which leads to psychosocial development. A Psychosocial Development Research Intervention Model has been created for foundation phase teachers in South Africa, so they may develop

psychosocially, work effectively during the crisis, minimize challenges, increase support and become resilient.

LIST OF KEY CONCEPTS

Covid-19 Pandemic

Experiences

Foundation Phase

Foundation Phase Teacher

Psychosocial

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special THANK YOU to all those who have supported me throughout my PhD Journey!

I, Jayshree Thilakdhari (210 517 610) hereby acknowledge

my sincere appreciation and gratitude to:

- **My beloved, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba** for guiding me throughout my research journey and providing me with strength, commitment, determination and motivation to complete my research dissertation successfully.
- **My Supervisor: Dr. Visvaranie Jairam** for your professional guidance, intellectual discussions, valuable feedback, useful critiques and inspirational support throughout my PhD degree. I am extremely fortunate to have been supervised by you. Thank you!
- **My Research Editor: Dr. Smita Ramson** for your invaluable insight, constructive criticism and valuable suggestions whilst editing my PhD.
- **My Research Participants: Candy, Tresha, Celia, Yara, Wendy and Fekile (pseudonyms)** for your incredible participation and enthusiasm in sharing your experiences as foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **My Loving Parents: Mr. Harichans and Mrs. Shureka Rampersad** for instilling in me the value of education and hard work. I am truly blessed to have parents like you. I love you both!
- **My Husband: Mr. Chevaar Thilakdhari** for all the sacrifices you make for us. Thank you for understanding why I had to write early in the morning, during the middle of the day or late at night. Thank you for believing in my dreams! I love you!
- **My Family and Critical Friends** for your unwavering support and encouragement throughout my research journey.

DEDICATION

I hereby dedicate this research dissertation to:

My son, Shivay Thilakdhari

My little lockdown baby boy! You were born during the Covid-19 pandemic: a time when the world stood still. I will never forget it. This PhD is for you my son! May you learn and develop each and every day of your life! I love you immensely!

- Mum



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BEd	Bachelor of Education
BEd (H)	Bachelor of Education Honours
DBE	Department of Basic Education
FP	Foundation Phase
FPT	Foundation Phase Teacher
FPTs	Foundation Phase Teachers
GP	Gauteng Province
HOD	Head of Department
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
MEd	Master of Education
PDT	Psychosocial Development Theory
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
SA	South Africa
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
WC	Western Cape

**PSYCHOSOCIAL EXPERIENCES
OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS
IN SOUTH AFRICA
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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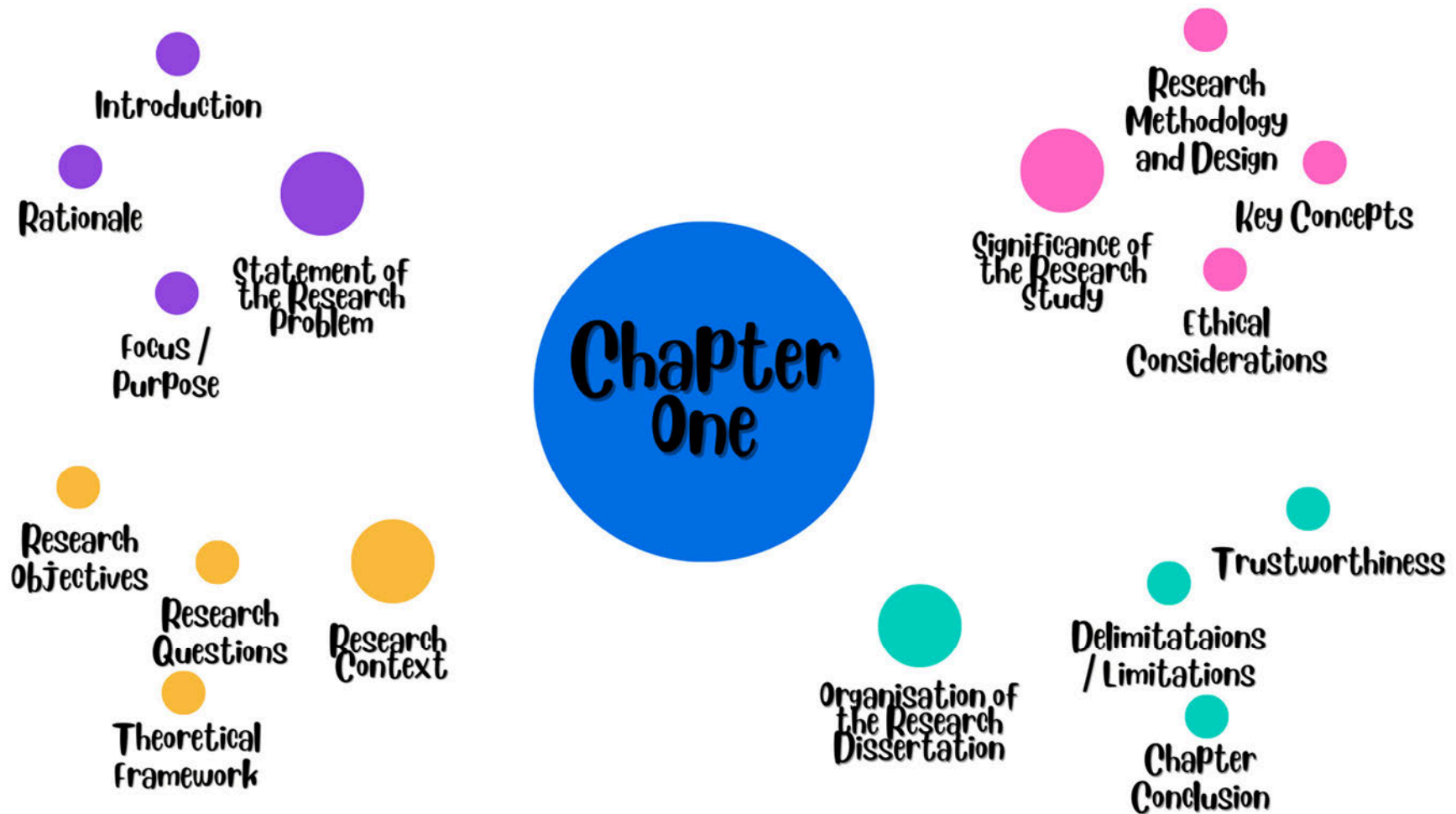
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CHAPTER ONE

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

“Teaching young children is complex and challenging and requires laying solid foundations for literacy, mathematics and language learning”¹

1.1 Introduction

This research dissertation titled “*Psychosocial Experiences of Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa During the Covid-19 Pandemic*” presents an exploration and understanding of the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers (FPTs) in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic has manifested as a multifaceted crisis, affecting every critical sector of the world, including education. These unprecedented times have brought about various challenges and radical changes to normality in the lives of human beings in South Africa and world-wide. Education is an extremely significant aspect which involves a continuous process of teaching and learning in which development occurs. Teachers, including foundation phase teachers, play a crucial role in enhancing the development of young children and working during a global pandemic has made this development process different. This first chapter presents an introduction and overview of the research study. In this chapter, a personal-professional and contextual rationale is presented. The statement of the research problem, followed by the focus and purpose as well as the research objectives, the research questions, the research context and location, clarification of key concepts and the methodological approach of this research study are presented.

¹ Quote by Sarah Gravett and Nadine Petersen in The Conversation on 1 February 2017. Sarah Gravett is a Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Education at University of Johannesburg. Nadine Petersen is a Professor of Teacher Education for Primary School at the University of Johannesburg.

1.2 Rationale of the Research Study

The Covid-19 pandemic has major implications for education in South Africa. The realities of the crisis hit hard and a new sense of urgency of coping with the crisis is vital for teaching and learning to occur effectively. The rationale for embarking on this research study emanated from different imperatives. The first being a personal – professional rationale, and second being a contextual one.

1.2.1 Personal – Professional Rationale

The first rationale derived from my personal – professional self of being a foundation phase teacher (FPT) in a public primary school in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. I have 6 years of teaching experience in this phase and throughout these years, I have encountered and successfully negotiated several schooling challenges and changes. One of the most significant years in the history of the world, and that impacted teachers, learners and parents in the education context, was the impact of the novel disease, Covid-19 in 2022. It had initially left me with the following questions – What is Covid-19? When did the global pandemic start and when will it end? Who is going to suffer the most from this Disease? How are FPTs going to cope? Where are we headed? and Why is this happening? Evidently, my Bachelor of Education (BEd) qualification from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) did not prepare me adequately for this circumstance; neither did my Bachelor of Education Honours (BEd Hons) or Master of Education (MEd) qualifications from UKZN. Consequently, I struggled to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic in my social and schooling context. The transformation of circumstances to sanitizing, wearing masks, social distancing and many more duties and responsibilities for a foundation phase teacher was surreal, and often left me physically, emotionally and mentally drained at the end of the school day. The ‘building a foundation’ for learners in this phase became even more daunting.

Given the challenges and experiences of working as a foundation phase teacher during a global pandemic, I was interested in the lives of other FPTs and the ways in which they were coping during the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the strategies and techniques they used to negotiate various schooling challenges and changes. Hence, my interest gained traction and culmination in the enrollment for my Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in the latter part of 2020, at UKZN, with the express motive of exploring and understanding the psychosocial experiences of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 1

The Researcher's Collage



Note. This collage has been created by the researcher.

At the outset of my new academic journey, I decided to create a collage (Figure 1) of what it meant to me to be a FPT in South Africa whilst trying to cope during a global pandemic. I titled my collage 'Covid-19 Shock' as the Covid-19 global pandemic has been a sudden and surprising event. I stuck a picture of the world emphasizing that we are globally affected by this virus. The Covid-19 pandemic is described as 'out of the blue', 'unprecedented', 'challenging', 'changing', and a 'crazy experience'. I noted that as a primary school teacher, I am building a foundation for little children and although I feel 'overwhelmed' and 'unsupported', I have to be resilient in my duties and responsibilities. I also emphasized that during this era, 2020, FPTs need to 'always sanitize', 'social distance', 'wear a mask', and 'wash your hands'.

I used some words and phrases from my collage to create a pantoum poem which then assisted me in generating a topic for this research study. Meacham (2021) states that a

pantoum poem is used to reinforce and highlight experiences of individuals. This pantoum poem draws from my psychosocial experiences of working as a foundation phase teacher in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. The title of my pantoum poem is: 'Building a Foundation during the Covid-19 Pandemic'.

Figure 2

The Researcher's Pantoum Poem

***Building a Foundation During
the Covid-19 Pandemic***

***Building a foundation.
During the Covid-19 pandemic.
Bringing unprecedented challenges.
Feeling overwhelmed and unsupported.***

***During the Covid-19 pandemic.
An ongoing crisis.
Feeling overwhelmed and unsupported.
Emergency in education.***

***An ongoing crisis.
Education in emergency.
Emergency in education.
I am a resilient Teacher.***

***Education in emergency.
Bringing unprecedented challenges.
I am a resilient teacher.
Building a foundation.***

Note. This pantoum poem has been created by the researcher.

In Figure 2, the pantoum poem above, the reader will note that although the researcher is feeling overwhelmed and unsupported, she is negotiating her challenges to be resilient and build a foundation for her learners during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. This research focuses specifically on exploring and understanding the psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa who are ‘building a foundation’ during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.2.2 Contextual Rationale

The second rationale derives from a contextual perspective. The academic community (De Wever, Vanderlinde, Tuytens and Aelterman 2016; EDSYS, 2019; etc.) has extensively explored the challenges faced by teachers throughout the world. Teachers’ challenges are multifaceted, including, the lack of time for planning, preparing and executing tasks; too much of paper work; assuming multiple and complex roles and responsibilities; being a psycho educator, social worker, counsellor; lack of parental support; lack of professional development; feelings of being unsupported, overwhelmed and underpaid leading to teacher burnout (De Wever et al., 2019). Several of these research studies address the type of support strategies that teachers require or should receive with regards to the challenges they face. However, the Covid-19 global pandemic of the 21st century, was an unforeseen crisis on an unprecedented scale producing numerous unique challenges and responsibilities that teachers were unprepared for. As a researcher, I engage with South African foundation phase teachers to explore their psychosocial experiences and meanings, feelings and perceptions they had within the context of their working lives during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.3 Statement of the Research Problem

As a FPT, it is well understood by theorists and foundation phase teachers alike, that the initial stages of a child’s academic life is crucial to their growth and development. At the foundation phase (FP), a child’s significant learning occurs. Therefore, it is crucial for FPTs to prepare children academically and support them emotionally. FPTs involvement in children’s life ultimately impacts their psychosocial development. FPTs in South Africa are already faced with various challenges as well as the literacy and Mathematics crisis (Bangani, 2020). South African Teachers are dealing with complex realities in the everyday schooling

environment. Some of which are social, emotional and contextual. Therefore, an important question of how is teaching and learning taking place in South Africa during a global pandemic or even in similar emergencies is asked. As well as, what are the psychosocial experiences of FPTs during the Covid-19 pandemic. It would appear as if there is a lack of knowledge regarding this new phenomenon. Despite the suggestions or recommendations for teacher challenges, there remains a gap in literature pertaining to the psychosocial experiences of FPTs during a global pandemic or in similar emergencies. Consequently, the need for the FPTs lived psychosocial experiences requires more exploration and this study examines this subject in greater detail.

1.4 The Focus and Purpose of the Research Study

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 or Covid-19 21st century global pandemic is the latest, ongoing and multifaceted crisis that is fundamentally disrupting the lives and livelihoods of people throughout the world. It has brought about unprecedented challenges and changes, especially with regards to the South African education system. The focus and purpose of this research study was to explore and understand the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.5 The Research Objectives

The main objective of this research study was as follows:

- To explore and understand the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Underlying this objective were the following sub-objectives:

- To ascertain the knowledge and understandings that foundation phase teachers in South Africa have on the Covid-19 pandemic.
- To identify the challenges, if any, of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- To provide intervention strategies that are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.6 The Research Questions

The main research question of this research study was as follows:

- What are the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Underlying this question were the following sub-questions:

- What knowledge and understandings do foundation phase teachers in South Africa have on the Covid-19 pandemic?
- What are the challenges, if any, of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?
- What intervention strategies are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?

1.7 The Research Context

This qualitative research study was conducted in 6 different schools across 3 different provinces in South Africa, namely: KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Western Cape (KZN, GP and WC). Six FPTs were selected to be research participants belonging to public and private primary schools in South Africa. These schools are mainstream school and includes the foundation phase (which comprises of Grade R - 3 classes). In this research study, the crucial features of foundation phase teachers from the KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Western Cape provinces in South Africa as well as the Covid-19 pandemic play a distinctive and crucial role in understanding the psychosocial experiences of FPTs in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.8 The Theoretical Framework: Psychosocial Development Theory

The theoretical framework in a research study provides a foundation for conducting research and exploring a research study. According to Grant and Osanloo (2014, p.12) it functions as a “blueprint” to support a research study. The *Psychosocial Development Theory* (PDT) founded by Erik Erikson in the 1950’s was used as a frame to guide and support this research.

This theory assumes that there are eight stages of psychosocial development in which individuals advance through throughout their entire lifespan. These stages include: Trust versus Mistrust; Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt; Initiative versus Guilt; Industry versus Inferiority; Identity versus Identity Confusion; Intimacy versus Isolation; Generativity versus Stagnation; and Ego Integrity versus Despair. During each stage, an individual may experience a psychosocial crisis and based on their experience within their social context, they have a positive or negative outcome which affects their personality development. The rationale for selecting the PDT as the theoretical framework is based on the following 3 features: Firstly, the PDT addresses the growth of individuals across the lifespan; Secondly, the PDT assumes that individuals have the capacity to contribute to their own psychosocial development; and Thirdly, at each life stage, individuals react to social influences and this in turn allows them to develop (Newman & Newman, 2018). This qualitative research study is aimed at exploring and understanding the psychosocial experiences of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the PDT is used as a lens to emphasise how individuals navigate their social experiences within their social contexts. Overall, this theory is intended on probing into the complex and multiple lived psychosocial experiences of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic through the following research methods: semi-structured interviews, collage inquiry and metaphor drawing (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Theoretical Framework is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three of this research study.

1.9 Overview of the Research Methodology and Approach

1.9.1 The Research Paradigm: Interpretivist

This research study was underpinned by the interpretive paradigm. This paradigm focuses on describing and understanding how individuals make sense of their social contexts in which they live and work (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Cohen and Manion (1994, p.36) assert that interpretivist researchers understand “the world of human experience” from a subjective viewpoint. The interpretivist paradigm advocates for research participants to share their unique experiences and allows the researcher to make meaning of these experiences. This paradigm was most suitable to this research study since FPTs in SA are able to express their experiences of working during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.9.2 The Research Approach: Qualitative

This research study adopted a qualitative research approach. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p. 288) qualitative research provides an “in-depth, intricate and detailed understanding of meanings, actions, non-observable as well as observable phenomena, attitudes, intentions and behaviours...” It advocates for qualitative research methods which involve collecting and generating textual or verbal data. The qualitative research approach places importance on comprehensive and quality information and insight. In this research study, the FPT research participants were approached for the purpose of understanding their particular feelings, emotions, thinking, challenges and high points about how they were impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Cohen et al., (2018) assert that a qualitative research approach is best suited to this type of engagement with research participants because it gives voices to research participants and probes issues that lie beneath the surface and hence, it coheres with this chosen methodology as it allowed the researcher to explore and understand the psychosocial experiences of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.9.3 The Research Methodology: Phenomenology

This research study employs phenomenology as the research methodology. Lochmiller and Lester (2017) clearly describe phenomenology as a “qualitative methodology that applies a philosophical perspective to the study of human experience”. Significantly, phenomenology is the study of individuals consciously reported experiences. Polkinghorne (1989, p. 45) proposes that “the purpose of phenomenological research is to produce clear, precise, and systematic descriptions of the meaning that constitutes the activity of consciousness”. In addition, it focusses on the essence of experiences from the perspectives of the research participants at a particular point in time. The researcher had to cautiously adhere to the Bracketing process. Chan, Fung and Chien (2013, p. 1) describe this process as “a methodological device of phenomenological inquiry that requires deliberate putting aside one’s own belief about the phenomenon under investigation or what one already knows about the subject prior to and throughout the phenomenological investigation”. Phenomenology used in this research study was valuable since it brought out the research participants’ unique experiences, feelings and perceptions.

1.9.4 The Research Location: South Africa

This qualitative research study was conducted in 6 different schools across 3 different provinces in South Africa, namely: KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Western Cape.

Figure 3

The Research Location: South Africa



Note. The research location is 3 provinces in South Africa, namely: KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Western Cape. This figure is adapted from BUSINESSTECH, 2017

1.9.5 Sampling Techniques: Purposive, Availability and Convenience

Purposive sampling alongside availability and convenience were chosen for this research study. Purposive sampling occurs when the researcher chooses research participants that meet

a certain criteria or quality (Palinkas et al., 2015). Availability and convenience sampling occur when the research participants are available to participate in the research study and when they are in convenient locations to the researcher (Palinkas et al., 2015).

1.9.6 The Research Participants: Six Foundation Phase Teachers

Three foundation phase teachers from KwaZulu-Natal, one foundation phase teacher from Gauteng and two foundation phase teachers from Western Cape were selected as the research participants for this research study. The following pseudonyms of the research participants: Candy, Tresha, Celia, Yara, Wendy and Fekile were used to ensure that their identity and anonymity was upheld within this research study, and that any person other than the researcher would not be able to identify or link a response to a particular research participant (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). In March 2021, the greatest number of positive Covid-19 cases were in the following South African provinces: KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Western Cape and the researcher had sufficient knowledge of the changes and difficulties faced by FPTs from these provinces. Therefore, these FPTs were requested to become research participants in this study.

1.9.7 Data Generation

Data Generation Methods are defined as a range of research techniques used to generate data (Cohen et al., 2018). In this research study, the following three methods of generating data were used, namely: semi-structured interviews, collage inquiry and metaphor drawing. These multiple research methods of generating data were used in exploring and understanding the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through these methods, the voices of research participants were explored and understood in great detail. The purpose of using multiple methods of generating data is to ensure triangulation and trustworthiness in a research study (Cohen, et al., 2018).

1.9.8 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Qualitative Data/Thematic Analysis was chosen to interpret and analyse data in this research study. Jebb, Parrigon and Woo (2017) describe data analysis as the process of gathering data and giving meaning to it. Data/Thematic analysis was appropriate for this research study as it involved making sense of the FPTs lived psychosocial experiences, through noting patterns, categories and themes in the data (Cohen et al., 2018). Thus, structuring research findings and answering the research questions effectively.

1.10 Clarification of Key Concepts

The following clarification of key concepts are provided to the reader to ensure a clear understanding and uniformity of these key concepts that guided the research study. The key concepts include: Foundation Phase; Foundation Phase Teacher; Psychosocial; Experiences and Covid-19 Pandemic.

1.10.1 Foundation Phase

The foundation phase in the South African context is defined as a teaching phase in a primary school and includes Grade R to Grade 3 classes (Department of Basic Education, 2021). Learners that belong to this phase are between the ages of 5 – 9 years old. In South Africa, the CAPS curriculum is taught to learners. The subjects include Home language, First-additional language, Mathematics and Life Skills. This phase emphasises the development of a solid base of knowledge and fundamental learning techniques to assist learners in becoming more independent as they grow older (Pearson, 2021). It advocates for hands-on, visual and practical methods of teaching and learning (Pearson, 2021). In this phase, learners are taught basic reading, writing and mathematical learning skills.

1.10.2 Foundation Phase Teacher

A foundation phase teacher in South Africa is defined as a teacher who is qualified to teach the foundation phase which includes grades R, 1, 2 and 3 or children between the ages of 5 – 9 years old (Department of Basic Education, 2021). They usually teach all subjects of the South African Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) which include Home

Language, First Additional Language, Mathematics and Life Skills. Foundation phase teachers play an important role in the South African education system as they are responsible for helping children to develop a solid base of educational knowledge and thinking skills so as learners move to the intermediate and senior phases, they become more independent and work on their own. Apart from building the foundations of reading, writing, literacy and mathematics, foundation phase teachers promote the social, emotional, intellectual and physical development of children (Pearson, 2021).

1.10.3 Psychosocial

According to Vizzotto et al., (2013) psychosocial pertains to the influence of social factors on an individual's mind or behaviour, and to the interrelation of psychological and social aspects. In this research study, psychosocial refers to the thoughts and beliefs of the research participants and their interaction within their social context.

1.10.4 Experiences

An experience is the process through which an individual perceives the world around them. It is something that you 'go through' and has a particular understanding or feeling about a thing at a particular point in time (Moustakas, 1994).

1.10.5 Covid-19 Pandemic

Coronavirus Disease 2019 or Covid-19 is the latest, infectious disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) virus that is affecting people throughout the world (World Health Organisation, 2020). Due to the rapid spread of the virus, it has become a global outbreak that has led to a global pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic has drastically affected and is still affecting South Africa and other parts of the world in economic, political and social aspects, including education (World Health Organisation, 2020).

1.11 The Significance of the Research Study

The Covid-19 pandemic is affecting every aspect of our lives and livelihoods throughout the world. The education system around the world, including South Africa has changed drastically and rapidly. FPTs are experiencing various challenges and changes. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic being a new phenomenon, the available literature still does not offer enough an in-depth analysis of the psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the purpose of this research study was to fill this gap by exploring and understanding the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, the existing global knowledge about the psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during this ongoing crisis will be expanded and added to the existing body of knowledge. The information obtained in this research study as well as the research findings will be beneficial to teachers, educational institutions, policy planners and the South African Department of Basic Education.

1.12 Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations for research refer to a set of guiding principles that academic researchers need to abide by (Hasan, 2021). All ethical procedures were strictly followed before, during and after research was conducted and reported. The UKZN HSSREC granted FULL APPROVAL to conduct research (HSSREC/00002974/2021), as well as the South African Department of Basic Education gave permission to conduct research. In this research study, all ethical processes were transparent and all Covid-19 rules and protocols were followed. The research participants were requested to share their personal experiences; therefore, ethical stipulations were utilised effectively. Research did not harm the research participants directly or indirectly, and pseudonyms were used to protect the anonymity, dignity and identity of the research participants. Ethical Considerations is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four of this research study.

1.13 Trustworthiness of the Research Study

Trustworthiness is essential in a research study and refers to the ‘level of assurance’ that researchers have when undertaking qualitative research. Pratt et al., (2020, p.1) assert that trustworthiness in qualitative research is “the degree to which the reader can access whether the researchers have been honest in how the research has been carried out and reliable in the conclusions they make.” According to Guba and Lincoln (1985), trustworthiness may be in the form of a Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability. Trustworthiness is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four of this research study.

1.14 Delimitations and Limitations of the Research Study

1.14.1 Delimitations

Creswell (2009, p. 106) defines delimitations as the ways in which the research study will be “narrowed in scope”. Delimitations refer to the choices that a researcher makes for a research study. Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018) state that delimitations are known to be the boundaries or limits of a research study. In essence, it is the limitations consciously set out by the researcher. Thus, it is mainly concerned with the theoretical background, research objectives, research questions and research participants of a research study. This research study was specifically located within the field of educational psychology, which focuses on understanding and improving the development of children, and It focused on exploring and understanding the psychosocial experiences of six FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic. The geographical location, number of research participants and choice of research participants add to the delimitations of this research study.

1.14.2 Limitations

Limitations refer to potential weaknesses, challenges or influences that are beyond the researcher’s control (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). This research study is a small-scale qualitative study that is restricted to six FPTs in three provinces in SA, namely: KZN, GP and WC. This has implications for the generalisations of the findings of this research study. Therefore, the results of the findings cannot be generalised to other provinces in South Africa or other countries of the world. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher was restricted

to generating data online from the research participants and as a result there were slight technological and connection issues. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic is completely new and it was difficult in obtaining a vast array of literature. Limitations of this research study are discussed in more detail in Chapter Four of this research study.

1.15 The Organisation of the Research Dissertation

In establishing the terrain of this research study, the following structure has been used. This research study comprises of seven chapters and its descriptions are as follows:

Chapter One, provides an introduction and overview of the research dissertation. It elucidated the background, rationale, statement of the research problem, focus and purpose, research objectives, research questions, research context, theoretical framework, methodological approach, clarification of key concepts, significance of the research study, ethical considerations, trustworthiness, as well as delimitations and limitations of the research study.

The focus of **Chapter Two**, is to foreground the literature landscape relevant to the research study. The review of literature highlights ‘scholarly conversations’ (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 136) which bring out key debates, discussions and themes that are relevant to foundation phase teachers and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chapter Three, provides a comprehensive presentation of the theoretical framing underpinning the research study. The *Psychosocial Development Theory* is used as the theoretical lens to analyse how foundation phase teachers negotiate their lived psychosocial experiences within their social contexts and make meaning of it.

Chapter Four, provides an understanding of the research methodology and design utilised in the research study. The research methodology is Phenomenology. Phenomenology was used

to assemble the different dimensions of the foundation phase teachers' psychosocial experiences in South Africa. The multiple methods of data generation were as follows: semi-structured interviews, collage inquiry and metaphor drawing. The research approach, research paradigm, research location, sampling techniques, selection of the research participants, qualitative research process, data generation methods, data analysis and interpretation are presented. In addition to this, ethical considerations, trustworthiness and limitations and researcher's role as a qualitative researcher are discussed.

Chapter Five, presents a reconstructed account of the lived psychosocial experiences of FPTs in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic in the form of case studies. This text focused on the essence of experiences and provided an insight into the FPTs lives. Furthermore, this chapter offers an analysis of the research questions.

Chapter Six, presents vignettes that are used as a tool to analyse selected excerpts from the case studies in order offer a further and final analysis of the research questions.

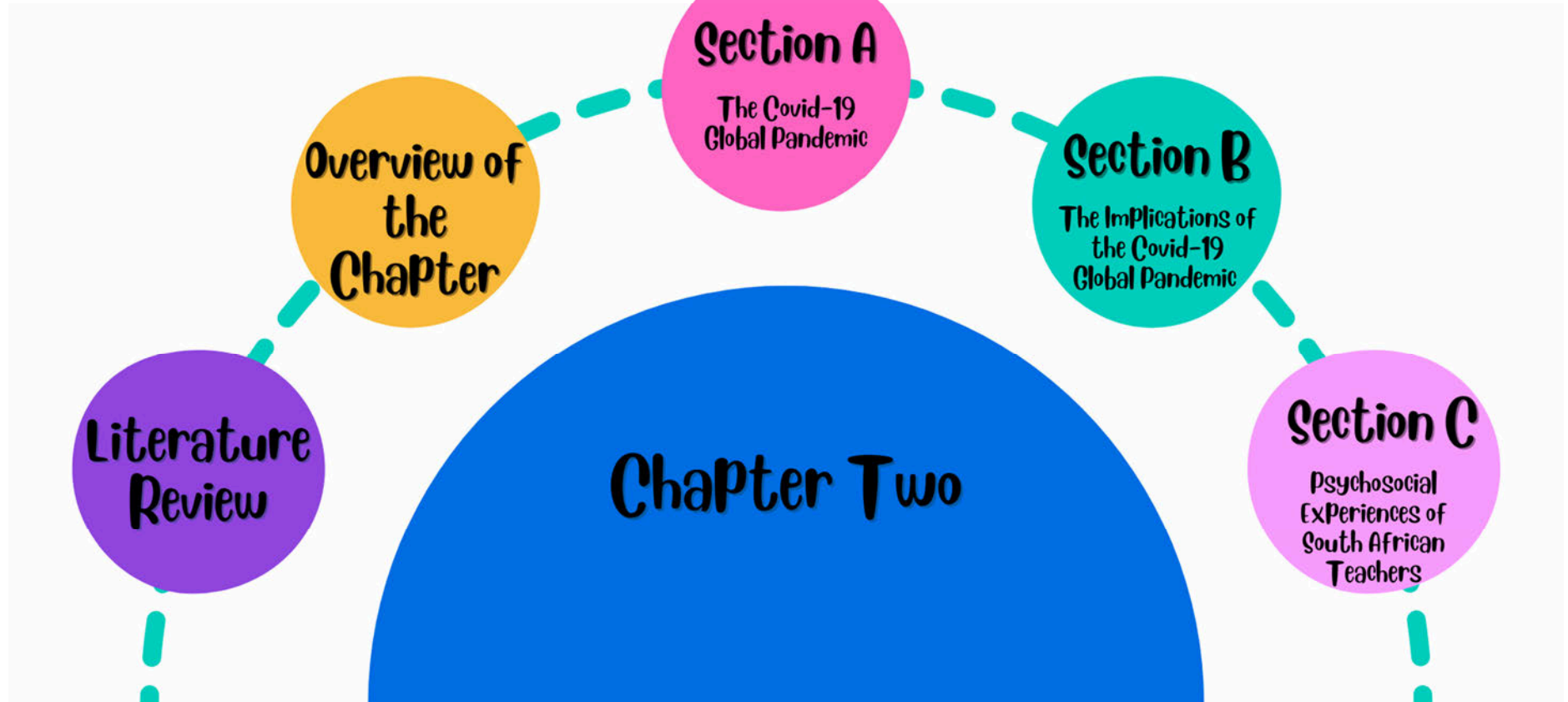
Finally, **Chapter Seven**, foregrounds the summary of the findings of this research study. Moreover, in this chapter, a methodological reflection and theoretical reflection is presented as well as policy imperatives and practice imperatives. Thereafter, contributions to educational research, recommendations for further research and limitations is presented. The research dissertation is concluded with a final reflection.

1.16 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the research dissertation. A personal-professional and contextual rationale was discussed. Thereafter, the statement of the research problem, focus and purpose, research objectives, research questions and research context that informed this study were explained. In addition, the theoretical framework and an overview of the methodological approach were highlighted. Clarification of key concepts that are pertinent to this study were presented. The significance of the research study, ethical considerations, trustworthiness and delimitations and limitations were elucidated. Finally, the organisation of the research dissertation was outlined and a summary of this chapter was presented.

The focus and purpose of this research study is on exploring and understanding the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. The following questions were asked: What are the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?; What knowledge and understandings do foundation phase teachers in South Africa have on the Covid-19 pandemic?; What are the challenges, if any, of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?; and What intervention strategies are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?

The subsequent chapter, CHAPTER TWO, will present a review of relevant literature focusing on the psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa and the Covid-19 pandemic which is significant to the research study.



CHAPTER TWO

SCHOLARY CONVERSATIONS ON THE PSYCHOSOCIAL EXPERIENCES OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted a personal-professional and contextual rationale, the statement of the research problem, followed by, the focus and purpose as well as the research objectives, the research questions, the research context, theoretical framework, the methodological approach, the research location, sampling techniques, the research participants, data generation, data analysis and interpretation, clarification of key concepts, the significance of the research study, ethical considerations, trustworthiness, delimitations and limitations of the research study as well as the organisation of the research dissertation.

In this chapter, an overview of studies conducted by numerous South African and international scholars related to foundation phase teachers' lived psychosocial experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic is presented. The purpose of this chapter is to elucidate the understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic; the impact of the pandemic on education in South Africa and Worldwide; as well as the understandings of who FPTs are and their psychosocial experiences.

2.2 Literature Review

According to McMillian and Schumacher (2001, p. 108), a literature review is defined as:

“A narrative interpretative criticism of the existing research.”

A literature review is a significant element that forms part of any research study. It is often described as a critical and in-depth analysis and evaluation of the previous research of scholars in a particular field of study (Aveyard, 2010). According to Cohen et al., (2018), the purpose of a literature review is to provide a context for the research, raise critical issues,

provide a justification or need for the research study, and outline the gaps found in previous research. A literature review broadens the researcher's depth of understandings of the current issues and assists in identifying the gaps within the body of existing literature. It is noted that a literature review is an organised and developed argument acting as a 'springboard' to present, contextualize, analyse, interpret, critique and evaluate existing academic sources and issues (Cohen et al., 2018). Academic sources can be found in libraries, indexes, electronic databases and the internet, and may be in the form of academic journals, eBooks, books, newspapers, magazines, conference papers, national and local government publications and publishers' websites.

2.3 Overview of the Chapter

This chapter is divided into three sections: **SECTION A**, **SECTION B** and **SECTION C**.

▪ SECTION A

In this section, a critical review of what is known in the research literature about the Covid-19 global pandemic within the international and South African contexts are provided with specific reference to: the definition, timeline and statistics.

▪ SECTION B

In this section, a critical review of what is known in the research literature about the Covid-19 global pandemic and Education within the South African and international contexts are provided with specific reference to: the implication of the Covid-19 pandemic on education internationally and in South Africa.

▪ SECTION C

In this section, a critical review of what is known in the research literature about the psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers within the South African and international contexts are provided with specific reference to: the significant role of the foundation phase and foundation phase teachers in South Africa, the impact and psychosocial experiences of Covid-19 on teachers in South Africa, and foundation phase teachers building a foundation during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa.

SECTION A

THE COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC

2.4.1 Introduction of SECTION A

This section will discuss the Covid-19 global pandemic.

2.4.2 The Covid-19 Global Pandemic

Coronavirus Disease 2019 or Covid-19 is the latest, contagious disease affecting people throughout the world. This global pandemic has drastically affected and continues to affect South Africa and other parts of the world economically, politically and socially, including education. Although this disease rapidly escalated from just an outbreak in 2019 to a global pandemic in 2020, it is evident that the Covid-19 pandemic still remains a new phenomenon and is currently being researched extensively throughout the world, with emphasis placed on: understanding the virus; acquiring potential treatments and vaccines to cure the virus; and inculcating medical and social interventions to prevent the spread of the virus. Covid-19 is a disease that has not been previously identified in humans before and is unceasingly affecting people throughout the world. Admittedly, Covid-19 is a new pandemic; consequently, limited information and research studies that describe the psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers working during the Covid-19 pandemic or similar emergencies in South Africa is currently available.

2.4.3 Definition of Covid-19

Covid-19 can be defined as a new family of viruses that “causes illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases” in human beings (Aljezeera, 2020, p. 1). It is assumed to spread mainly when an infected individual comes into close contact with another. It is transmitted through respiratory droplets produced when an infected individual breathes, coughs, sneezes, sings or speaks (SAcoronavirus, 2021). The uninfected individual becomes infected when the virus gets into their eyes, mouth or nose (WHO, 2020). The current symptoms of Covid-19 include “mild to severe respiratory illness with cough, sore throat, shortness of breath”, fever, breathing difficulties, fatigue, loss of smell and loss of taste, muscle aches, chills, headaches, chest pains and runny nose (SAcoronavirus, 2021). Reported cases indicate that the illness of an infected individual ranges from “little to no symptoms to people being severely ill and dying” (SAcoronavirus, 2021, p. 1). Medical

research has shown that some individuals that are infected with the virus remain asymptomatic and do not develop noticeable symptoms at any point in time. However, the disease is contagious and these people can rapidly spread it without knowing (Oran & Topol, 2020; WHO, 2020). During the first few days after exposure of the virus, symptoms may or may not show (WHO, 2020). It is noted that many individuals who are infected with the virus tend to experience a range of effects that last for months after recovery (WHO, 2020). From February 2020, various methods have been developed to detect this somewhat dreadful disease (such as a nasal swab or throat swab) however, there is no specific antiviral treatment available to cure this disease (SAcoronavirus, 2020). Nevertheless, individuals can prevent infection through the following ways: social distancing; quarantining; washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; using alcohol-based hand sanitiser; avoiding close contact with those infected; keeping unwashed hands away from the eyes, nose or mouth; using cotton face masks or coverings in public; coughing or sneezing in a flexed elbow or in a tissue and throwing the tissue in a bin and washing your hands immediately after; not sharing things if you know that you are infected; as well as cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces (Mayoclinic, 2020).

2.4.4 The Covid-19 Global Pandemic International Time Line

On 31 December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported a cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan, a city on the Yangtze River in central Hubei Province, People's Republic of China. Since then, there have been several cases which spread rapidly throughout numerous counties across the globe, leading to an ongoing coronavirus outbreak. "On 7 January 2020, 'Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2' (SARS-CoV-2) was confirmed as the causative agent of the 'Coronavirus Disease 2019' or Covid 19" which first developed in Wuhan, China (Department of Health, 2020, p. 1). On 30 January 2020, the WHO declared this new ongoing coronavirus outbreak a 'global public health emergency' (WHO, 2020; Westman, 2020a). Two months later, 11 March 2020, the WHO declared the coronavirus outbreak a global pandemic due to the "alarming levels of spread and severity" throughout various countries of the world (Westman, 2020b).

According to the global statistics to date, 13 February 2021, there have been more than 100 000 000 positive cases of coronavirus that have resulted in over 2 000 000 deaths across the globe (Worldmeter, 2021). The economic, social and political aspects of the world have drastically changed, some of which are still uncertain and may leave deep underlying scars

for the future (Tabish, 2020). This “invisible virus” that came within a blink of an eye is said to have many lasting effects for all the people in this fast-changing world (Pena, 2020, p. 1). The impact of the Covid-19 ongoing global pandemic has resulted in unemployment, starvation, an “increase in gender-based violence, homelessness, alcoholism and millions slipping into poverty” throughout the world (Tabish, 2020).

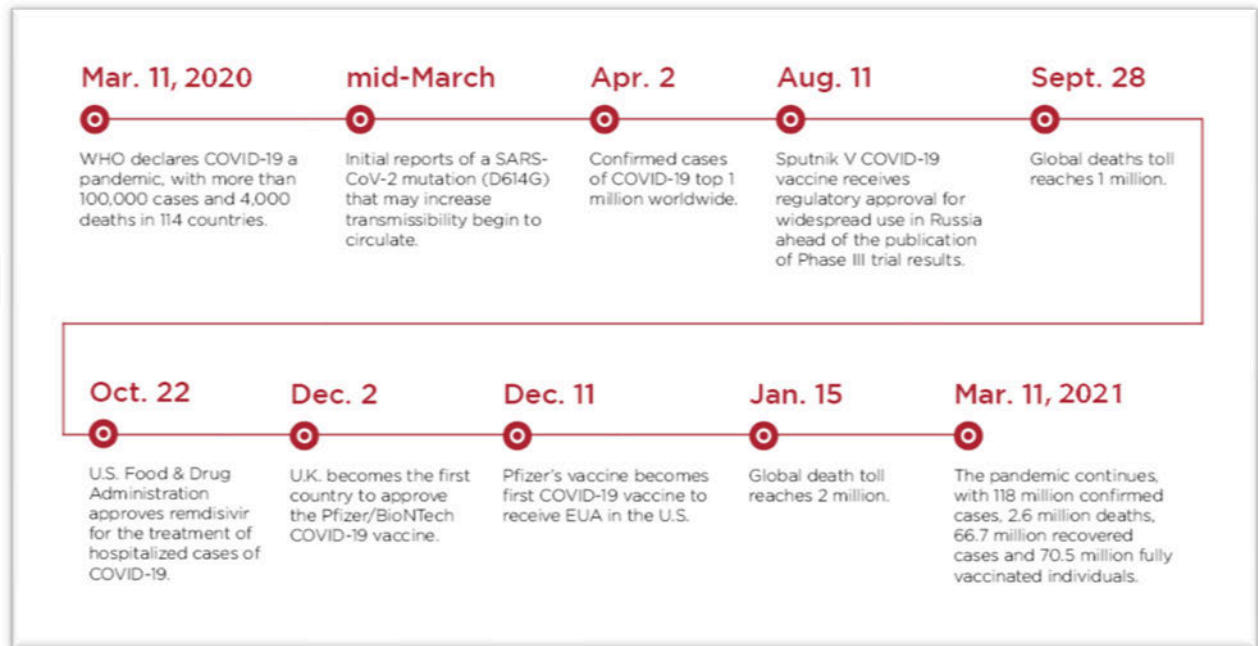
Since the emergence of this deadly virus in December 2019, it has spread to every single continent throughout the world within a few months (Machhi, Herskovitz & Senan, 2020). It is known as “the first pandemic of the 21st century” by the WHO (Dong, Du & Gardner, 2020). The top countries that have been hit aggressively with the greatest number of cases on 13 February 2021, being: United States of America with 27.5 million cases; India with 10.9 million cases; Brazil with 9.77 million cases, Russia with 4 million cases and the United Kingdom with 4 million cases as well. These countries also have significant death rates which are: United States of America with 471 000 deaths; India with 156 000 deaths; Brazil with 237 000 deaths, Russia with 79 000 deaths and the United Kingdom with 116 000 deaths. Mexico also has a high death rate of 171 000 deaths. Many countries around the globe have employed different measures in place to deal with the ongoing virus. Some of which include: national lockdowns, trade restrictions, shelters for people without homes, banning of large gatherings, confinement measures, travel bans, late-night travel restrictions and border closures.

