

**EXPLORING PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR VULNERABLE
CHILDREN IN RURAL SCHOOLS.**

By

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This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Education (Educational Psychology),
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2019

Date of submission

November, 2019

DECLARATION

I, Thembinkosi Victor Ndlovu, declare that:

- a) The research reported in this dissertation, except where stated otherwise is my original work
- b) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university
- c) This dissertation does not entail other people's work unless specifically attributed as such, in which case their words have been rephrased and referenced. However, where their exact words have been used, their writings have been placed in quotation marks and referenced as well.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the glory of God, the creator and lover of our souls.

I would like to thank Professor D.J. Hlalele for his exceptional expertise and guidance.

I am also deeply indebted to the participants who selflessly shared their narratives and valuable experiences on support systems for OVC, whose contributions made the completion of this dissertation possible.

To my supportive wife Zine uMaMthembu for being my slave driver, Ngonyama!

To my great children: Sithabile, Ayanda, Sibonginkosi and Sphumelele thank you for being a constant source of inspiration.

To my High School teacher and Principal Dr C.J. Buthelezi. I am sorry sir it took so long to pay this debt.

To my parents Ntombi uMaSitimela and Elias iNgonyama for staying on to see this old dream coming through. Stay on there, still more to come.

Lastly thank you to the multitudes of fatherless children in Africa, for giving me sleepless nights thinking about their plight,

“Here where man sit and here each other groan, where youth grows pale spectre-thin and dies, where but to think is to be full of sorrow”, John Keats

Abstract

The HIV/AIDS pandemic and high levels of violence in South Africa have resulted in increased prevalence of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). Vulnerable children experience barriers to learning and development. Broader socio-economic circumstances, including community health issues and dire poverty, such as is faced in rural communities, intensify the vulnerability. This qualitative study explored the educational prospects of lives of vulnerable children in rural schools, with a special focus on the psychosocial support systems available to them. Three layers of data generation techniques (Observation, Document analysis and Interviews) were employed in the exploratory case studies to explore the lives of three learners within the framework of two theories; Communities of Practice (CoP) and Social Constructivism. The amalgamated theoretical framework was intended to; raise awareness of the plight of rural children, advance social cognition, and to lobby for social justice. Two orphanage schools in rural KwaZulu-Natal were selected for the study. Purposive sampling was used to select three learners, four teachers, a resident social worker, a member of school management and two caregivers. The selected participants were regarded as integral voices and potential role players in the envisaged psychosocial support systems collaboration. The findings pointed to a critical shortage of psychosocial support systems for vulnerable children in rural schools, especially highly specialized services like educational psychology services, proper health care, food security and focused poverty alleviation initiatives.

Key Concepts: Psychosocial, support systems, vulnerable, rural, collaboration.

Acronyms

AIDS	:	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
(CoP)	:	Community of Practice
DoE	:	Department of Education
HIV	:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
NGO	:	Non-Government Organization
NPO	:	Non-Profit Organization
OVC	:	Orphans and Vulnerable children
UNAIDS	:	United Nations and AIDS
UNESCO	:	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	:	United International Nations Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	:	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	:	World Health Organization.

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Chapter 1

Introductory chapter

1.1 Introduction

Chapter one hereby serves as an introductory chapter to present the *modus operandi* of the whole research process. This chapter discusses the background of the study, the purpose of the study, the rationale for the study, the problem statement, objectives of the study, research questions, and the synopsis of methodology.

1.1.1 Background of the study

Multiple vulnerabilities affecting children in rural communities adversely impact their development and schooling. Psychosocial support systems for children in rural schools can render much needed support for these vulnerable children. Educational Psychology can foster a significant, more supportive and leading role in psychosocial support systems to bridge the gap between the family and the school. Psychosocial support systems can help to provide mental health services to children and their families. Such psychosocial support can be a catalyst for the provision of quality inclusive education. Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001, p.15) maintains that “all children and youth can learn and need support and learner’s individual strengths need to be encouraged.” This assertion is emphatically reiterated by many other inclusive education experts and proponents such as Engelbrecht, et al. (2017) and Lindsay (2007, p.2) who contend that “Educational psychology can contribute to the conceptualization of the nature, appropriateness and effectiveness of education for children with disabilities and special educational needs.” Rural children indeed require special attention (UNESCO, 1994).