2.4.5 A Changing Life throughout the World

The 11th March 2021 marked one year after the official declaration of the global pandemic. It is evident that it has not faded, rather increasing and severe (Vingne, 2021). Many developments have been made since then. Figure 4, below, is a timeline adapted from the American Society for Microbiology (2021) showing developments of one year of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 4

The Covid-19 Pandemic Timeline



Note. Adapted from American Society for Microbiology, 2021

A year later, the global pandemic is ongoing with 118 million positive cases, 26 million deaths and 66.7 million recoveries worldwide. To date, medical science claims that there are effective vaccines available, however, it is not available to the vast majority of people (Vingne, 2021). The pandemic has impacted local and international travel, gatherings of people, wearing of face coverings in public, company closures, consequent employment, recreational and health facilities like gyms, museums, art galleries, cinemas as well as places of worship. The 21st century global pandemic has created much uncertainty in the lives of people throughout the world.

2.4.6 A South African Timeline of the Covid-19 Pandemic

The first wave of the corona virus pandemic in South Africa began on 1 March 2020. It emerged from a South African traveller who had returned home from Italy and was tested positive for the virus. On 15 March 2020, South African President Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa declared a national state of disaster and announced several measures to lower the number of transmissions. On 23 March 2020, Ramaphosa announced a national 21-day lockdown that

was to begin on 27 March 2020 until 16 April 2020. However, on 9 April 2020, he extended the lockdown until the end of April 2020 to contain the number of transmissions. During this time, only healthcare workers, pharmacy and laboratory personnel, emergency personnel, security services, individuals regarded as necessary to the basic functioning of the economy, and those working in industries that could not be economically shut down went to work. The rest of the South Africans were restricted to their homes. Other measures included: all gatherings (except funerals) were prohibited; restaurants, taverns and bottle stores were closed; schools that were already closed a week before the lockdown period were now to be reopened until after the lockdown; people were allowed to leave their homes only to access health services, social grants, and allowed to shop for essential goods and attend funerals which had no more than 50 individuals. By the 24 March 2020, all nine provinces of South Africa had confirmed cases of the coronavirus. It took until 27 March 2020 to confirm the first death that resulted from Covid-19 in South Africa. On 21 April 2020, a 500-billion-rand stimulus was announced in response to the pandemic. By the end of the first wave, November 2020, the number of positive cases was 1353 and there were 5 deaths (Karrim, 2020).

The number of positive coronavirus cases continued to increase rapidly over a few months that led to the start of the second wave which began in December 2020. On 3 December 2020, Ramaphosa noted a resurgence of Covid-19 in some provinces and tightened restrictions in those areas with other measures in place to reduce transmissions, such as: introducing a curfew from 9am to 6pm, banning the sale and transport of alcohol, closure of public amenities, and the compulsory wearing of masks in public. On 27 December 2020, the number of confirmed cases was 1 million.

On 13 February 2021, there were 1.49 million positive cases and 47 670 deaths in South Africa. The 10th June 2021, marked the start of the third wave in South Africa as the number of Covid-19 positive cases amounted to 9149 daily. The fourth wave began in December 2021 as there was a rise in the number of positive Covid-19 cases. At the end of December, South Africa had an accumulated amount of 3 446 532 positive cases. As the pandemic continues so does the mutation of the virus as people are infected. The several variants include: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, Omicron, Lambda and Mu.

2.4.7 The Statistics of this Deadly Disease in South Africa

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic transcends categories of race, gender, age, social class, creed or nationality, and as Pena (2021, p. 1) asserts, “Covid-19 has once again put Darwin’s hypothesis of “survival of the fittest” in style, which does not necessarily have to correspond to the strongest”. The daily lives and livelihoods of people throughout the world, including South Africa have been adversely affected by the pandemic (Tabish, 2020). Common issues that have increased during this time include: stress, panic, anxiety and depression, hallmarking a need for physical, emotional, social, spiritual, financial, occupational, and environmental wellness of individuals have to be redefined with the passage of time (Tabish, 2020).

In South Africa, on 11 March 2021, the cumulative number of positive Covid-19 cases was 1 525 648. Below is Table 1 adapted from the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) showing one year of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. The number of positive cases and percentage total per province are as follows:

Table 1

Covid-19 Cases for 11 March 2021

Province	Total Covid-19 cases for 11 March 2021	Percentage Total
Eastern Cape	194 197	12.7
Free State	81 070	5.3
Gauteng	408 255	26.8
KwaZulu-Natal	331 223	21.7
Limpopo	62 485	4.1
Mpumalanga	72 484	4.8
North West	61 882	4.1
Northern Cape	34 565	2.3
Western Cape	279 487	18.3
Total	1 525 648	100

Note. Adapted from NICD, 2021

Table 1 shows that the greatest number of positive Covid-19 cases were in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape.

2.4.8 Conclusion of SECTION A

This section has discussed a critical review of what is known in the research literature about the Covid-19 global pandemic within the South African and international contexts with specific reference to: the definition and timeline. In the next section, Section B, the implication of the Covid-19 global pandemic on education internationally and in South Africa will be discussed.

SECTION B

THE IMPLICATION OF THE COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC ON EDUCATION INTERNATIONALLY AND IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.5.1 Introduction of SECTION B

This section will discuss the implication of the Covid-19 global pandemic on education internationally and in South Africa.

2.5.2 The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Education Internationally

The Covid-19 global pandemic is first and foremost a health crisis; however, it has “manifested as a multifaceted crisis” (Le Grange, 2020, p. 425). It impacts largely on the lives and livelihoods of people and more specifically, on education worldwide. At the onset of the crisis in early 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic led to the near or total closure of educational institutions, including: schools, colleges and universities worldwide in order to prevent the spread of the virus by limiting physical contact with others. This closure resulted in several unexpected challenges (Le Grange, 2020). Tabish (2020) asserts how the physical space of education suddenly transitioned from face-to-face interaction to remote, digital teaching and learning, and in many places access to resources such as radios, televisions, computers, laptops, cell phones, internet and data was limited.; and parents without capacity found it difficult to support their children’s education at home. Emotional and psychological issues of stress, anxiety, fear, worry, loneliness and depression increased (Tabish, 2020). Tabish (2020) indicates that “the education of many children for whom long distance learning is unavailable stands at great risk.” These challenges have long term consequences for those that have been adversely affected and therefore likely to increase educational inequalities (Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020). Throughout the world, Covid-19 has forced educational institutions to revise and readjust their education systems, as well as forcing teachers in a short space of time to change the manner and structure of their daily work. Tabish (2020) advocates for nations to protect children from the dire consequences of this unforeseen Covid-19 global pandemic.

2.5.3 The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Education in South Africa

The Covid-19 pandemic has rapidly and radically affected and is still affecting South African society in general and more specifically, its education system. According to Le Grange (2020, p. 425), the pandemic has revealed “the gross inequalities that are the legacies of apartheid and the consequences of neoliberal capitalism.” Reddy, Soudien and Winnaar (2020) indicate that the longer the implementation of social distancing, the greater the learning losses of learners, especially those that are disadvantaged and therefore ‘deepening inequalities’. For South Africa, “schools are more than places where knowledge is exchanged between teacher and learner.” (Le Grange, 2020, p. 427). Schools have become “places of safety and security” for children who come from vulnerable communities (Le Grange, 2020, p. 427). There are more than 9 million children who receive meals on a daily basis at school as part of the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) and the lockdown meant many children were hungry.

Due to the implementation of the lockdown of schools in March 2020 for an extended period, the South African education system faced many consequences: the NSNP had been temporarily suspended therefore leaving children hungry and/or malnourished; there was an interruption of learning; children had unequal access to communication technology; there was a lot of confusion and stress for teachers and education authorities; parents and children felt unprepared for distance learning; there was increased pressure on schooling systems; children were socially isolated and therefore felt lonely and anxious; and teachers faced challenges to assess learners learning, development and progress (UNESCO, 2021).

Educational authorities in South Africa realized that due to social distancing, the time to complete the schooling curriculum was being lost and therefore they needed to save the academic year. Jansen (2020, p. 1), however, had already asserted that in July 2020 the academic year of 2020 was already lost and “in education, the virus will greatly exacerbate the inequality of learning outcomes between the minority privileged and the majority poor.” Jansen (2020) argued that those learners that did not have privileges such as internet access and access to digital learning platforms will get further left behind in their academic careers. He further articulates that “Covid-19 did not cause the inequality – it will reveal it ...” (Jansen, 2020, p. 1).

Ten weeks following the initial lockdown, schools began to reopen across the country. There were many opposing views from different stakeholders. The teacher unions argued that too much would be at stake if school has to reopen; many parents and teachers viewed school “as a potential flash point for the spread of the virus”; and researchers argued that schools were more than a place of knowledge exchange and therefore schools should reopen with minimal risk (Robinson, 2020). Various school policies have been put in place to deal with the new disease at school. Washing of hands with soap and water, sanitizing, social distancing and wearing masks were the new norm of 2020. Those teachers with comorbidities were allowed to stay home for a short period. In many poor condition schools in South Africa, water was unavailable therefore making life more difficult; social distancing was not possible in small, overcrowded classrooms. These challenges mentioned above have the consequences of contributing to exacerbating the stark inequalities that are present in the South African education system (Hart, 2020).

2.5.4 Conclusion of SECTION B

This section has discussed the implication of the Covid-19 global pandemic on education internationally and in South Africa. In the next section, Section C, the significant role of the foundation phase and foundation phase teachers in South Africa, the impact and psychosocial experiences of Covid-19 on teachers in South Africa, and foundation phase teachers building a foundation during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa will be discussed.

SECTION C

PSYCHOSOCIAL EXPERIENCES OF SOUTH AFRICAN TEACHERS

2.6.1 Introduction of SECTION C

This section will discuss the significant role of the foundation phase and foundation phase teachers in South Africa, the impact and psychosocial experiences of Covid-19 on teachers in South Africa, as well as foundation phase teachers building a foundation during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa.

2.6.2 The Significant Role of the Foundation Phase and Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa

According to Pearson (2021) a foundation phase teacher in South Africa is defined as a teacher who is qualified to teach the foundation phase which includes grades R, 1, 2 and 3 or children between the ages of 5 – 9 years old. They usually teach all subjects of the curriculum, which includes: Mathematics, Home Language, First Additional Language and Life Skills. Foundation Phase Teachers play an important role in the South African education system. They are responsible for helping children to develop a solid base of educational knowledge and thinking skills so as learners move to the Intermediate and senior phases, they become independent and can work on their own. Apart from building the foundations of reading, writing, literacy and mathematics, foundation phase teachers promote the social, emotional, intellectual and physical development of children.

2.6.3 The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Teachers in South Africa

Hlungwane and Steytler (2021, p. 1) recognise that “teachers have always held the future of children in their hands, but never has this been more true than in 2020” when teachers had to adapt to a new way of teaching and learning. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, many teachers in South Africa did not have much technology training and during the lockdown period, they had to find innovative ways of supporting learners, parents and caregivers, despite the turmoil caused by the virus. It is noted that some teachers worked outside their normal teaching hours and above their duties (Hlungwane & Steytler, 2021). Many teachers taught learners at night

since data used to connect to the internet was cheaper during this time and learners could afford to connect. Other teachers sent voice notes, notes, pictures and documents to learners via digital platforms. There were cases in which some teachers wrote on pieces of paper on their home walls using it like white boards, recording their lessons on their cell phones and then sharing these videos with learners. Those teachers who could not attend to learners digitally, physically dropped documents and checked on learners at their homes or in convenient spaces. This global pandemic has highlighted the “tenacity, leadership and agility” of some teachers. However, South Africa is faced with complex realities in everyday schooling contexts.

During this ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, it is evident that teachers job descriptions have changed suddenly. Their responsibilities have increased and their ways of working in their schooling contexts have been adjusted differently. Their teaching loads, duties and responsibilities have increased. Teachers are now using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) daily, sanitizing learners, checking health and body temperatures of learners, ensuring social distancing takes place in the school context, ensuring learners are washing their hands with soap and water regularly, ensuring learners are wearing face coverings, and ensuring teaching and learning takes place effectively. Hlungwane and Steytler (2021) recognise that teachers have always been frontline workers, with regard to teaching and learning. During the pandemic and similar emergencies, teachers should be supported and valued and included in shaping and reshaping the South African education system. In order to strengthen and rebuild the South African education system, educational, provincial departments of education, district managers, senior management teams at schools, school governing bodies, teachers, parents and communities must unite.

2.6.4 Foundation Phase Teachers Building a Foundation During the Covid-19 Pandemic

As a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, foundation phase teachers among others, feel overwhelmed and pressured in building a foundation for learners (Robinson, 2020). Lost teaching time lost and the stop and start learning schedules, with long gaps in between has adversely impacted the South African education system. Bangani (2021) noted that young learners in the foundation phase have learnt very little of the schooling curriculum in 2020.

She further noted that learners need to develop a firm foundation in reading and understanding of mathematical concepts. The lost teaching time delays efforts in addressing the literacy and mathematics crisis that South Africa is already facing. Trying to ‘catch up’ puts pressure and stress on foundation phase teachers. It is evident that the disruption to teaching and learning at school is likely to wipe out any learning gains and therefore it is the responsibility of teachers to ensure that all learning material is covered (Bangani, 2021). In addressing learning losses, it is believed that teachers need fast-tracked support from the South African Department of Basic Education in order to move forward (Bangani, 2021). Although the 2021 schooling year remains uncertain, there is opportunity for growth and development. Hlungwane and Steytler (2021) believe that due to Covid-19 underlining the value of teachers in society, it is best to put teachers needs at heart and reimagine their role in order to build an education better for the benefit of every child for their future.

2.6.5 Conclusion of SECTION C

This section has discussed the important role of the foundation phase and foundation phase teachers in South Africa, the impact and psychosocial experiences of Covid-19 on teachers in South Africa, and foundation phase teachers building a foundation during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. In the next section, Section D, the theoretical framework will be elucidated.

2.7 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, significant international and South African debates, issues and scholarly conversations on Covid-19, the impact of Covid-19 on education and the lives of FPTs, including their psychosocial experiences were presented. The scholarly discussions focused on the on-going Covid-19 pandemic that FPTs are faced with, as well as the ways in which these teachers are developing their experiences and personality while working within their social contexts.

In the next chapter, CHAPTER THREE, the theoretical framework for this research study is illustrated with specific reference to: The *Psychosocial Development Theory* founded by Erik Erikson in the 1950's.

Chapter Three



CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

A critical review of the several research studies was conducted in the previous chapter, which delineated studies on the Covid-19 pandemic in relation to education internationally, and research on the Covid-19 pandemic in relation to education in South Africa, and foundation phase teachers lived psychosocial experiences during this period. In addition, the significant role of the foundation phase and foundation phase teachers in South Africa and the global and local impact of the pandemic on education was discussed.

In this chapter, the theoretical framework for this research study is expounded with specific reference to: The *Psychosocial Development Theory* founded by Erik Erikson in the 1950's. As the fundamental focus of this research study is on exploring the psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 global pandemic, the PDT as a theoretical frame is considered appropriate. Hence, this chapter will discuss the main characteristics of Erik Erikson's *Psychosocial Development Theory* and discuss how this theory can be used as a lens to explain how FPTs negotiate their lived psychosocial experiences within their social contexts and develop their personality through that particular context.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

According to Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005, p. 9), a theoretical framework is defined as:

“A set of ideas, assumptions and concepts that explain the world, ourselves, or an aspect of reality.”

Another definition provided by Grant & Osanloo (2014, p.12) states that a theoretical framework “is the foundation from which all knowledge is constructed (metaphorically and literally)”, and serves as a guide or “blueprint” to assist in building and supporting a research study. According to Gabriel (2008) a theoretical framework is a structure, overview or plan that supports a theory of a research study. It introduces and describes the theory as well as explores the phenomenon under study. Bertram and Christiansen (2014, p. 118) advocate for researchers to “use the principles of a particular theory to broadly inform their study.” In this research study, the *Psychosocial Development Theory* is deployed as the theoretical framework which offer a lens to explore and understand how FPTs negotiate their psychosocial experiences of working during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa within their social contexts. It focuses on self-understanding, social relationships and one’s relationship with his/her social world (Newman & Newman, 2020).

3.3 Psychosocial Development Theory

Erik Erikson (1902 – 1994) was a German-American psychologist and psychoanalyst who founded the *Psychosocial Development Theory* in the 1950’s. This theory continues to be influential and popular today. It is rooted in Sigmund Freud's psychosexual theory. However, it differs in important respects. Freud and Erikson both believed that an individual develops through crises that occurs throughout a series of pre-determined stages. However, Freud refers to these as sexual crises and Erikson refers to these as self-identity crises. In addition, both theories have fixed stages and are linked to age norms. However, Freud’s psychosexual theory ends at puberty and Erikson’s *Psychosocial Development Theory* encompasses the entire life span of an individual.

Erikson’s *Psychosocial Development Theory* elucidates that an individual is shaped by and reacts to their social experiences within their social contexts throughout their entire lifespan (Newman & Newman, 2020). This theory proposes that an individual’s personality develops through socialization throughout eight stages of psychosocial development which occurs “from the cradle to the grave” (Erikson, 1958). Throughout each stage, an individual experiences a psychosocial crisis which may have a positive or negative effect on their personality. Erikson focused on “the inner and outer, which the vital personality weathers, re-emerging from each crisis with an increased sense of inner unity,” (Erikson, 1968, p. 92).

Psychosocial development comprises of two elements: psychological and social. The psychological element refers to an individual's mental or emotional state, and the social element refers to the social environment in which an individual develops. Erikson believed that psychological and social factors influence each stage of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1963). According to Re Ville (1989) 'psychosocial' may be defined as an individual interacting within social influences.

This theory articulates that an individual advances through stages of development based on how they adjust to social crises throughout their lives. These social crises determine how an individual reacts to or within their social contexts (Newman & Newman, 2020). Erikson emphasized that an individual's personality development occurs through a series of crises which are known to be a "radical change in perspective" (Erikson, 1968, p. 96). As maintained in the theory, successful completion of each stage will result in healthy personality and the acquisition of basic virtues (McLeod, 2018). The basic virtues are defined as "characteristic strengths which the ego can use to resolve subsequent crises" (McLeod, 2018). On the other hand, failure to successfully complete a stage will result in a reduced ability to complete further stages and therefore an unhealthier personality and sense of self (McLeod, 2018). However, crises may be resolved successfully at later stages of development.

3.4 Erikson's Eight Stages of the Psychosocial Development Theory

The *Psychosocial Development Theory* consist of eight fixed-stages, which in chronological order include: (1) Trust versus Mistrust; (2) Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt; (3) Initiative versus Guilt; (4) Industry versus Inferiority; (5) Identity versus Identity Confusion; (6) Intimacy versus Isolation; (7) Generativity versus Stagnation; and (8) Ego Integrity versus Despair. As shown in Table 2: Erik Erikson's Eight Stages of the Psychosocial Development Theory, below, each stage is associated with a specific age group and represents a psychosocial crisis experienced during that period of life, which may have a positive or negative outcome for their personality development throughout each developmental stage.

Table 2*Erik Erikson's Eight Stages of the Psychosocial Development Theory*

Stage	Approximate Age	Psychosocial Crisis	Basic Virtue
1	Infancy (0 – 1 ½)	Trust versus Mistrust	Hope
2	Early Childhood (1 ½ – 3)	Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt	Will
3	Pre-school Age (3 – 5)	Initiative versus Guilt	Purpose
4	School Age (5 – 12)	Industry versus Inferiority	Competence
5	Adolescence (12 – 18)	Identity versus Identity Confusion	Fidelity
6	Early adulthood (18 – 40)	Intimacy versus Isolation	Love
7	Middle Adulthood (40 – 65)	Generativity versus Stagnation	Care
8	Late Adulthood (65 +)	Ego Integrity versus Despair	Wisdom

Note. Adapted from McLeod, 2018

Erikson's Eight Stages of the *Psychosocial Development Theory* can be described as follows:

3.4.1 Stage 1: *Trust verses Mistrust*

The first stage of Erikson's theory of psychosocial development occurs between 0 – 1 ½ years of age and focuses on infancy. According to Cherry (2022) this is the most fundamental stage of an individual's life as an infant is completely dependent on their caregiver. This stage is where the psychosocial crisis of trust and mistrust is explored. At this point of development, an infant is dependent upon caregivers for everything that is needed to survive, including: water, food, shelter as well as emotional needs. If the caregiver provides the necessary needs to the infant, the infant will view the world as a safe and secure place, and will have a positive psychosocial outcome of trust (Malone, Liu, Vaillant, Rentz & Waldinger, 2016). If the caregiver fails to provide adequate care and love, the infant will come to feel as if he/she cannot trust or depend on the caregiver, and will have a negative psychosocial outcome of mistrust. In this stage, the basic virtue that will be developed upon a positive outcome of the psychosocial crisis is 'hope'.

3.4.2 Stage 2: *Autonomy verses Shame and Doubt*

The second stage of Erikson's theory of psychosocial development occurs between 1 – 3 years of age and focuses on early childhood. According to Sutton (2021) at this stage children explore the world around them, gain independence and develop an increasing perception of control over their physical skills (Erikson, 1958; Erikson, 1963). At this point of development, children begin to develop a heightened sense of personal control and acquire feelings of independence. This stage is where the psychosocial crisis of autonomy and shame and doubt is explored. If a child experiences success over bodily functions and takes control of simple choices, he/she has a sense of personal power, feelings of autonomy, increased independence, a greater sense of being able to survive in the world, and will have a positive psychosocial outcome of autonomy. Those children that have negative experiences will result in lacking self-esteem, feeling less confident, and will have a negative psychosocial outcome of shame and doubt. In this stage, the basic virtue that will be developed upon a positive outcome of the psychosocial crisis is 'will' (Sutton, 2021).

3.4.3 Stage 3: *Initiative verses Guilt*

The third stage of Erikson's theory of psychosocial development occurs between 3 – 5 years of age and focuses on preschool. According to Sutton (2020) young children assert control over their worlds typically through direct play and social interactions. This stage is where the psychosocial crisis of initiative and guilt is explored. At this point of development, young children may be viewed as vigorous, overly assertive or even aggressive while they are exploring their interpersonal skills (Sutton, 2020). If the young child is able to use their initiative and explore their world positively, he/she develops feelings of capability and security, and will have a positive psychosocial outcome of initiative (Sutton, 2020). If young children are overly restricted either by parental control or through increased criticism, they develop a sense of guilt, self-doubt and become less likely to lead, and will have a negative psychosocial outcome of guilt. In this stage, the basic virtue that will be developed upon a positive outcome of the psychosocial crisis is 'purpose'.

3.4.4 Stage 4: Industry verses Inferiority

The fourth stage of Erikson's theory of psychosocial development occurs between 5 – 12 years of age and focuses on school going children age. According to Erikson (1958, 1963) at this stage, school going children are immersed in a world full of education. This stage is where the psychosocial crisis of industry and inferiority is explored. At this point of development, teachers play an essential role in the growth and development of a child. At this point in time, social interaction between others is increasingly relevant as well as coping with academic demands in the development of a child's self-esteem and sense of pride. If a child is encouraged and commended by teachers, parents or peers, he/she will develop a feeling of competence and belief in their skills, and will have a positive psychosocial outcome of industry. If a child receives no or little encouragement from teachers, parents or peers, he/she will doubt their abilities of being successful, and will have a negative psychosocial outcome of inferiority. In this stage, the basic virtue that will be developed upon a positive outcome of the psychosocial crisis is 'competence'.

3.4.5 Stage 5: Identity verses Identity Confusion

The fifth stage of Erikson's theory of psychosocial development occurs between 12 – 18 years of age and focuses on the adolescence years. According to Erikson (1958) this is a fundamental stage of an adolescent's life as his/her task is to develop a sense of self and personal identity. This stage is where the psychosocial crisis of identity and identity confusion is explored. At this point of development, Erikson (1963) articulates that this stage exists "between the morality learned by the child, and the ethics to be developed by the adult." The formative years (ages 12 – 18) provides a valuable and in-depth exploration of the beliefs, goals and values of an individual while searching for their personal identity and sense of self. The transition between childhood and adulthood is crucial. Adolescents become increasingly independent and begin to consider careers, family, friends, and their place in society. If they are true to themselves and successful because of their ongoing explorations, they will have a positive psychosocial outcome of identity. With appropriate encouragement and reinforcement, adolescents move toward increasing independence and have a stronger sense of control and self (Marcia, 2010). If adolescents are confused about who they are, they will have a poor sense of self. This failure will lead to insecurity and unsureness of themselves and their future, and will have a negative psychosocial outcome of identity

confusion. In this stage, the basic virtue that will be developed upon a positive outcome of the psychosocial crisis is ‘fidelity’.

3.4.6 Stage 6: *Intimacy verses Isolation*

The sixth stage of Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development occurs between 18 – 40 years of age and focuses on early adulthood. At this point of development, young adults explore personal relationships and the desire to form intimate relationships (Cherry, 2022). This stage is where the psychosocial crisis of intimacy and isolation is explored. Erikson (1963) believed that it was vital for individuals to develop close, committed relationships and the ability to love. Success in this stage leads to a strong sense of personal identity which is crucial to developing relationships that are strong and intimate (Sutton, 2021), and will have a positive psychosocial outcome of intimacy. Failure in this stage results in not forming appropriate bonds with others, avoiding intimacy, having feelings of loneliness and depression, and will have a negative psychosocial outcome of isolation. In this stage, the basic virtue that will be developed upon a positive outcome of the psychosocial crisis is ‘love’.

3.4.7 Stage 7: *Generativity verses Stagnation*

The seventh stage of Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development occurs between 40 – 65 years of age and focuses on middle adulthood. According to Cherry (2022) adults may display their need for longevity; often by being more productive, contributing to the development of others, engaging in meaningful work that contributes positively to society, and contributing to the next generation. This stage is where the psychosocial crisis of generativity and stagnation is explored. Success in this stage results in adults being useful in life, accomplishing goals successfully and contributing to society, and will have a positive psychosocial outcome of generativity. Failure of this stage results in adults feeling unproductive, uninvolved, disillusioned and disconnected from the world, and will have a negative psychosocial outcome of stagnation. In this stage, the basic virtue that will be developed upon a positive outcome of the psychosocial crisis is ‘care’.

3.4.8 Stage 8: *Ego Integrity versus Despair*

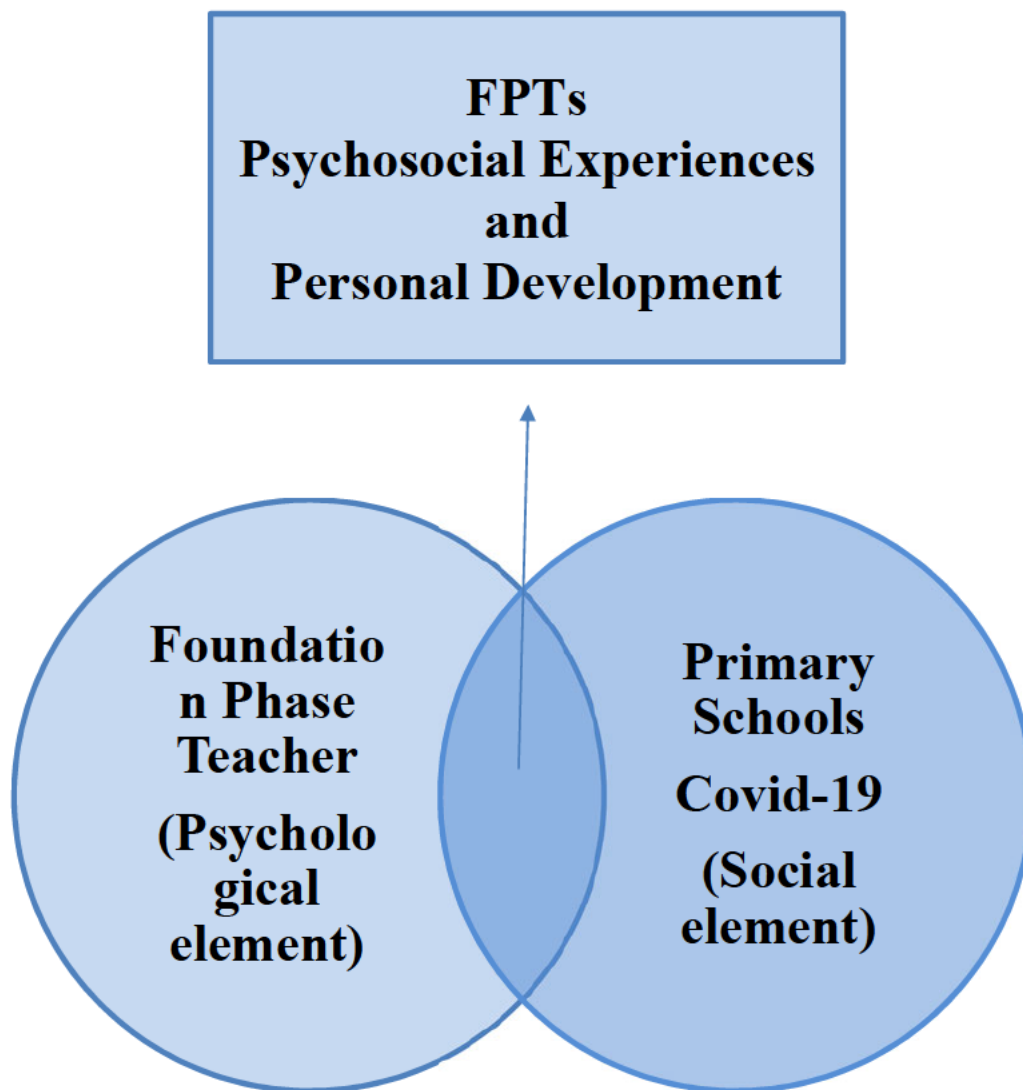
The eighth stage of Erikson's theory of psychosocial development occurs from 65 years of age and focuses on late adulthood. According to Cherry (2022) this is a reflection stage where an individual slows down, becomes less productive and spends time reviewing their accomplishments throughout life. This stage is where the psychosocial crisis of ego integrity and despair is explored. Success in this stage occurs when an individual achieves his/her goals and has "a sense of coherence and wholeness" (Erikson, 1982), and this will have a positive psychosocial outcome of ego integrity. Failure of this stage occurs when an individual has regret over things that are not completed or have made mistakes throughout life. They are bitter about the past and are frightened that their life is about to end without having a sense of having lived well, and this will have a negative psychosocial outcome of despair. In this stage, the basic virtue that will be developed upon a positive outcome of the psychosocial crisis is 'wisdom'.

3.5 Psychosocial Experiences Leads to Personal Development

In this research study, the *Psychosocial Development Theory* is deployed as the theoretical framework which offers an avenue through which the FPTs psychosocial experiences of working in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic can be explored and understood. The *Psychosocial Development Theory* is extremely useful as it highlights the psychological and social development of an individual. The PDT identifies the importance of social interactions of an individual and the significance of their personal development. During each stage of development, an individual may experience a psychosocial crisis which leads to a basic virtue that will be developed upon a positive psychosocial outcome.

Figure 5

Psychosocial Experiences Leads to Personal Development



Note. This figure has been created by the researcher

This Venn diagram, Figure 5, titled *Psychosocial Experiences Leads to Personal Development* was developed by the researcher to show the relationship between the FPTs experiences in relation to their social context that leads to personal development. A Venn diagram is suitable to this research study as it is used “to indicate shared or overlapping aspects of a concept, a category or a process” (Verdinelli & Scagnoli, 2013, p. 364). By using the PDT, the researcher explores and understands the FPTs psychosocial experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa.

3.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter presented the theoretical framework which guided this research study. The *Psychosocial Development Theory* by Erik Erikson offers lenses in exploring and understanding how FPTs negotiate their psychosocial experiences of working within their social contexts during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. It is extremely valuable in this research study as it is able to highlight the importance of social interactions of an individual and the significance of their personal development.

In the next chapter, CHAPTER FOUR, the research methodology and design that was used to generate data for this research study will be presented. This includes the rationale for selecting the research methodology and design; the research process; the selection of research participants as well as the research context and location. The data generation methods and the role of the researcher is elucidated. Thereafter, the data analysis process, including: ethical issues; trustworthiness and limitations that the study may encounter are explicated.

CHAPTER FOUR

SECTION A

THE RESEARCH

METHODOLOGY

AND

DESIGN

SECTION B

DATA

GENERATION.

INTERPRETATION

AND ANALYSIS

SECTION C

ETHICAL

CONSIDERATIONS.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

AND LIMITATIONS

CHAPTER FOUR

A METHODOLOGICAL VISTA

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the *Psychosocial Development Theory* founded by Erik Erikson as the theoretical framework which underpinned this research study.

In this chapter, aspects of the research methodology and design are presented. In exploring and understanding the psychosocial experiences of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic, a phenomenological approach was adopted in this research study as it focused on the essences of lived experiences from the perspectives of the research participants. In addition, this chapter includes the reasons for selecting the research approach, the research paradigm, the research methodology, the research location, sampling techniques, the selection of research participants, as well as a description of each participant is elucidated. Furthermore, this chapter presented data generation methods, the research procedure, and qualitative data/thematic analytical framing and interpretation. Finally, ethical considerations, trustworthiness of the qualitative research study, limitations of the research study as well as the researcher's role as a qualitative researcher is presented.

4.2 Overview of the Chapter

This chapter is divided into three sections: **SECTION A**, **SECTION B** and **SECTION C**.

- **SECTION A**

In this section, aspects of the research methodology and design is discussed.

- **SECTION B**

In this section, data generation methods, the qualitative research procedure, and qualitative data/thematic analytical framing and interpretation is discussed.

- **SECTION C**

In this section, ethical considerations, trustworthiness of the qualitative research study, limitations of the research study as well as the researcher's role as a qualitative researcher is discussed.

SECTION A

4.3 The Research Methodology and Design

This section will discuss the research methodology and design of the research study.

4.3.1 The Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is described as a worldview; a way of “seeing the world and making sense of it” (Mukherji & Albon, 2015, p. 24). Guba (1990) asserts that it is guided by “a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied.” In addition, a research paradigm is characterized by its own distinctive ontology, epistemology and methodology. Ontology refers to the nature of reality and truth; epistemology refers to the nature and ground of knowledge; and methodology refers to the identification and justification of research methods.

This research study was underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) state that the purpose of the interpretivist paradigm is to develop a greater understanding of how individuals make meaning of their lived experiences in their social contexts, and how these experiences inform their behaviours. The interpretivist paradigm emphasizes that reality is not objectively determined, rather, reality is socially constructed, multi-layered, complex and therefore, the experiences of individuals occur within their social contexts (Cohen et al., 2018). Social reality is viewed and interpreted by individuals from their own perspectives. Hennik, Hutter and Bailey (2020) further note that the interpretivist paradigm places importance on understanding experiences which are meaningful and subjective, therefore, there can be multiple realities and interpretations.

In this research study, the interpretivist paradigm was utilized to improve the understanding of the phenomenon under study. It allowed for the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic to be explored and understood. The research participants have unique psychosocial experiences and therefore this interpretivist paradigm focused on the holistic perspective of each research participant. The following table, Table 3, created by the researcher displays the characteristics of the interpretivist paradigm as developed within this research study.

Table 3

Characteristics of the Interpretivist Paradigm within this Research Study

Feature	Description
Ontology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are multiple realities. ▪ Realities are complex, subjective, multiple and socially constructed through human interaction. ▪ Social realities exist due to varying lived psychosocial experiences of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic.
Epistemology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social realities are viewed and interpreted according to the ideological position of an individual. ▪ Knowledge is socially constructed by experiencing life within social contexts.
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data is generated through semi-structured interviews, collage inquiry and metaphor drawings; and is generated by the researcher at a particular point in time (Covid-19 pandemic).

Note. This table has been created by the researcher.

4.3.2 The Research Approach

A qualitative research approach has been adopted in this research study. Corbin and Strauss (2008) define qualitative research as a systematic inquiry into social phenomena in naturalistic contexts. In addition, Silverman (2010, p.56) elucidates the characteristics of qualitative research as “subjective”, “in-depth”, “exploratory”, “interpretive” and “open-ended in nature.” Qualitative research involves generating and analyzing non-numerical data in order to understand how individuals or groups of individuals explore and understand meanings of their experiences of the world they live in (Bhandari, 2020). Moreover, Maree (2007, p. 51) explains that qualitative research “attempts to collect rich, descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon or context with the intention of developing an

understanding of what is being observed or studied”, from the point of view of the research participants (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020).

Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 43) state that “qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world”, and that “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.” In addition, qualitative research is a situated activity that focuses on locating the observer in the world (Denzin & Lincoln (2011). Furthermore, it focuses on gathering in-depth insights, so the voices of the research participants are acknowledged and understood through their lived experiences: behaviors, feelings and perceptions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative data generation methods are more appropriate for inquiring into experience and making meaning (Creswell, 2008). Qualitative research brings out in-depth, rich and profound understandings and meanings from the research participants’ lived experiences (Creswell, 2009). This research study was qualitative and therefore was intended to explore and understand the lived psychosocial experiences of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19.

4.3.3 The Research Methodology

Phenomenology was selected as the most suitable research methodology for this research study. Phenomenology is a research technique that has been used extensively in qualitative research for decades, and is defined as the study of the essence of phenomena that arises from lived experiences of being in the world (Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa & Varpio, 2015). In addition, Van Manen (2014) expresses that phenomenology focuses on understanding how individuals experience a particular situation or phenomenon from their own perspectives, and make meaning as they live through those experiences. Furthermore, Heinonem (2015) emphasizes that an individual’s lived experiences ultimately shape their own behaviours.

Phenomenology is a well-established field that has been postulated and developed extensively by pioneers who have richly contributed to its cultivation and recognition. It is noted that phenomenology was initially developed in the early twentieth century by a German Philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938). Husserl was regarded as “the fountainhead of

phenomenology in the twentieth century” (Vandenberg, 1997, p. 11), who believed that lived experience is the source of all knowledge. He founded transcendental phenomenology which focuses on understanding lived experience through a process called *epoche* or bracketing. Bracketing refers to setting aside one’s biases, preconceived ideas or prejudgments (Moustakas, 1994). Martin Heidegger (1889 – 1976) was a student of Husserl who further developed phenomenology and believed that the truth has more than one meaning. He founded hermeneutic phenomenology which focuses on understanding lived experience without setting aside one’s own presuppositions and beliefs. Furthermore, he believed that the self and its context could not be realistically separated. There are various other scholars who have contributed to the expansion of this philosophy, among others, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905 – 1980) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961).

Phenomenological philosophers and scholars believe that phenomenology aims at gaining deeper understandings of the meanings of lived experiences. In addition, they believe in the four characteristics of phenomenological research which is discussed as follows:

- **Description:**

Phenomenological research has rich and detailed descriptions of the phenomenon under study (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). Finlay (2008, p. 8) states that phenomenological research “involves both rich description of the life world or lived experience”.

- **Reduction:**

Reduction in phenomenological research allows the researcher to be open-minded and listen receptively to the research participants lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). In this phenomenological reduction process, the researcher purposefully sets aside any preconceived beliefs or ideas they may have on the lived experiences. This process is traditionally known as bracketing.

- **Imaginative Variation:**

Following the reduction and bracketing process, imaginative variation allows the researcher to view the phenomenon from multiple perspectives, and then understand the essence of the research participant’s lived experiences.

- **Essences:**

In phenomenological research, essences or the meaning of the phenomenon represent the researcher's perspective at a particular point in time (Moustakas, 1994).

In this research study, the researcher adopted a hermeneutic phenomenological research approach. The rationale for selecting this approach is that the hermeneutic phenomenological research approach focuses on understanding the research participants lived experiences from their own perspectives that ultimately influences their own realities. In addition, the researcher took a slightly different approach to the traditional bracketing method. She did not separate herself from the research study; rather, she acknowledged her expectations and beliefs. Significantly, phenomenology is a unique qualitative form of inquiry that is intended to arrive at phenomenal understandings and insights of lived experiences (Van Manen, 2017). Therefore, when used in this research study, it brings out the unique perceptions, perspectives and understandings of the research participants and the essences of their lived experiences.

4.3.4 The Research Location

This qualitative research study was conducted in 6 different schools across 3 different provinces in South Africa, namely: KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Western Cape. These South African schools that have foundation phase departments, are either primary or combined schools; mainstream schools; co-educational schools and either public or private schools. The public schools have different quintile ratings according to their respective Departments of Education. These quintile ratings have been stipulated in the National Norms and Standards for Educators (2000) by the Department of Basic Education to achieve the redress of equity and quality in South Africa (Department of Basic Education, 2006). The educational institutions in KZN, GP and WC were selected purposively, as the researcher had sufficient knowledge of the challenges, changes and difficulties experienced by the FPTs during the Covid-19 pandemic at these school. The motivation for selecting 6 schools was that the researcher aimed at generating rich and detailed information to capture the essences of the lived psychosocial experiences of FPTs, as well as using this research to launch further research and development interest. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to safeguard the researcher and research participants, the researcher did not physically go to each school, but generated the data through online interviews.

4.3.5 Sampling Techniques

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014, p.59) “sampling involves making decisions about which people, settings, events or behaviours to include in the study.” For this research study, purposive sampling, alongside availability and convenience were selected. According to Patton (2002) purposive sampling is a technique that is extensively used in qualitative research for the purpose of gaining in-depth, detailed and richly textured information about the phenomenon under study. It involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals with expertise according to pre-selected qualifying criteria (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In addition, the pre-selected qualifying criteria allows for the research questions to be answered comprehensively. The sample and sample size that are selected are extremely vital to the nature and scope of the research study (Sandelowski, 1995).

4.3.6 Selection of the Research Participants

This small-scale research study focuses on the essences of lived psychosocial experiences. Therefore, six foundation phase teachers from 3 provinces in South Africa, namely: KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Western Cape were selected as the research participants for this research study. These South African FPTs are either experienced or novice; belong to different race groups; are of different ages; teach at primary or combined schools in South Africa; teach in grades R – 3; and teach some of the following subjects: Home Language, First Additional Language, Mathematics and Life Skills. This sample was purposively chosen out of availability and convenience as well as knowledge of the challenges experienced by foundation phase teachers since the Covid-19 pandemic. The researcher networked with other South African and International teachers on her Instagram handle: Teacher and Friends SA, and therefore was able to select research participants based on their voluntary contribution. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher was not able to interact with the research participants in person, therefore, data was generated online from the research participants to safeguard themselves as well as the researcher. As the researcher of this research study, I desired to generate rich information so that I could explore and understand deeply the lived psychosocial experiences of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic, thus, six research participants were selected. Each individuals’ psychosocial experiences are unique and vital to this phenomenological research study.

In this research study, the selection of the research participants is defined by the following inclusion /exclusion criteria:

- ✚ The research participants had to be Foundation Phase Teachers.
- ✚ The research participants had to reside and work in South Africa, specifically in the: KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Western Cape provinces.
- ✚ The research participants had to be working during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 4 shown below is a profile of the research participants captured at a particular point in time that the research study was conducted (September/October 2021). Pseudonyms are used in this research study to safeguard the anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants.