1.1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to highlight the the importance of psychosocial support systems for rural vulnerable children. The study seeks to explore psychosocial support systems, i.e. their availability or lack thereof. The study also seeks to foster collaborations and mutual understanding and support between the family and the school. Most learning opportunities fall in the cracks between the school and the home and opportunities to maximize the child’s educational success are lost (Mandarakas, 2014; Blaisdell, 2019). There is thus, a crucial need to support rural children and their schooling by addressing the gaps between the family system and the school ecosystem. While much has been said about the lack of parental involvement, very little has been done to solve or at least advocate practical solutions to address the problem.

This study explored the role that can be played by the psychosocial support systems in bridging the schism between the home and the school, and perhaps to find ways to encourage collaboration of all support systems to work together as one conjugate system for the edification of the vulnerable children in rural schools and communities. The researcher's hypothesis is that the synergistic collaboration of psychosocial support systems can benefit schooling and general life outlook for the rural vulnerable children. Support is required for all children and all permutations of family structures, more especially orphans and child-headed families, which are prevalent in South Africa (Pillay, 2018; Abuya, Mutisya, Onsomu, Ngware & Oketch, 2019).

1.2 Rationale for the Study

The motivation to do this study was that I realised that there is a gap in finding out psychosocial support systems available for vulnerable children in rural schools. My experience as an educator and student counsellor has taught me that the bulk of the factors accounting for learner adversities are related to family circumstances, especially those to do with family structure, family socio-economic standing and family culture. This sentiment is also reflected by other educators. This is particularly true of rural vulnerable children. This study explored the psychosocial support systems available to address the challenges confronting vulnerable children's schooling, especially those from home to school and in the broader society. The lack of purposeful interventions to build resilience of vulnerable children leads to a "lost generation" (Sohnge, 2001, p. 231). Lost generation is a designation that refers to children who drop out of school to become so-called street children, most of whom end up in juvenile prisons. Only once they reach prison do such children receive psychological services, a delayed intervention that ~~comes too little too late~~ since institutional environments are not ideal for raising children (Nkosi, Ngwenya, Mchunu, Gumede, Ferguson, & Doyle, 2019, (Sohnge, 2001). Children do not receive psychosocial support from systems that should ideally be found in the home, the school, the community and the society at large. The Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001, p.50) envisaged that "at the institutional education level, partnerships will be established with parents so that they can, armed with information, counselling and skills, participate more effectively in the planning and implementation of inclusion activities, and so that they can play a more active role in the learning and teaching of their own children, despite limitations due to disabilities or chronic illnesses". South Africa is currently far from this partnership ideal.

1.3 Problem statement

Rural children are vulnerable and suffer the consequences of being marginalized and the psychological distresses resulting from social pathologies. Many researchers have researched the prevalence and plight of orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) emanating from the veritable onslaught of HIV/AIDS in Africa. However, very few have dedicated their work to exploring the predicament uniquely faced by rural vulnerable children. Rurality is an added vulnerability because of the socio-political deprivation and the exodus of the educated people to the cities. Psycho-social support systems are crucial, to bring about awareness and upliftment to the rural children besieged by traumatic experiences. There is a need to expose the injustices against these vulnerable children. The goal is to help them develop optimally, to do well educationally, and to become responsible citizens who are empowered to change their circumstances and those of others (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

1.4 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to investigate the availability or non-availability (and the impact of either) of psychosocial support systems, and to explore ways to appraise and enhance available support systems. The study will raise awareness about vulnerable children and their rights and responsibilities. Where there is inadequate support for children, the study seeks to awake Ubuntu consciousness of all stakeholders. This study sought to explore the main objective through the following focus objectives:

1. To explore psychosocial support systems for rural children.
2. To investigate the role that can be played by educational psycho-social services in addressing vulnerable children's vulnerabilities.
3. To highlight the need for collaboration of all stakeholders.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What psychosocial support systems are available for vulnerable children living in the two orphanage schools in Inchanga in KwaZulu-Natal?
2. What role does educational psycho-social services play in addressing these vulnerable children's adversities?
3. Is there any collaboration existing among all stakeholders in addressing risk factors of the sampled learners?

1.6 Significance of the Study

As briefly stated under objectives above, this study sought to expose the plight of rural vulnerable children. It was hoped that the results would provide deeper understanding, leading to advocacy for changes. This study will contribute to research on rural children's vulnerabilities. The children will be conscientized, through engagement in the research, to make sense of their situations and will be provoked towards achieving some social cognition. Social cognition refers to how children, through social interaction, think about themselves and others, which impacts on the formulation of their mental depictions of themselves, their relationships and their social world (Wyer Jr, 2014). Lastly and most importantly, departmental planners and policy makers can use the generated knowledge to facilitate the provision of support systems for rural children, schools and communities.

1.7 Definition of Key Concepts

- 1 **Resilience:** Resilience refers to the tendency to rebound, bounce back, recover, adapt or cope in response to risk, challenges or adversity (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2011). It can be defined as “the ability to successfully use external and internal resources to resolve developmental issues and life- tasks” (Pienaar et al., 2011 p.130).
- 2 **Orphans:** Orphans are children under the age of 18 who have lost at least one parent.
- 3 **Vulnerable children:** Vulnerable children are children who experience multiple and/or serious risks to their development due to a number of predisposing risk factors, especially poverty; whether or not they are orphans (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2010).
- 4 **Risk factor:** A risk factor is a variable that precedes a negative outcome and increases the chances that the outcome will occur (Donald et al., 2010).
- 5 **Protective factor:** A protective factor is a personal or situational variable that reduces the chances of a child developing a disorder (Donald et al., 2010).
- 6 **Attachment:** Attachment is a social bond that can apply to all aspects of a child-parent relationship. It is the on-going process of establishing and maintaining an emotional bond with parents or other significant individuals, helping the child to explore and learn about their world (Mash & Wolfe, 2012).
- 7 **Social cognition:** Refers to how children think about themselves and others, resulting in the formation of mental representations of themselves, their relationships and their social world. These are not fixed but are continually updated on the basis of maturation and social interaction (Wyer Jr, 2014).

- 8 ***Social capital:*** Relates to the social connections that one can use to gain access to knowledge or power. It embodies aspects such as trust, diverse friendships and socialization (Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016).
- 9 ***Social justice:*** Social justice is a democratic process that seeks to ensure full and equitable participation of all people, as they mutually and collaboratively advance their capacity to shape their society to become inclusive (Adams & Bell, 2016).
- 10 ***Self-efficacy:*** Bandura's (1986) classical definition of self-efficacy is that it refers to people's own belief and judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to attain a designated type of performance.
- 11 ***Ethnography:*** Involves studying people in their contextual situation to gain deep understanding of their lives (Thomas, 2015).
- 12 ***Psychopathology:*** Psychopathology is the study of psychological dysfunction within an individual that is associated with distress or impairment in functioning and a response to that which deviates from that person's culture (Mash & Wolfe, 2010; Burke, 2013).

1.8 Theoretical framework

Theoretical framework orientates and draws the focus of the researcher to the type of information to be systematically observed and analysed (Terre Blanche et al., 2006; Kumar, 2019; (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The theoretical framework sets the stage and defines the context for the investigation or inquiry initiated by the problem statement. It embodies the researcher's understanding and conceptualisation of how the variables in the study interconnect and talk to one another. It is through the theoretical framework that the researcher fully describes and investigates the phenomenon under study. It works within a boarder framework of theories that represent previous findings on the phenomenon (McGaghie et al., 2001; Uher, 2019). In chapter 2 the theoretical framework will be discussed in greater detail.