Table 4

Profile of the Research Participants

Name of Research Participant (Pseudonym)	Sex	Age	Race	South African Province	Qualification, Year Obtained and University	Years of Experience	Type of School
Candy	F	26	White	Gauteng Province	BEd (FP) 2019 UNISA	4	Private
Tresha	F	28	Indian	KwaZulu-Natal	BEd (FP/IP) 2015 UKZN; BEd Hons 2017 UKZN	6	Public
Celia	F	24	White	Western Cape	BEd (FP) 2019 NWU	1	Public

Yara	F	34	Indian	KwaZulu-Natal	BEd (ECD/FP) 2011 UKZN	9	Public
Wendy	F	32	Coloured	Western Cape	BEd (FP) 2014 CPUT	8	Public
Fekile	F	40	Black	KwaZulu-Natal	BEd (ECD/FP) 2017 UNISA	4	Public

Note. This table has been created by the researcher.

4.3.7 A Description of Each Research Participant

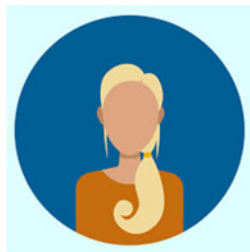
In this research study, the researcher has made every effort to guarantee the anonymity, confidentiality and well-being of each of the research participants. As a result, pseudonyms have been used.



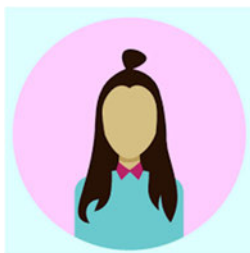
Research Participant 1, **Candy**, is a 26-year-old female. She works in a private collage in Waterfall, Johannesburg, Gauteng. She has a total number of 4 years of working experience. She teaches English, Mathematics, Afrikaans and Life Skills in grade 3 in the foundation phase. The school that she teaches in has over 1000 learners.



Research Participant 2, **Tresha**, is a 28-year-old female. She is a foundation phase teacher and works at a public primary school in Chatsworth, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. She belongs to a public school with only 264 learners in total. The school is in a socially economic disadvantaged area. She has 6 years of working experience and moved to her present school at the beginning of 2021.

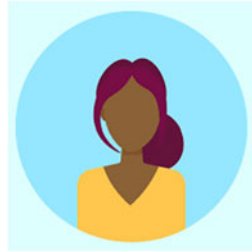


Research Participant 3, **Celia**, is a 24-year-old female. She works at a public school in Protea Heights, Cape Town, Western Cape. Her school is a parallel-medium school in which English, Afrikaans and IsiXhosa are used. It is described as a large school with more than 1800 learners. Celia regards her school as fortunate due to the many amenities it has, such as: sports grounds, hockey field, cricket field, rugby field, tennis courts, netball courts, Astroturf. Teachers that belong to the school are provided with interactive whiteboards in the classroom. Celia is a novice teacher that began her teaching career at the beginning of 2020.

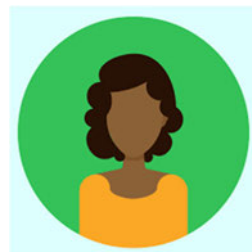


Research Participant 4, **Yara**, is a 34-year-old female. She has 9 years of working experience in both public and private schools. Currently, she works as a foundation phase teacher in a

public school in Newlands West, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Yara's school has approximately 1400 learners and is poorly resourced. She is a hard-working teacher that always improvises in the classroom.



Research Participant 5, **Wendy**, is a 32-year-old female. She works as a foundation phase teacher in Mitchells Plain, Cape Town, Western Cape. Wendy works in a public, primary school and has 8 years of working experience. Although the area in which she works is filled with low to middle-class income earners, her school is provided with interactive smartboards, internet access and laptops. She is extremely passionate about teaching grade 1.



Research Participant 6, **Fekile**, is a 40-year-old female. She works as a foundation phase teacher in a public primary school in Newlands West, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Fekile has only 4 years of working experience, two of which are during this pandemic. She is novice and inexperienced.

4.3.8 Conclusion of SECTION A

This section has discussed aspects of the research methodology and design. In the next section, Section B, data generation methods and data/thematic analytical framing will be elucidated.

SECTION B

4.4 Data Generation, Interpretation and Analysis

This section will discuss the data generation methods, qualitative research procedure, data generation, as well as the qualitative data/thematic analysis and interpretation of the research study.

4.4.1 Data Generation Methods

Phenomenological research allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the researcher participants lived psychosocial experiences as through their: perceptions, beliefs and feelings. The data generation methods were in the form of semi-structured interviews, collage inquiry and metaphor drawings. These multiple data generation methods were suitable for exploring and understanding the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic (Van Manen, 2017). The data generation methods are discussed in detail below.

4.4.1.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Bertram and Christiansen (2014, p. 80) define interviews as a “conversation” between the interviewer (who is also the researcher) and interviewee (who is also the research participant). Knowledge and information are generated and passed through these conversations between these individuals (Cohen et al., 2011). Semi-structured interviews do not strictly follow a formalized or rigorous list of questions rather open-ended ones (Doyle, 2020). The open-ended nature of these questions allows for more open-ended responses from research participants. Semi-structured interviews offer a platform for research participants to liberally respond to questions and express themselves in their own words with flexibility and freedom (Cohen et al, 2011). A structured interview was not suitable for this research study as it has a straightforward question and answer format. Neither was an unstructured interview suitable as it does not have any structure. A semi-structured interview advocates for rich and thick data to be generated which allows for research participants beliefs, feelings and thoughts to be deeply explored.

In this research study, the research participants were given the opportunity to share their perceptions, feelings, opinions and beliefs through conversations between themselves and the researcher. The researcher formulated a list of questions which was used as a guide in the interview process. Each of the six research participants were requested to be interviewed individually. The semi-structured interview was based on answering the question: “What are your lived psychosocial experiences of working as a foundation phase teacher in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?” The semi-structured interviews were conducted online and were an hour long. In addition, it was audio and video recorded. The researcher explained the purpose of the interview in detail to the research participants so they could comprehensively understand what was expected of them. The semi-structured interview data generation activity was guided by the Semi-structured Interview Schedule (see Appendix 3). During the interview process, the interviewer used cues, probes and prompts in order to encourage the interviewee. This research technique is an effective method which offered the opportunity to delve deeply into the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.4.1.2 Collage Inquiry

Collage Inquiry is an arts-based technique that is used in qualitative research. It is a post-modern genre of art that enables meanings of images to travel in ways that words cannot” (Burns as cited in Knowles & Cole, 2008). It is described as the process of cutting and pasting images and materials on a flat surface to portray phenomena (Butler-Kisber, 2007). A collage is a “visual imagery” that promotes creative and metaphorical thinking of the research participants. Literat (2013, p. 86) notes that by using this visual inquiry, research participants are provided with “expressive channels to voice their inner stories.” Eisner (1991) notes that a collage is a ‘flexible composition’ which is assembled gradually and additively and therefore builds meaning to all of its parts.

In this research study, the research participants were given the opportunity to visually express themselves through collage inquiry as foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. Each of the six research participants were individually requested to make a collage which was based on answering the question: “What are some of your experiences of working as a foundation phase teacher in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?” and share its significance with the researcher. The researcher explained the

activity in detail to the research participants using online platforms (WhatsApp and Zoom) so that they could comprehensively understand the activity at hand. The research participants used pictures and words from the internet, newspapers and magazines to portray their feelings, beliefs and perceptions. At certain points in time, the researcher advised the research participants to deeply think of their plan before executing it. The collage inquiry data generation activity was guided by the Collage Inquiry Schedule (see Appendix 4). This research technique was conducted online and lasted an hour long. It was also audio and video recorded. After each of the research participants made their collages, a short discussion based on the collage took place. This research technique was artistic, creative and suitable to this research study as it allowed for the research participants lived psychosocial experiences of working as foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic to be fully expressed.

4.4.1.3 Metaphor Drawing

A metaphor drawing is described as a visual research technique that is used to construct knowledge of the phenomenon under study from a unique and creative perspective. Tracy and Redden (2015) acknowledge that metaphor drawings provide insight into the lives of individuals and more particularly how they experience the world they live in. According to Van Lauren (2014, p.21) metaphor drawings “are mediums for thought expression which frequently depict personal experiences and realities.” This research technique is suitable as it creates a platform in which the research participants visually represent themselves in ways that words cannot. They can fully express their thoughts and feelings with freedom and therefore enhances the researcher’s understanding of the phenomena under study. Gameiro, de Guevara, El Refaie and Payson (2018) highlight that metaphor drawings have immense potential for knowledge construction and that they are able to communicate experiences immediately and strikingly. Furthermore, metaphor drawings reveal a more nuanced depiction of lived experiences (Literat, 2013).

In this research study, the research participants were given the opportunity to visually express themselves as foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic, using online platforms. Each of the six research participants were requested individually to make a drawing which was based on answering the question: “What does this drawing reveal about your everyday lived experiences of working as a foundation phase teacher in South

Africa during Covid-19 pandemic?” and share its significance with the researcher. The researcher explained the activity in detail to the research participants so they could comprehensively understand the activity at hand. At certain points in time, the researcher advised the research participants to deeply think of their ideas before drawing them. The metaphor drawing data generation activity was guided by the Metaphor Drawing Schedule (see Appendix 5). At the end of the drawing activity, the research participants shared meanings of their drawing with the researcher. The entire process was audio and video recorded. This art-based activity proved fruitful as it was used to elicit the research participants’ experiences, feelings and thoughts. This research technique is artistic, creative, unique and allows for increasing trustworthiness in this research study.

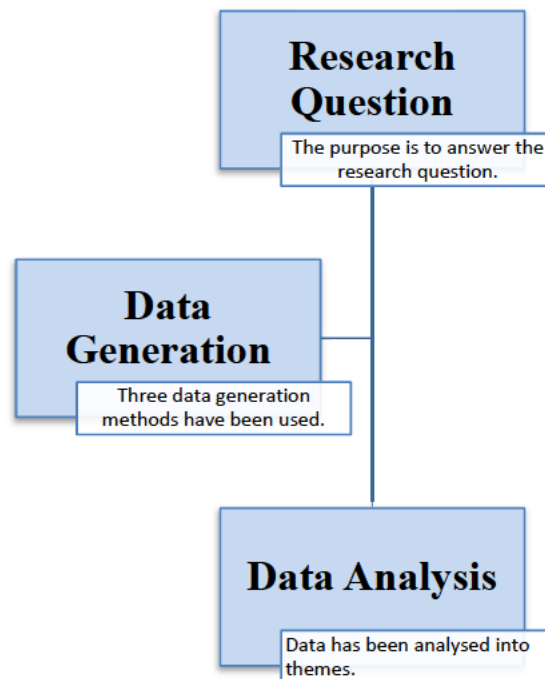
4.4.2 Qualitative Research Procedure

This research study embraced a qualitative research procedure to explore and understand the psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. It aimed at answering the research questions appropriately, intelligently and comprehensively in order to develop a deep and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The following diagram (Figure 6) created by the research represents the qualitative research procedure in this research study.

Figure 6

Qualitative Research Procedure



Note. This figure has been created by the researcher.

4.4.3 Data Generation

The following table, Table 5, is a summary of the data generation plan used in this research study. It specifically demonstrates how the research questions were answered.

Table 5

The Research Design

No.	The Research Questions	The Research Methods	The Research Context	The Research Participants
1	What are the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured Interview • Collage Inquiry • Metaphor Drawing 	<p>Six Schools in 3 different provinces in South Africa:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KwaZulu-Natal • Gauteng • Western Cape 	Six South African Foundation Phase Teachers
2	What knowledge and understandings do foundation phase teachers in South Africa have on the Covid-19 pandemic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured Interview • Collage Inquiry • Metaphor Drawing 	<p>Six Schools in 3 different provinces in South Africa:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KwaZulu-Natal • Gauteng • Western Cape 	Six South African Foundation Phase Teachers
3	What are the challenges, if any, of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured Interview • Collage Inquiry • Metaphor Drawing 	<p>Six Schools in 3 different provinces in South Africa:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KwaZulu-Natal • Gauteng • Western Cape 	Six South African Foundation Phase Teachers
4	What intervention strategies are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured Interview • Collage Inquiry • Metaphor Drawing 	<p>Six Schools in 3 different provinces in South Africa:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KwaZulu-Natal • Gauteng • Western Cape 	Six South African Foundation Phase Teachers

Note. This table has been created by the researcher.

In this research study, data was generated through three data collection methods, namely: semi-structured interviews, collage inquiry and metaphor drawings. Data collection activities included locating the research participants and sites, undergoing various data collection activities, recoding data, transcribing data and storing data. The six research participant's data were recorded visually and audially via the researcher's cellphone and stored electronically on the researcher's personal computer which she only has access to. Thereafter, the data was transcribed verbatim and went through a systematic process of data/thematic analysis and interpretation.

4.4.4 Qualitative Data/Thematic Interpretation and Analysis

Data Analysis in qualitative research is described as a systematic process of making sense of the data in order to increase the understanding of the phenomenon under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). The purpose of data analysis in this research study allowed for "the process of breaking up or segmenting the data into parts and reassembling the parts again into a coherent whole" (Boeije, 2010, p. 76) in order to answer the research questions. Data analysis involves generating data, reviewing it, extracting selected data based on analytical and logical reasoning and analyzing it into themes in order to extract findings, and ultimately draw conclusions (Terre Blanche, 2006).

The process of qualitative data/thematic analysis has been adapted from Lochmiller and Lester (2021). It involves the following 7 phases which may overlap: preparing and organizing the data, transcribing the data, becoming familiar with the data, memoing the data, coding the data, moving from codes to categories and categories to themes, making the analytical process transparent.

Phase 1: Preparation and organising the data for analysis

This phase involves the preparation and organisation of data for thematic analysis (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2021). During this phase, the researcher prepared all the audio and video recorded data for each research participant and organised it electronically in one location on the researcher's personal laptop which was broken up into six folders in respect for each of the research participants.

Phase 2: Transcribing the data

This phase involves allocating time for transcribing the data in preparation for further analysis (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2021). During this phase, data had been transcribed verbatim by the researcher. It was a lengthy and overwhelming process overall.

Phase 3: Becoming familiar with the data

This phase involves becoming familiar with the data that has been generated and transcribed by the researcher. This phase is described as an ‘initial analysis’ where the researcher takes cognisance of the research participants experiences as these initial understandings can often inform a researcher’s later, more detailed analysis (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2021).

Phase 4: Memoing the data

This phase involves reviewing the data and generating memos that may describe initial reflections and emergent interpretations (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2021). These memos are regarded as a “conversation with ourselves about the data” (Clarke, 2005, p. 202). During this phase, the researcher captured emergent understandings and experiences that were considered potentially important for data analysis.

Phase 5: Coding the data

This phase involves coding the data and is known to be an important phase (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2021). During this phase, the researcher made initial and explicit connections with the research participants statements, reflections and experiences.

Phase 6: Moving from codes to categories and categories to themes

This phase involves the movement of isolated cases to broader interpretations through the application of codes, development of categories and ultimately the production of themes (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2021). During this phase, the researcher applies codes to the data, develops categories within the data and thereafter produces themes.

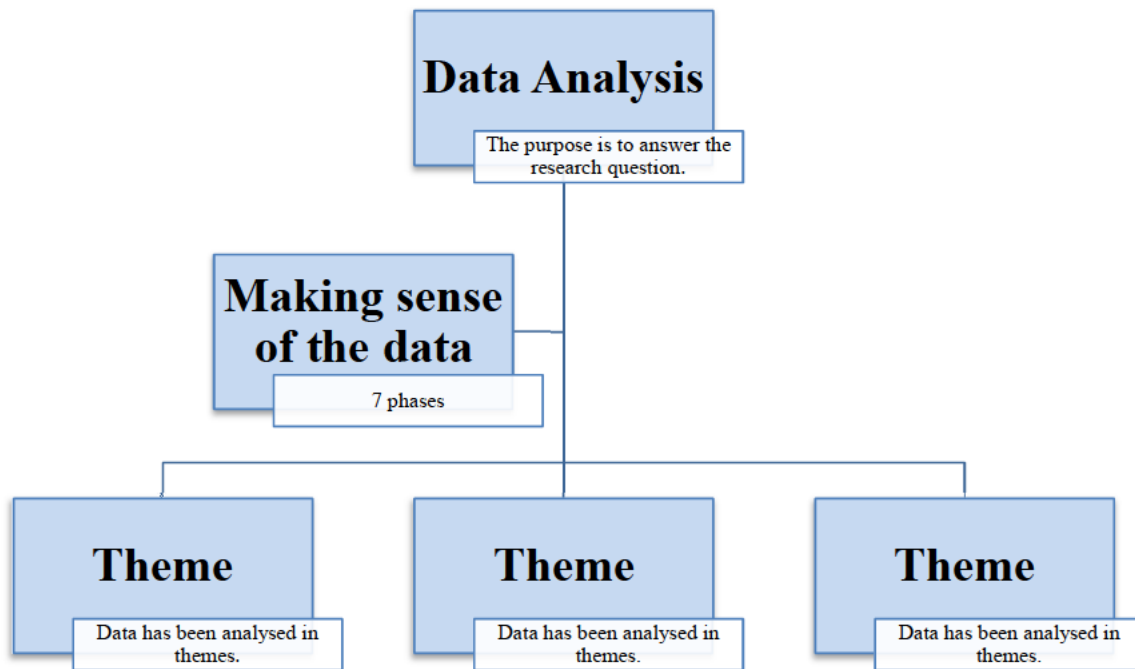
Phase 7: Making the analytical process transparent

This phase involves presenting information about the analytical process transparently and verifiably (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2021). During this phase, the researcher shared the research process transparently.

The following diagram (Figure 7) represents 7 phases of qualitative data/thematic analysis in this research study.

Figure 7

Seven Phases of Qualitative Data/Thematic Analysis



Note.

This figure has been created by the researcher.

4.4.5 Conclusion of SECTION B

This section has discussed data generation methods, qualitative research procedure as well as qualitative data/thematic analytical framing of this research study. In the next section, Section C, ethical considerations, trustworthiness of the qualitative research study, limitations of the research study as well as the researcher's role as a qualitative researcher is discussed.

SECTION C

4.5 Ethical Considerations, Trustworthiness and Limitations

This section will discuss ethical considerations, trustworthiness and limitations of the research study.

4.5.1 Ethical Considerations

Figure 8, below, represents the entire process of ensuring ethical considerations in this research study.

Figure 8

Ethical Considerations



Note. This figure has been created by the researcher.

4.5.1.1 Research Ethics

Research ethics are a set of codes, guidelines or ‘golden’ rules for conducting and reporting research. For any research study, there are ethical guidelines that the researcher needs to strictly follow before, during and after conducting and reporting the research. The purpose of ethics in research is for the researcher to conduct and report research without deception or the

intention of harming the research participants directly or indirectly (Singh, 2019). As the researcher, I ensured that all ethical procedures requested by the university in which I was registered as doctoral student, were followed transparently and truthfully throughout this research study.

4.5.1.2 Research Consent

At the outset of this research study, permission to conduct research from the Department of Basic Education was required and obtained (see Appendix 1). Thereafter, a letter of consent from my school principal was also required and obtained, as it was vital that research did not take place during normal school working hours. Ethical clearance from the Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at UKZN was required and obtained (see Appendix 2) before conducting and reporting research. According to Wang and Geale (2015, p. 197) ethics are defined as a “set of responsibilities in human relationships”. Therefore, as the researcher, I clarified in advance the respective roles and responsibilities that of a researcher and research participant, as well as establishing a good rapport which is important for conducting quality qualitative research (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). Following the Ethical clearance approval, I requested the foundation phase teachers to electronically sign and complete informed consent forms to become research participants. The research title, purpose and objectives of this research study were clearly stated as well as that participation was purely voluntary, and research participants had the freedom to withdraw their participation without any consequences at any given point in time (Cohen et al., 2009). After sufficient information was understood by the FPTs, they made an informed decision to participate in this research study. The FPTs that participated in this research study are over 18 years of age and therefore no parental or guardian permission was required.

4.5.1.3 Ethical Guidelines

In addition to the definition of ethics mentioned above, Liamputtong (2007, p. 24) defines ethics “as a set of moral principles that aims to prevent researchers from harming those they research.” In agreement, Fritz and Fuld (2010) state that research participants are to be physically and mentally unharmed and their confidentiality to be sustained. As the researcher, I intended on protecting the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants as well

respecting their human dignity, privacy and rights. In accordance, Cohen et al., (2009) state that the principle of anonymity is guaranteed when information provided by the research participants do not in any way disclose their identity. In this research study, the identities and information of the research participants are withheld from public knowledge and pseudonyms have been used to replace their correct names and name of schools. This will ensure that their information is secure and their data is anonymous (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). All transcriptions and data that were generated are safely stored and protected by the researcher through electronic measures with a secure password.

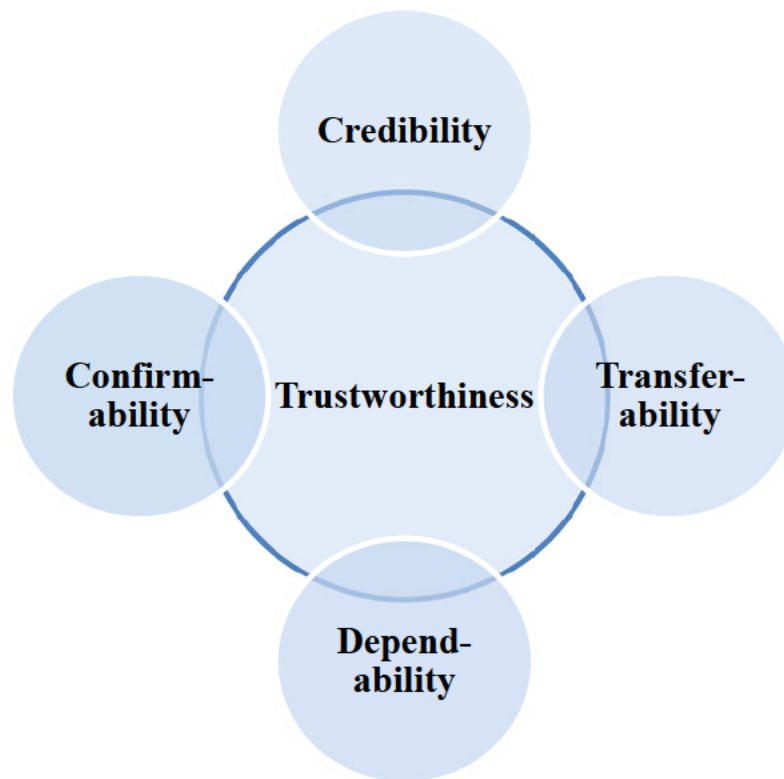
4.5.2 Trustworthiness of the Qualitative Research Study

Cohen et al., (2011) note that trustworthiness is a fundamental component in qualitative research as it is recognized as an element that is used to ensure coherence of a research study and evaluate its worth. In addition, Pilot and Beck (2014) refer to trustworthiness of a qualitative research study as the degree of confidence in data methods, data generation and data analysis and interpretation. The purpose of trustworthiness in a qualitative research study is to support the argument that the research findings are “worth paying attention to” and “worth taking account of” (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p. 290). Bertram and Christiansen (2014) acknowledge the significance of interpretivist research being credible, trustworthy and reflecting the reality of the research participants.” Guba and Lincoln (1994) have created a set of quality criteria for qualitative research, which includes: Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability.

The following diagram (Figure 9) represents trustworthiness of this qualitative research study.

Figure 9

Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research



Note. This figure has been created by the researcher.

4.5.2.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to confidence that is found in the truth of the findings of qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It establishes whether the research results of the findings represent accurate and believable information, and that which is drawn from the research participant's original data. Triangulation and member-checking are commonly used to ensure credibility and support trustworthiness in a qualitative research study. As the researcher of a qualitative research study, I used triangulation by engaging in multiple methods of generating data in order to gain a deeper insight of the FPTs experiences. In addition, I used an audio and video recording device to record and thereafter transcribe verbatim data of each research participant. Direct quotations of the research participants were used to strengthen trustworthiness in this qualitative research study (Patton, 2002). The authenticity of the analysis was be strengthened by the research participants' recordings, collages and drawings. Member checking was also used as it allowed participants to ensure that data selected by the researcher been reconstructed truly and reflects the original views of the research participant.

4.5.2.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the research findings are applicable to other individuals in other circumstances, contexts or situations (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). DeVault (2019, p. 1) recommends that purposive sampling can be used to “maximize specific data relative to the context in which it was collected.” When using purposive sampling, the researcher must consider the participants characteristics which are related to the research questions. As the researcher of a qualitative research study, I used purposive sampling to select FPTs in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic to explore and understand their psychosocial experiences. The researcher endeavored to establish a mutual bond of confidence and rapport for the research participants to share thick and rich data.

4.5.2.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of the research findings, interpretation and recommendations which should be consistent and repeatable (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). To ensure dependability in a qualitative research study, triangulation should be used. As mentioned earlier, the researcher has used triangulation in this qualitative research study, to strengthen the findings of this qualitative research study. Multiple data generation used in this research study included: semi-structured interviews, collage inquiry and metaphor drawing.

4.5.2.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree of neutrality in the findings of a qualitative research study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Confirmability ensures that researcher’s findings are not shaped by the researcher’s biases, motivation or interest. As the researcher of a qualitative research study, I established an audit trail in which the research process (including: data generation, data analysis and data interpretation) is transparently documented in great detail. This enabled the reader to understand the process and determined whether or not the research study is logically accurate. I also used multiple methods of generating data and therefore this allowed the researcher to gain a better and nuanced understanding of the psychosocial experiences of the foundation phase teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. During the data generation and data analysis processes, I intended to be aware of my ‘insider-outsider’ research role as I can unknowingly influence the data (Buckle & Dwyer, 2009).

4.5.3 Limitations of the Research Study

According to multiple researchers and research sources, limitations in research can be defined as the “short-comings”, “restrictions”, “constraints”, “influences”, “potential weaknesses” and “conditions” that are encountered by the researcher that are usually beyond his or her control (Ross & Zaidi, 2019; Pro Academic Writers, 2021; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019; Informedia Services, 2017). These factors may directly and indirectly affect the research study with regards to its design, findings and ultimately, its conclusion. The main objective of this research study was to explore and understand the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South African schools during the Covid-19 pandemic. This research study was a small-scale qualitative study that was limited to the following provinces in South Africa: KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Western Cape. The results of the findings will be unique and may not be representative of all foundation phase school teachers in other provinces in South Africa, or internationally. However, the results may raise important issues and may serve as a basis for similar research studies. The research participants are not known personally to the researcher and may not feel comfortable in disclosing information. However, it is of utmost importance that the researcher, build a rapport with each research participant. The research participants may decide to withdraw from the research study at any given point in time. However, the researcher aims to be well-planned and time-conscious, therefore, limiting their chances of withdrawal from this research study. Online data generation and communication may have a negative impact on the way in which data is generation. There can be misinterpretation and confusion, however, it is important for the researcher to create a good and trusting relationship with each research participant and confirm what has been said by cross checking data. This can also be a time-consuming process; however, it will authenticate what has been said. The Covid-19 global ongoing pandemic is new and therefore adequate literature on this topic may be scarce. However, the researcher aims at getting information from multiple avenues. The researcher may have pre-conceived expectation and beliefs, about data generation, data interpretation and data analysis. However, it is advisable that the researcher remains impartial and neutral throughout the research process.

4.5.4 The Researcher's Role as a Qualitative Researcher

The role of a qualitative researcher is a multiple one and constantly changes throughout the research process. Hennik, Hutter, and Bailey (2020) advocate for a qualitative researcher to be “open-minded, curious and empathic, flexible and able to listen to people telling their own story.” In addition, a qualitative researcher establishes a strong and significant relationship with the research participants. As the researcher of this research study, I intended on establishing a mutual bond of trust and maintaining a respectable relationship with the FPTs. At the outset of fieldwork, the researcher was nervous about implicating her biases, experiences, expectations and assumptions. However, through a process of bracketing the researcher explicates these aspects of concern and sets aside her own beliefs.

The researcher is recognized as a crucial research instrument of data generation and plays a significant role in analyzing the data and presenting its findings. During the data generation process, the researcher remained neutral and created a friendly yet true atmosphere. In addition, the researcher created a space where the research participants felt relaxed and were able to voice their experiences with freedom and flexibility. The researcher was an active listener who did not interrupt the opinions of the research participants or voice her own opinion. The researcher appreciated the sensitive responses and treated it with care and respect. The participants commented on their opportunity to communicate without inferences and acknowledged that their responses were appreciated. The researcher often asserts that the research participants experiences were beneficial to her research study, as well as to the body of knowledge on FPTs. Data generation methods took a lengthy time to complete as the research participants had busy schedules. However, they made every effort to fit the researcher in. After interviewing each of the six participants individually, the researcher also completed the collage inquiry and metaphor drawing activities with each of them individually. Sufficient time was given to researcher participants to complete their activities and time was allocated for a discussion.

During the data analysis process, the researcher transcribed the data verbatim and paid attention to the powerful voices of the research participants and tried her utmost in giving a meaningful account of their experiences. The researcher also attempted to safeguard the research participants data. The researcher represented the FPTs thoughts and feelings to the

best of her ability and was aware that she could possibly influence the research process. However, she made every effort to be aware of her insider-outsider stance.

Figure 10, below, represents the researcher's role as a qualitative researcher in this research study.

Figure 10

The Role of a Qualitative Researcher



Note. This figure has been created by the researcher.

4.5.5 Conclusion of SECTION C

This section has discussed ethical considerations, trustworthiness of the qualitative research study, limitations of the research study, as well as the researcher's role as a qualitative researcher.

4.6 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, aspects of the research methodology and design have been presented. This research study which was a qualitative, interpretative, phenomenological research study focused on the essences of lived experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. This chapter also presented the research location, sampling techniques, the selection of the research participants, as well as a description of each participant. Furthermore, this chapter presented data generation methods, a qualitative research procedure, as well as a qualitative data/thematic analytical framing and interpretation. Finally, ethical considerations, trustworthiness of a qualitative research study, limitations of the research study as well as the role of the researcher has been presented.

In the following chapter, CHAPTER FIVE, reconstructed accounts of the FPTs experiences are presented in the form of case studies. These reconstructed accounts offer an opportunity to get a glimpse into the lives of the FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic. These unique and valuable reconstructed accounts of FPTs lives support in making meaning of their lived psychosocial experiences.

Chapter Five



SECTION A

South African
Foundation Phase
Teachers Knowledge
and Understandings
of the Covid-19
Pandemic



SECTION B

South African
Foundation Phase
Teachers Challenges
of Working During the
Covid-19 Pandemic



SECTION C

Intervention
Strategies that are
Needed to Support
Foundation Phase
Teachers in South
Africa

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter highlighted the methodological framework of this research study. The focus and purpose of this study was on exploring and understanding the psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through this exploration, this research study aimed to ascertain the knowledge and understandings that foundation phase teachers in South Africa have on the Covid-19 pandemic; identify the challenges, if any, of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic; and provide intervention strategies that are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Throughout this research study, multiple data generation methods, namely: collage inquiry, semi-structured interviews and metaphor drawings, were used to deepen the researcher's insight into the research phenomenon. These data generation methods allowed the research participants to share their lived psychosocial experiences of working as foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic in creative and multiple ways. The research participant's audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and the visual data generated from the data generation methods have been presented throughout this chapter.

For this research study, the researcher presented data, interpreted selected data and analysed it in the form of vignettes. Vignettes are often referred to as 'snapshots' that highlight the lived psychosocial experiences of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic (Jenkins et al., 2010). Furthermore, this research study adopted Lochmiller and Lester's (2021) data/thematic analysis process. This process involved 7 phases, and ultimately produced themes and sub-themes, which have been developed throughout the analysis of data and the discussion of research findings. To adhere to ethical considerations and to protect the identity and anonymity of the research participants, the following pseudonyms were used: Candy, Tresha, Celia, Yara, Wendy and Fekile.

5.2 Overview of the Chapter

This chapter is divided into three sections, namely: **SECTION A**, **SECTION B**, and **SECTION C**.

▪ **SECTION A**

In this section, **THEME ONE: *South African Foundation Phase Teachers Knowledge and Understandings of the Covid-19 Pandemic*** will be presented and discussed. It addresses the **first research sub-question: *What knowledge and understandings do foundation phase teachers in South Africa have on the Covid-19 pandemic?*** and **first research sub-objective: *To ascertain the knowledge and understandings that foundation phase teachers in South Africa have on the Covid-19 pandemic.***

▪ **SECTION B**

In this section, **THEME TWO: *South African Foundation Phase Teachers Challenges of Working During the Covid-19 Pandemic*** will be presented and discussed. It addresses the **second research sub-question: *What are the challenges, if any, of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?*** and **second research sub-objective: *To identify the challenges, if any, of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.***

▪ **SECTION C**

In this section, **THEME THREE: *Intervention Strategies that are Needed to Support Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa*** will be presented and discussed. It addresses the **third research sub-question: *What intervention strategies are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?*** and **third research sub-objective: *To provide intervention strategies that are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.***

5.3 Key Themes and Sub-themes:

The key themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data presentation, interpretation and analysis process are as follows in Table 6:

Table 6

Themes and Sub-themes

THEME	SUB-THEME
<p>Theme One:</p> <p><i>South African Foundation Phase Teachers Knowledge and Understandings of the Covid-19 Pandemic</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Knowledge and Understandings of Covid-19</i> ▪ <i>Knowledge and Understandings of the Covid-19 Pandemic</i> ▪ <i>The Implications of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Education, the Foundation Phase and Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa</i> ▪ <i>Foundation Phase Teachers Knowledge and Understandings of the Covid-19 Pandemic Recapitulated Through an Image</i>
<p>Theme Two:</p> <p><i>South African Foundation Phase Teachers Challenges of Working During the Covid-19 Pandemic</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Teacher Fatigue</i> ▪ <i>Disruptive Routines</i> ▪ <i>Increased Workload</i> ▪ <i>Loss of Teaching and Learning Time</i> ▪ <i>Coping with the Curriculum</i> ▪ <i>Sudden Shift to Distant Learning</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Lack of Teaching and Learning Resources</i> ▪ <i>Lack of Support</i> ▪ <i>Planning Uncertainty</i> ▪ <i>Learner Challenges</i> ▪ <i>Increased Mental Health Anxiety</i> ▪ <i>Teaching Profession Demands</i> ▪ <i>Lost Social Connection</i> ▪ <i>Lack of Physical Touch</i> ▪ <i>Restrictions</i>
<p>Theme Three: <i>Intervention Strategies that are Needed to Support Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Building Resilience Amid the Global Pandemic</i> ▪ <i>Continuous Professional Development</i> ▪ <i>Competencies Required to Manage Working During the Covid-19 Pandemic</i> ▪ <i>Importance of Mental Preparedness</i> ▪ <i>Strategies for Coping with the Crisis</i> ▪ <i>Ensuring Effectiveness During Daily Activities</i> ▪ <i>Continuous Inclusive Educational Support Strategies</i> ▪ <i>Role of Support Structures</i> ▪ <i>Self-Directed Learning</i> ▪ <i>Use of Different Pedagogical Approaches</i>

Note. This table has been created by the researcher.

SECTION A

5.4 Theme One:

South African Foundation Phase Teachers Knowledge and Understandings of the Covid-19 Pandemic

In this theme, the researcher used the data generation method: **COLLAGE INQUIRY** as a research technique to explore foundation phase teacher's knowledge and understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic. The research participants were requested to make a collage by cutting and pasting images of choice to visually express their knowledge and understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as to highlight their experiences of working during the Covid-19 pandemic (see Appendix 3). A discussion relating to the collage followed and the responses from the research participants are transcribed verbatim below.

Theme One addresses the following first research sub-question and sub-objective:

RESEARCH SUB-QUESTION 1	RESEARCH SUB-OBJECTIVE 1
<i>What knowledge and understandings do foundation phase teachers in South Africa have on the Covid-19 pandemic?</i>	<i>To ascertain the knowledge and understandings that foundation phase teachers in South Africa have on the Covid-19 pandemic.</i>

The guiding prompts for undertaking the **collage** are as follows:

GUIDING PROMPTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Please explain the meanings of your collage.• Are there any words, pictures or phrases that stand out from the rest of your collage? Please explain the meaning of them.• If you had to recapitulate your knowledge and understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic through an image, what would it be?• Which words, pictures or phrases signify critical moments that have occurred

during the Covid-19 pandemic?

- Whilst creating this collage, did you redefine your understanding of Covid-19?
- What does the Covid-19 pandemic mean to you as a foundation phase teacher?

5.4.1 Research Participant 1 – Candy

Figure 11

Research Participant 1 – Candy's Collage



Note. This collage has been created by research participant 1 - Candy

Researcher: Please explain the meanings of your collage.

Candy:

“My collage introduces me as a young foundation phase teacher teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. I teach English, Afrikaans, Mathematics and Life Skills in grade 3 in a private school in Gauteng. I only have 14 children in my classroom. I am often described as a fun-loving teacher who enjoys singing, dancing and being personal by shaking learners’ hands, patting their backs and giving warm hugs. I love it when children are excited about coming to school. I ensure that I give all my learners the best support and provide various fun-filled activities for them. This pandemic has really changed the way in which I teach on a daily basis. I am well informed about the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 is a virus that affects the entire world. Covid-19 is transmitted through droplets from the infected person to the uninfected person via their eyes, ears or mouth. At school, we keep our surfaces clean, do not share, keep our masks on, sanitize our hands and social distance.

Researcher: Are there any words, pictures or phrases that stand out from the rest of your collage? Please explain the meaning of them.

Candy:

“It’s definitely the words: ‘COVID TEACHING’, because this type of teaching is new and different! During school, we follow Covid-19 protocols. Teachers and learners are social distancing, sanitizing, wearing their masks and frequently washing their hands. The Covid-19 pandemic is most definitely an eye-opener! Many things have changed from ‘normal’ teaching to Covid-19 teaching: Learners sit in rows and it’s not the easiest to teach, all flexible seating was removed and sharing is not possible in the classroom. When a few learners had Covid-19, I had to teach online from home as the entire grade was not allowed to come to school, which allowed for teaching time not to be lost. Learners who do not feel well or have symptoms of the virus, such as, coughing, fever, sore throat or runny nose are required to stay home from school and a catch up will be done. This is very time-consuming.”

Researcher: If you had to recapitulate your knowledge and understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic through an image, what would it be?

Candy:

“It would be the last picture in the heart. This picture shows teaching happening during Covid-19. Masks are worn, social distancing is taking place and there is a sanitizer available. Although my young learners may tend to forget about wearing their mask correctly and social distancing, I remind them of it immediately.”

Researcher: Which words, pictures or phrases signify critical moments that have occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Candy:

“It would be the picture on the extreme right where a child is writing. In between writing, this little girl sneezed under her mask and everyone in the classroom said: BLESS YOU, and thereafter she sanitized her hands. This is our ‘new normal’.”

Researcher: Whilst creating this collage, did you redefine your understanding of Covid-19?

Candy:

“This activity was a reminder of the deadly disease which is transmitted through droplets via the eyes, ears and mouth. At school, learners are constantly reminded of the seriousness of this disease around the world and are aware of the school protocols which are followed thoroughly.”

Researcher: What does the Covid-19 pandemic mean to you as a foundation phase teacher?

Candy:

“As a foundation phase teacher, I have to be supportive of learners,

share their good and bad experiences and celebrate learners progress they make during this unforeseen time of Covid-19.”

The response received from Research Participant 1 – Candy, indicates that she has sound knowledge and understanding of Covid-19 and the global pandemic. She defines the pandemic and elucidates the prevention measures, transmission and Covid-19 protocols, as well as the symptoms. She further indicates that the pandemic is to be taken seriously and that it is happening throughout the world.

5.4.2 Research Participant 2 – Tresha

Figure 12

Research Participant 2 – Tresha's Collage



Note. This collage has been created by research participant 2 – Tresha.

Researcher: Please explain the meanings of your collage.

Tresha:

“The collage title: ‘World Wide Pandemic’ introduces my collage. My collage has many pictures and words relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. I am a foundation phase teacher and I have moved from one public primary school to another during the Covid-19 pandemic and I must admit that it was difficult for me to take it all in. My collage is mixed with pictures which display the new protocols which need to be followed, such as: wearing masks, social distancing, sanitizing, wearing gloves and protective gear. The other pictures also display symptoms, treatment, vaccination and Covid-19 tests taking place. There are many emotional words: crying, lonely, sacred, depressed, angry, paranoid, negative and positive which emphasize the mixed feelings that I have experienced. I also have an image showing the different symptoms that we need to be aware of. The word: ‘death’ indicates that this virus is a deadly virus that is here to kill our population. People are dying like crazy and there is just no cure for Covid-19. Although every country is fighting, we are just not winning. There’s always a new variant which mutates itself and the vaccine may be outdated by the time we receive it. In addition, I also wrote down some of my challenges as a foundation phase teacher: lack of resources, less time in the classroom, difficult to cover syllabus and overthinking.”

Researcher: Are there any words, pictures or phrases that stand out from the rest of your collage? Please explain the meaning of them.

Tresha:

“It definitely the title: ‘World Wide Pandemic’. It such an important title.

Researcher: If you had to recapitulate your knowledge and understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic through an image, what would it be?

Tresha:

“It would be the corona virus picture. Corona virus is a disease that is able to kill people. There is no cure for it and therefore the pandemic has come about. The world is facing this pandemic together that has changed the lives of us all.”

Researcher: Which words, pictures or phrases signify critical moments that have occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Tresha:

“It is the pictures which show the ‘new normal’ or Covid-19 protocols. As a teacher, I have many extra duties at school, such as: sanitizing learners before, during and after school, ensuring that learners’ social distance, wear their masks and follow protocols.”

Researcher: Whilst creating this collage, did you redefine your understanding of Covid-19?

Tresha:

“There’s not only a negative side to Covid-19. There’s also a positive side: I have increased parent participation, the size of learners in a classroom have been reduced to 50%, time for marking is shorter, the workload from the ATP’s are cut shorter and a low number of learners makes the instruction easier. Covid-19 made me aware of what’s really going on in the world. It has taught me the need to value and appreciate everybody and everything around me, because, I don’t know whether I am going to be here tomorrow or not, or even they are going to be here tomorrow or not.”

Researcher: What does the Covid-19 pandemic mean to you as a foundation phase teacher?

Tresha:

“Due to the fact that our learners are little, I am always educating them on the new concept of the Covid-19 pandemic. A lot has changed in 2021, and I have to find new ways of teaching and learning.

The collage assembled by Research Participant 2 – Tresha, displays her knowledge and understanding of the Covid-19 pandemic. Her collage is mixed with pictures and words relating to the pandemic, as well as emotional words. It is evident from her response that she portrays a sound understanding of Covid-19 and the Covid-19 pandemic, as Tresha included symptoms, prevention measures, transmission and mentions that there is no cure for this pandemic that is being faced by the entire world.