1.9 Preview of Research Design and Methodology

1.9.1 Paradigm

Paradigm is a worldview, fundamental assumptions and beliefs that guide the researcher's thinking and way of conducting research. Paradigms provide a viewpoint to identify distinct and common patterns in the research data that allow the researcher to recognize research findings relevant to the topic being studied, (Kuhn, 1974; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). There are two major philosophical dimensions that distinguish a research paradigm, they are *ontology*

and *epistemology* (Terre Blanche, et al.2006; Noddings, 2018; Wahyuni, 2012). Ontology and Epistemology will be discussed further in chapter three.

1.9.2 Research Design

Research designs within this qualitative research method provide specific direction for procedures the research design (Creswell, 2014, Kumar, 2019). Research design is a plan of action that strategically connects the stages of the research from the research questions to data generation, analysis and reporting (Uher, 2019). In the qualitative study like this one, the research stages are not rigid, as in the case of experimentally manipulated design. The interactive research processes form a sequence of activities that are more fluid and flexible to allow a free flow of the study (Terre Blanche, et al. 2006).

1.10 Synopsis of Methodology

A qualitative approach under the interpretive paradigm was employed to explore the participants' views, feelings and interpretations (Barak, 2017). This paradigm assisted the researcher to gain in-depth, authentic understanding of the participants' perspectives, rather than relying on theoretical assumptions (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Interpretivists' epistemological belief is that knowledge is intersubjectively created by people in their contextual setting, and it can be influenced by their culture. The ontological stance is that reality is determined by human experience and is constructed by people interacting as individuals, as well as with their environment (Kemmis, Wilkinson, Edwards-Groves, Hardy, Grootenboer, & Bristol, 2014). The participants were purposively selected for in-depth ethnography through the multiple case studies inquiry. Ethnography involves studying people in their contextual situation in order to gain a deep understanding of their lives (Jorgensen, 2015; Thomas, 2015).

The learners who participated in the study were conveniently sampled for their vulnerability by virtue of being subjected to rural marginalisation and, other added vulnerabilities of orphanhood, disability and past trauma. (Creswell, 2015). The methodology and the theoretical framework employed for the study, as well as sampling procedures and research instruments, are discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

1.11 Data Generation Methods

1.11.1 Observation

According to Merriam and Grenier (2019), observational data generation method is the first and integral part of an ethnographic study. “The intent of ethnographic research is to obtain a holistic picture of the subject of study with emphasis on portraying the everyday experiences of individuals by observing and interviewing them and relevant others” (Creswell, 2014, p. 256). Ethnographic research used employs observational methods to collect the data (Thomas, 2015; Jorgensen, 2015). Observation is done in natural setting where participants are allowed to carry on with their daily activities as much as possible. Ethnographic studies are also about observing various contemporary societies or group shared culture including “school culture” as is done in this study (Cohen, 2013; Kumar, 2019; Hammersley, 2017).

1.11.2 Document analysis

Document analysis is a data collection technique in a qualitative research in which documents are investigated by the researcher to find information relevant to the research question (Bowen, 2009).

1.11.3 Interview

The interview is a data generation method that fits within a particular methodology (Wahyuni, 2012). Interviewing is a particularly useful way to gather people’s views as one formulates research hypotheses (Uher, 2019; Tracy, 2019). The interviewer normally starts an interview session with some preconceptions and hypotheses. During the interview, these hypotheses are either reinforced or dispelled. Data analysis will distil the information to confirm the hypotheses before being acceptable as truth and scientific knowledge (Creswell, 2014; Lune & Berg, 2016).