5.4.3 Research Participant 3 – Celia

Figure 13

Research Participant 3 – Celia’s Collage



Note. This collage has been created by research participant 3 – Celia.

Researcher: Please explain the meanings of your collage.

Celia:

“My collage describes me as a foundation phase teacher. I began teaching in 2020, 2 months before lockdown level 5 in South Africa. I teach in a lovely public school in Cape Town. It is a big, beautiful school with approximately 1900 learners. The school is quantile level 5 and we are very fortunate to have the latest technology (such as interactive whiteboards) and various resources. Our school amenities include: a hockey field, astroturf, library, sports ground and netball courts. I am a novice teacher, teaching 5 years olds. My teaching approach is learner centered and learning through play is my

philosophy. I have a picture of the Covid-19 symptoms and preventions on my walls which are so important for us to know and impart on our children. Covid-19 is a viral infection which is transmitted from touching people and being too close to people. Some people can be asymptomatic where they are infected but unaware of it until they get tested for the virus. There are so many variants of the disease, no cure and the chance of life or death."

Researcher: Are there any words, pictures or phrases that stand out from the rest of your collage? Please explain the meaning of them.

Celia:

"The picture of the corona virus. The pandemic has turned everything upside down for me! Everything new is new again. I am trying to adapt to this changing context."

Researcher: If you had to recapitulate your knowledge and understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic through an image, what would it be?

Celia:

"It would be the image at the bottom where the teacher is teaching. Many things have changed within 2 months for me, such as: learners are social distancing, wearing their masks, sanitizing. The curriculum has changed slightly, there's not much physical activity taking place and we have extra duties."

Researcher: Which words, pictures or phrases signify critical moments that have occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Celia:

"It definitely the picture with the little girl learning online from home. I am a new teacher with only 2 months of working experience, working with my mentor teacher and getting used to everything. Therefore, working online and from home during South Africa's first

lockdown was extremely challenging and exhausting. I wasn't with my mentor teacher to help me with planning so I had to do it all on my own. I had to go into a different mode of teaching: virtual teaching. I used Google Slides for my lessons and retrieved ideas from Pinterest. It was very difficult for me to think of ideas on my own. I did not fully understand how grade 1 should be and I was concerned about how my learners would follow me."

Researcher: Whilst creating this collage, did you redefine your understanding of Covid-19?

Celia:

"Covid-19 had made teaching very difficult for me. I always dreamed that when I start my career, I would be the best teacher I could be and I was very upset about not getting to do everything with my kids that I had planned to do at the beginning of the year. I am big on planning and I have so many dreams and goals. The things that I really wanted to do with the kids, I was not allowed to. It was a big challenge to accept that it doesn't always go the way you like it to go."

Researcher: What does the Covid-19 pandemic mean to you as a foundation phase teacher?

Celia:

"This deadly pandemic is not only about teaching and learning that needs to take place at school. It is also about the harsh reality it has brought for some people. Some of my learners' parents and people in our community have lost their jobs and they started struggling financially. In addition, the pandemic is a major health crisis. For me, many of my family members have comorbidities (such as: diabetes) and I fear spreading on the virus to the them or even my little children at school as I fear the unknown of what may happen."

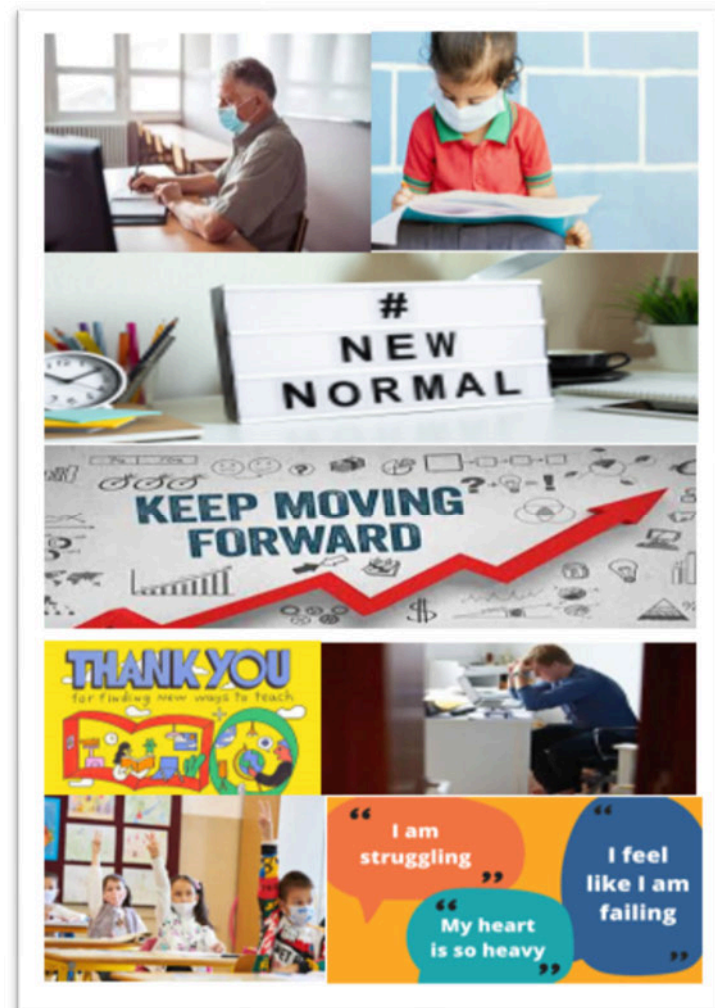
Based on the collage created by Research Participant 3 – Celia, it is clear that she completely understands Covid-19 and the Covid-19 pandemic. Her collage includes pictures relating to

the pandemic as well as symptoms and prevention measures. Celia is a novice teacher that has experienced various changes in her career, many of which is due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In her response, she is knowledgeable of the transmission of Covid-19 and is completely aware of how this major health crisis has brought about a harsh reality.

5.4.4 Research Participant 4 – Yara

Figure 14

Research Participant 4 – Yara's Collage



Note. This collage has been created by research participant 4 – Yara.

Researcher: Please explain the meanings of your collage.

Yara:

“My collage is a collection of pictures about Covid-19. I am a grade 1 teacher in a public school in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. I have 9 years of overall working experience in the foundation phase. However, nothing has prepared me for this pandemic. I have a picture of a frustrated person which displays my feelings of often feeling this way. On the top left corner, there is a picture of a teacher planning. Although we have ATPs now and the curriculum is slightly shorter, it is still difficult to prepare and plan lessons and activities. In addition, I have a picture of a learner reading on her own. There is no physical contact taking place and this makes it especially difficult in grade 1. Some learners that attend my school, do not go to grade R the previous year and many are unsure of how to hold a pencil correctly. Grade 1 is a crucial year for children and these challenges make it more difficult for teachers and learners.

Researcher: Are there any words, pictures or phrases that stand out from the rest of your collage? Please explain the meaning of them.

Yara:

“It definitely the words: ‘New Normal’. Covid-19 is an infectious deadly disease. The entire world is facing the Covid-19 pandemic and this is our new normal! Things have changed drastically. Protocols stipulated by the Department of Education have to be followed. Learners are wearing masks, social distancing and constantly sanitizing. As a foundation phase teacher, I have many more duties to fulfill, such as: coming earlier to school to sanitize learners, being on duty more often, making workbook for learners, teach twice over to 2 different group because my quantile 4 school cannot accommodate all 100% capacity of learners.

Researcher: If you had to recapitulate your knowledge and understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic through an image, what would it be?

Yara:

“It would most definitely be the bottom left image of the learners in the classroom. It is a constant reminder of what South African teachers are facing in the classroom which was already filled with difficulty.”

Researcher: Which words, pictures or phrases signify critical moments that have occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Yara:

“It is the following words: ‘My heart is so heavy’. As a teacher, I am constantly working and living in fear. I often feel stressed about getting Covid-19 and passing it on to my family or my learners at school.”

Researcher: Whilst creating this collage, did you redefine your understanding of Covid-19?

Yara:

“At the onset, I stuck pictures of the negative sides of Covid-19, such as the words: I am struggling. Thereafter, I went on to stick an image which reads: keep moving forward. Creating this collage made me more conscious of what is really going on in the world.”

Researcher: What does the Covid-19 pandemic mean to you as a foundation phase teacher?

Yara:

“The most important thing for me during this global pandemic, is keeping myself and my learners safe. I have 2 little daughters of my own and I do not know what I would do if anything had to happen to them. At school, I ensure all my little children follow the Covid-19 protocols set out by the Department of Education to protect myself and others.”

The response from Research Participant 4 – Yara, shows that she has a reasonable understanding of the Covid-19 pandemic. In her response, she mentions the prevention measures, however, her collage or response lacks information about Covid-19 symptoms or the transmission of it. Yara gives the impression that she is a teacher who knows that there is a negative side to Covid-19, however she chooses to look at it in a positive and opportunistic way.

5.4.5 Research Participant 5 – Wendy

Figure 15

Research Participant 5 – Wendy's Collage



Note. This collage has been created by research participant 5 – Wendy.

Researcher: Please explain the meanings of your collage.

Wendy:

“The first picture of my collage introduces me as a grade 1 teacher teaching in Cape Town, Western Cape. I teach in a public, primary school with approximately 870 learners. The school is situated in a low/middle class area; however, we are afforded with smartboards, internet access and laptops to teach our learners. I am still extremely passionate about my career despite the dullness that Covid-19 has brought about. It is like a black cloud over our heads that doesn’t seem to disappear. Other images display masks which needs to be worn at all times. When wearing your mask for too long, it feels like you are suffocating. The imagine on the top right shows people social

distancing. Not only are they physically distancing but they are out of touch with each other. We cannot hug our learners anymore. The top middle picture shows fatigue in teaching from home on some days and too much of planning for lessons and activities are involved."

Researcher: Are there any words, pictures or phrases that stand out from the rest of your collage? Please explain the meaning of them.

Wendy:

"It is the bottom right picture where the teacher is looking out. As a foundation phase teacher, I am optimistic. I see the glass half full. With this pandemic that the entire world is facing, I've always seen it as something we all need to overcome together. It's something that we should think positive about. It is our new normal. Without a doubt, it will be here for a long period of time, and we have to work around it. It has turned our teaching world upside down!"

Researcher: If you had to recapitulate your knowledge and understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic through an image, what would it be?

Wendy:

"It is the top right image where people are social distancing. We are living in a new normal. Covid-19 is a disease/virus that affects your lungs and affects everyone differently. It can be transmitted via touch, spit and particles, and can be deadly to those with comorbidities." We are really restricted in the things we do on a daily basis and have limited resources as a school. We must always follow all Covid-19 protocols correctly, like, social distancing, wearing masks and sanitizing. I always remind my learners if they have any symptoms, like, cough or fever, they need to stay home. However, this is especially difficult for little children who are 5 or 6 years old."

Researcher: Which words, pictures or phrases signify critical moments that have occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Wendy:

“The bottom right middle picture indicates that learners learn differently in this pandemic. Covid-19 has made teaching extremely difficult. I have 2 different groups: group A and group 2. These groups are grouped by their abilities. I find this exciting as I get to work on their ability level. I am teaching the same work but I am teaching it completely different.”

Researcher: Whilst creating this collage, did you redefine your understanding of Covid-19?

Wendy:

“As a foundation phase teacher, no matter all this difficulty, my main goal is to make learning fun and engaging, and allow them to develop a love for learning.”

Researcher: What does the Covid-19 pandemic mean to you as a foundation phase teacher?

Wendy:

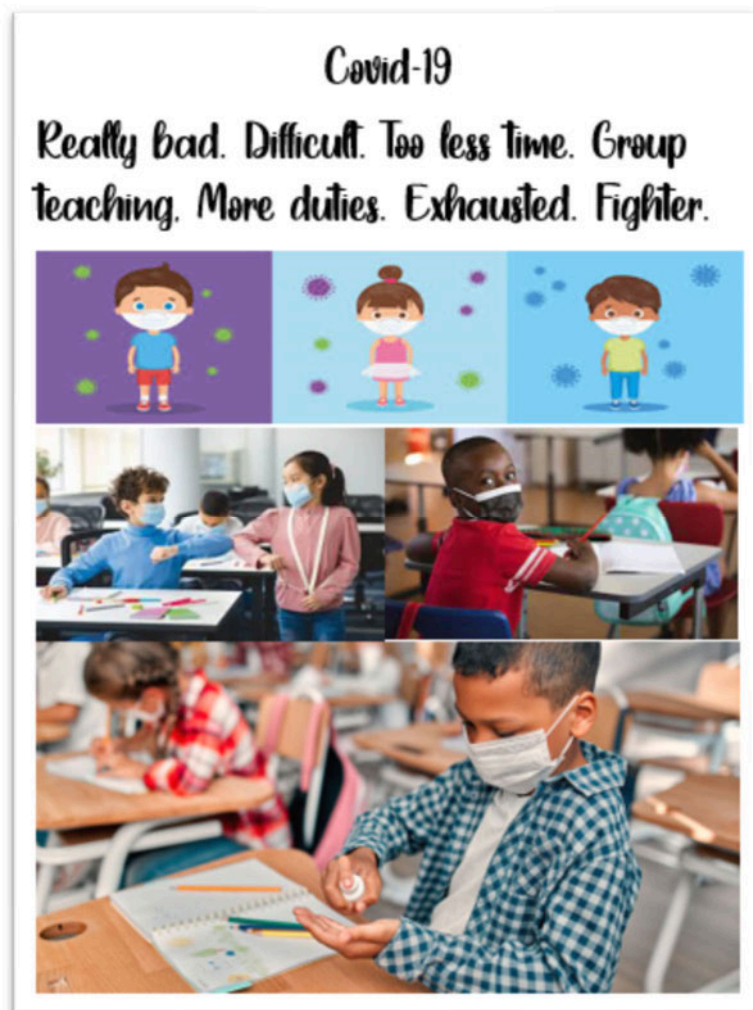
“I have an opportunity to educate learners grouped by their abilities, and I intend on embracing this opportunity.”

The response collated from Research Participant 5 – Wendy, clearly contains a good understanding of Covid-19 and the pandemic. It is evident that Wendy understands the Covid-19 transmission, prevention measures and symptoms. However, in the response she does not list the symptoms of Covid-19. Further, Wendy in her response displays her love for teaching and learning despite the impact of a global pandemic.

5.4.6 Research Participant 6 – Fekile

Figure 16

Research Participant 6 – Fekile’s Collage



Note. This collage has been created by research participant 6 – Fekile.

Researcher: Please explain the meanings of your collage.

Fekile:

"I am a foundation phase teacher in a public primary school in

Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. I have only 4 years of working experience. Two of which was before the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, I am still learning to adapt to changing and challenging circumstances. The focus of my collage is on children. During this unprecedented time, these children are following Covid-19 protocols: wearing masks, social distancing and sanitizing. I have posters in my classroom to protect myself and my learners. I once was a victim of Covid-19 and I am very scared of the deadly virus. This pandemic is world-wide and the virus a contagious one which makes it so deadly and fearful. I have words on the top of my collage to show what's going on in my teaching world. Covid-19 is 'Really bad!' It has made teaching very difficult for me. I have to find new methods of teaching."

Researcher: Are there any words, pictures or phrases that stand out from the rest of your collage? Please explain the meaning of them.

Fekile:

"It definitely the word: 'Exhausted'. If teaching in the foundation phase is already exhausting, teaching during Covid-19 in the foundation phase is more exhausting and more difficult."

Researcher: If you had to recapitulate your knowledge and understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic through an image, what would it be?

Fekile:

"It would be the bottom picture of the little boy who is sanitizing in the classroom which he is busy with work. The South African education system has changed so much. Our country has new protocols to follow. Everything is new, especially for little children."

Researcher: Which words, pictures or phrases signify critical moments that have occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Fekile:

"The picture where two learners are greeting each other with their

elbows. Things really have changed!

Researcher: Whilst creating this collage, did you redefine your understanding of Covid-19?

Fekile:

“Covid-19 is a disease that affects us all! My own family members have lost their jobs because of this virus and it has negatively and financially affected us at home.”

Researcher: What does the Covid-19 pandemic mean to you as a foundation phase teacher?

Fekile:

“Foundation phase learners are small and they need more support, however, this pandemic is really difficult to give them the support needed.”

Based on Research Participant 6 - Fekile’s collage and response, she has a reasonable understanding of Covid-19 and the pandemic. She has discussed the prevention measures. However, the transmission and symptoms of Covid-19 was not discussed. Fekile appears to be a teacher who is young in the profession and is struggling to deal with the many challenges and changes that Covid-19 has brought about.

5.4.7 Research Findings of Theme One:

South African Foundation Phase Teachers Knowledge and Understandings of the Covid-19 Pandemic

The researcher sought interest in ascertaining the knowledge and understandings that foundation phase teachers in South Africa have on the Covid-19 pandemic by using the data generation method: Collage Inquiry. **Sub-themes** that have emerged from **Theme One**, include: ***Knowledge and Understandings of Covid-19; Knowledge and Understandings of the Covid-19 Pandemic; The Implications of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Education, the Foundation Phase and Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa; and Foundation Phase Teachers Knowledge and Understandings of the Covid-19 Pandemic Recapitulated Through an Image.***

5.4.7.1 Knowledge and Understandings of Covid-19

This research study indicated that all the six research participants described their knowledge and understandings of Covid-19 as follows:

Candy states:

“Covid-19 is a virus that affects the entire world. Covid-19 is transmitted through droplets from the infected person to the uninfected person via their eyes, ears or mouth. At school, we keep our surfaces clean, do not share, keep our masks on, sanitize our hands and social distance... Learners who do not feel well or have symptoms of the virus, such as, coughing, fever, sore throat or runny nose are required to stay home from school and a catch up will be done.”

Tresha says:

“Corona virus is a disease... My collage is mixed with pictures which

display the new protocols which need to be followed, such as: wearing masks, social distancing, sanitizing, wearing gloves and protective gear. The other pictures also display symptoms, treatment, vaccination and Covid-19 tests taking place.”

Celia declares:

“Covid-19 is a viral infection which is transmitted from touching people and being too close to people. Some people can be asymptomatic where they are infected but unaware of it until they get tested for the virus. There are so many variants of the disease, no cure and the chance of life or death.”

Yara recalls:

“Covid-19 is an infectious deadly disease... Protocols stipulated by the Department of Education have to be followed. Learners are wearing masks, social distancing and constantly sanitizing.”

Wendy articulates:

“Covid-19 is a disease/virus that affects your lungs and affects everyone differently. It can be transmitted via touch, spit and particles, and can be deadly to those with comorbidities... We must always follow all Covid-19 protocols correctly, like, social distancing, wearing masks and sanitizing. I always remind my learners if they have any symptoms, like, cough or fever, they need to stay home.”

Fekile expresses:

“Covid-19 is a disease that affects us all... During this unprecedented time, these children are following Covid-19 protocols: wearing masks, social distancing and sanitizing.”

Based on the findings from Collage Inquiry and the discussion that followed, it is evident that the research participants have reasonable to sound understandings of Covid-19. Four of the

six research participants portrayed sound understandings of Covid-19 and elucidated the definition, symptoms, prevention measures and transmission process. Two of the six research participants with reasonable understandings of Covid-19, only included the definition and prevention measures, leaving out the symptoms and transmission process. This could imply that these participants do not fully understand Covid-19.

Covid-19 is a new phenomenon. A justification of the research participants who have a sound understanding of Covid-19 is supported by the World Health Organisation (2020) definition and explanation which indicates that coronavirus is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The most common symptoms include: fever, cough, tiredness and loss of taste or smell. Prevention measures include: social distancing, sanitizing, frequently washing hands, wearing a mask properly, covering your mouth and nose when you cough, and isolating if you are unwell. There is no cure for Covid-19 and therefore treatment includes self or medical care (SAcoronavirus, 2020).

5.4.7.2 Knowledge and Understandings of the Covid-19 Pandemic

This research study revealed the research participants knowledge of the Covid-19 pandemic and how they made sense of it. The research participants understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic are as follows:

Candy shares:

“The Covid-19 pandemic is most definitely an eye-opener!... deadly disease... At school, learners are constantly reminded of the seriousness of this disease around the world...”

Tresha describes:

“The word: ‘death’ indicates that this virus is a deadly virus that is here to kill our population. People are dying like crazy and there is just no cure for Covid-19... There’s always a new variant which mutates itself and the vaccine may be outdated by the time we receive it.”

Celia clarifies:

“This deadly pandemic is not only about teaching and learning that needs to take place at school. It is also about the harsh reality it has brought for some people... In addition, the pandemic is a major health crisis.”

Yara states:

“The entire world is facing the Covid-19 pandemic and this is our new normal!”

Wendy reflects:

With this pandemic that the entire world is facing, I’ve always seen it as something we all need to overcome together.”

Fekile declares:

“I once was a victim of Covid-19 and I am very scared of the deadly virus. This pandemic is world-wide and the virus a contagious one which makes it so deadly and fearful.”

According to the World Health Organisation (2020) the Covid-19 pandemic is defined as the latest, infectious, ongoing global pandemic which is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). It has been rapidly spread throughout the world and there is no cure for the virus as yet (WHO, 2020). It is evident from the excerpts above that the research participants have knowledge of the Covid-19 pandemic. All six research participants indicated that Covid-19 is experienced throughout the world. Candy, Tresha, Celia and Fekile described the pandemic as *deadly* which implies the severity of the nature of the virus. In addition, Tresha declared that there is *no cure* for the virus; Candy expressed the *seriousness* of the pandemic; and Celia mentioned the *harsh realities* that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought about for some individuals known to her.

5.4.7.3 The Implications of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Education, the Foundation Phase and Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa

The South African education system has been affected drastically by the Covid-19 pandemic. Educationalists have been faced with various challenges and changes ever since, and have to essentially create a sense of normalcy. The South African government has indicated that teaching and learning should be at the centre of everyone's focus (EDUFUNDI, 2022). The implications of the Covid-19 pandemic are both positive and negative. Some of the negative implications include: the unforeseen effects of mask wearing, the disruption of teaching and learning, mental health issues, and social issues. Some of the positive implications include: creating positive outcomes and creating opportunities.

This research study revealed that all six research participants expressed implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on education, the foundation phase and foundation phase teachers in South Africa, as follows:

Candy states:

The Covid-19 pandemic is most definitely an eye-opener! Many things have changed from 'normal' teaching to Covid-19 teaching... This pandemic has really changed the way in which I teach on a daily basis."

Tresha mentions:

"Due to the fact that our learners are little, I am always educating them on the new concept of the Covid-19 pandemic. A lot has changed in 2021, and I have to find new ways of teaching and learning."

Celia positions:

"The pandemic has turned everything upside down for me! Everything new is new again. I am trying to adapt to this changing context... Covid-19 had made teaching very difficult for me. I always dreamed that when I start my career, I would be the best teacher I

could be and I was very upset about not getting to do everything with my kids that I had planned to do at the beginning of the year. I am big on planning and I have so many dreams and goals. The things that I really wanted to do with the kids, I was not allowed to. It was a big challenge to accept that it doesn't always go the way you like it to go."

Yara confirms:

"My heart is so heavy. As a teacher, I am constantly working and living in fear. I often feel stressed about getting Covid-19 and passing it on to my family or my learners at school... I have 9 years of overall working experience in the foundation phase. However, nothing has prepared me for this pandemic."

Wendy pronounces:

"As a foundation phase teacher, I am optimistic. I see the glass half full. With this pandemic that the entire world is facing, I've always seen it as something we all need to overcome together. It's something that we should think positive about. It is our new normal. Without a doubt, it will be here for a long period of time, and we have to work around it. It has turned our teaching world upside down!... Covid-19 has made teaching extremely difficult. I have 2 different groups: group A and group 2. These groups are grouped by their abilities. I find this exciting as I get to work on their ability level. I am teaching the same work but I am teaching it completely different."

Fekile shares:

"Covid-19 is 'Really bad!' It has made teaching very difficult for me. I have to find new methods of teaching... If teaching in the foundation phase is already exhausting, teaching during Covid-19 in the foundation phase is more exhausting and more difficult... Foundation phase learners are small and they need more support, however, this pandemic is really difficult to give them the support needed."

Five of six research participants express negative implications, and one of the six research participants, Wendy, expresses both negative and positive implications where she is rather *optimistic* and sees *the glass half full*. Celia, Wendy and Fekile note that the Covid-19 pandemic has made teaching *very difficult*. Yara indicates that nothing has prepared her for this pandemic. In addition, she is *working and living in fear*. Tresha and Fekile express the need to find new techniques of teaching and learning. Celia is *trying to adapt to this changing context*, and both Yara and Wendy announce a *new normal*.

5.4.7.4 Foundation Phase Teachers Knowledge and Understandings of the Covid-19 Pandemic Recapitulated Through an Image

This research study indicated that all six research participants recapitulated their knowledge and understandings of Covid-19 through an image from their collages, as shown below:

Figure 17

Foundation Phase Teachers Knowledge and Understandings of the Covid-19 Pandemic Recapitulated Through an Image



Note. Figure 17 has been created by the researcher to show foundation phase teachers knowledge and understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic recapitulated through an image.

The images above belong to the following research participants: **Image 1 – Candy, Image 2 – Tresha, Image 3 – Celia, Image 4 – Yara, Image 5 – Wendy, and Image 6 – Fekile.**

The selected excerpts below relate to each image, as follows:

Candy declares:

“This picture [Image 1] shows teaching happening during Covid-19. Masks are worn, social distancing is taking place and there is a sanitizer available. Although my young learners may tend to forget about wearing their mask correctly and social distancing, I remind them of it immediately.”

Tresha expresses:

“It would be the corona virus picture [Image 2]. Corona virus is a disease that is able to kill people. There is no cure for it and therefore the pandemic has come about. The world is facing this pandemic together that has changed the lives of us all.”

Celia shares:

“It would be the image at the bottom [Image 3] where the teacher is teaching. Many things have changed within 2 months for me, such as: learners are social distancing, wearing their masks, sanitizing. The curriculum has changed slightly, there’s not much physical activity taking place and we have extra duties.”

Yara announces:

“It would most definitely be the bottom left image [Image 4] of the learners in the classroom. It is a constant reminder of what South African teachers are facing in the classroom which was already filled with difficulty.”

Wendy indicates:

“It is the top right image [Image 5] where people are social distancing. We are living in a new normal. Covid-19 is a disease/virus that affects your lungs and affects everyone differently. It can be transmitted via touch, spit and particles, and can be deadly to those with comorbidities.” We are really restricted in the things we

do on a daily basis and have limited resources as a school. We must always follow all Covid-19 protocols correctly. I always remind my learners if they have any symptoms, they need to stay home. However, this is especially difficult for little children who are 5 or 6 years old.”

Fekile points out:

“It would be the bottom picture [Image 6] of the little boy who is sanitizing in the classroom which he is busy with work. The South African education system has changed so much. Our country has new protocols to follow. Everything is new, especially for little children.”

Candy’s recapitulated knowledge and understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic was illustrated by Image 1. This image depicts that teaching and learning is occurring as a new normal during the global pandemic. Tresha referred to Image 2 as it defines *Corona virus as a disease that is able to kill people* and that *there is no cure*. This indicates that this virus is to be taken rather seriously. Celia’s recapitulated knowledge and understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic was portrayed in Image 3, where teaching and learning occurs. She has noted that *many things have changed* due to the pandemic including change in the *curriculum*, lack of *physical activity* and *extra duties*. Yara in the selected image, Image 4, highlights learners in the classroom. She indicates that by seeing learners, this is a *constant reminder of what South African teachers are facing* and furthermore, that working during the pandemic is *already filled with difficulty*. Wendy’s recapitulated knowledge and understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic was highlighted through the image of people social distancing, Image 5. This indicates that teaching and learning occurs through a *new normal*. Fekile in Image 6, displays the Covid-19 protocols which are taking place in the classroom. The learner is *sanitizing in the classroom whilst he is busy with work*. Through the analysis of the images above and the responses which pertain to it, it is evident that all research participants have reasonable to sound understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic.

SECTION B

5.5 Theme Two:

South African Foundation Phase Teachers Challenges of Working during the Covid-19 Pandemic

In this theme, the researcher used the data generation method: **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS** as a research technique to explain foundation phase teacher's challenges of working during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research participants were requested to share their challenges, if any, of working as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic, and highlight their experiences in a semi-structured interview with the researcher (see Appendix 4). The responses from the research participants are transcribed verbatim below.

Theme Two addresses the following second research sub-question and sub-objective:

RESEACH SUB-QUESTION 2	RESEARCH SUB-OBJECTIVE 2
<i>What are the challenges, if any, of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?</i>	<i>To identify the challenges, if any, of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.</i>

The guiding prompts for undertaking the **semi-structured interviews** are as follows:

GUIDING PROMPTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research Participant Profile: Gender/Age/Qualification/Location/Year started teaching/Grades taught/ Subjects taught/ Personal self/Professional self• Describe your school day prior to the Covid-19 pandemic by sharing some of your daily schooling activities or routines.• Share some of your schooling experiences as a foundation phase teacher during

the Covid-19 pandemic.

- How is teaching and learning taking place during the Covid-19 pandemic?
- How does working during the Covid-19 pandemic make you feel?
- What are some of the challenges that you have experienced as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic?

5.5.1 Research Participant 1 – Candy

Researcher: Describe your school day prior to the Covid-19 pandemic by sharing some of your daily schooling activities or routines.

Candy:

“I absolutely love school and love learners who want to come to school. Like any day prior to Covid-19, I would be so personal with my learners. I have ground duty in the mornings and would play and sing with learners during that time. During the day, our school would have a lot of extra mural activities, such as: athletics, swimming, cricket, netball and hockey. I would participate in various duties because I enjoyed it and I enjoyed the learners being outside. In the classroom, we would have lots of fun. Learners would be sitting in groups for various activities and were more hands-on.”

Researcher: Share some of your schooling experiences as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Candy:

“The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the ways in which teachers work on a daily basis. Following the March lockdown level 5 where everyone in South Africa was not allowed to be out in public, our school worked online from home for a while. This was extremely

tiring and time consuming as we had to prepare lessons and activities without much assistance from our management and in a short space of time. When we did go back to school, we had new ways of working by following protocols, such as: sanitizing, social distancing, wearing masks and washing hands frequently. We were lucky enough to accommodate all learners in the classroom and therefore no teaching and learning time was lost. However, our teaching styles had to change. I used to prepare for lessons and activities in advance and now I cannot do that because of the nature of this virus. Covid-19 makes you become more flexible and adaptable in your lesson planning.”

Researcher: How is teaching and learning taking place during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Candy:

“Although our private school is fully resourced, we were unable to use many of those resources. All flexible seating from our classrooms were removed and learners had to sit in traditional rows. This classroom layout was not the best for me and rather boring for my little learners. Each learner had a box that belonged to them. They would play with the items that were inside their boxes and we not allowed to share. During the Covid-19 pandemic, I gave a lot of academic support as physical activity was very limited.”

Researcher: How does working during the Covid-19 pandemic make you feel?

Candy:

“Stressed! Very stressed. Not knowing the unknown is a very stressful. I also feel like I am not in control of anything and it’s not a good feeling.”

Researcher: What are some of the challenges that you have experienced as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic?

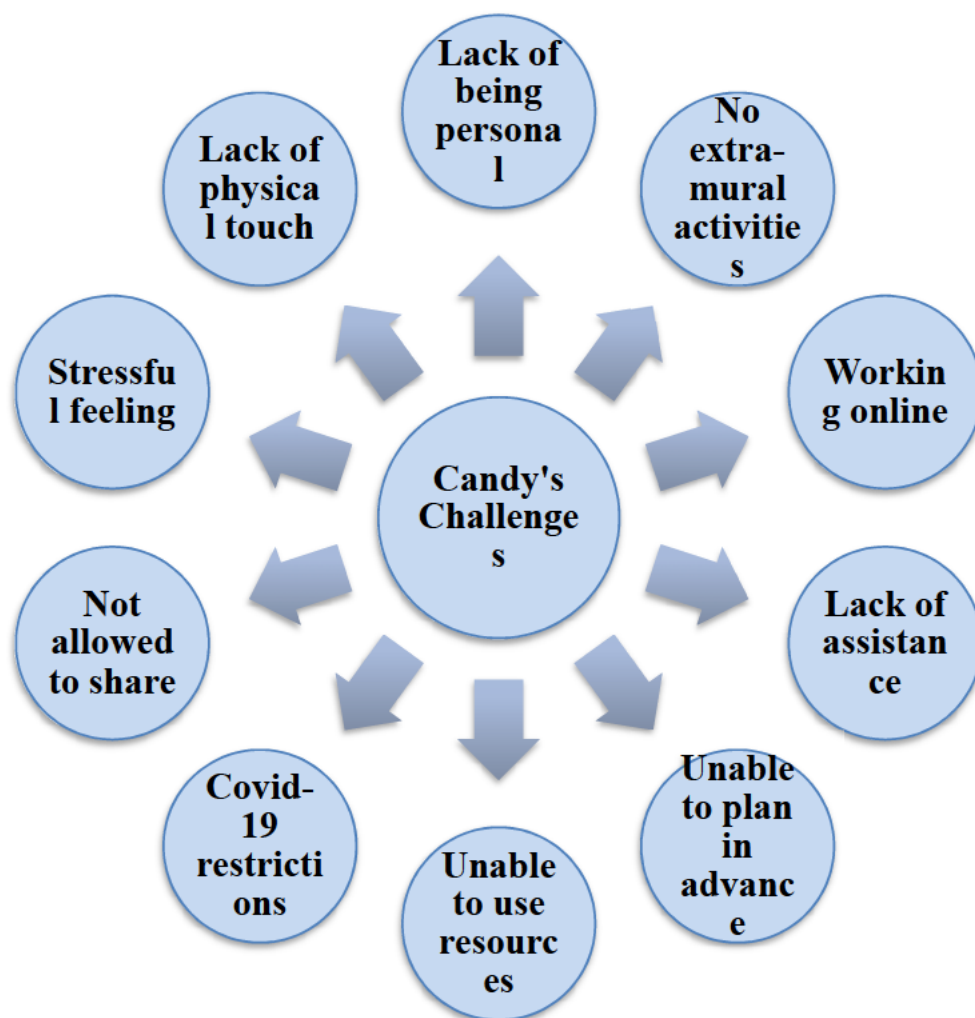
Candy:

“The foundation phase allows for a lot of physical touch, such as: hugging, holding hands, patting learners on the back, holding their hands when writing or for fitness... And by having no physical touch means that there is some connection lost between you and the child. Neither you or the learners have experienced this virus before and therefore it’s a very scary and stressful feeling.”

The response received from Research Participant 1 – Candy indicates that she experiences a variety of challenges of working as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic. The challenges are summarized below in the following diagram:

Figure 18

Research Participant 1 – Candy’s Challenges



Note. This figure has been created by the researcher as a summary of research participant 1 – Candy’s challenges.

5.5.2 Research Participant 2 - Tresha

Researcher: Describe your school day prior to the Covid-19 pandemic by sharing some of your daily schooling activities or routines.

Tresha:

“As soon as I get to school, I sign in at the office, take my keys and register to my classroom. The learners line up and come inside. I start with registration and then start teaching and learning by following the timetable. At the end of the day, I prepare for the next day. I am always busy running out worksheets or getting my photocopies done. Every 4th day, I have ground duty in which I need to observe learners. Learners would line up once a week for assembly but not anymore.

Researcher: Share some of your schooling experiences as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Tresha:

“When Covid-19 started, just before we went into lockdown level 5, we had to make workbooks for learners to take home and mark it when we come back to school. I get to school much earlier every day to assist with Covid-19 duties: sanitizing learners, checking temperatures and recording it. I have to ask each and every child a series of questions and complete a questionnaire during registration as well as marking the register. This is extremely time consuming. Some parents were not sending their learners to school, so I had to make separate workbooks for them. It was very difficult to complete the curriculum although it was trimmed. Attendance at my school was very poor because learners were often in quarantine. After a day of work, I still have to sort out notes, workbooks and do a whole lot of

marking. We initially had 2 group which came on alternate days. This was a lot! It was tiring to teach the same thing twice. My weaker performing learners gave me a challenge. I have one child that has never went to school before and it took me a really long time to teach him single sounds and the pencil grip. It was difficult because I could not physically hold this child's hand."

Researcher: How is teaching and learning taking place during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Tresha:

"Covid-19 protocols are still being followed at school. We have 2 groups that we teach that come on alternate days. I mainly work with charts and the chalkboard so all learners can see because we do not have smartboards and we are not allowed to physically touch others. I make a lot of enrichment booklets for my learners which is very time-consuming. Unfortunately, there is limited physical activities and no group work that is taking place so they learners are mostly sitting and working. We are not allowed to give learners readers so I photocopied the readers for each one of them. Previously, I allowed learners to come up to the board to complete math sums, but not anymore. We are extremely restricted. I just ask them verbally from the front of the classroom for the next step."

Researcher: How does working during the Covid-19 pandemic make you feel?

Tresha:

"Terrified. I am so scared to bring Covid-19 home to my family or to work to my little children."

Researcher: What are some of the challenges that you have experienced as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Tresha:

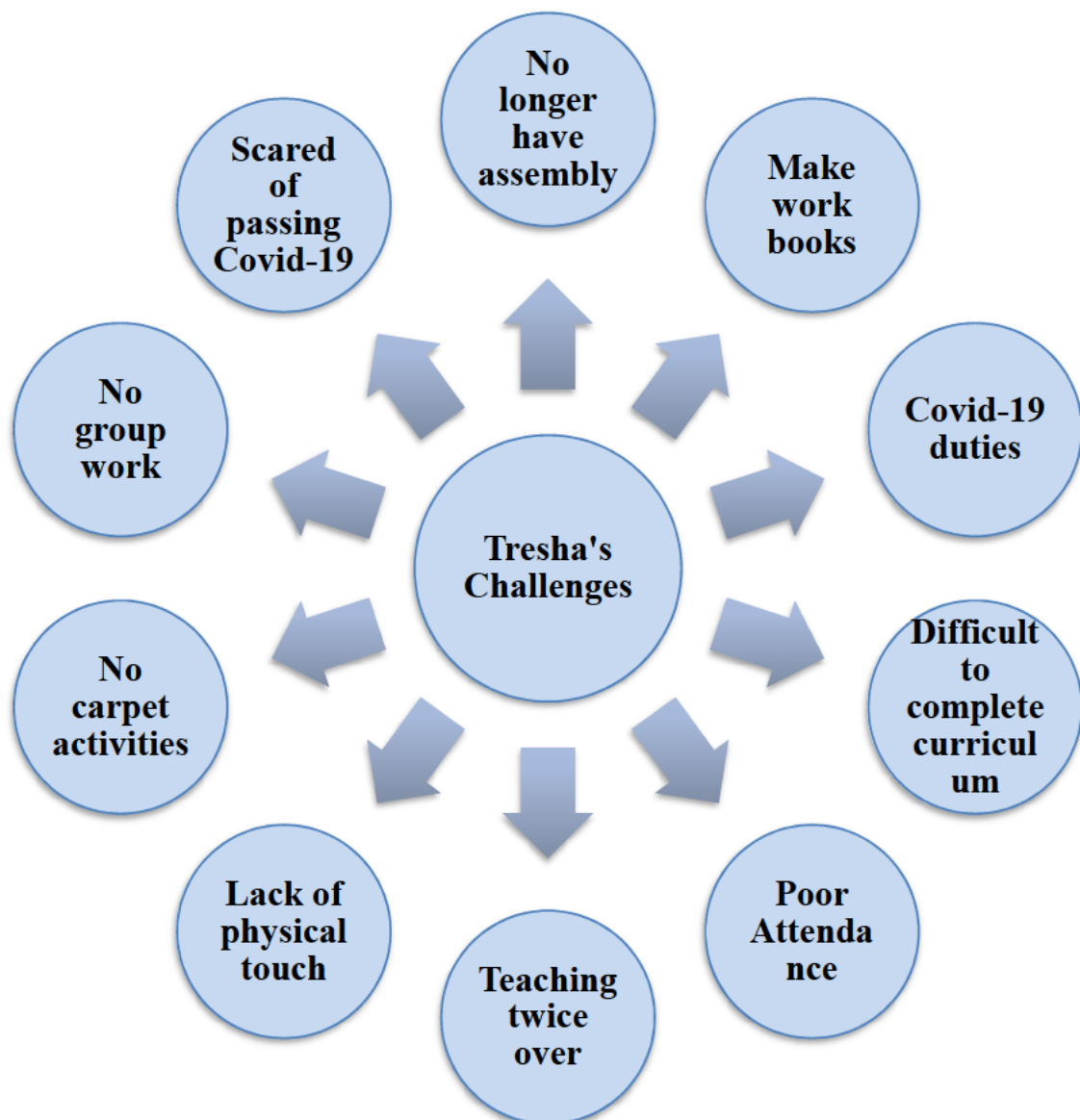
"The way in which I teach has changed. Previously, we were allowed to be close together, now, we have to social distance. We don't have

'carpet' activities anymore and limited physical activities and sports. School life is very boring for a child right now because they cannot play on the jungle gym and interact with their friends. There is a lack of connection amongst children. Learners are confined to the classroom. Working with a smaller number of learners at a time allows for individual attention, it allows for quick marking and observation of learners.

The response received from Research Participant 2 – Tresha indicates that she experiences a variety of challenges of working as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic. The challenges are summarized below in the following diagram:

Figure 19

Research Participant 2 – Tresha's Challenges



Note. This figure has been created by the researcher as a summary of research participant 2 – Tresha’s challenges.

5.5.3 Research Participant 3 – Celia

Researcher: Describe your school day prior to the Covid-19 pandemic by sharing some of your daily schooling activities or routines.

Celia:

“Before the Covid-19 pandemic, I had only 2 months of normal schooling which I was extremely happy about. In the mornings before the school bell would ring, the learners would play outside on the jungle gym. Thereafter, we would gather on the carpet for our morning circle meeting. Here, we would talk about the theme for the week, the calendar and what we were going to do for the day. Then the learners would go back for 15 minutes to play while I do my administration. Our assistant teachers would go outside to watch the children while they play on the jungle gym. Everyone is without masks, which I actually cannot believe now. Afterwards, the bell would ring and the learners would make lines and come back inside for mathematics. We don’t do lines anymore. We are back on the carpet where we work with whole class counting. The learners would physically count blocks and touch everything in the classroom and thereafter, leave for play again, except for six learners where I will have a small group where I focus on intervention. During lunch, the learners would have an hour of playtime where we all would eat outside in circles. They would be extremely close together. I can’t actually believe this. After playtime would be Afrikaans. We would sit on the carpet, read book, touch resources, and write. The learners that needed extra help would stay inside and practice their formation of letters. I would hold their hand while they practice their writing which I cannot do anymore. After Afrikaans, we would have Life Skills where we would go outside and play with balls which we are

not allowed to do because of Covid-19. At home time, the parents would fetch their children from the classroom however that had to stop. We meet the parents outside on the sidewalks as the parents are not allowed on the school grounds anymore.”

Researcher: Share some of your schooling experiences as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Celia:

“Covid-19 has changed my schooling experiences a lot. Following the first lockdown level 5 in March 2020, I had to teach online to my learners from my home. This was rather challenging for me, as I didn’t have enough practice of planning lessons on my own. It had only been 2 months that I started my teaching career and receiving help from my mentor teacher. I had to get into a different mode of teaching with the virtual and everything. For the very first lockdown, I did revision with my learners at home and it was difficult for me to find my own feet, but I had to. I used Google slides and Pinterest really helped. When we first got back to school during Covid-19, learners were put into 2 groups and were being taught on a rotational basis so I only had to teach 15 learners per day. The planning was a little bit difficult when we got back because we were unsure if and when we were to go back into lockdown. The curriculum was trimmed but the fatigue of teaching the same thing a few days in a row was challenging. I had brain fog because it was difficult to remember everything that I had said in my lesson the day after I taught it. It’s a different level of exhaustion. All physical activities and jungle gym were cancelled until recently. We are now allowed to do fitness and play with balls. The learners were really bored without physical activity. We have to still sanitize and follow protocols.”

Researcher: How is teaching and learning taking place during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Celia:

“I mostly use Microsoft PowerPoint to teach during the Covid-19

pandemic. I make YouTube videos and use the Bitmoji app, to teach concepts. Since learners are unable to meet on the carpet, they have to watch and learn numbers. Everything in the foundation phase is so hands-on, and learners are unable to physically touch objects. I have always a learner centered teacher but Covid-19 has made it hard. Learners now point to the objects on the screen and count. For the number 8, I would ask learners to run around their table 8 times or wake up and sit down 8 times. There was a sudden shift from physically counting the counters to watching the counters moving on a screen. The underperforming learners were unable to keep up with the activity. I tried to take only those learners and do an intervention for each one of them. We have to chop and change the way in which we work.”

Researcher: How does working during the Covid-19 pandemic make you feel?

Celia:

“Very sad! Teachers are looked down now more than ever. Parents are playing a very crucial role of assisting their children with learning and therefore they have lost respect for the fantastic work that teachers really do. I feel as if no one appreciates us and no one stopped to think about the way we feel and our mental health. I am also hopeful that things go back to normal.”

Researcher: What are some of the challenges that you have experienced as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic?

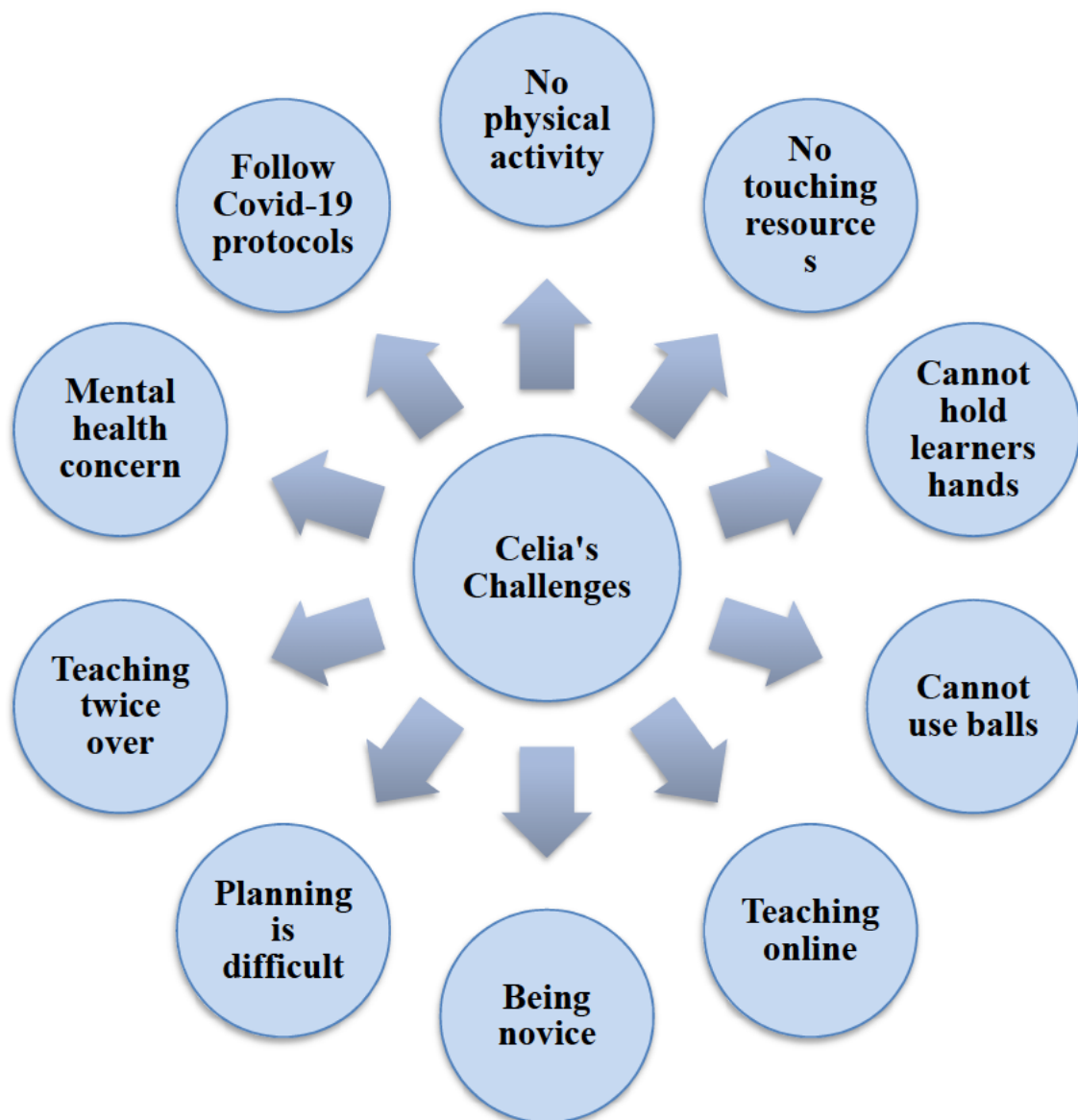
Celia:

“Definitely difficulty in planning lessons without my mentor teacher as well as teaching virtually with lack of communication from my mentor teacher. Following Covid-19 protocols which involved mask wearing, sanitizing and social distancing was a major challenge.”

The response received from Research Participant 3 – Celia indicates that she experiences a variety of challenges of working as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic. The challenges are summarized below in the following diagram:

Figure 20

Research Participant 3 – Celia's Challenges



Note. This figure has been created by the researcher as a summary of research participant 3 – Celia's challenges.

5.5.4 Research Participant 4 – Yara

Researcher: Describe your school day prior to the Covid-19 pandemic by sharing some of your daily schooling activities or routines.

Yara:

“I start the school day by signing in at the office and thereafter start with registration where I mark the register. Learners line up on a Monday morning and go to the hall where the foundation phase has an assembly. The learners sit in a girl’s line and boys’ line on the floor close together. Learners walk in lines to the classroom. In the classroom, learners sit close to each other and we start the day with work. We do group work for English and Mathematics and the weaker learners come to my table for extra help. We also do physical exercises and play with the ball, skipping rope or hula hoop. During the break, we dish out food for learners and go out on ground duty once a week.”

Researcher: Share some of your schooling experiences as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Yara:

“When Covid-19 first started, we went into a lockdown. Coming from an under resourced public school, there was no teaching and learning taking place in that time. However, I had to make booklets for my learners. When we returned to school, learners came in 2 groups on alternate days. I used to teach the same thing twice which was very tiring. We did not go outside for physical education because we were not allowed. Instead of using balls, we improvised and made paper balls with the learners. Learners were required to follow all Covid-19 protocol; however, they did not want to. I had to keep reminding my learners to follow protocols. I sometimes felt like I was losing my mind when they did not listen to me. I had Covid-19 duty, ground duty and feeding scheme duty every week. I was rather exhausted. Teaching little children without physically touching them was

difficult. Our management was not exactly helpful and expected us to work like there was no such thing as Covid-19. Every morning, I had to reset my mind to come to work.”

Researcher: How is teaching and learning taking place during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Yara:

“Learners were often disinterested and a lot of time was taken up to remind learners of the Covid-19 protocols which need to be followed at school.”

Researcher: How does working during the Covid-19 pandemic make you feel?

Yara:

“Frustrated. We are stuck in this situation and we don’t know when it will end.”

Researcher: What are some of the challenges that you have experienced as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic?

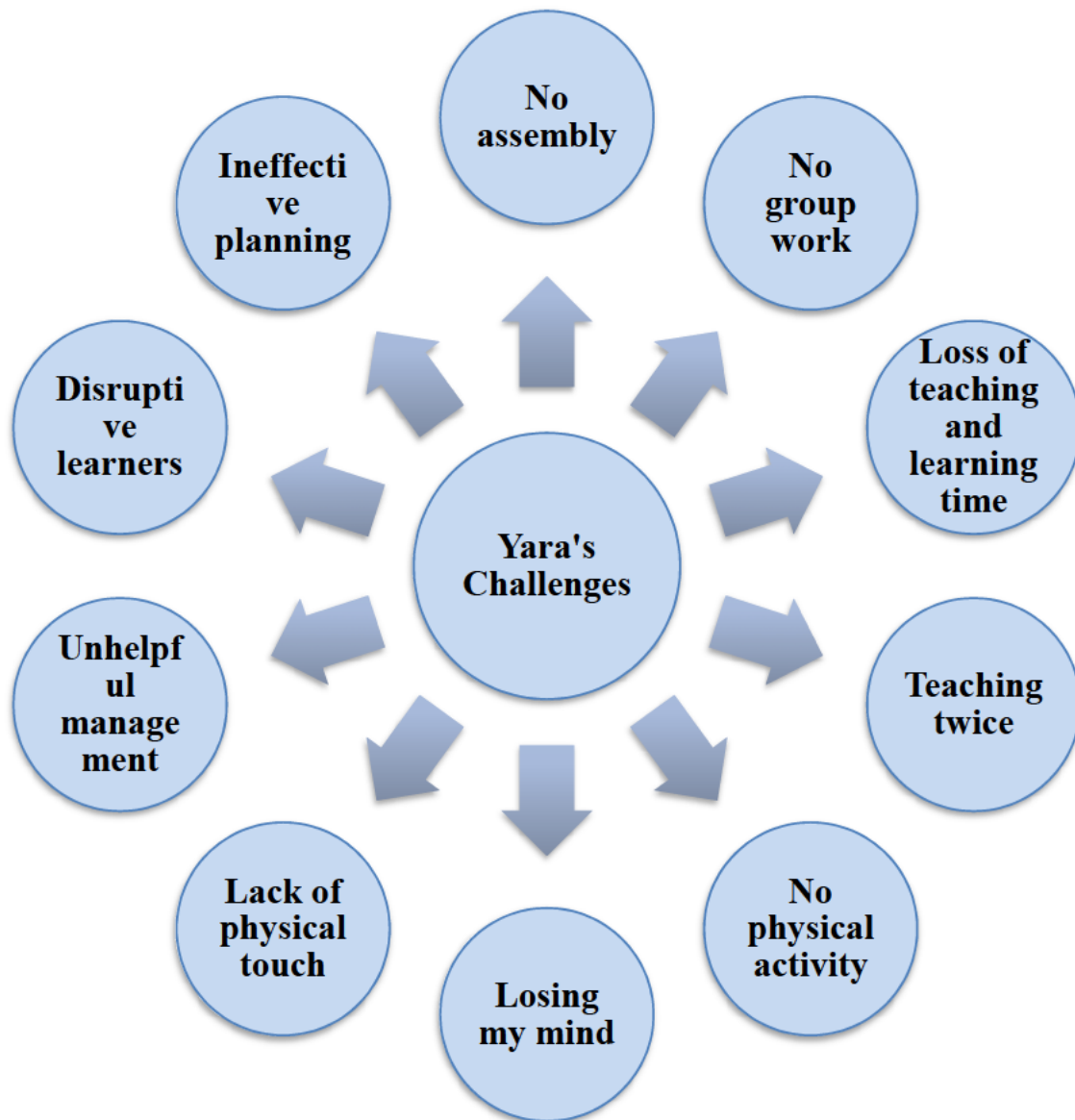
Yara:

“I have always been a planner, and not being able to plan makes things really difficult.”

The response received from Research Participant 4 – Yara indicates that she experiences a variety of challenges of working as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic. The challenges are summarized below in the following diagram:

Figure 21

Research Participant 4 – Yara's Challenges



Note. This figure has been created by the researcher as a summary of research participant 4 – Yara's challenges.

5.5.5 Research Participant 5 - Wendy

Researcher: Describe your school day prior to the Covid-19 pandemic by sharing some of your daily schooling activities or routines.

Wendy:

"I am very involved in my school. I take part in everything. On one day of the week, I'll do playground duty, another day I'll do scholar patrol duty and another day I'll do tuck-shop duty. After school, we have various committee meetings, such as: fundraising, safety, sports, IT or T2P: Transform to Perform. Our school also has morning and afternoon meetings as well as assembly. All learners are taught in the classroom together. Planning for lessons are done in advance."

Researcher: Share some of your schooling experiences as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy:

"I start school a bit earlier and I have Covid-19 duties in addition to my other duties. I have to sanitize learners, take their temperature, record it and be on quad duty and ensure they social distance. We do not have morning briefings or assembly. I get into my classroom at 8am. I start admin duty from 8 to 9am. I have 3 types of registers to complete: normal attendance register, Covid-19 temperature register and Covid-19 questionnaire register. I have to complete it and send it to the office before I start my work. During the interval, I am on interval duty, watching to see if learners are social distancing. I am not having a break, and I am rather exhausted. After school we have workshops. In the classroom, Covid-19 has really restricted me from a lot of activities. With the limited resources that we do have, I try to make teaching fun. We used to do a lot of hands-on activities, which is now restricted. We used to have many extra-mural activities, which are now not being done. We cannot do finger painting or getting to experiment. Those activities that we are allowed to do, I ensure that all learners sanitize before and after."

Researcher: How is teaching and learning taking place during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Wendy:

"Our learners have been divided into two groups based on their

ability level. Group A consists of learners who are performing well and Group B consists of learners who are underperforming. In Group B, I have sensory sensitive learners who have difficulty in understanding Covid-19. Some of them do not wear masks correctly, cannot sit still and cannot social distance. It has made teaching extremely difficult. I feel that everything we face, there are positives. I absolutely love the fact that I'm teaching in smaller groups and I don't think this would have happened if it wasn't for Covid-19. I do not give all my energy to one group, rather, I am teaching on each groups level. I make lessons exciting for learners. Although, I am teaching the same work but I am teaching it differently. It is extremely tiring but I am teaching at a different level."

Researcher: How does working during the Covid-19 pandemic make you feel?

Wendy:

"This Covid-19 pandemic has exhausted me! I am very tired all the time because of all the extra administration and duties. It also makes me stressed. I have to think about how to make the lesson exciting without using concrete objects. I have to think outside the box. It takes so much of mental work than what it's used to."

Researcher: What are some of the challenges that you have experienced as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Wendy:

"Too many extra duties! I am absolutely exhausted!"

The response received from Research Participant 5 – Wendy indicates that she experiences a variety of challenges of working as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic. The challenges are summarized below in the following diagram:

Figure 22

Research Participant 5 – Wendy's Challenges

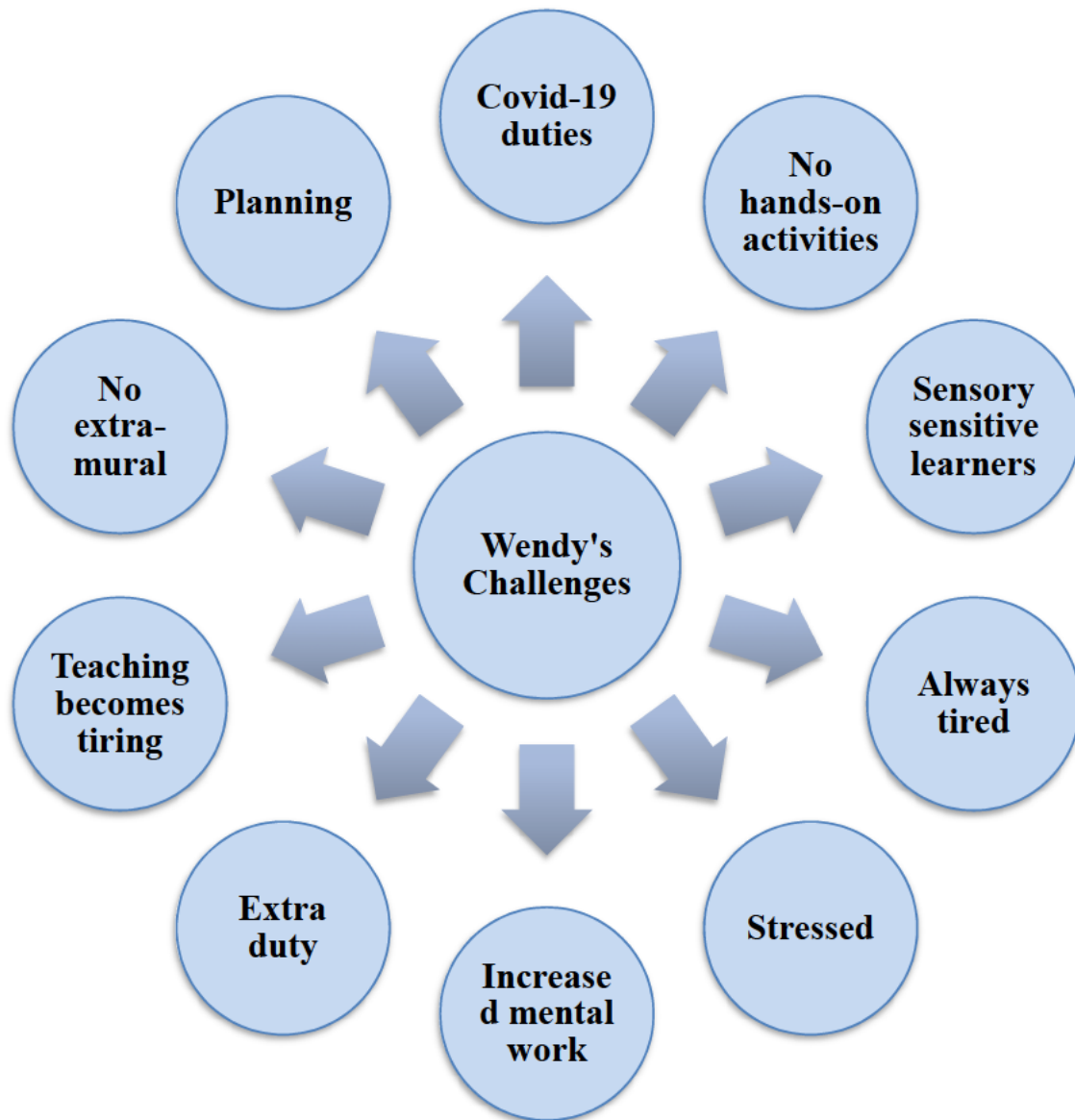


Figure 22: Research Participant 5 - Wendy's Challenges

Note. This figure has been created by the researcher as a summary of research participant 5 – Wendy's challenges.

5.5.6 Research Participant 6 – Fekile

Researcher: Describe your school day prior to the Covid-19 pandemic by sharing some of your daily schooling activities or routines.

Fekile:

“Before Covid-19, I came to school in the morning at 07:30am. I had ground duty for 1 day in the week. I would normally have registration then start my teaching day. During teaching and learning, we would do activities altogether. We would be personal with each other, by sitting in the carpet corner during reading time or being with weaker learners on my table to give them more attention. Learners were used to being together and I would sit in the staffroom with other teachers during the lunch break.”

Researcher: Share some of your schooling experiences as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Fekile:

“In the mornings, I would have Covid-19 duty where I would screen learners, sanitize learners and ensure social distancing is happening. The next day, I would have my normal ground duty. We often had to make ourselves visible during the day to ensure Covid-19 duty was being done. We had a screening register in which we had to make daily in addition to our attendance register and a whole lot of forms to complete. We were expected to teach like there was no such thing as Covid-19, like, we had to walk around the classroom and elbow mark. It is very difficult teaching in this time.”

Researcher: How is teaching and learning taking place during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Fekile:

“It is a little bit crazy! Although we are teaching 2 different groups, we are teaching the same work twice. Our groups have been coming on an alternative basis. First, the learners rotated every 3rd day, now, we have learners come to school bi-weekly. This approach is terrible

as learners are very little and forget the things they learnt very quickly. It's like we have to reteach. Learners are sitting 1m apart and trying to follow Covid-19 protocols, however, they often forget. The learners are like strangers to each other. Our school does not have enough resources and therefore this put a strain on teaching and learning. During the first lockdown, I could not give my learners online tuition because they come from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds and do not have access to cellphones, laptops and the internet. We made learner work packs and distributed it to learners. I received no special help or assistance from management."

Researcher: How does working during the Covid-19 pandemic make you feel?

Fekile:

"Angry! The nature of this virus is tormenting. I was a victim of Covid-19 and so were my family members."

Researcher: What are some of the challenges that you have experienced as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Fekile:

"There was not enough time to complete the curriculum with learners as some learners had comorbidities and did not attend school. Group teaching was difficult because I had to reteach work. In general, there were more duties that we were required to do. Honestly, it makes you fatigue."

The response received from Research Participant 6 – Fekile indicates that she experiences a variety of challenges of working as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic. The challenges are summarized below in the following diagram:

Figure 23

Research Participant 6 – Fekile's Challenges

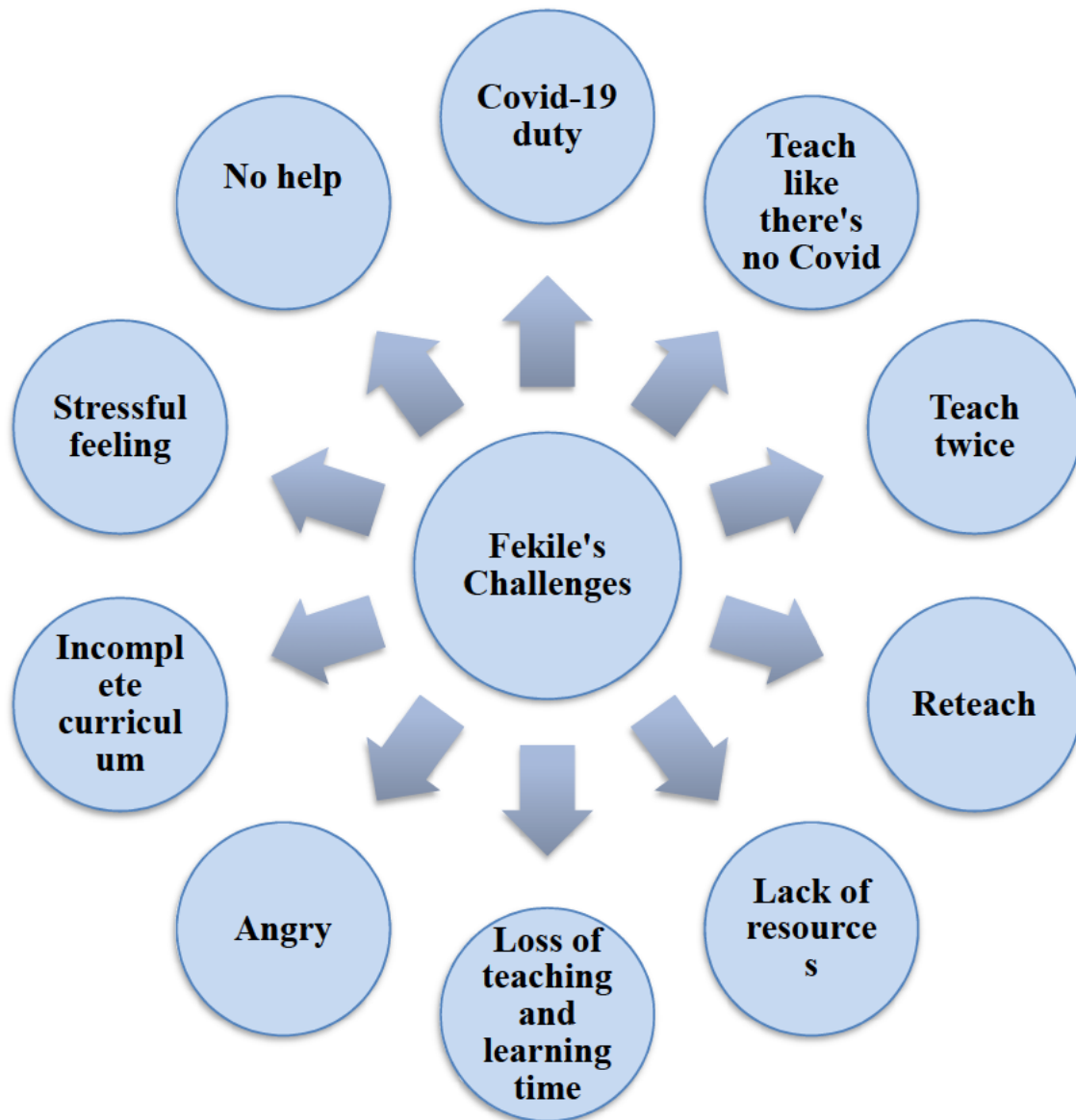


Figure 23: Research Participant 6 - Fekile's Challenges

Note. This figure has been created by the researcher as a summary of research participant 6 – Fekile's challenges.

5.5.7 Research Findings of Theme Two:

South African Foundation Phase Teachers Challenges of Working during the Covid-19 Pandemic

The researcher sought interest in identifying the challenges, if any, of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic by using the data generation method: Semi-Structured Interviews. ***Sub-themes*** that have emerged from ***Theme Two***, include: ***Teacher Fatigue; Disruptive Routines; Increased Workload; Loss of Teaching and Learning Time; Coping with the Curriculum; Sudden Shift to Distant Learning; Lack of Teaching and Learning Resources; Lack of Support; Planning Uncertainty; Learner Challenges; Increased Mental Health Anxiety; Teaching Profession Demands; Lost Social Connection; Lack of Physical Touch; and Restrictions.***

Gershenson and Holt (2022) indicate that teaching is believed to be an extremely “challenging profession” worldwide. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers, including foundation phase teachers were faced with a variety of challenges (Maree, 2021). Some of the challenges include: emotional, social, physical, cognitive and psychosocial challenges. Kanyane (2020) articulates that the “destructive and disruptive” impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on physical, emotional, psychological, social and volitional well-being of individuals has intensified the many challenges faced by teachers in South Africa. In addition, Maree (2021) adds that the Covid-19 pandemic has “adverse psycho-educational and psychological effects”. As the Covid-19 pandemic continues, foundation phase teachers face on-going, substantial and unprecedented challenges. This research study indicates that the research participants faced the following challenges of working as FPTs during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa:

5.5.7.1 Teacher Fatigue

The following research participants: Tresha, Celia, Yara, Wendy and Fekile have experienced teacher fatigue during the Covid-19 pandemic. Their responses related to teacher fatigue are as follows:

Tresha notes:

“We initially had 2 group which came on alternate days. This was a lot! It was tiring to teach the same thing twice.”

Celia says:

“The curriculum was trimmed but the fatigue of teaching the same thing a few days in a row was challenging. I had brain fog because it was difficult to remember everything that I had said in my lesson the day after I taught it. It’s a different level of exhaustion.”

Yara recalls:

“When we returned to school, learners came in 2 groups on alternate days. I used to teach the same thing twice which was very tiring.”

Wendy mentions:

“Although, I am teaching the same work but I am teaching it differently. It is extremely tiring but I am teaching at a different level.”

Fekile expresses:

“It is a little bit crazy! Although we are teaching 2 different groups, we are teaching the same work twice.”

The responses above indicate that the foundation phase teachers are extremely exhausted, more so, when they are teaching the same thing repeatedly. This is due to having two different groups of learners because not all learners could be accommodated in the classroom due to the new Covid-19 social distancing protocols. Jandric et al. (2020) note that teacher fatigue often leads to various other challenges, and consequently, the effectiveness of teachers become weaker and weaker. It is a serious challenge that needs to be addressed, especially during a global pandemic.

5.5.7.2 Disruptive Routines

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis, teachers, including, foundation phase teachers must make on-going, sudden and abrupt adjustments not only to their lives, school routines but to teaching and learning as well (Jandric et al., 2020). The following research participants: Candy, Tresha, Celia, Yara, and Wendy have experienced disruptive routines as a challenge during the Covid-19 pandemic. Their responses are as follows:

Candy remembers:

“Like any day prior to Covid-19 our school would have a lot of extra mural activities, such as: athletics, swimming, cricket, netball and hockey.”

Tresha mentions:

“Learners would line up once a week for assembly but not anymore.”

Celia positions:

“We are back on the carpet where we work with whole class counting. The learners would physically count blocks and touch everything in the classroom and thereafter, leave for play again...”

Yara says:

“Learners line up on a Monday morning and go to the hall where the foundation phase has an assembly.”

Wendy describes:

“This Covid-19 pandemic has exhausted me! I am very tired all the time because of all the extra administration and duties. It also makes me stressed.”

The research participants responses above reveal that their ways of working on a daily basis during the Covid-19 pandemic has changed drastically, and it is extremely challenging. In

addition, Wendy reveals that the Covid-19 pandemic makes her *stressed*. This implies that disruptive routines lead to unforeseen stresses in the workplace.

5.5.7.3 Increased Workload

Gershenson and Holt (2022) confirm that teachers' workloads have been increasingly intensified due to the Covid-19 pandemic. With this notion, it is noted that Covid-19 negatively impacts the effectiveness of teachers, and ultimately affects the performance of learners. The research participants: Tresha, Celia and Fekile have experienced increased workloads as a challenge. Their responses are as follows:

Tresha recalls:

“When Covid-19 started, just before we went into lockdown level 5, we had to make workbooks for learners to take home and mark it when we come back to school. I get to school much earlier every day to assist with Covid-19 duties: sanitizing learners, checking temperatures and recording it. I have to ask each and every child a series of questions and complete a questionnaire during registration as well as marking the register. This is extremely time consuming.”

Wendy indicates:

“I start school a bit earlier and I have Covid-19 duties in addition to my other duties. I have to sanitize learners, take their temperature, record it and be on quad duty and ensure they social distance... Too many extra duties! I am absolutely exhausted!”

Fekile confirms:

“In the mornings, I would have Covid-19 duty where I would screen learners, sanitize learners and ensure social distancing is happening.”

It is evident that Tresha, Wendy and Fekile now have Covid-19 duties. To Tresha, this is *extremely time consuming*, and Wendy, feels *absolutely exhausted*. From not having to do these kinds of duties to taking on new duties due to the pandemic, it has impacted the ways in which foundation phase teachers work on a daily basis.

5.5.7.4 Loss of Teaching and Learning Time

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has drastically disrupted education in South Africa (UNICEF, 2021). It is without a doubt that the South African education system was unprepared for such a crisis, and therefore, there was a stark increase in the loss of teaching and learning time. The loss of teaching and learning time in South Africa is due to the following reasons: the national lockdown where schools were closed, rotational attendance, those individuals with commodities who did not attend school, sporadic school closures and days off for learners in specific grades (UNICEF, 2021). In addition, poor attendance due to being in quarantine has contributed to the loss of teaching and learning time. The respondent indicates the following:

Tresha declares:

“Attendance at my school was very poor because learners were often in quarantine.”

The response from Tresha is clear as it shows the loss of teaching and learning time.

Reddy (2022) notes that the Covid-19 pandemic worsened the inequality of education in South Africa. This view is mirrored by the following research participants’ responses:

Yara remembers:

“When Covid-19 first started, we went into a lockdown. Coming from an under resourced public school, there was no teaching and learning

taking place in that time. However, I had to make booklets for my learners.”

Fekile recalls:

“During the first lockdown, I could not give my learners online tuition because they come from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds and do not have access to cellphones, laptops and the internet.”

The responses above indicate that the inequalities in education are severe, and drastically affect the loss of teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Those individuals that belong to *under resourced schools* and *socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds* have contributed greatly to the loss of teaching and learning in South Africa.

5.5.7.5 Coping with the Curriculum

The South African curriculum was revised through Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs); however, this created a long-term cost for the South African education system (BUSINESSTECH, 2020). Maree (2021) states that the foundation phase is crucial for laying solid foundations of reading, writing and basic mathematics. Therefore, it was of utmost importance that the foundation phase curriculum was neither trimmed nor accelerated. She further expresses that without a solid foundation base, there are increasing gaps in learner’s knowledge base which may reduce future chances of achieving success.

Tresha and Fekile note challenges with coping with the curriculum. Their responses were as follows:

Tresha states:

“It was very difficult to complete the curriculum although it was trimmed.”

Fekile notes:

“There was not enough time to complete the curriculum with learners as some learners had comorbidities and did not attend school.”

For the FPTs, Tresha and Fekile, coping with the curriculum was very challenging and has a long-term cost for the South African education system (Maree, 2021).

5.5.7.6 Sudden Shift to Distant Learning

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted face-to-face learning worldwide. More specifically, in South Africa, “advantaged schools” simply and suddenly transitioned from face-to-face interaction to a digital mode of teaching and learning to complete the academic syllabus of 2022 and leaving behind those “disadvantaged” schools (Davids, 2020). The FPTs responses are as follows:

Candy shares:

“The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the ways in which teachers work on a daily basis. Following the March lockdown level 5 where everyone in South Africa was not allowed to be out in public, our school worked online from home for a while. This was extremely tiring and time consuming ...”

Celia expresses:

“Covid-19 has changed my schooling experiences a lot. Following the first lockdown level 5 in March 2020, I had to teach online to my learners from my home. This was rather challenging for me, as I didn’t have enough practice of planning lessons on my own.”

From the responses above, it is clear that South African schools face challenges of inequality in education, and therefore, this will have a long-term cost on the South African education system (Maree, 2021).

5.5.7.7. Lack of Teaching and Learning Resources

Duby, Jonas and Bunce (2022) indicate that the pandemic year, 2020, highlighted the disparity in access to various resources that are necessary for teaching and learning. This issue is evident in the research participants responses:

Candy confirms:

“Although our private school is fully resourced, we were unable to use many of those resources.

Fekile recognizes:

“Our school does not have enough resources and therefore this put a strain on teaching and learning.”

The Covid-19 pandemic shows us that whether schools have plenty of resources or not, it cannot be of use, due to the nature of this virus.

5.5.7.8 Lack of Support

All educational stakeholders should be trained to support teachers, more specifically, foundation phase teachers in order to promote their effectiveness in the schooling environment (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008). The “one-size-fits-all” approach to supporting teachers is ineffective and therefore leads to tensions in their daily lives. In relation to the pandemic, the research participants reveal their challenge of lack of support, as follows:

Candy says:

“... we had to prepare lessons and activities without much assistance from our management and in a short space of time.”

Celia notes:

“It had only been 2 months that I started my teaching career and receiving help from my mentor teacher. I had to get into a different mode of teaching with the virtual and everything.”

Yara mentions:

“Our management was not exactly helpful and expected us to work like there was no such thing as Covid-19. Every morning, I had to reset my mind to come to work.”

Fekile elucidates:

“I received no special help or assistance from management.”

It is evident that Candy, Celia, Yara and Fekile lacked support at such an important time in world history.

5.5.7.9 Planning Uncertainty

Ramrathan (2020) asserts that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought about higher levels of uncertainty with regards to planning for teaching and learning. The respondent's understanding of this is illustrated below:

Candy recalls:

“I used to prepare for lessons and activities in advance and now I cannot do that because of the nature of this virus. Covid-19 makes you become more flexible and adaptable in your lesson planning.”

Celia reveals:

“The planning was a little bit difficult when we got back because we were unsure if and when we were to go back into lockdown.”

Yara asserts:

“I have always been a planner, and not being able to plan makes things really difficult.”

Wendy stresses:

“Planning for lessons are done in advance.”

From the responses above, Candy, Celia, Yara and Wendy experience challenges with regards to planning for teaching and learning.

5.5.7.10 Learner Challenges

Holmes et al., (2020) emphasize that the Covid-19 global pandemic will have a long-lasting impact on teaching and learning, and as a consequence on teachers and learners. The research participants indicated the following:

Yara shares:

“Learners were often disinterested and a lot of time was taken up to remind learners of the Covid-19 protocols which need to be followed at school.”

Wendy indicates:

“... In Group B, I have sensory sensitive learners who have difficulty in understanding Covid-19. Some of them do not wear masks correctly, cannot sit still and cannot social distance. It has made teaching extremely difficult...”

Fekile explains:

“First, the learners rotated every 3rd day, now, we have learners come to school bi-weekly. This approach is terrible as learners are

very little and forget the things they learnt very quickly. It's like we have to reteach."

It is evident that Yara, Wendy and Fekile have different learner challenges.

5.5.7.11 Increased Mental Health Anxiety

Gershenson and Holt (2022) indicate that poor mental health, stress, anxiety, burnout and unbalanced work-life hinders the effectiveness of teachers in the teaching profession. The onset of the Covid-19 crisis in education in South Africa was sudden and dramatic, and therefore, foundation phase teachers had to make rapid personal and professional adjustments, thereby, affecting their mental health. The research participants provide their understandings of mental health as follows:

Candy feels:

"Stressed! Very stressed. Not knowing the unknown is a very stressful. I also feel like I am not in control of anything and it's not a good feeling."

Tresha appears:

"Terrified. I am so scared to bring Covid-19 home to my family or to work to my little children."

Celia seems:

"Very sad! Teachers are looked down now more than ever. Parents are playing a very crucial role of assisting their children with learning and therefore they have lost respect for the fantastic work that teachers really do. I feel as if no one appreciates us and no one stopped to think about the way we feel and our mental health. I am also hopeful that things go back to normal."

Yara explains:

“Learners were required to follow all Covid-19 protocol; however, they did not want to. I had to keep reminding my learners to follow protocols. I sometimes felt like I was losing my mind when they did not listen to me.”

Wendy shares:

“This Covid-19 pandemic ... makes me stressed. I have to think about how to make the lesson exciting without using concrete objects. I have to think outside the box. It takes so much of mental work than what it’s used to.”

Fekile feels:

“Angry! The nature of this virus is tormenting. I was a victim of Covid-19 and so were my family members.”

It is evident that all six foundation phase teachers experienced mental health anxiety during the Covid-19 pandemic. The global pandemic brought about the following feelings in the research participants: Candy and Wendy felt *stressed*, Tresha felt *terrified*, Yara felt as if she was *losing* her *mind*, and Fekile felt angry. These are all negative feelings that will contribute negatively to teaching and learning (Gershenson & Holt, 2022).

5.5.7.12 Teaching Profession Demands

Teaching is an extremely complex and demanding profession. The pandemic has brought about challenges regarding professional demands. The respondent’s view below is echoed by this:

Fekile pronounces:

“We were expected to teach like there was no such thing as Covid-19, like, we had to walk around the classroom and elbow mark. It is very difficult teaching in this time.”

From the response above, it is evident that teaching brings about high pressure and is very demanding, especially during a pandemic.

5.5.7.13 Lost Social Connection

The Covid-19 pandemic has led educational departments worldwide to implement Covid-19 protocols, such as: social distancing, quarantining and restricting social interactions (Parent et al., 2021). Therefore, the social connection between individuals have been threatened in an unprecedented way. The research participants indicated the following:

Candy points out:

“Like any day prior to Covid-19, I would be so personal with my learners. I have ground duty in the mornings and would play and sing with learners during that time.”

Celia recalls:

“Before the Covid-19 pandemic, I had only 2 months of normal schooling which I was extremely happy about. In the mornings before the school bell would ring, the learners would play outside on the jungle gym. Thereafter, we would gather on the carpet for our morning circle meeting.”

Yara indicates:

“We do group work for English and Mathematics and the weaker learners come to my table for extra help.”

Candy, Celia and Yara emphasize the lost connection that they have with their learners due to social distancing protocols, and therefore, this hampers their relationships with their learners.

5.5.7.14 Lack of Physical Touch

Due to the contagious nature of the virus and Covid-19 restrictions of physical distancing, there is lack of a connection between foundation phase teachers and their learners. The FPTs indicate the following:

Candy evokes:

“The foundation phase allows for a lot of physical touch, such as: hugging, holding hands, patting learners on the back, holding their hands when writing or for fitness... And by having no physical touch means that there is some connection lost between you and the child.”

Tresha states:

“My weaker performing learners gave me a challenge. I have one child that has never went to school before and it took me a really long time to teach him single sounds and the pencil grip. It was difficult because I could not physically hold this child’s hand.”

Celia notes:

“The learners that needed extra help would stay inside and practice their formation of letters. I would hold their hand while they practice their writing which I cannot do anymore.”

Yara explains:

“Teaching little children without physically touching them was difficult.”

Candy indicates *by having no physical touch, some connection lost between you and the child*. In addition, Yara indicates that *teaching little children without physically touching them was difficult*. Tresha and Celia note that teaching is difficult without *physically holding a child’s hand*, especially during letter formation, as foundation phase teachers model handwriting.

5.5.7.15 Restrictions

The South African government has placed various and ever-changing restrictions to curb and hopefully eliminate Covid-19. Due to these restrictions, foundation phase teachers were unable to work as they used to prior to the global pandemic. The research participants provide their challenges as follows:

Candy notes:

“All flexible seating from our classrooms were removed and learners had to sit in traditional rows. This classroom layout was not the best for me and rather boring for my little learners. Each learner had a box that belonged to them. They would play with the items that were inside their boxes and we not allowed to share. During the Covid-19 pandemic, I gave a lot of academic support as physical activity was very limited.”

Tresha shares:

“Unfortunately, there is limited physical activities and no group work that is taking place so they learners are mostly sitting and working.”

The way in which I teach has changed. Previously, we were allowed to be close together, now, we have to social distance. We don't have 'carpet' activities anymore and limited physical activities and sports.

Celia recalls:

“After Afrikaans, we would have Life Skills where we would go outside and play with balls which we are not allowed to do because of Covid-19... Following Covid-19 protocols which involved mask wearing, sanitizing and social distancing was a major challenge.”

Yara remembers:

“We did not go outside for physical education because we were not allowed. Instead of using balls, we improvised and made paper balls with the learners. Learners were required to follow all Covid-19

protocol; however, they did not want to

Wendy says:

*“We used to do a lot of hands-on activities, which is now restricted.
We used to have many extra-mural activities, which are now not
being done.”*

Five of six research participants were affected by the restrictions that the Covid-19 pandemic brought about, and this negatively contributed to teaching and learning. The most significant restriction was physical distancing.

SECTION C

5.6 Theme Three:

Intervention Strategies that are Needed to Support Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa

In this theme, the researcher used the data generation method: **METAPHOR DRAWING** as a research technique to provide intervention strategies that are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research participants were requested to make a drawing manually (by physically drawing) or electronically (by using the computer) that exemplifies intervention strategies that are needed to support foundation phase teachers, as well as to highlight their experiences of working during the Covid-19 pandemic (see Appendix 5). A discussion relating to the metaphor drawing followed and the responses from the research participants are transcribed verbatim below.

Theme Three addresses the following third research sub-question and sub-objective:

RESEACH SUB-QUESTION 3	RESEARCH SUB-OBJECTIVE 3
<i>What intervention strategies are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?</i>	<i>To provide intervention strategies that are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.</i>

The guiding prompt questions for undertaking the **metaphor drawing** are as follows:

GUIDING PROMPTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Please explain the meanings of your drawing.• Are there any words, pictures or phrases that stand out from the rest of your drawing? Please explain the meaning of them.• Express an emotion that your drawing brings forth to you.• What role do you think foundation phase teachers in South African should play

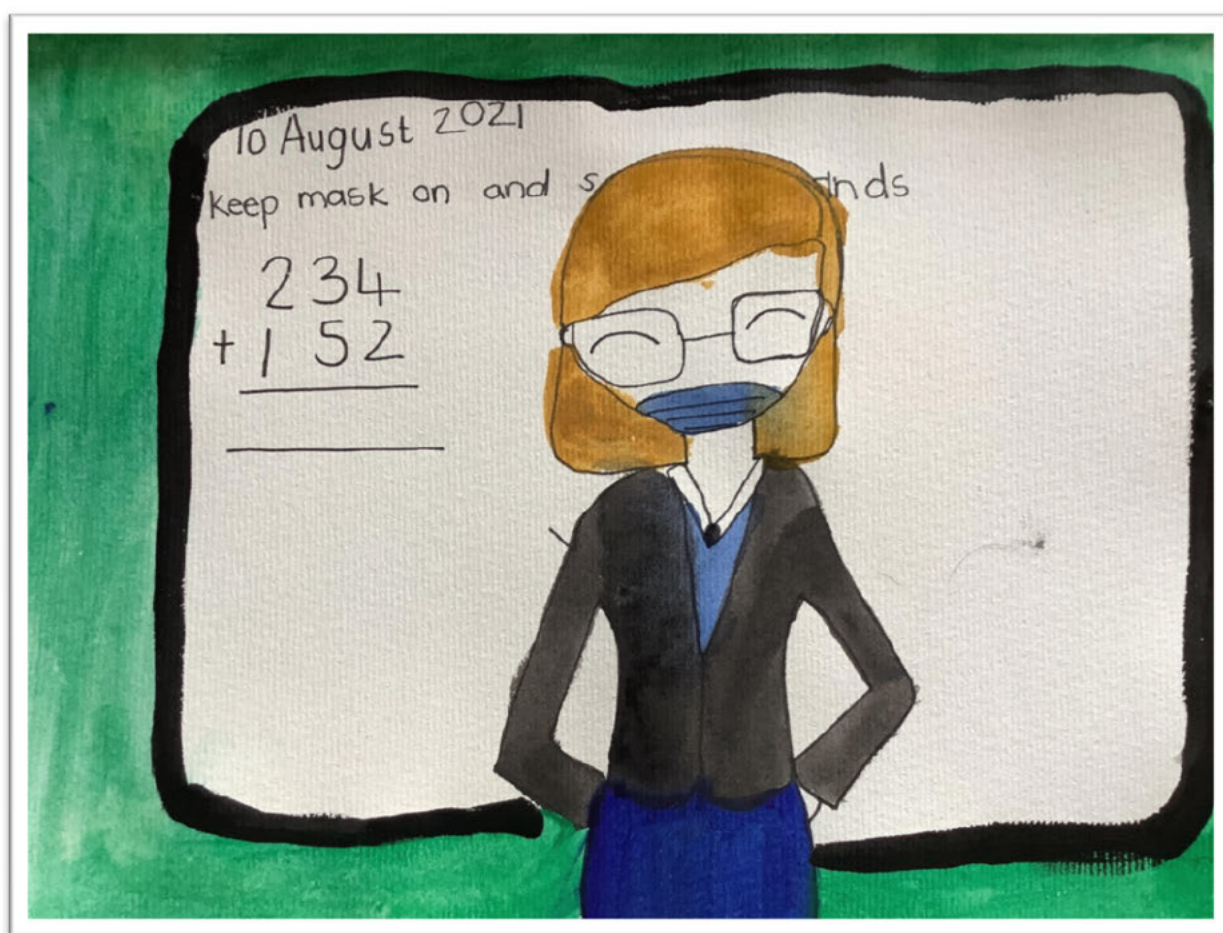
during the Covid-19 pandemic?

- What intervention strategies are needed for foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?

5.6.1 Research Participant 1 – Candy

Figure 24

Research Participant 1 – Candy’s Metaphor Drawing



Note. This metaphor drawing has been created by research participant 1 – Candy.

Researcher: Please explain the meanings of your drawing.

Candy:

“This drawing displays a teacher who is wearing a mask and is

standing in the front of the whiteboard in the classroom and whose hands are behind her back. This signifies that the hands of teachers who are teaching in every classroom during the Covid-19 pandemic are tied when it comes to being in control of teaching and learning during this unprecedented time. It is extremely difficult for teachers to plan and prepare their lessons, activities and assessments in advance. Teachers need ongoing support with curricular and non-curriculum issues. The way we have to teach now is extremely different and challenging.”

Researcher: Are there any words, pictures or phrases that stand out from the rest of your drawing? Please explain the meaning of them.

Candy:

“There is a reminder on the white board which reads: Keep mask on and sanitize hands. The pandemic popped out of absolutely nowhere and therefore learners have to be constantly reminded to follow all Covid-19 protocols as it has a great impact on their lives and well-being.”

Researcher: Express an emotion that your drawing brings forth to you.

Candy:

“This drawing makes me feel very concerned about education of learners during this pandemic.”

Researcher: What role do you think foundation phase teachers in South Africa should play during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Candy:

“A very important role as us teachers hold the future of learners in our hands.”

Researcher: What intervention strategies are needed for foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Candy:

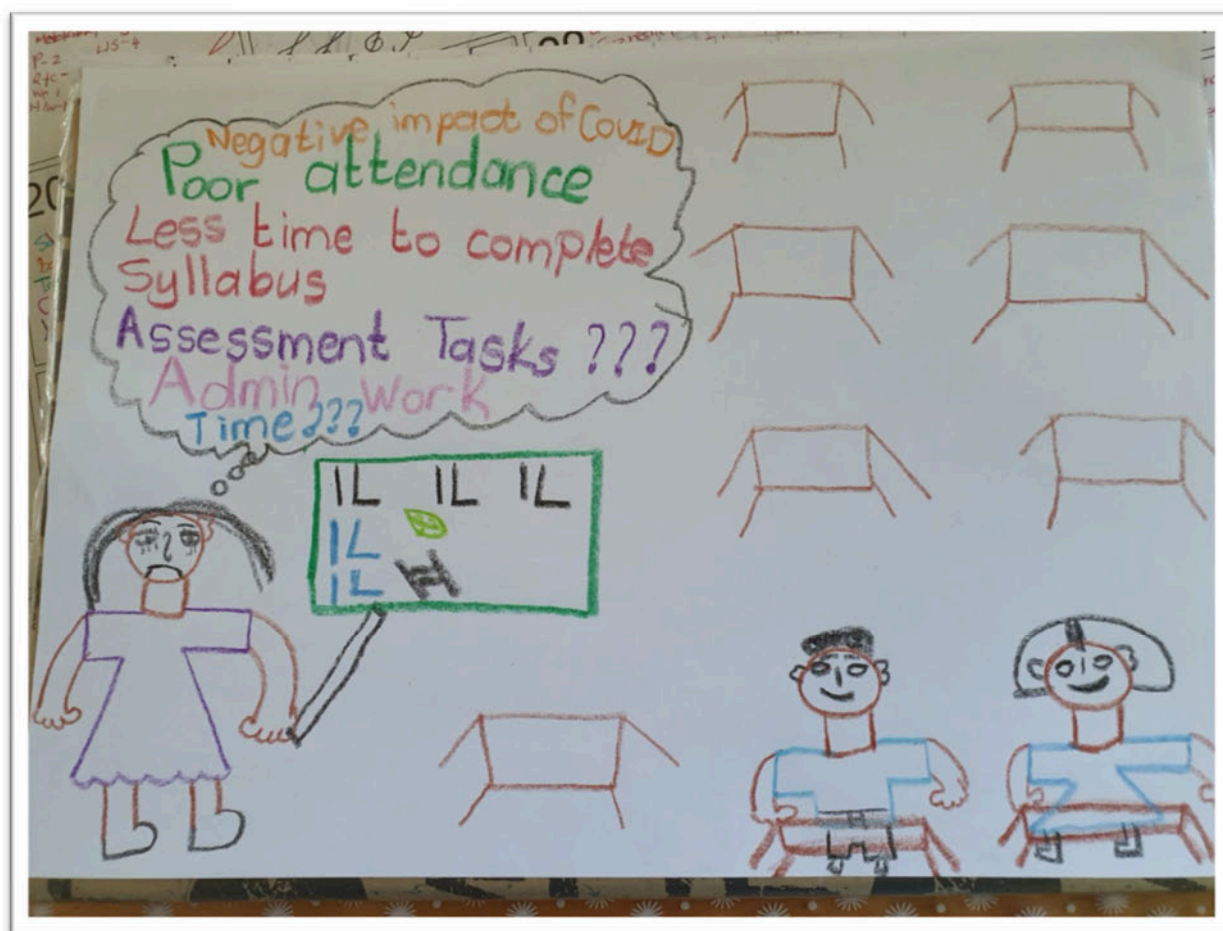
“It will definitely be professional development and ways in which us teachers have to cope with this ongoing virus at schools. School managers should be able to give clear direction on daily activities. No teaching and learning time must be wasted.”

Based on the response received from Research Participant 1 – Candy and her drawing, it is implied that teaching and learning is taking place during the pandemic. However, teachers are not *in control of the teaching and learning process during this unprecedented time*. In addition, Candy places emphasis on *professional development and ways of coping with the ongoing virus at schools* as intervention strategies that are needed for foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.

5.6.2 Research Participant 2 – Tresha

Figure 25

Research Participant 2 – Tresha’s Metaphor Drawing



Note. This metaphor drawing has been created by research participant 2 – Tresha.

Researcher: Please explain the meanings of your drawing.

Tresha:

“I drew a picture of a classroom. Whilst the teacher is teaching, there are many thoughts that are popping up in her mind. Some of which include: negative impact of Covid, poor attendance, less time to complete the syllabus, assessment tasks???, admin work, time?. Teachers are experiencing a variety of challenges and need support from other structures within the schooling environment.”

Researcher: Are there any words, pictures or phrases that stand out from the rest of your drawing? Please explain the meaning of them.

Tresha:

“The teacher stands out – as she is looking very sad while all these thoughts are flowing through her mind.”

Researcher: Express an emotion that your drawing brings forth to you.

Tresha:

“It’s very sad that us teachers have to work during a global pandemic.”

Researcher: What role do you think foundation phase teachers in South Africa should play during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Tresha:

“A very important role as we are the ones that are teaching children to read and write and the basics.”

Researcher: What intervention strategies are needed for foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Tresha:

I have always experienced challenges and I need support from my management, professional development workshops, assistance in planning and something for my mental health as the Covid-19 pandemic is serious.”

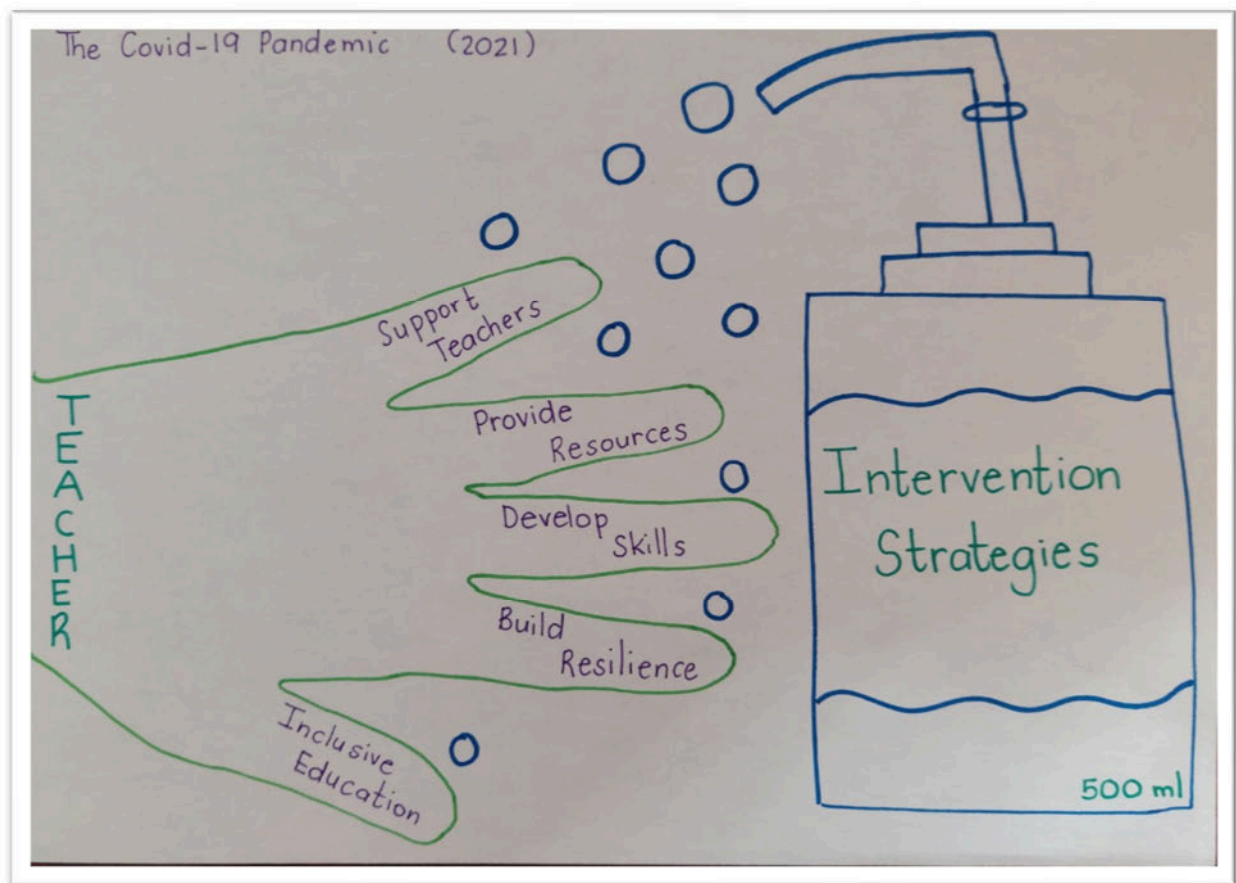
Research Participant 2 - Tresha in her drawing, highlights the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic as thoughts that are flowing through her mind whilst she is engaged in teaching and learning. In addition, the teacher in her drawing appears to be sad and crying. The thoughts and the expression of the teacher in her drawing indicates that Covid-19 drastically affects the well-being of teachers. In her response regarding intervention strategies that are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic,

Tresha indicates that she requires *support from her management, professional development workshops, assistance in planning and something for her mental health.*

5.6.3 Research Participant 3 – Celia

Figure 26

Research Participant 3 – Celia's Metaphor Drawing



Note. This metaphor drawing has been created by research participant 3 – Celia.

Researcher: Please explain the meanings of your drawing.

Celia:

"I drew a picture of a teacher's hand and a sanitizer bottle. The sanitizer bottle represents intervention strategies and the droplets

from the bottle represent each intervention strategy. Just as alcohol-based sanitizers kill Covid-19, intervention strategies will assist teachers to manage working during the Covid-19 pandemic.” The intervention strategies include: Support Teachers, Provide Resources, Develop Skills, Build Resilience, Inclusive Education.”

Researcher: Are there any words, pictures or phrases that stand out from the rest of your drawing? Please explain the meaning of them.

Celia:

“It is the sanitizer bottle which represents intervention strategies.”

Researcher: Express an emotion that your drawing brings forth to you.

Celia:

“Hope. In this unprecedented times, one can only be hopeful.”

Researcher: What role do you think foundation phase teachers in South Africa should play during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Celia:

“Very active and supportive role. We have little children that need us to be the best we can for them.”

Researcher: What intervention strategies are needed for foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Celia:

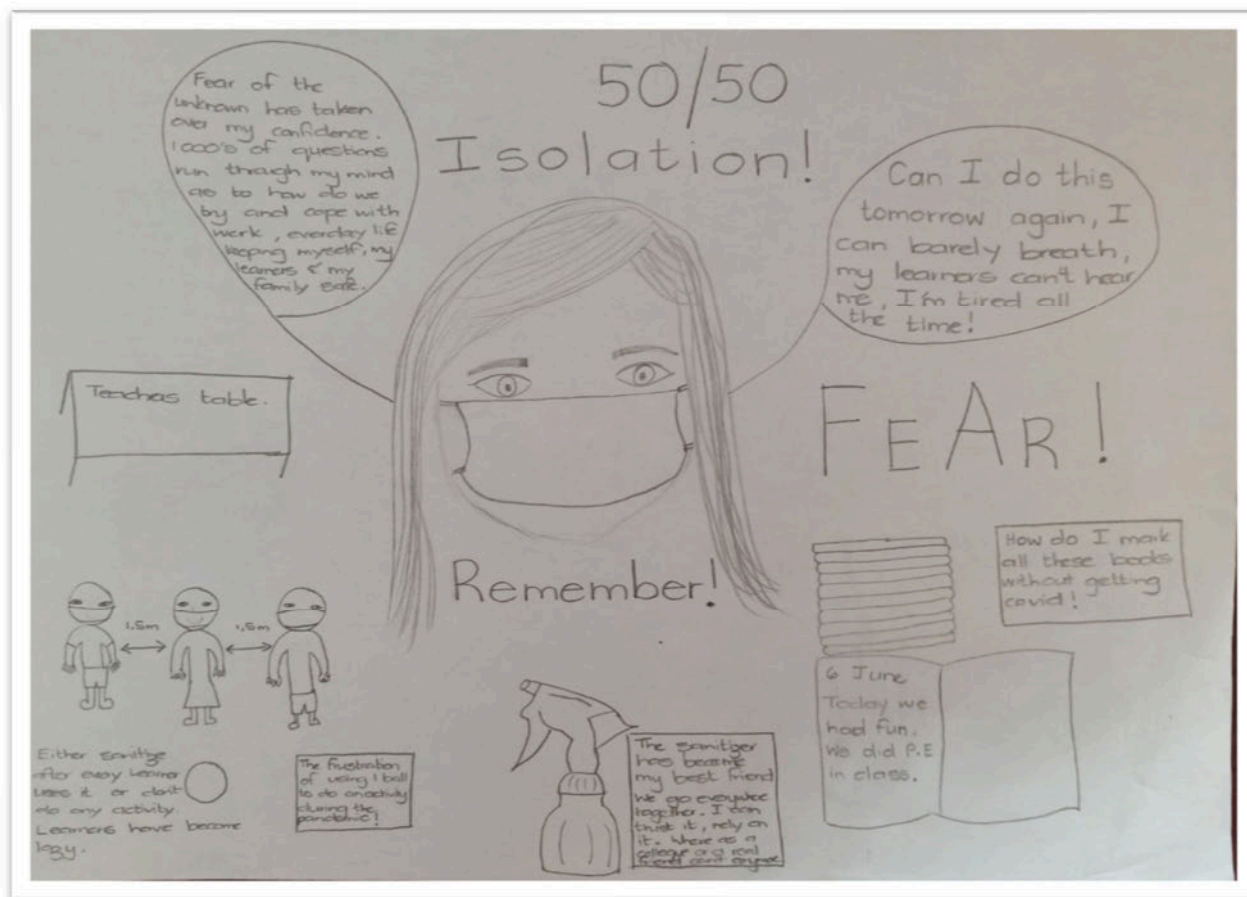
“As mentioned in the drawing, we need teacher support, resources, enhancing our skills and knowledge, assisting us to build resilience and inclusive education.”

Based on the metaphor drawing created by Celia, it clearly shows how intervention strategies will assist foundation phase teachers in managing working during the Covid-19 pandemic. The sanitizer bottle in the drawing represents intervention strategies and droplets from this bottle represents the following intervention strategies: *support teachers, provide resources, develop skills, build resilience, and inclusive education*. Once the bottle is squeezed onto a teacher's hand, teachers will be able to receive intervention strategies that are needed to support foundation phase teachers, and ultimately manage working during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa.

5.6.4 Research Participant 4 – Yara

Figure 27

Research Participant 4 – Yara's Metaphor Drawing



Note. This metaphor drawing has been created by research participant 4 – Yara.

Researcher: Please explain the meanings of your drawing.

Yara:

“This drawing is just not one picture, rather multiple pictures which have different meanings. The reason I drew this is because the Covid-19 pandemic is like a puzzle and we as teachers are still figuring it out. It is extremely challenging working during an unprecedented time. I have a large face of a teacher who has many thoughts. A teacher has multiple roles to play even though she is fearful of the unknown.”

Researcher: Are there any words, pictures or phrases that stand out from the rest of your drawing? Please explain the meaning of them.

Yara:

“It definitely the words: Fear of the unknown has taken over my confidence. 1000s of questions run through my mind as to how do we try and cope with work, everyday life, keeping myself, my learners & my family safe.”

Researcher: Express an emotion that your drawing brings forth to you.

Yara:

“Fear! I am extremely fearful!”

Researcher: What role do you think foundation phase teachers in South Africa should play during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Yara:

“We have to play multiple roles. Our priority is to protect ourselves and our learners. We have to teach learners to follow all Covid-19 protocols, complete our duties as effectively as possible and eventually not burn out.”

Researcher: What intervention strategies are needed for foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Yara:

“Workshops on how to cope during the global pandemic, clear direction from management, mini courses on how to teach during a global pandemic and professional development training.”

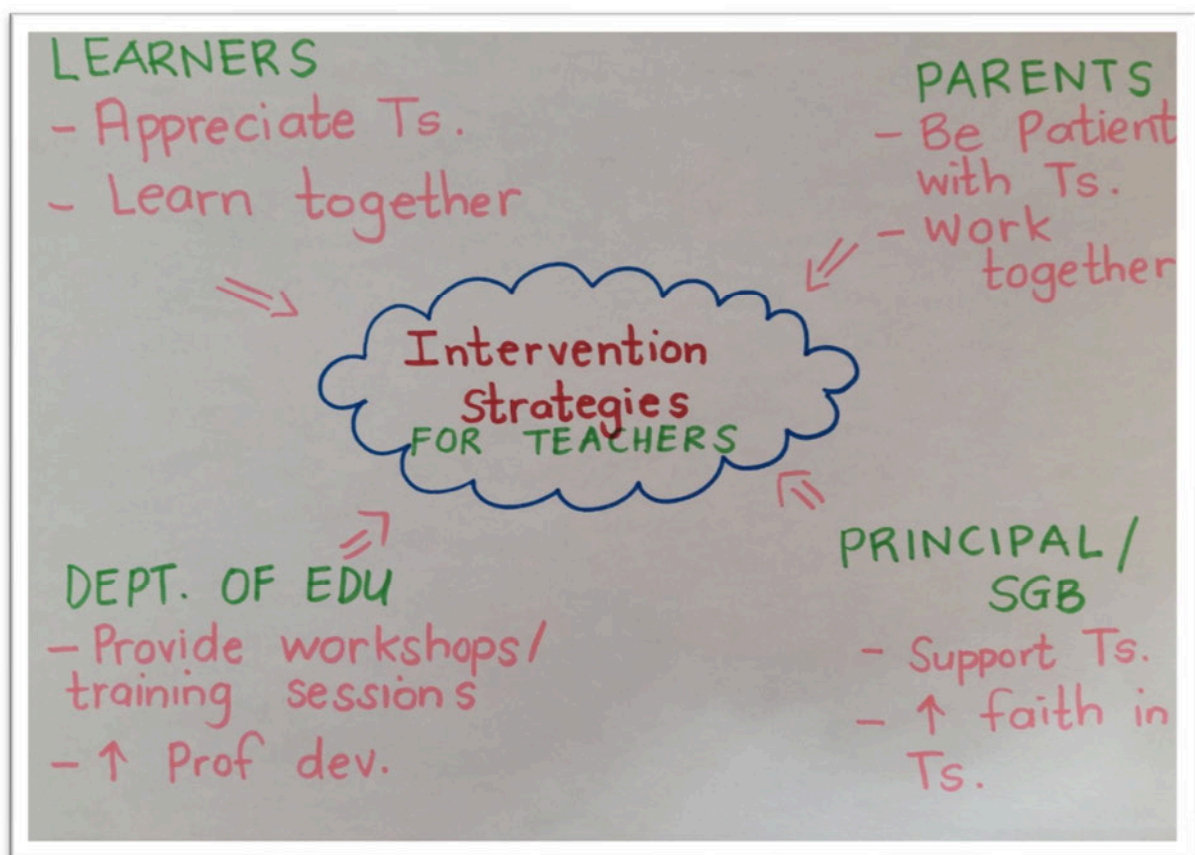
The Covid-19 pandemic to Research Participant 4 – Yara, is like a puzzle that still needs piecing together. A puzzle in essence develops problem-solving skills. There is a picture of a teacher with her mask on and whose eyes appear to be filled with fear. In Yara’s response,

she indicates that she feels *extremely fearful* of coping with *work* and *everyday life*, as well as, *keeping* herself, her *learners* and her *family safe*. Yara indicates that she requires *workshops on how to cope during the global pandemic*, *clear direction from management*, *mini courses on how to teach during a global pandemic* and *professional development training* as intervention strategies that are needed for foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.

5.6.5 Research Participant 5 – Wendy

Figure 28

Research Participant 5 – Wendy's Metaphor Drawing



Note. This metaphor drawing has been created by research participant 5 – Wendy.

Researcher: Please explain the meanings of your drawing.

Wendy:

“My drawing shows different intervention strategies from various stakeholders in the education context.”

Researcher: Are there any words, pictures or phrases that stand out from the rest of your drawing? Please explain the meaning of them.

Wendy:

“The various stakeholders: parents, principal and SGB, Department of Education and learners.”

Researcher: Express an emotion that your drawing brings forth to you.

Wendy:

“Optimistic. I believe that if we all work together, we can overcome the virus.”

Researcher: What role do you think foundation phase teachers in South Africa should play during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Wendy:

“To give off their very best during this unprecedented time. To make teaching and learning fun and engaging is my biggest aim. To treat the learners in their classroom as their own, and therefore protect them to the best of their ability.”

Researcher: What intervention strategies are needed for foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Wendy:

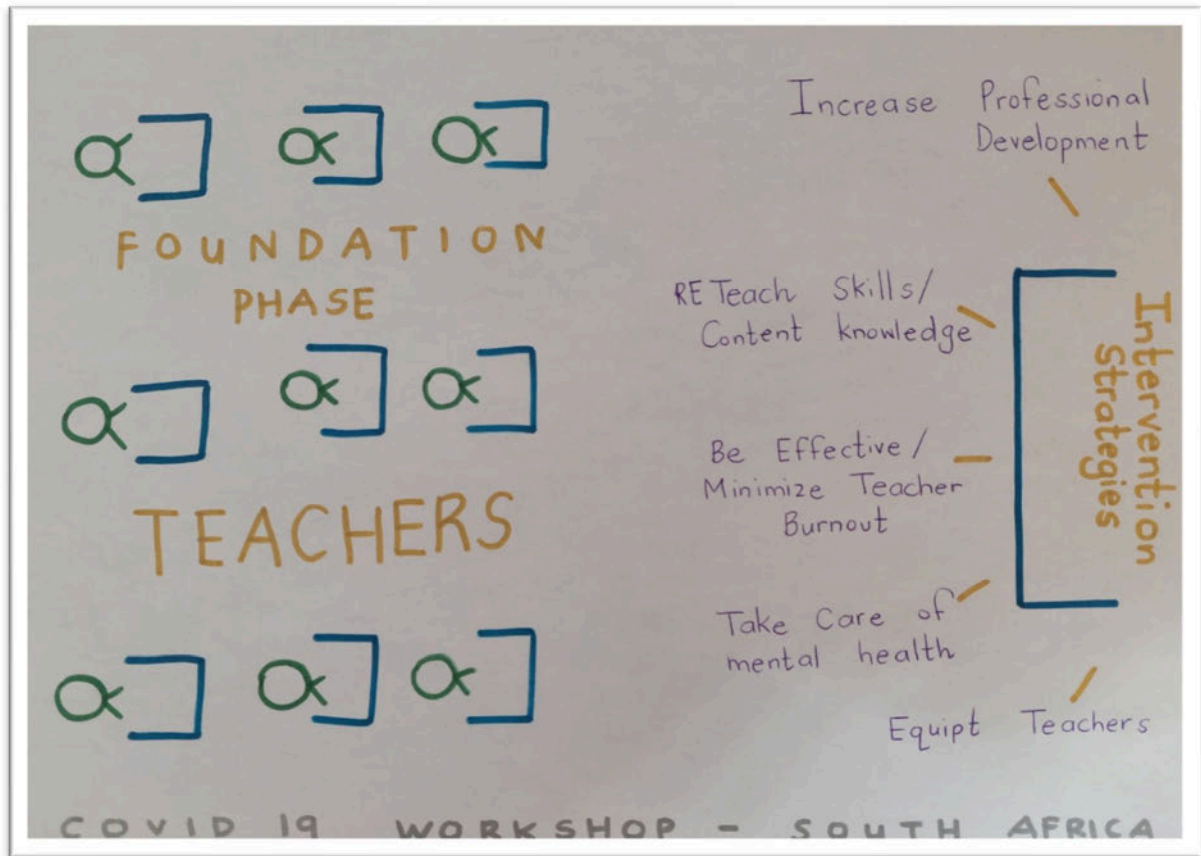
“Workshops, training and professional development. New ways to plan and prepare lessons and assessments. New ways to teach the curriculum effectively in a shorter time. New ways to take care of mental health. It is important to keep abreast with the latest news and information related to the Covid-19 pandemic. I often read articles and share them with my colleagues.”

The metaphor drawing created by Research Participant 5 – Wendy, emphasizes the importance of different stakeholders in the educational context. These stakeholders are equally responsible for providing intervention strategies that are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. In her response, Wendy highlights the following intervention strategies: *workshops, training and professional development; new ways of planning and preparing lessons and assessments; new ways of teaching the curriculum effectively; new ways of taking care of mental health issues; and keeping abreast with the latest news and information related to the Covid-19 pandemic.*

5.6.6 Research Participant 6 – Fekile

Figure 29

Research Participant 6 – Fekile’s Metaphor Drawing



Note. This metaphor drawing has been created by research participant 6 – Fekile.

Researcher: Please explain the meanings of your drawing.

Fekile:

“This picture shows a workshop that is taking place in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. All foundation phase teachers are seated following the social distancing protocol, and are receiving a workshop on intervention strategies. The intervention strategies as mentioned in the drawing include: Increase Professional Development, Reteach Skills/Content Knowledge, Be Effective/Minimize Teacher Burnout, Take Care of mental health, Equip Teachers.”

Researcher: Are there any words, pictures or phrases that stand out from the rest of your drawing? Please explain the meaning of them.

Fekile:

“The so-called teacher’s desk: Intervention Strategies. This shows that intervention strategies are very much needed.”

Researcher: Express an emotion that your drawing brings forth to you.

Fekile:

“Hopefulness. I say this because if we are to receive intervention strategies, we would become hopeful during this time of history.”

Researcher: What role do you think foundation phase teachers in South Africa should play during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Fekile:

“Foundation phase teachers must be resilient to continue working during a global pandemic. They must be flexible and adaptable in this everchanging context.”

Researcher: What intervention strategies are needed for foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Fekile:

“As mentioned in the picture, intervention strategies must include: an ever-increasing teacher professional development, workshops, training, re-teaching of knowledge and skills, being and staying effective, minimizing teacher burnout, taking care of mental health and equipping teachers with resources. ”

Research Participant 6 – Fekile’s drawing displays a workshop that is taking place for foundation phase teachers in South Africa. In this workshop, teachers are following Covid-19 protocols by being socially distanced, and they are receiving intervention strategies that are needed for foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. These

intervention strategies include: *ever-increasing teacher professional development, workshops, training, re-teaching of knowledge and skills, being and staying effective, minimizing teacher burnout, taking care of mental health and equipping teachers with resources.*

5.6.7 Research Findings of Theme Three:

Intervention Strategies that are Needed to Support Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa

The researcher sought interest in providing intervention strategies that are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic by using the data generation method: Metaphor Drawings. **Sub-themes** that have emerged from **Theme Three**, include: ***Building Resilience Amid the Global Pandemic; Continuous Professional Development; Competencies Required to Manage Working During the Covid-19 Pandemic; Importance of Mental Preparedness; Strategies for Coping with the Crisis; Ensuring Effectiveness During Daily Activities; Continuous Inclusive Educational Support Strategies; Role of Support Structures; Self-Directed Learning; and Use of Different Pedagogical Approaches.***

Maree (2021) emphasises that the Covid-19 pandemic has arrived at a challenging time in world history and therefore, educationalists in South Africa need to join forces with all educational stakeholders to analyse the current situation and devise strategies to “achieve the most appropriate style of teaching and learning at this time in history of teaching and learning in South Africa”. As the pandemic continues, foundation phase teachers in South Africa need intervention strategies to support them during the Covid-19 pandemic. This research study indicated that the research participants need the following intervention strategies to support them during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa:

5.6.7.1 Building Resilience Amid the Global Pandemic

According to Wuest and Subramanian (2021) “resilience is the ability to adapt well, cope and rebound in the face of challenges, whether a minor hassle or major life event.”. Day and Gu (2007) indicate that “the realities of teaching and context plays a significant role in resilience.”. Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers were challenged to be flexible and effectively adaptable to changing circumstances. The research participants understanding of this is illustrated below:

Celia states:

“... assisting us to build resilience ...”

Wuest and Subramanian (2021) support the view echoed by Celia, as they indicate that to be resilient within these dynamic contexts, resilience needs to be nurtured and an individual should take an active role in building and sustaining their capacity for resilience.

5.6.7.2 Continuous Professional Development

Professional development in education is defined as “activities that develop an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher” (OECD, 2009). This definition recognises that development is a life-long process and that it may occur in various forms. The research participants indicate the following in light of professional development:

Candy states:

“It will definitely be professional development...”

Tresha says:

“... professional development workshops...”

Yara mentions:

“...mini courses on how to teach during a global pandemic and professional development training.”

Wendy expresses:

““Workshops, training and professional development.”

Fekile adds:

“...an ever-increasing teacher professional development, workshops, training...”

It is noted that professional development is always needed in the educational environment, however, it is needed more during the Covid-19 pandemic. Foundation phase teachers need to keep updating their development on an on-going basis. As well as, adapting to new situations.

5.6.7.3 Competencies Required to Manage Working During the Covid-19 Pandemic

In relation to competencies that is required by FPTs to manage working during the Covid-19 pandemic, the research participants reveal the following:

Celia notes:

“... enhancing our skills and knowledge ...”

Fekile suggests:

“... re-teaching of knowledge and skills ...”

From the responses, it is evident that teachers need to update their knowledge and skills base as competencies, so they are able to manage working during the Covid-19 pandemic.

5.6.7.4 Importance of Mental Preparedness

Baker et al., (2021) articulates that teacher stress related to the Covid-19 pandemic drastically affects their well-being and consequently relates to “poorer mental health” issues. There is a critical need for supporting the well-being of teachers and those individuals in the education system, specifically foundation phase teachers, to “prevent significant adverse consequences” (Baker et al., 2021). In addition, Hidalgo-Andrade et al. (2021) indicate that the reason for the change in teacher’s mental health conditions are associated with their working conditions. It is evident that many teachers were unprepared to face unprecedented challenges related to the pandemic, due to the lack of mental preparedness (Hidalgo-Andrade et al., 2021). The research participants reveal the following:

Tresha adds:

“... and something for my mental health as the Covid-19 pandemic is serious.”

Wendy indicates:

“New ways to take care of mental health.”

Fekile notes:

“...taking care of mental health ...”

From the responses above, Tresha, Wendy and Fekile need support with regards to mental preparedness.

5.6.7.5 Strategies for Coping with the Crisis

Covid-19 is a new concept that has brought much damage to the education system in South Africa, and therefore, since it is here to stay, teachers need to learn how to cope with the crisis (Wilichoski & Cobo, 2020). The responses reveal the following:

Candy states:

“... ways in which us teachers have to cope with this ongoing virus at schools.”

Yara says:

“Workshops on how to cope during the global pandemic...”

From the responses above, it is evident that Candy and Yara need strategies for coping with the crisis, as this should be used as an opportunity to improve the teaching and learning situation, therefore, making the education system stronger.

5.6.7.6 Ensuring Effectiveness During Daily Activities

According to Wilichoski and Cobo (2020), special psychological care needs to be given to those teachers who are most vulnerable to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, so they could cope with the crisis, and therefore, perform effectively in their daily activities. This is of utmost importance, as, teachers, more especially FPTs are currently shaping the “society of the future” (Ozamiz-Etxebarria, 2021). Planning is a key aspect in ensuring effectiveness. The following responses relate to planning as a need of ensuring effectiveness during daily activities:

Tresha mentions:

“... assistance in planning ...”

Wendy states:

“New ways to plan and prepare lessons and assessments.”

It is evident that planning plays a key role in ensuring effectiveness during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to planning, sustaining resources for teaching and learning plays a key role in ensuring effectiveness during the Covid-19 pandemic. The following research participants reveal the following:

Celia positions:

“we need ... resources ...”

Fekile expresses:

“... being and staying effective ... equipping teachers with resources ...”

Both planning and resources play a key role for teachers in ensuring they are working effectively during the Covid-19 pandemic.

5.6.7.7 Continuous Inclusive Educational Support Strategies

Motitswe and Mokhele (2013) indicate that inclusive education is necessary for “strengthening the capacity of education systems”. Within the South African context, inclusive education is defined as the process of addressing the needs of all learners, thereby, reducing learning barriers within the schooling environment (Department of Basic Education, 2005). The South African policy entitled *White Paper 6*, indicates that schools should effectively respond to the diversity of all learners and provide equal opportunity to all. The response from Celia below indicates the following:

Celia mentions:

“...inclusive education ...”

From the response above, it is evident that continuous inclusive educational support strategies are needed to support FPTs during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa.

5.6.7.8 Role of Support Structures

It is noted that stakeholders within the education system have found difficulty in meeting new educational demands during the pandemic, and therefore, should have adequate training and resources to address challenges of adapting to a new normal. As the Covid-19 pandemic ravages the world, it is essential that the role of all support structures should be clearly defined, to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (OECD, 2020). The following FPTs indicate the need for support during the pandemic:

Candy states:

“School managers should be able to give clear direction on daily activities.”

Tresha indicates:

“... I need support from my management.”

Celia mentions:

“... we need teacher support ...”

Yara expresses:

“... clear direction from management ...”

From the responses above, it clearly indicates that support structures and support are crucial elements for FPTs during the Covid-19 pandemic (Wilichoski & Cobo, 2020).

5.6.7.9 Self-Directed Learning

Knowles (1975, p. 18) describes self-directed learning as “a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes.”. It is evident that Wendy has taken the initiative to enhance her development. The response below reveals:

Wendy positions:

“It is important to keep abreast with the latest news and information related to the Covid-19 pandemic. I often read articles and share them with my colleagues.”

Self-directed learning is needed to support FPTs, and more so during the Covid-19 pandemic.

5.6.7.10 Use of Different Pedagogical Approaches

Alexander’s (2009, p. 175) recognises that teacher should use “different teaching approaches to accommodate the varied learning styles in the classrooms as an intervention to the diversity”. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about various other challenges and it is of utmost importance that teachers accommodate all learners through various types of pedagogical approaches. In relation to this theme, the respondent indicates the following:

Wendy indicates:

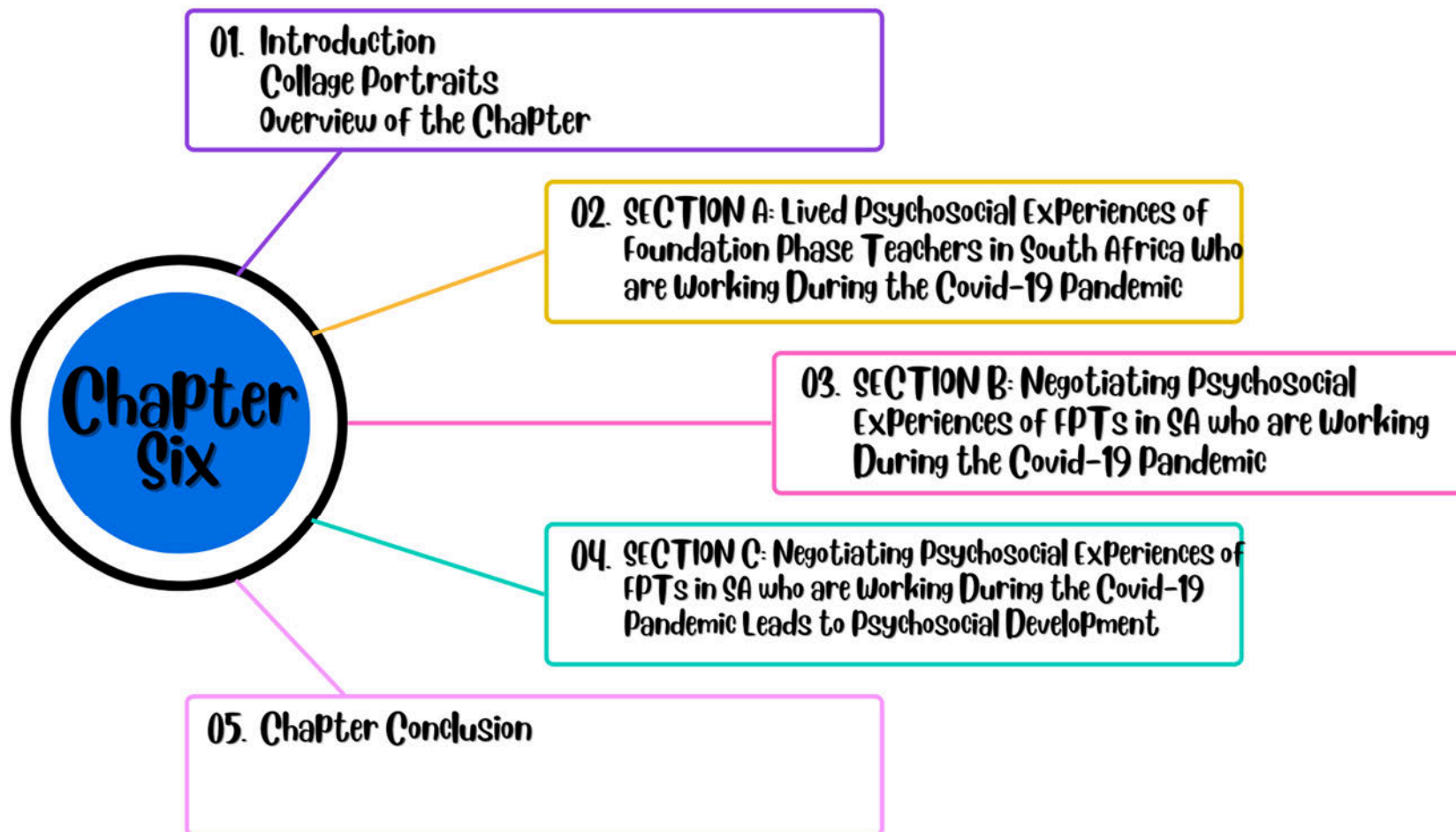
“New ways to teach the curriculum effectively in a shorter time.”

The nature of the Covid-19 pandemic is unstable, and therefore Wendy indicates that *new ways* are needed *to teach ... effectively*.

5.7 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher presented, interpreted and analysed data that was generated through the following three data generation methods, namely: Collage Inquiry, Semi-Structured Interviews and Metaphor Drawings. This chapter highlighted the knowledge and understandings that foundation phase teachers in South Africa have on the Covid-19 pandemic; the challenges of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic; and intervention strategies that are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. The data/thematic analysis presented themes and sub-themes throughout Section A, B and C.

In the succeeding chapter, CHAPTER SIX, a further and final analysis will be presented. This chapter will highlight the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through this exploration and understanding, the researcher will analyse data theoretically which is supported by relevant literature.



CHAPTER SIX

A DEEPER ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented, interpreted and analysed data that was generated through the following three data generation methods, namely: Collage Inquiry, Semi-Structured Interviews and Metaphor Drawings. That chapter highlighted the knowledge and understandings that foundation phase teachers in South Africa have on the Covid-19 pandemic; the challenges of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic; and intervention strategies that are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. Data was analysed through data/thematic analysis and themes and sub-themes were presented throughout the chapter.

In this chapter, the researcher presents a final analysis in order to answer the main research question: *What are the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?* In analysing this question, the researcher adopts Erik Erikson's *Psychosocial Development Theory* and significant literature as a guide to frame this chapter. *Collage Portraiture* is an analysis tool that is used by qualitative researchers to analyse data into themes. In this chapter, collage portraits for each of the six research participants is presented. The main focus of the collage portraits is to 'support' and 'enliven' the analysis by 'producing new knowledge and interpretation' (Gerstenblaat, 2013). Throughout each collage portrait, the researcher endeavoured for the research participant's psychosocial experiences of working as foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic to be significantly brought out authentically, creatively and carefully.

6.2 Collage Portraits

The collage portraits for the six FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic are as follows:

Figure 30

Research Participant 1 – Candy's Collage Portrait



Note. This collage portrait has been created by the researcher.

Figure 31

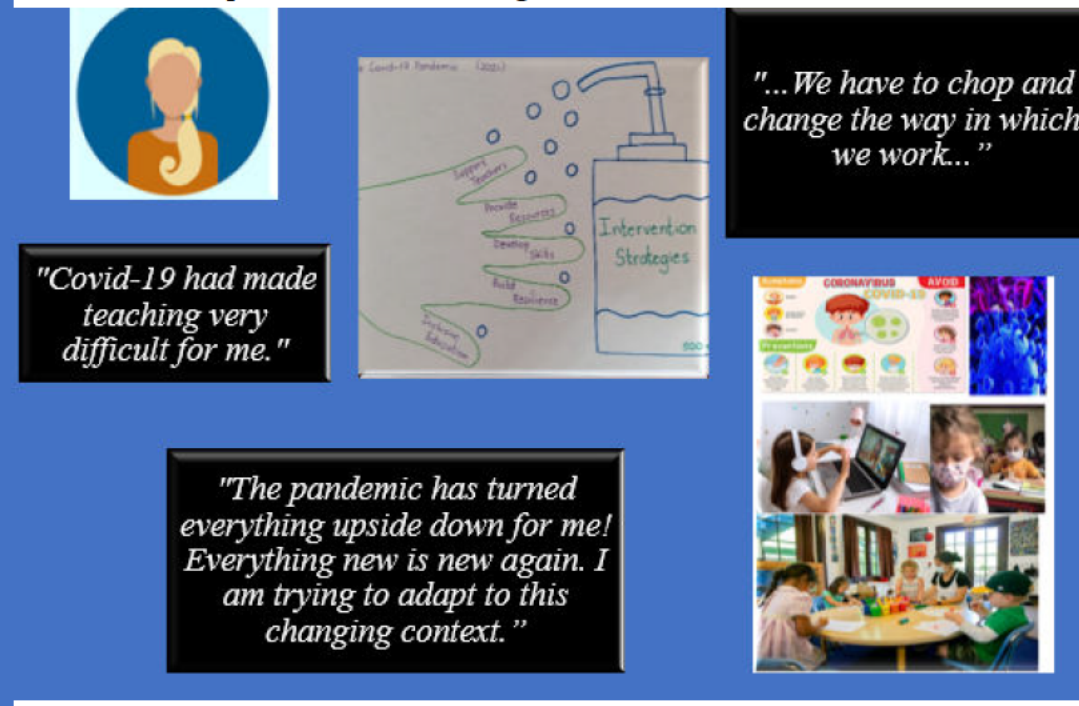
Research Participant 2 – Tresha's Collage Portrait



Note. This collage portrait has been created by the researcher.

Figure 32

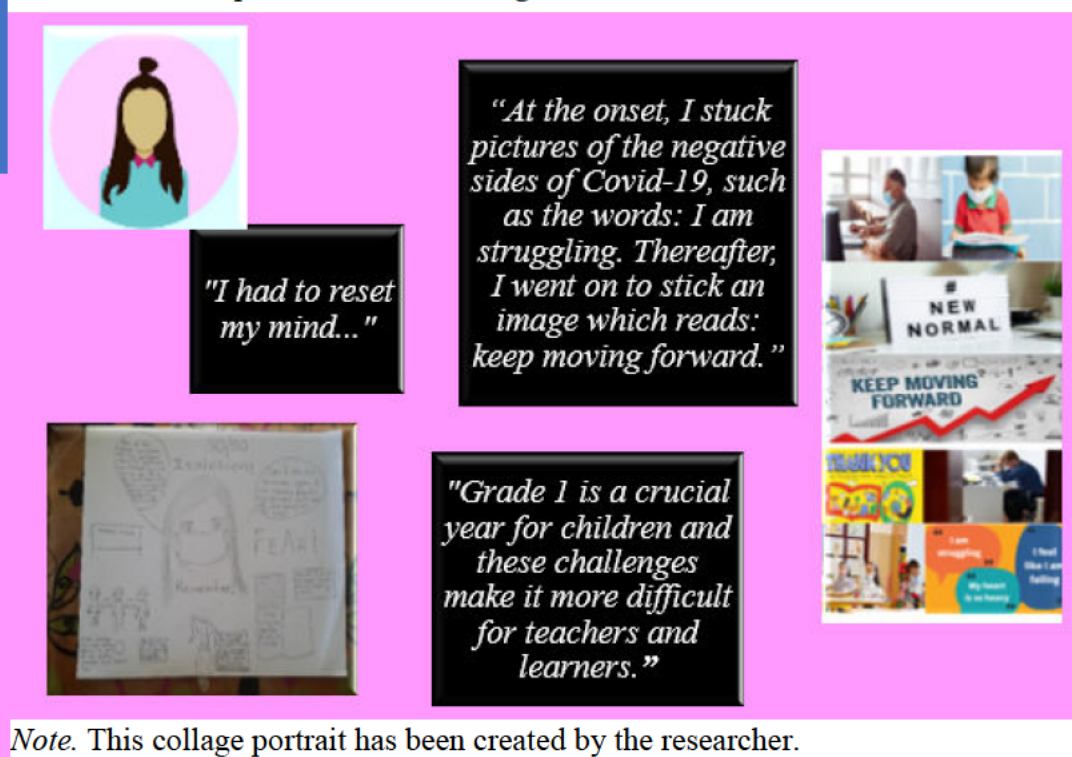
Research Participant 3 – Celia's Collage Portrait



Note. This collage portrait has been created by the researcher.

Figure 33

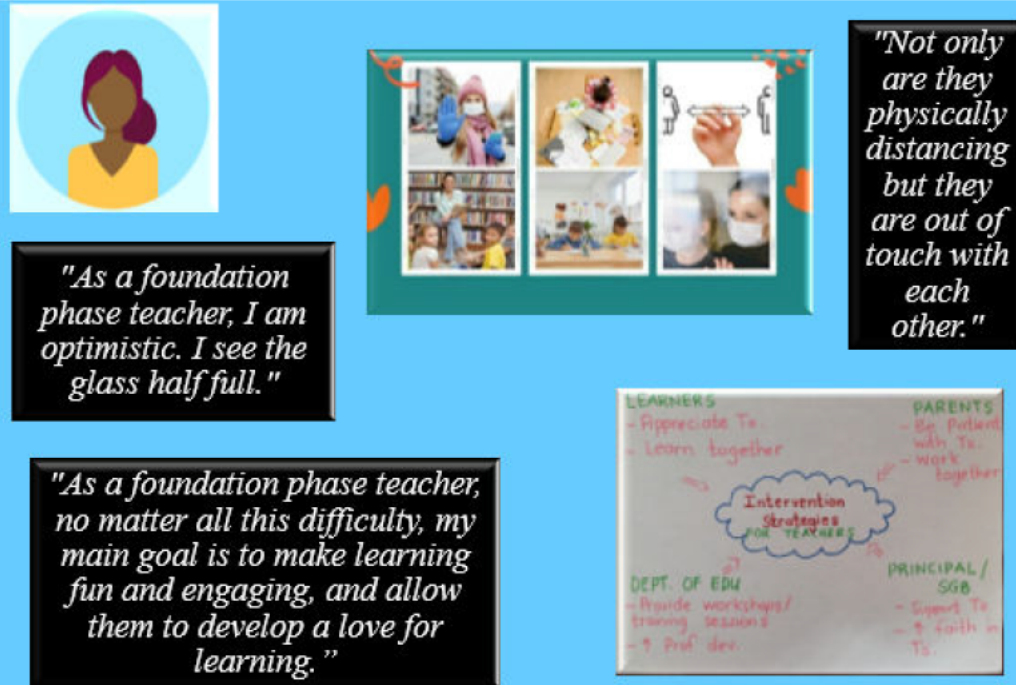
Research Participant 4 – Yara's Collage Portrait



Note. This collage portrait has been created by the researcher.

Figure 34

Research Participant 5 – Wendy's Collage Portrait



Note. This collage portrait has been created by the researcher.

Figure 35

Research Participant 6 – Fekile's Collage Portrait



Note. This collage portrait has been created by the researcher.

6.3 Overview of the Chapter

This chapter is divided into three sections: **SECTION A**, **SECTION B** and **SECTION C**.

- **SECTION A**

In this section, the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic is explored through themes.

- **SECTION B**

In this section, the negotiation of foundation phase teachers' psychosocial experiences of working during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa is theoretically explored, and encapsulated by a pantoum poem.

- **SECTION C**

In this section, foundation phase teacher's negotiation of psychosocial experiences of working during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa leading to psychosocial development is explored.

SECTION A

6.4 Lived Psychosocial Experiences of Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa During the Covid-19 Pandemic

The researcher sought interest in exploring and understanding the lived psychosocial experiences of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic. **Themes** that have emerged, include: ***Emotions; Social Relations; Societal Disruptions; Learning Experiences*** and ***Support***.

6.4.1 Emotions

According to the American Psychological Association (2022), emotion is defined as “a complex reaction pattern, involving experiential, behavioural, and physiological elements, by which an individual attempts to deal with a personally significant matter or event”. Furthermore, emotion are mental states associated with behaviour, feelings and thoughts responses of engagement with the world (American Psychological Association, 2022). The research participants experienced the following emotions whilst working during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa:

Candy expresses:

“Stressed! Very stressed. Not knowing the unknown is a very stressful feeling. I also feel like I am not in control of anything and it’s not a good feeling... [I] feel very concerned about education of learners during this pandemic... the hands of teachers who are teaching in every classroom during the Covid-19 pandemic are tied when it comes to being in control of teaching and learning during this unprecedented time.

Tresha states:

“[The] emotional words: crying, lonely, scared, depressed, angry,

paranoid, negative and positive ... emphasize the mixed feelings that I have experienced... It's very sad that us teachers have to work during a global pandemic."

Celia feels:

"Very sad! Teachers are looked down now more than ever. Parents are playing a very crucial role of assisting their children with learning and therefore they have lost respect for the fantastic work that teachers really do. I feel as if no one appreciates us and no one stopped to think about the way we feel and our mental health..."

Yara confirms:

"My heart is so heavy'. As a teacher, I am constantly working and living in fear. I often feel stressed about getting Covid-19 and passing it on to my family or my learners at school."

Wendy senses:

"Optimistic. I believe that if we all work together, we can overcome the virus."

Fekile is:

"Angry! The nature of this virus is tormenting... I once was a victim of Covid-19 and I am very scared of the deadly virus."

It is evident that all the research participants experienced a variety of emotions whilst teaching during the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic. Candy indicated that she felt *very stressed* as she is *not in control of anything*. Tresha is pervaded with *mixed feelings*. Celia is *very sad*. Yara indicates that her *heart is so heavy*. This implies that she is depressed and weighted down by sorrow. She adds that she often feels *stressed*. Fekile is *angry* and *scared*. On the other hand, Wendy is rather positive as she feels *optimistic*. Day and Qing (2009) maintain that there is an inextricable link between teacher's social contexts and their emotions. The nature of the Covid-19 virus is ever-changing and therefore, the emotions of

the foundation phase teachers may change. Current research on the Covid-19 pandemic has indicated that teachers' psychological challenges resulted in producing more negative emotions. However, those teachers that have managed potential intrapersonal conflicts, produced more positive emotions (Panadero et al., 2022).

6.4.2 Social Relations

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a dynamic interruption with regards to social relations between individuals (Jones & Kessler, 2020). Smith and Lim (2020) indicate that strong measures of social distancing and restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in significant changes to social relationships. The research participants experienced the following social relations during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa:

Candy says:

“As a foundation phase teacher, I have to be supportive of learners, share their good and bad experiences and celebrate learners progress they make during this unforeseen time of Covid-19... In between writing, this little girl sneezed under her mask and everyone in the classroom said: BLESS YOU, and thereafter she sanitized her hands. This is our ‘new normal’.”

Tresha recalls:

“Previously, I allowed learners to come up to the board to complete math sums, but not anymore. We are extremely restricted. I just ask them verbally from the front of the classroom for the next step.”

Celia notes:

“The learners that needed extra help would stay inside and practice their formation of letters. I would hold their hand while they practice their writing which I cannot do anymore.”

Yara acknowledges:

“There is no physical contact taking place and this makes it especially difficult in grade 1. Some learners that attend my school, do not go to grade R the previous year and many are unsure of how to hold a pencil correctly. Grade 1 is a crucial year for children and these challenges make it more difficult for teachers and learners.”

Wendy states:

“... Not only are [people] physically distancing but they are out of touch with each other. We cannot hug our learners anymore... As a foundation phase teacher, no matter all this difficulty, my main goal is to make learning fun and engaging, and allow them to develop a love for learning.”

Fekile notices:

“... two learners are greeting each other with their elbows. Things really have changed! ... The learners are like strangers to each other.”

Evidently, the social relations have changed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Candy takes on a very supportive role of being a foundation phase teacher. When a learner sneezes in the classroom, other don't mock her, rather, they say *bless you*. This shows the care and support Candy shares with her learners. Tresha, Yara and Celia experience social changes due to Covid-19 restrictions. Tresha does not allow *learners to come up to the board to complete math sums*, rather, she asks *them verbally from the front of the classroom for the next step as they are extremely restricted*. In addition, Yara feels challenged by the restrictions as it makes teaching and learning *more difficult* especially because she is a grade 1 teacher and is unable to hold her learners' hands when writing. Celia shares the same issue of not being able to hold learners' hands while they *practice their formation of letters*. Wendy indicates that not only is socially distancing taking place, but, people *are out of touch with each other*. Fekile shares the same sentiment when she says *the learners are like strangers to each other*. Social relations will continue to change over and over again during the unstable global pandemic.

6.4.3 Societal Disruptions

Across the world, the Covid-19 pandemic has wrought substantial societal disruptions (Collie, 2021). In light of this, teachers, including foundation phase teachers faced significant adversities in relation to their work whilst navigating their own adversities. The Covid-19 pandemic is unstable and requires sudden shifts in working, therefore, foundation phase teachers' experiences are complex and multiple. Malinen at al., (2009) indicate that the negative impact of major societal disruptions increases the potential for teachers to experience maladaptive outcomes. However, as the Covid-19 pandemic continues, different societal disruptions will continue and result in different outcomes. The societal disruptions experienced by the FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic are as follows:

Candy recognizes:

“This pandemic has really changed the way in which I teach on a daily basis... The way we have to teach now is extremely different and challenging.”

Tresha mentions:

“I have one child that has never went to school before and it took me a really long time to teach him single sounds and the pencil grip. It was difficult because I could not physically hold this child's hand.”

Celia states:

“Covid-19 had made teaching very difficult for me. I always dreamed that when I start my career, I would be the best teacher I could be and I was very upset about not getting to do everything with my kids that I had planned to do at the beginning of the year. I am big on planning and I have so many dreams and goals. The things that I really wanted to do with the kids, I was not allowed to. It was a big challenge to accept that it doesn't always go the way you like it to go... Covid-19 has changed my schooling experiences a lot... Learners now point to the objects on the screen and count. For the number 8, I would ask learners to run around their table 8 times or

wake up and sit down 8 times. There was a sudden shift from physically counting the counters to watching the counters moving on a screen. The underperforming learners were unable to keep up with the activity. I tried to take only those learners and do an intervention for each one of them. We have to chop and change the way in which we work.”

Yara notes:

“... the learners... [are] ... a constant reminder of what South African teachers are facing in the classroom which was already filled with difficulty.”

Wendy articulates:

“We are really restricted in the things we do on a daily basis and have limited resources as a school. We must always follow all Covid-19 protocols correctly, like, social distancing, wearing masks and sanitizing. I always remind my learners if they have any symptoms, like, cough or fever, they need to stay home. However, this is especially difficult for little children who are 5 or 6 years old.”

Fekile recalls:

“During the first lockdown, I could not give my learners online tuition because they come from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds and do not have access to cellphones, laptops and the internet. We made learner work packs and distributed it to learners.”

All research participants indicated that they were affected by societal disruptions. Candy indicated that *the way in which I teach on a daily basis* has changed. Tresha has difficulty in her teaching due to restrictions. She is unable to *physically hold a child’s hand*. Celia thought that she *would be the best teacher* when she started her *career*. However, this changed when Covid-19 came about. Whatever she *had planned*, she was not allowed to do. Her *schooling experiences* changed drastically. Yara emphasizes that the Covid-19 pandemic makes teaching and learning more difficult. Wendy articulates that the *protocols* that Covid-19 has

brought, is *especially difficult for little children who are 5 or 6 years old* to understand. Fekile indicated that due to her learners coming from *socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds*, teaching and learning did not occur *during the first lockdown* and therefore, there was a loss in teaching and learning time. It is evident that societal disruptions play a key role in FPTs psychosocial experiences.

6.4.4 Learning Experiences

Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021) state that despite the fact that teachers are faced with overwhelming challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic, they have created numerous opportunities to learn, grow and develop. The FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic have experienced the following learnings from the pandemic:

Candy reflects:

“Covid-19 makes you become more flexible and adaptable in your lesson planning.”

Tresha postulates:

“Due to the fact that our learners are little, I am always educating them on the new concept of the Covid-19 pandemic. A lot has changed in 2021, and I have to find new ways of teaching and learning... There’s not only a negative side to Covid-19. There’s also a positive side: I have increased parent participation, the size of learners in a classroom have been reduced to 50%, time for marking is shorter, the workload from the ATP’s are cut shorter and a low number of learners makes the instruction easier. Covid-19 made me aware of what’s really going on in the world. It has taught me the need to value and appreciate everybody and everything around me, because, I don’t know whether I am going to be here tomorrow or not, or even they are going to be here tomorrow or not.”

Celia recognizes:

“I am a new teacher with only 2 months of working experience, working with my mentor teacher and getting used to everything. Therefore, working online and from home during South Africa’s first lockdown was extremely challenging and exhausting. I wasn’t with my mentor teacher to help me with planning so I had to do it all on my own. I had to go into a different mode of teaching: virtual teaching. I used Google Slides for my lessons and retrieved ideas from Pinterest. It was very difficult for me to think of ideas on my own. I did not fully understand how grade 1 should be and I was concerned about how my learners would follow me... The pandemic has turned everything upside down for me! Everything new is new again. I am trying to adapt to this changing context.”

Yara states:

“At the onset, I stuck pictures of the negative sides of Covid-19, such as the words: I am struggling. Thereafter, I went on to stick an image which reads: keep moving forward. Creating this collage made me more conscious of what is really going on in the world.”

Wendy maintains:

“... As a foundation phase teacher, I am optimistic. I see the glass half full. With this pandemic that the entire world is facing, I’ve always seen it as something we all need to overcome together. It’s something that we should think positive about. It is our new normal. Without a doubt, it will be here for a long period of time, and we have to work around it... I have an opportunity to educate learners grouped by their abilities, and I intend on embracing this opportunity.”

Fekile believes:

“Foundation phase teachers must be resilient to continue working during a global pandemic. They must be flexible and adaptable in this

everchanging context.”

From the above statements, it is clearly indicated that all research participants have had learning experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. Candy indicated that *Covid-19 makes you become more flexible and adaptable*. Tresha notes that *a lot has changed in 2021*, and she has to *find new ways of teaching and learning*. She emphasizes that there is *not only a negative side to Covid-19*, but a *positive side* too, and embraces it. In addition, Yara acknowledges *negative sides of Covid-19*, then to realize that there are positive sides too. Celia explores the use of online platforms: *Google slides* and *Pinterest*, and tried teaching virtually for the very first time in order to continue education. In addition, she says that *everything new is new again* and that she is *trying to adapt to this changing context*. Wendy is very *optimistic* as she sees *the glass half full* meaning that there is a *positive side* to the pandemic. She has *an opportunity to educate learners grouped by their abilities*, and she intends *on embracing this opportunity*. Doucet et al. (2020) note that foundation phase teachers develop creative initiatives that assist in overcoming the limitations that the Covid-19 pandemic brings. Fekile believes that *foundation phase teachers must be resilient to continue working during a global pandemic*. In addition, *they must be flexible and adaptable in this everchanging context*. It is evident that the foundation phase teachers have learning experiences from the pandemic, and create opportunities to learn and develop.

6.4.5 Support

MacIntyre et al. (2022) state that teaching is regarded as one of the most stressful professions, and that, teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic brings about a variety of psychosocial experiences that need to be supported. The research participants experienced the following kinds of support and lack of support during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa:

Candy expresses:

“... professional development and ways in which us teachers have to cope with this ongoing virus at schools [is needed]. School managers should be able to give clear direction on daily activities. No teaching

and learning time must be wasted.”

Tresha notes:

“Teachers are experiencing a variety of challenges and need support from other structures within the schooling environment... I have always experienced challenges and I need support from my management, professional development workshops, assistance in planning and something for my mental health as the Covid-19 pandemic is serious.”

Celia explains:

“Teachers need ongoing support... we need teacher support, resources, enhancing our skills and knowledge, assisting us to build resilience and inclusive education.”

Yara mentions:

“Our management was not exactly helpful and expected us to work like there was no such thing as Covid-19. Every morning, I had to reset my mind to come to work.”

Wendy needs:

Workshops, training and professional development. New ways to plan and prepare lessons and assessments. New ways to teach the curriculum effectively in a shorter time. New ways to take care of mental health. It is important to keep abreast with the latest news and information related to the Covid-19 pandemic. I often read articles and share them with my colleagues.”

Fekile notes:

“I received no special help or assistance from management... intervention strategies must include: an ever-increasing teacher professional development, workshops, training, re-teaching of

knowledge and skills, being and staying effective, minimizing teacher burnout, taking care of mental health and equipping teachers with resources.”

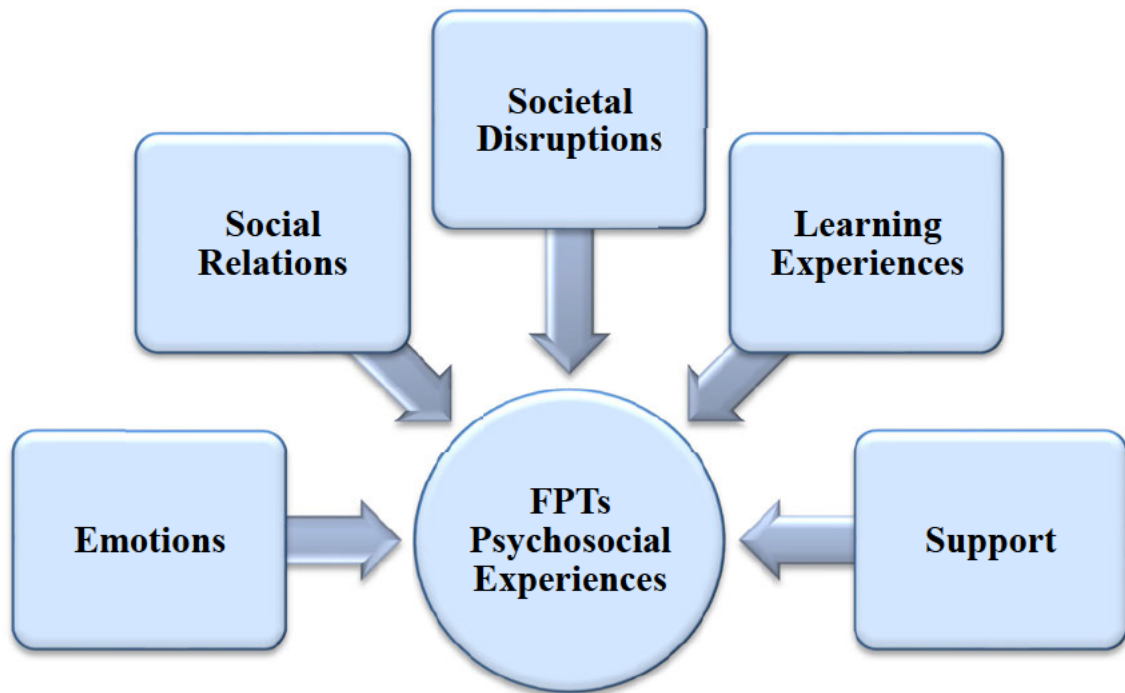
Evidently, all research participants expressed that there is limited support offered. Candy indicated that teachers need to be supported through *professional development* as this will assist with teaching teachers how to *cope* during the pandemic. Tresha acknowledges that teachers experience *a variety of challenges and need support from other structures within the schooling environment*. Celia emphasizes that *teachers need ongoing support* to enhance their *skills and knowledge* base. Yara was supportive of herself when she says that she *had to reset her mind to come to work*. Support in terms of *workshops, training and professional development* is needed for Wendy. In addition, she embraces self-directed learning by keeping *abreast with the latest news and information related to the Covid-19 pandemic*, and sharing *them with colleagues*. Fekile requires *an ever-increasing teacher professional development, workshops, training, and re-teaching of knowledge and skills*.

6.4.6 Conclusion of SECTION A

The themes above reveal that particular emotions, social relations, societal disruptions, learning experiences, and support and lack of it contribute to South African FPTs psychosocial experiences of working during the Covid-19 pandemic. The following diagram represents the psychosocial experiences of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic:

Figure 36

Foundation Phase Teachers Psychosocial Experiences



Note. Figure 36 has been created by the researcher to show foundation phase teachers psychosocial experiences.

SECTION B

6.5 Negotiating Psychosocial Experiences of Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa During the Covid-19 Pandemic

This research study evidently illustrates that the psychosocial experiences of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic are multiple and complex. These experiences highlight the FPTs emotions, social relations, societal disruptions, learning experiences, support and lack of it. The *Psychosocial Development Theory* by Erik Erikson advocates an inextricable link between individuals and their social contexts; and positions that an individual's personality develops through socialization in a social crisis (Erikson, 1968). Throughout the ongoing global crisis: the Covid-19 pandemic, FPTs make on-going negotiations of their lived psychosocial experiences within their social contexts.

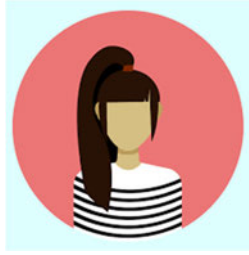
6.5.1 Research Participants On-going Negotiations

This research study indicated that the six research participants made the following negotiations of their lived psychosocial experiences of working as FPTs during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa as follows:



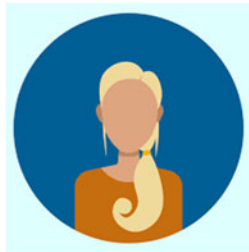
Research Participant 1, Candy negotiates:

“This pandemic has really changed the way in which I teach on a daily basis... Covid-19 makes you become more flexible and adaptable...”



Research Participant 2, Tresha negotiates:

“There’s not only a negative side to Covid-19. There’s also a positive side.”



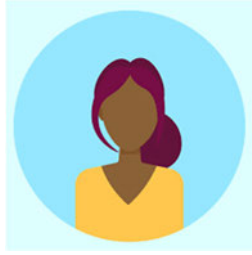
Research Participant 3, Celia negotiates:

“Everything new is new again. I am trying to adapt to this changing context.”



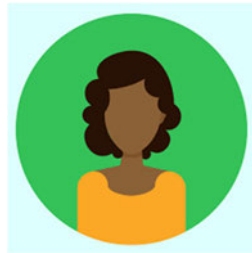
Research Participant 4, Yara negotiates:

“Every morning, I had to reset my mind to come to work.”



Research Participant 5, Wendy negotiates:

“It is our new normal. Without a doubt, it will be here for a long period of time, and we have to work around it... I have an opportunity to educate learners grouped by their abilities, and I intend on embracing this opportunity.”



Research Participant 6, Fekile negotiates:

“Foundation phase teachers must be resilient to continue working during a global pandemic. They must be flexible and adaptable in this everchanging context.”

6.5.2 Synthesis of SECTION B

The above excerpts reveal the negotiations of the research participants lived psychosocial experiences of working as FPTs during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. This section is encapsulated by a pantoum poem (Figure 37) which as it highlights the deeper meaning of the FPTs negotiation of experiences (Meacham, 2021).

Figure 37

Pantoum Poem

FPTs making on-going negotiations

While developing a strong educational base

Be flexible and adaptable

During the Covid-19 pandemic

While developing a strong educational base

Unprecedented challenges arise

During the Covid-19 pandemic

Teachers need to be supported

Unprecedented challenges arise

Feeling extremely restricted?

Teachers need to be supported

In an ever-changing context

Feeling extremely restricted?

Be flexible and adaptable

In an ever-changing context

FPTs making on-going negotiations

Note. A pantoum poem created by the researcher.

SECTION C

6.6 Negotiating Psychosocial Experiences of Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa During the Covid-19 Pandemic Leads to Psychosocial Development

Erik Erikson's *Psychosocial Development Theory* elucidates that an individual's personality develops through socialization. Erikson believed that during each stage of the eight stages of psychosocial development, an individual experiences a 'psychosocial crisis' (Erikson, 1968). Through the resolution of each crisis, an individual's personality develops positively or negatively. A positive resolution leads to positive development and a negative resolution leads to negative development (Erikson, 1968).

Drawing from this *Psychosocial Development Theory*, and importantly on the 7th stage of the PDT which is Generativity vs Stagnation, the researcher was able to explore and understand the multifaceted lives of the six FPT research participants as they negotiate their experiences in relation to their social contexts. During this stage, individuals strive to nurture things, foster positive changes and contribute to the next generation (Cherry, 2022). This research study indicated that all six FPTs in SA negotiate their psychosocial experiences which leads to psychosocial development.

Figure 38

Psychosocial Experiences Leads to Psychosocial Development



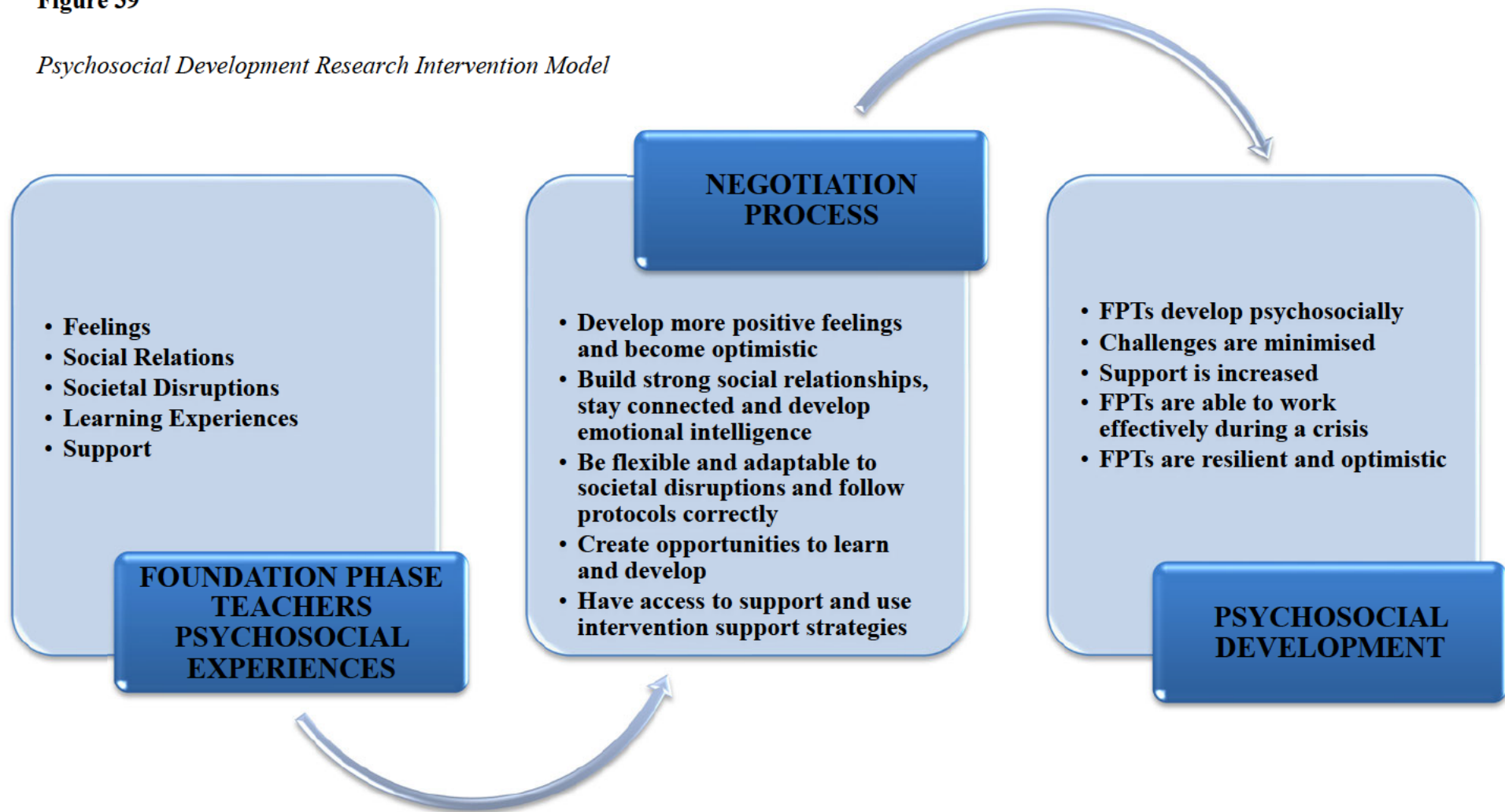
Note. This figure has been created by the researcher.

6.6.1 Psychosocial Development Research Intervention Model

Evidently, FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 crisis negotiate their psychosocial experiences, in order for development to occur. The following model has been developed by the researcher to assist FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic to negotiate their psychosocial experiences, leading to psychosocial development:

Figure 39

Psychosocial Development Research Intervention Model



Note. The Psychosocial Development Research Intervention Model has been created by the researcher.

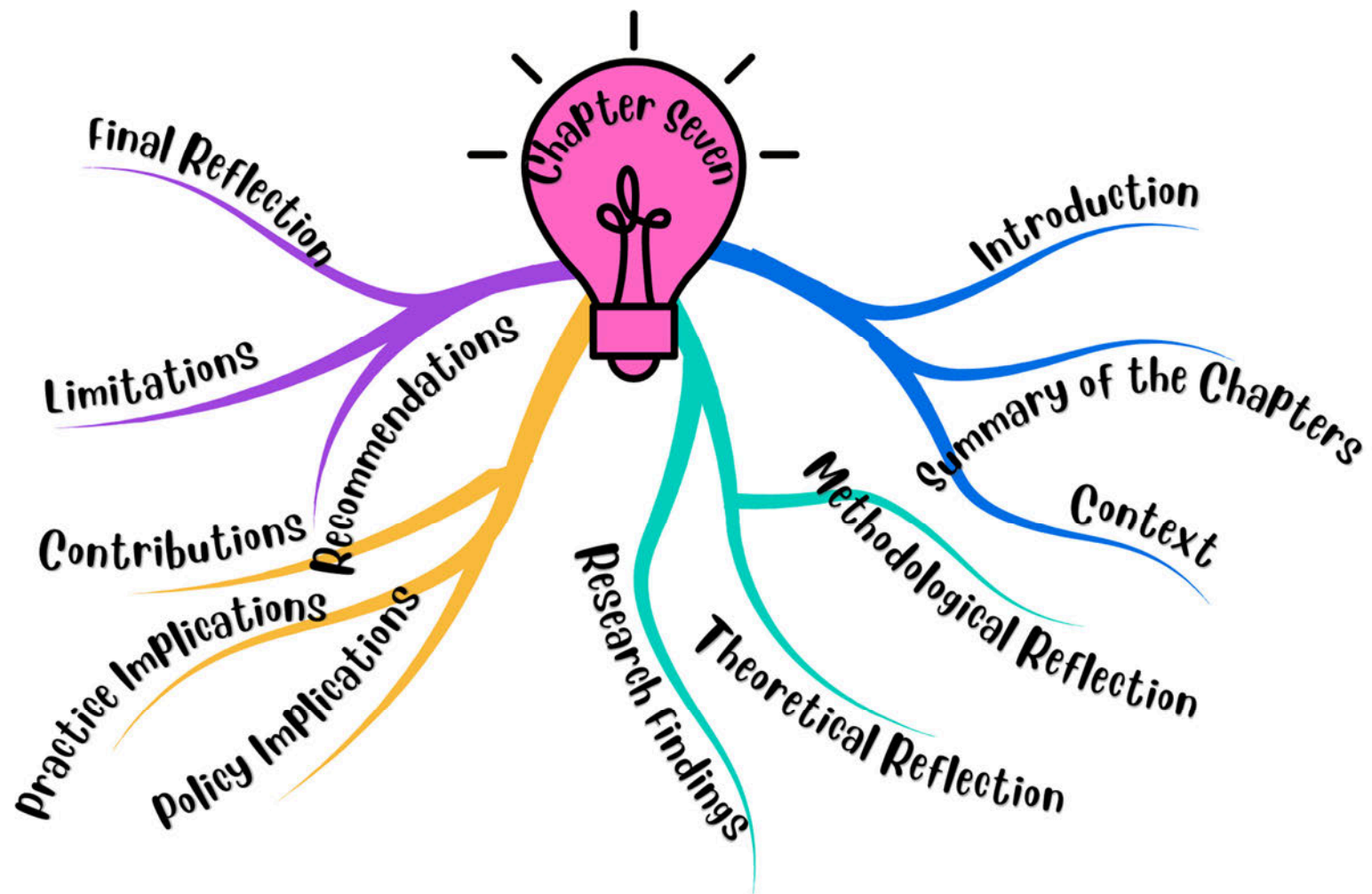
6.6.2 Synthesis of SECTION C

The construction of the *Psychosocial Development Research Intervention Model* indicates that FPTs undergo a negotiation process of their psychosocial experiences for psychosocial development to occur. The FPTs in this research study will be given access to this model as an intervention strategy that is needed to support FPTs during the Covid-19 pandemic. This model provides an understanding on how FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic negotiate their psychosocial experiences throughout the Covid-19 crisis and ultimately develop themselves psychosocially. Development is defined by a crisis, and therefore developing oneself psychosocially during the Covid-19 pandemic will result in positive outcomes for the FPTs in SA. Through using this model which is relevant and necessary for the growth and development of FPTs in SA during such an unpredictable time, challenges are minimized, support is increased, FPTs are able to work effectively during a crisis and are resilient frontline workers.

6.7 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter presented collage portraits and offered a final analysis of selected excerpts from the data in response to the main research question. Themes that were presented in this chapter highlighted the psychosocial experiences of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic. This research study indicated that FPTs make on-going negotiations of their psychosocial experiences within their social contexts. These were encapsulated through a pantoum poem. The research study further indicated that FPTs on-going negotiations of their psychosocial experiences within their social contexts leads to psychosocial development. A *Psychosocial Development Research Intervention Model* is provided for FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic to assist them in on-going negotiations.

In the final chapter, CHAPTER SEVEN, the researcher articulates and reflects on her research journey. This chapter presents a final conclusion, context of the research study, methodological reflection, theoretical reflection, summary of the research findings, research implications, contributions to educational research, recommendations for further research, limitations of the research study, and a final reflection.



CHAPTER SEVEN

ARTICULATION AND REFLECTION OF MY RESEARCH JOURNEY

7.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter presented a final analysis of the main research question. This analysis highlighted the psychosocial experiences of six foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, it indicated that FPTs make on-going negotiations of their psychosocial experiences within their social contexts which leads to psychosocial development. A *Psychosocial Development Research Intervention Model* was provided for FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic to assist them in on-going negotiations.

This chapter presents a conclusion of this research dissertation titled, “*Psychosocial Experiences of Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa During the Covid-19 Pandemic*”. The focus and purpose of this research study was to explore and understand the lived psychosocial experiences of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic. In this chapter, a summary of the chapters, context of the research study, methodological reflection, theoretical reflection, summary of the research findings, policy implications, practice implications, contributions to educational research, recommendations for further research, limitations of the research study, and a final reflection is presented.

7.2 Summary of the Chapters

This research study constituted seven chapters, with each chapter exclusively dedicated to a particular purpose.

7.2.1 Chapter One:

An Introduction to the Study

Chapter One served as an introductory chapter and provided a background and overview of the research dissertation. In this chapter, the rationale, statement of the research problem, focus and purpose, research objectives, research questions, research context, theoretical framework, methodological approach, clarification of key concepts, significance of the research study, ethical considerations, trustworthiness, as well as delimitations and limitations of the research study were elucidated. This qualitative and interpretative research study focused on the powerful voices of the six foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic so that their psychosocial experiences were explored and understood.

7.2.2 Chapter Two:

Scholarly Conversations on the Psychosocial Experiences of Foundation Phase Teachers During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Chapter Two provided a review of literature which highlight ‘scholarly conversations’ (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 136) that have brought out key debates, discussions and themes that were relevant to the foundation phase, foundation phase teachers and the Covid-19 pandemic. This chapter drew on literature from numerous South African and international scholars related to South African foundation phase teachers lived psychosocial experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. In this chapter, the understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic; the impact of the pandemic on education in South Africa and Worldwide; as well as the understandings of who FPTs are and their psychosocial experiences were elucidated.

7.2.3 Chapter Three:

Theoretical Framework

Chapter Three comprehensively presented the theoretical framing underpinning this research study. The *Psychosocial Development Theory* by Erik Erikson was described in great detail. This theory assisted the researcher in exploring and understanding the lived

psychosocial experiences of FPTs during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the ways in which FPTs negotiate their lived psychosocial experiences within their social contexts to develop psychosocially through that particular social context.

7.2.4 Chapter Four:

A Methodological Vista

Chapter Four described the research methodology and design utilised in the research study. This research study adopted a qualitative approach, and was embedded within the interpretivist paradigm. The research methodology was phenomenology which focused on the essence of lived psychosocial experiences of the six foundation phase teachers in SA working during the Covid-19 pandemic. In this research study, multiple methods of data generation used are as follows: semi-structured interviews, collage inquiry and metaphor drawing. This chapter also presented the research location, sampling techniques, the selection of the research participants, as well as a description of each participant. Furthermore, this chapter presented data generation methods, a qualitative research procedure, as well as a qualitative data/thematic analytical framing and interpretation. Finally, ethical considerations, trustworthiness of a qualitative research study, limitations of the research study as well as the role of the researcher were presented.

7.2.5 Chapter Five:

Data Presentation, Interpretation and Analysis

Chapter Five offered an analysis of the three research sub-questions. This chapter presented interpreted and analysed data in the form of vignettes through themes and sub-themes. This chapter highlighted the knowledge and understandings that foundation phase teachers in South Africa have on the Covid-19 pandemic; the challenges of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic; and intervention strategies that are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.

7.2.6 Chapter Six:

A Deeper Analysis and Discussion

Chapter Six presented a final analysis of the main research question. The researcher adopted Erik Erikson's *Psychosocial Development Theory* and significant literature as a guide to frame this chapter. *Collage Portraiture* was used as an analysis tool to analyse selected excerpts into themes. The analysis significantly brought out the research participant's psychosocial experiences of working as foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic authentically, creatively and carefully. The research findings concluded that FPTs negotiate their lived psychosocial experiences which leads to psychosocial development. A *Psychosocial Development Research Intervention Model* was created to assist FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic in on-going negotiations of their psychosocial experiences.

7.2.7 Chapter Seven:

Articulation and Reflection of my Research Journey

Chapter Seven presents the conclusion of this research study. This chapter presents an articulation and reflection of the researcher's research journey, as well as foregrounds the summary of the chapter, context of the research study, methodological reflection, and theoretical reflection of this research study. Moreover, the summary of the research findings, policy implications, practice implications is presented as well as policy imperatives and practice imperatives. Thereafter, contributions to educational research, recommendations for further research and limitations of the research study is presented. This research dissertation is concluded with a final reflection.

7.3 Context of the Research Study

This qualitative research study was conducted in 3 different provinces in South Africa, namely: KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Western Cape. Six foundation phase teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic were selected as research participants. This research study used purposive sampling, alongside availability and convenience to handpick research participants

for a particular purpose (Cohen et al., 2011). The FPTs in SA are working during the latest, on-going Covid-19 pandemic that has been caused by the infectious virus: SARS-CoV-2. This pandemic is currently being experienced throughout the world, and when it will end is unknown.

7.4 Methodological Reflection

Phenomenology as a qualitative methodology is the study of lived experiences (Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa & Varpio, 2015). In this research study, phenomenology was used to deepen the researchers understanding of the lived psychosocial experiences of six FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic. Phenomenology is exceptionally suited to this research study as the researcher was able to get glimpses of the unique and multifaceted psychosocial experiences of FPTs in SA. This methodology focuses on “convergence and divergence of experiences, as well as its mission in examining detailed and nuanced analysis of the lived experience of small number of participants” (Finlay, 2012, p. 6). This qualitative research study located within the interpretivist paradigm focused on the meanings of lived experiences. Multiple data generation methods were used to generate data include: collage inquiry, semi-structured interviews and metaphor drawings. These data generation methods were suitable as it allowed the researcher to explore and understand the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic in creative and multiple ways. The researcher was able to obtain rich, detailed descriptions of data as it evoked the FPTs in SA lived psychosocial experiences of working during the Covid-19 pandemic. Data was presented, interpreted and analyzed in the form of vignettes and produced themes and sub-themes. For the purpose of the analysis, collage portraiture was used as an analysis tool to analyse selected excerpts into themes and thus producing the research findings. This research study adopted Lochmiller and Lester (2021) data/thematic process which involved the following 7 phases which may overlap: preparing and organizing the data, transcribing the data, becoming familiar with the data, memoing the data, coding the data, moving from codes to categories and categories to themes, making the analytical process transparent.

7.5 Theoretical Reflection

This research study was framed by the *Psychosocial Development Theory* founded by Erik Erikson. This theory focuses on the inner experiences of individuals in relation to their socialization experiences. The *Psychosocial Development Theory Model* created by Erikson relies on eight stages of psychosocial development. These eight stages mark eight different crises that individuals experience in their social relations with others throughout their lifespan. Erikson noted that crises that are resolved positively will have a positive outcome, and crises that are resolved negatively will have a negative outcome. Therefore, the positive resolution to a crisis leads to personal development of an individual.

In this research study, the *Psychosocial Development Theory* as a theoretical framework offers lenses in exploring and understanding the psychosocial experiences of FPTs during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. This Covid-19 pandemic is defined as a crisis that is faced worldwide. It has disrupted every aspect of our lives, including the education system in South Africa. The *Psychosocial Development Theory* advocates an inextricable link between psychological elements and social elements of individuals. These elements when combined contribute to psychosocial experiences of individuals. This research study indicated that FPTs in SA have complex, multiple and unique psychosocial experiences of working during the Covid-19 crisis, which are as follows:

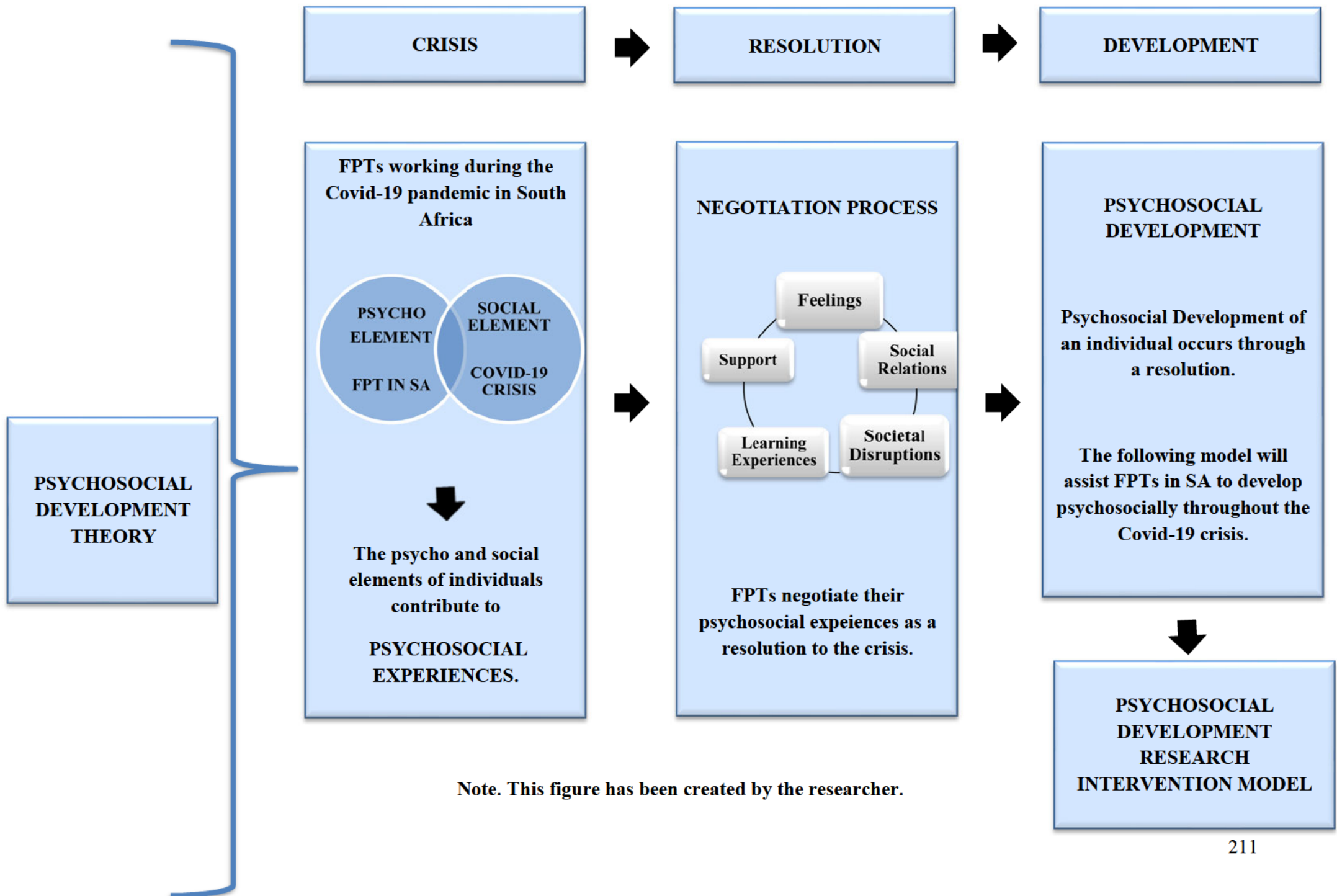
- Feelings
- Social Relations
- Societal Disruptions
- Learning Experiences
- Support

In this research study, Candy, Tresha, Celia, Yara, Wendy and Fekile make continuous negotiations of their psychosocial experiences which is informed by their social contexts as a resolution to the Covid-19 crisis that they face. This negotiation of psychosocial experiences ultimately leads to psychosocial development of FPTs in SA.

The following diagram shows that FPTs in SA are faced with the Covid-19 crisis and negotiate their psychosocial experiences within their social contexts as a resolution to the crisis, in order to develop psychosocially.

Figure 40

Psychosocial Development Theory



7.6 Summary of the Research Findings

The summary of the research findings of this research study is based on the analysis and interpretation of selected data, and elucidates the learning from this research study. The summary of the research findings is encapsulated below:

7.6.1 South African Foundation Phase Teachers Knowledge and Understandings of the Covid-19 Pandemic

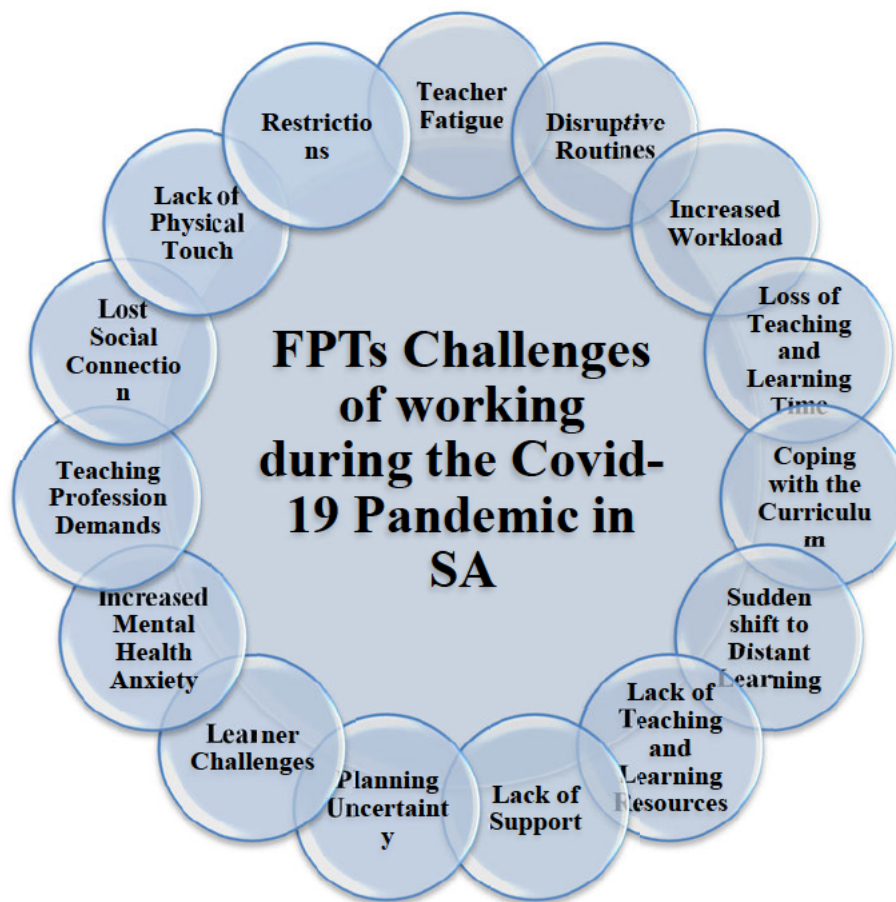
The Covid-19 pandemic is the latest, on-going, infectious disease faced globally (WHO, 2020). The impact of this virus is significant, and has drastically affected the South African education system. It has brought about many more challenges for FPTs in SA, and many of which are unprecedented. From this research study, it is evident that all research participants have reasonable to sound understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic. The research participants in this research study indicated that the Covid-19 pandemic is experienced world-wide, and described it as a deadly virus. They further indicate that it should be taken seriously as there is no cure for this on-going virus. In addition, the research participants indicated that there are positive and negative implications of the Covid-19 pandemic. Although most are negative, the FPTs in SA use this as an opportunity to adapt to their social contexts and embrace a new normal.

7.6.2 South African Foundation Phase Teachers Challenges of Working During the Covid-19 Pandemic

This research study confirms that the six research participants experience a variety of challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic. The unprecedented impact of the pandemic contributed greatly to the well-being of FPTs, and in particular adds to the challenges faced by teachers in South Africa. This research study indicated that Candy, Tresha, Celia, Yara, Wendy and Fekile faced the following challenges of working as FPTs during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa as displayed in Figure 41:

Figure 41

FPTs Challenges of Working During the Covid-19 Pandemic in SA



Note. This figure created by the research shows foundation phase teachers challenges of working during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa.

7.6.3 Intervention Strategies that are Needed to Support Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa

Due to the unstable nature of the global pandemic, FPTs in SA need support while working during this unprecedented time. This research study indicated that Candy, Tresha, Celia, Yara, Wendy and Fekile need the following intervention strategies to support them while working as FPTs during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa as displayed in Figure 42:

Figure 42

Intervention Strategies that are Needed to Support FPTs in SA



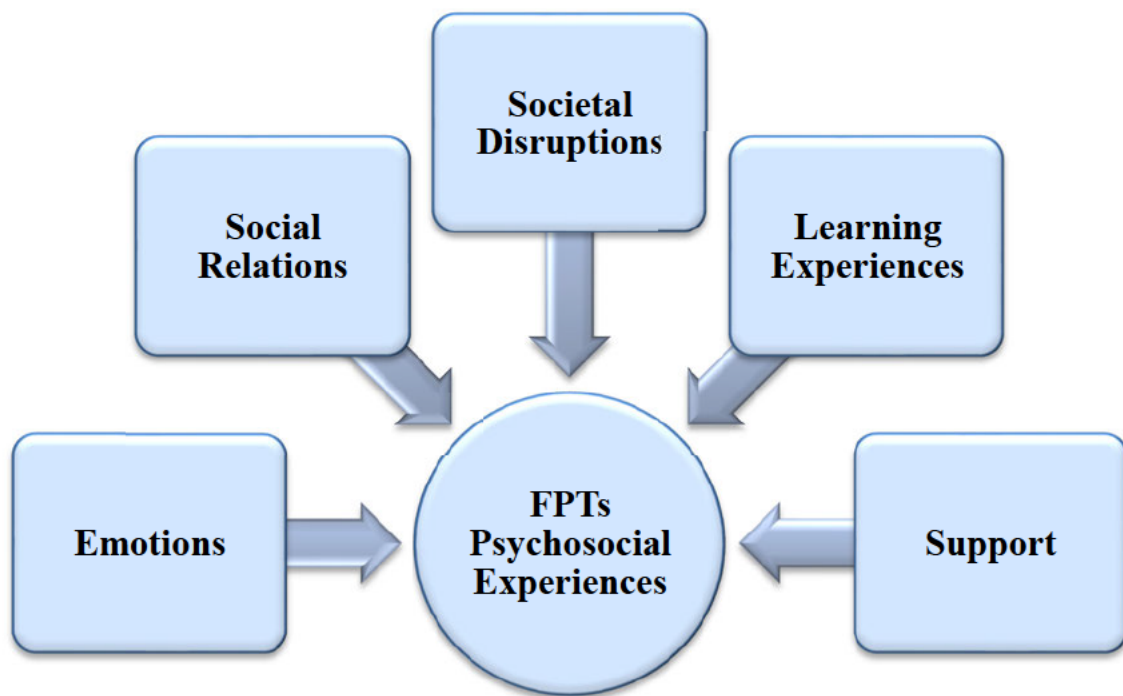
Note. This figure created by the researcher shows intervention strategies that are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa.

7.6.4 Lived Psychosocial Experiences of Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa During the Covid-19 Pandemic

This research study reveals that particular emotions, social relations, societal disruptions, learning experiences, support and lack of it contribute to South African FPTs psychosocial experiences of working during the Covid-19 pandemic. The following diagram (Figure 43) represents the psychosocial experiences of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic:

Figure 43

Foundation Phase Teachers Psychosocial Experiences



Note. This figure created by the researcher shows foundation phase teachers psychosocial experiences

7.6.5 Negotiating Psychosocial Experiences of Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa During the Covid-19 Pandemic

In this research study, the FPTs in SA make the following negotiations of their psychosocial experiences of working during the Covid-19 pandemic as displayed in Figure 44 below:

Figure 44

FPTs Negotiating Psychosocial Experiences



Note. This figure created by the researcher shows foundation phase teachers negotiating psychosocial experiences.

7.6.6 Negotiating Psychosocial Experiences of Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa During the Covid-19 Pandemic Leads to Psychosocial Development

Drawing from the *Psychosocial Development Theory*, the researcher was able to explore and understand the multifaceted lives of the six FPT research participants as they negotiate their experiences in relation to their social contexts. This research study indicated that all six FPTs negotiate their psychosocial experiences which leads to psychosocial development.

Figure 45

Psychosocial Experiences Leads to Psychosocial Development



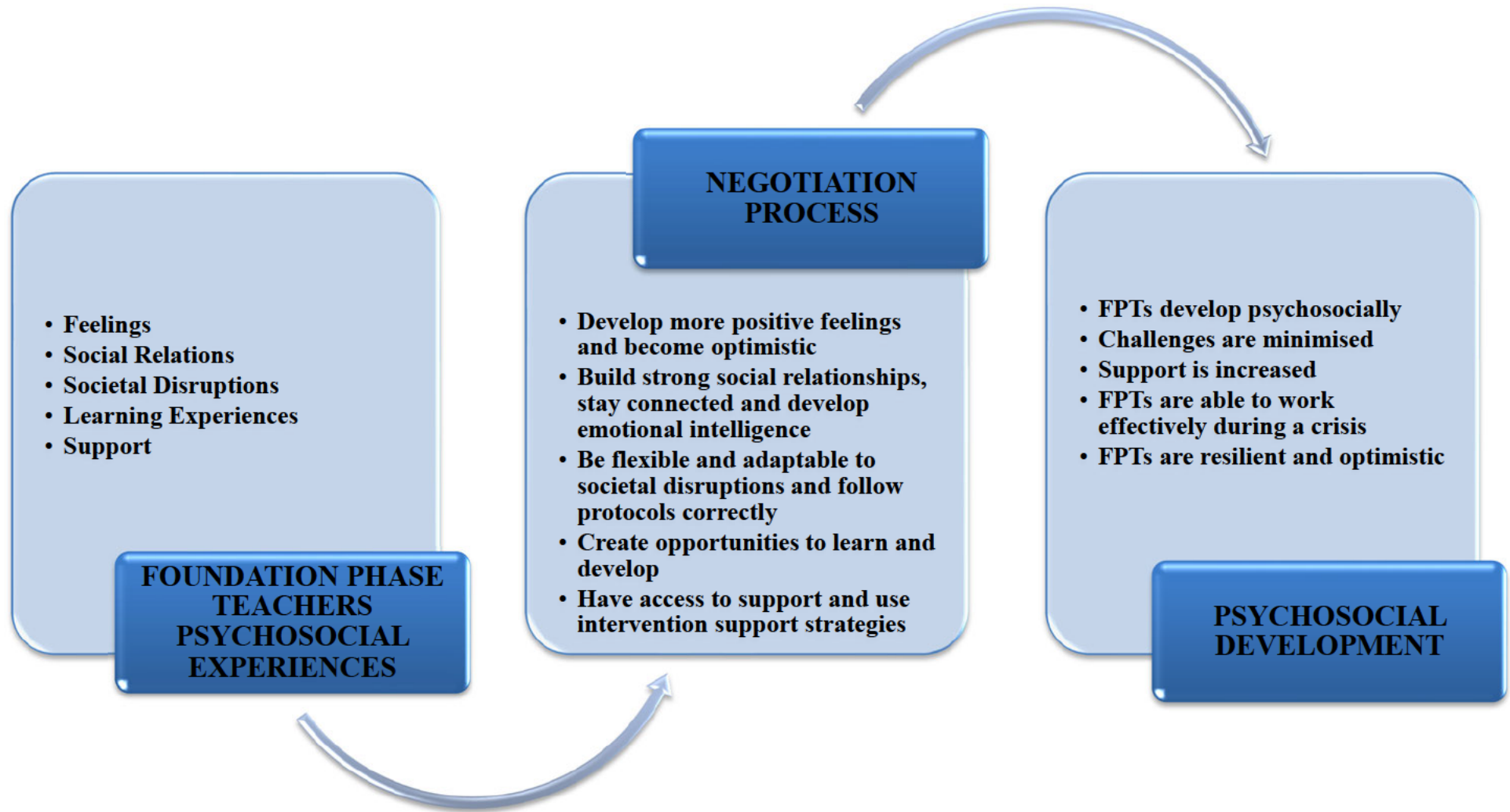
Note. Figure 45 created by the researcher shows psychosocial experiences leads to psychosocial development.

7.6.7 Psychosocial Development Research Intervention Model

Evidently, FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic negotiate their psychosocial experiences within their social contexts, for development to occur. The *Psychosocial Development Research Intervention Model* will assist FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic to negotiate their psychosocial experiences, leading to psychosocial development. This model has been created to assist FPTs in SA to work effectively during the crisis, minimize challenges, increase support, become resilient and ultimately develop psychosocially.

Figure 46

Psychosocial Development Research Intervention Model



Note. This Psychosocial Development Research Intervention Model has been created by the researcher.

7.7 Policy Implications

The Covid-19 pandemic has greatly impacted the already fragile South African education system. The South African government has struggled to keep the education system operational during this unforeseen pandemic. It is evident that South Africa has not improved itself in terms of better resources in response to the Covid-19 pandemic (Soudien, Reddy & Harvey, 2022). Various unprecedented and on-going challenges have psychosocially affected FPTs in SA and therefore, it is imperative that policy makers within the South African Department of Basic Education (DBE) recognise the need to support FPTs in SA during this immediate crisis, and create educational policies for the Covid-19 pandemic and similar emergencies.

7.8 Practice Implications

It is recognised that teaching is an extremely challenging profession and that it has become more challenging due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Within the South African educational context, all teachers, including FPTs have become frontline workers working during the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic. FPTs among others are expected to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively and safely. However, they are faced with unprecedented challenges and need intervention strategies to support them in this unforeseen era of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This research study has indicated that intervention strategies include:

- Building Resilience Amid the Global Pandemic
- Continuous Professional Development
- Competencies Required to Manage Working During the Covid-19 Pandemic
- Importance of Mental Preparedness
- Strategies for Coping with the Crisis
- Ensuring Effectiveness During Daily Activities
- Continuous Inclusive Educational Support Strategies
- Role of Support Structures
- Self-Directed Learning
- Use of Different Pedagogical Approaches.

As a result, FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic and in similar emergencies will develop themselves psychosocially and work effectively within their social contexts.

7.9 Contributions to Educational Research

This research dissertation contributes to educational research in relation to the field of phenomenology, and adds to the growing body of knowledge on FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic. This qualitative and interpretative research study has afforded FPTs in SA an opportunity to reflect on their lived psychosocial experiences of working during an unprecedented, on-going, global pandemic. It assists in deepening our understanding of FPTs knowledge and understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic, the challenges of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic and intervention strategies that are needed to support FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic. The analysis of this research dissertation concluded that FPTs negotiate their psychosocial experiences daily in order to work effectively and safely during a global pandemic, which leads to psychological and social development. The findings of this research study can assist in addressing the issues raised by FPTs and in policy implementation. The research findings should be of benefit to FPTs throughout SA and internationally, all types of teachers throughout the world, school management, school principals, university lecturers within the faculty of education, educational institutions throughout SA and internationally, teacher trainers, South African Department of Basic Education officials, educational officials worldwide and policy-makers who are concerned with the unprecedented challenges of Covid-19 and similar emergencies. This research study leads to establishing further research into FPTs psychosocial experiences as they negotiate their experiences within their schooling context, and allow for psychosocial development.

7.10 Recommendations for Further Research

The research findings have been presented, and the following areas that require further research have been deduced as follows:

- This research study focused on exploring and understanding the lived psychosocial experiences of FPTs in KZN, GP and WC during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore,

there is a need to research FPTs in other parts of South Africa or worldwide, as well as other types of teachers throughout SA or internationally.

- The sample size was limited to six FPTs in SA. Therefore, there is a need to research a larger sample size as this may assist in the generalisation of information.
- It is also necessary to explore and understand the psychosocial experiences of those individuals who are directly related to education in SA, including: learners, teachers, school managers, school principals, district education officials, provincial education officials and national education officials.

The research questions that can be generated for further research are as follows:

- What are the lived psychosocial experiences of FPTs worldwide during the Covid-19 pandemic?
- What are the lived psychosocial experiences of all types of teachers worldwide during the Covid-19 pandemic?
- What are the lived psychosocial experiences of learners in South Africa who are learning during the Covid-19 pandemic?

7.11 Limitations of the Research Study

It is of utmost importance to interpret the research findings of this study with cognisance of the following limitations:

- The researcher, being a foundation phase teacher in South Africa has her own psychosocial experiences of working during the Covid-19 pandemic, and may have negatively impacted the research process, including: data generation, interpretation and analysis. However, the researcher's positionality was carefully negotiated throughout this research study.
- The researcher might have had pre-conceived beliefs, biases and interests during the research. However, the researcher had to be aware of her insider-outsider positionality.

- This research study is a small-scale qualitative study that is limited to 3 provinces in South Africa, namely: KZN, GP and WC. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised to other provinces in South Africa or other countries of the world.
- This research study utilised purposive sampling and as a result, it was limited to only six research participants in 3 provinces in South Africa, namely: KZN, GP and WC. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised.
- Online data generation and communication might have negatively impacted on the way in which data was generated. However, the researcher was patient when technical issues were experienced as well as ensuring that research participants feel comfortable and connected by engaging in continuous conversation.
- The Covid-19 pandemic is a new phenomenon and there is insufficient literature to be used. This research study extends the current knowledge base by exploring and understanding the lived psychosocial experiences of FPTs in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has made data generation a rather difficult process as the research participants may have felt overburdened and mentally exhausted.

Despite these limitations, this research dissertation has provided new insight into the lived psychosocial experiences of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically, this research study, ascertained knowledge and understandings of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic; identified the challenges of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic; as well as provided intervention strategies that are needed to support of FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 pandemic.

7.12 Final Reflection

This phenomenological research study highlighted the lived psychosocial experiences of six FPTs in SA during the Covid-19 global, ongoing pandemic. In researching the lives of the FPTs in SA at a particular point in time, the researcher has come to understand the value of their lived experiences, as these experiences shape their psychological and social development. In this research study, data was generated through the following data generation methods, namely: Collage Inquiry, Semi-structured Interviews and Metaphor Drawings. Data were presented, interpreted and analysed. This research study adopted Lochmiller and Lester's (2021) data/thematic analysis process, as well as Collage Portraiture as an analysis tool. The findings of this research study presented through vignettes highlighted the knowledge and understandings that foundation phase teachers in South Africa have on the Covid-19 pandemic; the challenges of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic; intervention strategies that are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic; as well as the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. This research study noted that FPTs in SA have complex, multiple and unique psychosocial experiences of working during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, they negotiate their psychosocial experiences which leads to psychosocial development.

This unprecedented Covid-19 global pandemic is embedded in the history of the world, and will be remembered in years to come. As the researcher, I write this final chapter while the world is still fighting this pandemic, and so am I. As a foundation phase teacher in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic, I have my own psychosocial experiences. However, I am resilient and determined to negotiate my psychosocial experiences for my own psychosocial development.

I conclude this research dissertation with a quote:

“This pandemic is unprecedented for us, but we have experienced other hard things. This time gives us an opportunity to practice resilience and to show our kids what resilience looks like.” - Audrey Monke

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APPENDIX 1

LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

**51B SENTINEL AVENUE
GREENWOOD PARK
DURBAN NORTH
4051**

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Mrs. Jayshree Thilakdhari, a doctoral student (210 517 610) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I hereby request permission to conduct research at your school.

The Title of my Research Dissertation is:

Psychosocial Experiences of Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa During the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Main Focus and Purpose of this Research Study is to:

- explore and understand the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.

I intend to fully respect the institution as well as maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants. Pseudonyms will be used and all information that is gathered will be used for the purpose of this research study only. The reporting of findings will enhance the existing knowledge of foundation phase teachers' psychosocial experiences and their involvement in working during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. This research study may be useful to teachers, schools, teacher training institutions, policy makers and the Departments of Education in South Africa. This research study requires data generation activities that will be communicated with the research participant for 1-2 hours per day for three days upon commencement of the data generation process.

The research study is supervised by Doctor Visvaranie Jairam who is a lecturer at the School of Education, UKZN and a registered educational psychologist. Doctor Visvaranie Jairam can be contacted on 031 260 1438 or Jairam@ukzn.ac.za. If you have any questions relating to the rights of research participants, you can contact the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration Research Office on 031 260 4557 or HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za. If you require any other information about the research study upon its completion, the researcher can be contacted on 083 825 3590 or arusha12@gmail.com. Thank you for your assistance!

Yours Faithfully,

Mrs. Jayshree Thilakdhari - BEd (Cum laude); BEd Hons (Cum laude); MEd (First Class Pass)

PRINCIPAL DECLARATION

The Title of this Research Dissertation:

Psychosocial Experiences of Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa During the Covid-19 Pandemic

I, _____ (Full name/s of Principal)
hereby grant permission to the researcher to conduct research at my school. I understand that the research participant has willingly agreed to participate in this research study and that she/he is at liberty to withdraw from the research study at any time, so should she/he desire. I also understand that the name of the school, name of the research participant and their responses will be kept confidential.

I give permission for the use of the following record devices during the data production process:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio Recording		
Video Recording		
Photographic Equipment		

Signature of Principal

Date



School Stamp

APPENDIX 2

LETTER TO THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

**51B SENTINEL AVENUE
GREENWOOD PARK
DURBAN NORTH
4051**

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

1. Nature of the Research Study

My name is Mrs. Jayshree Thilakdhari and I am a doctoral student (210 517 610) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I hereby request permission to conduct research at your school.

The Title of this Research Dissertation is:

Psychosocial Experiences of Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa During the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Main Focus and Purpose of this Research Study is to:

- explore and understand the lived psychosocial experiences of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.

I intend to the best of my ability to maintain anonymity and confidentiality throughout the research study. All information that is gathered will be used for the purpose of the research study only and will be kept in a safe place at UKZN, Edgewood campus, for a period of five years. Thereafter, the documents containing the research data will be destroyed. At any given point in time, you can withdraw from the research study and will not be penalized for taking such action. Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved. As a research participant, you are invited to engage in the following activities as part of the data generation process: semi-structured interview, collage inquiry and metaphor drawing. The data generation sessions will take place online at a convenient date and time. It will not disrupt your day-to-day functioning at your school and will be conducted out of your instructional time.

As a research participant, you may contact the researcher or supervisor. The details are as follows:

Researcher	Name: Mrs. Jayshree Thilakdhari Qualification: Doctor of Philosophy (Educational Psychology) Contact Number: 083 825 3590 Email Address: arusha12@gmail.com
Supervisor	Name: Doctor Visvaranie Jairam Qualification: Doctor of Philosophy/Registered Educational Psychologist Contact Number: 031 260 1438 Email Address: jairam@ukzn.ac.za

If you have any questions relating to the rights of research participants, you can contact the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration Research Office on 031 260 4557 or HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za.

2. Requirements of the Research Participant

The main requirements of the research participant are as follows:

- Participation will be voluntary and subject to informed consent.
- A research participant is free to withdraw from the research study at any given point in time.
- The rights of a research participant will be safeguarded in relation to the preservation of confidentiality, access to research information and reporting of findings, and misleading promises regarding the benefits of the research.
- Anonymity and Confidentiality will be ensured through a coding system to avoid the inclusion of personal identifiers. The research participant will not be identifiable when the researcher presents her findings. Confidentiality will be maintained in storing and disposing of the research findings.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you. The data generated will be used for academic purposes of the research study only.
- Each data generation session may take up to 2 hours and may be split depending on your preference.

Yours Faithfully,

Mrs. Jayshree Thilakdhari - BEd (Cum laude); BEd Hons (Cum laude); MEd (First Class Pass)

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT DECLARATION

The Title of this Research Dissertation is:

Psychosocial Experiences of Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa During the Covid-19 Pandemic

I, _____ (Full name/s of research participant) hereby voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. I confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research study which I have been briefed about in advance by the researcher. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research study at any time, so should I desire. I also understand that the results of this research study will be used for the purpose of the study only, and that my identity and information will be kept confidential.

I give permission for the use of the following record devices during the data production process:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio Recording:		
Semi-structured interview		
Collage Inquiry		
Metaphor Drawing		
Video Recording:		
Use of my: Photographs/Collage/Drawing		

Signature of Research Participant

Date

APPENDIX 3

COLLAGE INQUIRY SCHEDULE

For the purpose of this research study, **Collage Inquiry** as a data generation method addressed the following research question and research objective:

RESEACH QUESTION	RESEARCH OBJECTIVE
<i>What knowledge and understandings do foundation phase teachers in South Africa have on the Covid-19 pandemic?</i>	<i>To ascertain the knowledge and understandings that foundation phase teachers in South Africa have on the Covid-19 pandemic.</i>

The **Collage Inquiry** prompt question is as follows:

“What are your knowledge and understandings of the Covid-19 pandemic?”

Research participants are requested to make a collage based on the prompt question above and that exemplifies some of their lived experiences of working as a foundation phase teacher in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic and share its overall significance through a discussion with the researcher.

The collage may be completed manually (by physically cutting and pasting images) or electronically (by using the computer). The research participant may use images and words found in magazines, newspapers and the internet. The collage will be completed individually and will take a day to complete, if no challenges arise. Once the collage has been completed, it will be photographed and sent electronically to the researcher. Thereafter, a discussion will follow. In this discussion, the researcher will ask questions based on the collage. The discussions will be video and voice recorded, and the recording will be transcribed verbatim. Due to the nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, there will be no face-to-face meetings; only virtual ones.

The research participants will be provided with the following guiding prompts during their discussion with the researcher after the collage is completed:

- **Please explain the meanings of your collage.**
- **Are there any words, pictures or phrases that stand out from the rest of your collage? Please explain the meaning of them.**
- **If you had to recapitulate your knowledge and understandings of Covid-19 through an image, what would it be?**
- **Which words, pictures or phrases signify critical moments that have occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic?**
- **Whilst creating this collage, did you redefine your understanding of Covid-19?**
- **What does the Covid-19 pandemic mean to you as a foundation phase teacher?**

APPENDIX 4

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

For the purpose of this research study, **Semi-structured Interviews** as a data generation method addressed the following research question and research objective:

RESEACH QUESTION	RESEARCH OBJECTIVE
<i>What are the challenges, if any, of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?</i>	<i>To identify the challenges, if any, of foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic.</i>

The **Semi-structured Interview** prompt question is as follows:

“What are challenges, if any, of working as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic?”

Research participants are requested to share their challenges, if any, of working as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic, and highlight their experiences in a semi-structed interview with the researcher.

Semi-structured Interviews will take 1 – 2 hours on a convenient date. The interview will be voice and video recorded, and the recordings will be transcribed verbatim. Due to the nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, there will be no face-to-face meetings; only virtual ones.

The research participants will be provided with the following guiding prompts whilst undertaking the semi-structured interview:

- **Research Participant Profile: Gender/Age/Qualification/Location/Year started teaching/Grades taught/ Subjects taught/ Personal self/Professional self**
- **Describe your school day prior to the Covid-19 pandemic by sharing some of your daily schooling activities or routines.**
- **Share some of your schooling experiences as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic.**
- **How is teaching and learning taking place during the Covid-19 pandemic?**
- **How does working during the Covid-19 pandemic make you feel?**
- **What are some of the challenges that you have experienced as a foundation phase teacher during the Covid-19 pandemic?**

APPENDIX 5

METAPHOR DRAWING SCHEDULE

For the purpose of this research study, **Metaphor Drawing** as a data generation method addressed the following research question and research objective:

RESEACH QUESTION	RESEARCH OBJECTIVE
<i>What intervention strategies are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?</i>	<i>To provide intervention strategies that are needed to support foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?</i>

The **Metaphor Drawing** prompt question is as follows:

“What intervention strategies are needed to support foundation phase teachers?”

Research participants are requested to make a drawing based on the prompt question above and that exemplifies some of their lived experiences of working as a foundation phase teacher in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic and share its overall significance through a discussion with the researcher.

The metaphor drawing may be completed manually (by physically drawing) or electronically (by using the computer). The research participant may use any thoughts and ideas that they may have. The metaphor drawing will be completed individually and will take a day to complete, if no challenges arise. Once the metaphor drawing has been completed, it will be photographed and sent electronically to the researcher. Thereafter, a discussion will follow. In this discussion, the researcher will ask questions based on the metaphor drawing. The discussions will be video and voice recorded, and the recording will be transcribed verbatim. Due to the nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, there will be no face-to-face meetings; only virtual ones.

The research participants will be provided with the following guiding prompts during their discussion with the researcher after the metaphor drawing is completed:

- **Please explain the meanings of your drawing.**
- **Are there any words, pictures or phrases that stand out from the rest of your drawing? Please explain the meaning of them.**
- **Express an emotion that your drawing brings forth to you.**
- **What role do you think foundation phase teachers in South Africa should play during the Covid-19 pandemic?**
- **What intervention strategies are needed for foundation phase teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic?**

APPENDIX 6

PERMISSION LETTER FROM DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Tel: 033 392 1063

Email: Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Phindile Duma

Ref: 2/4/8/1776

Mrs J Thilakdhari
51B Sentinel Avenue
Greenwood Park
DURBAN NORTH
4051

Dear Mrs Thilakdhari

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"EXPLORING PSYCHOSOCIAL EXPERIENCES OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 July 2021 to 31 August 2023.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

PINETOWN DISTRICT
UMLAZI DISTRICT


Dr. EY Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 06 July 2021

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

APPENDIX 7

TURN IT IN REPORT

Exploring Psychosocial Experiences of Foundation Phase Teachers in South Africa During the Covid-19 Pandemic			
ORIGINALITY REPORT			
6%	%	6%	%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
PRIMARY SOURCES			
1	Yael Shalem, Ursula Hoadley. "The dual economy of schooling and teacher morale in South Africa", International Studies in Sociology of Education, 2009		1%
	Publication		
2	Saul Ngarava. "Empirical analysis on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food insecurity in South Africa", Physics and Chemistry of the Earth, Parts A/B/C, 2022		1%
	Publication		
3	"Communicating COVID-19", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2021		<1%
	Publication		
4	Jessica Nina Lester, Yonjoo Cho, Chad R. Lochmiller. "Learning to Do Qualitative Data Analysis: A Starting Point", Human Resource Development Review, 2020		<1%
	Publication		
5	"Program Abstracts from The GSA 2020 Annual Scientific Meeting "Turning 75: Why		<1%

APPENDIX 8

EDITOR'S LETTER

ACARA

Academic Consulting and Research Advisory

T/A Smiling King Events Management and Multimedia Solutions Cc

S. Ramson

PhD, MA, Hons (Psych), UHDE, BA

Coaching for Academic Excellence

16/11/2022

Editing Work undertaken for: Jayshree Thilakdhari, Student Number: 210 517 610

PhD Dissertation: Discipline of Educational Psychology, School of Education, UKZN Edgewood.

TITLE: EXPLORING PSYCHOSOCIAL EXPERIENCES OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The student has engaged my services as editor for the purposes of examining and correcting the technical aspects of the work and providing a critical reading.

The student was advised about the following aspects:

- The usage of SA language, spelling, and grammar.
- Sentence construction, logical sequence
- Referencing according to APA standards, as well as replacing outdated references
- Formatting of text
- Standardization of Contents, and Chapter Titles, and layout.
- Page layout and design as well as layout of diagrams and tables.
- Layout of Reference list
- A Turnitin report was not provided, hence any plagiarism in the document cannot be verified, nor falls under the responsibility of the editor.

The following recommendation, amongst others, was made:

1. The theoretical framework PDT must be used more strongly in the analysis of the data. Rather than only having a concluding discussion of the PDT in relation to summarized results, the student is advised to show how the PDT is a lens that helps to analyse and interpret the data at every step of data analysis. Since Erikson's PDT proposes stages, clearly show which stage(s) the participants are displaying and how the key characteristics of the identified stage can be used as a tool of analysis.

The student was also advised that any recommendation made by the editor will defer to the advice of her supervisor.

The document was reviewed and edited using the *Track Changes* feature of Word. The edited document returned to the student remains fully editable and the student reserves the right to accept, reject or modify my suggestions and changes. Thus, it can be accepted that the final version of this document submitted for examination by the student may differ from the document edited by me.

S.M. Ramson

PS. The detailed editing as Track changes, Comments and email correspondence with the student can be provided if required.