1.12 Data Analysis (Thematic Analysis)

Qualitative research is about finding and going through sources of theory and evidence, generating new data, and analysing the material and getting acquainted with the data, and then delineating and distilling essential features for publication as findings, (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Thematic analysis is a data analysis method that is used for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns from the data. This method identifies themes from the data that either confirm or refute the researcher’s hypothesis. These themes are patterns of data that describe, organise possible observations, and further assist to interpret aspects of the phenomenon. Data

analysis helps the researcher to exhibit their creativity. It shows deep understanding of the data, and ability to appraise and synthesise it. Thematic analysis is the method used as the algorithm for data analysis in this study (Jorgensen, 2015). These algorithmic steps guide processing, delineating and making sense of data (Bowen, 2009; Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016). The six phases of thematic analysis (Clark & Braun, 2014; (Lune & Berg, 2016) are:

1. Familiarising yourself with data
2. Data coding and organising data according to patterns
3. Organising data into themes and sub-themes
4. Reviewing themes to refine them for analysis
5. Defining and naming themes according to their relevance
6. Using identified themes to report findings

1.13 Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is said to be trustworthy if it adequately addresses the issues of credibility, transferability and dependability. Credibility is enhanced by corroborating findings across different data sets and analysing data collected through different data collection methods to minimise the effect of bias. (Bowen, 2009; Tracy, 2019). To that end, qualitative research strives to collect, integrate, and present data from different sources using triangulation of methods where a variety of sources of evidence are incorporated in the study. Transferability refers to the level of applicability of results into other settings or situations. An adequate explanation of the characteristics and organization of a research site should be provided to improve transferability (Creswell, 2014; Wahyuni, 2012).

1.14 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues pertain to human respect, dignity and autonomy of participants, and their right and liberty to choose to participate voluntarily (Tracy, 2019; Kumar, 2019). Participants' confidentiality and anonymity is guaranteed. Also important is beneficence, which is about how the research will benefit the participants, whilst taking measures to minimize psychological, social or physical risks. The envisaged benefits specifically exclude material incentives such as money (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Specific ethical considerations for this study are discussed in chapter 3.

1.15 Limitations of the study

Limitations of the study are effects or conditions that the researcher cannot control. Limitations may compromise the methodology and conclusions of the study, and any such limitations should be declared. Also important are delimitations or research boundaries determined by the researcher which should be mentioned (Jorgensen 2015). Limitations for this study are mentioned in chapter 3.

1.16 Arrangement of chapters.

The study consists of five chapters.

Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter. It provided the layout or the structure of the study. The introduction of the provided a brief background and highlighting the rationale of the study, the problem statement, the objectives, the research questions and the synopsis of the methodology used in the study.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the relevant literature. It focuses on vulnerable children and the psychosocial support systems available to assist them to prevail over their vulnerabilities and excel both at school and later in life. Different disciplines including anthropology and sociology have approached the study of resilience in various ways and perspectives, but this study is inclined toward psychology and more specifically, educational psychology.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology employed in the study. It outlines the research design, sampling, data generation methods and tools, data analysis methods, measures of trustworthiness, ethical considerations and the study's limitations. Chapter 3 also explores the literature on research paradigm and outlines the theoretical framework that underpinned this study.

Chapter 4 presents and analyses the data gathered for this study. Three tiers of data emerged. These were *observation* of the two rural orphanage schools to investigate their conduciveness as learning ecology environments), *document analysis* of life histories (including medical, psychological and scholastic reports) of three vulnerable children, and *interviews* of all sampled participants.

Chapter 5 presents the summary of findings, provides an in-depth discussion of the researcher's interpretation of the findings. The conclusion is also given as well as the recommendations based on the researcher's perspective of the whole support system for rural vulnerable children.

1.17 Conclusion

This study explores psychosocial support systems for vulnerable children in rural schools. Whilst several studies have done work on Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC), this study recognises that not only orphaned children are vulnerable, but that vulnerability disposing factors affect almost all children in various forms and degrees depending on their exposure to disposing risks. Children with both parents can be vulnerable because of many factors including parental toxic relations fuelled by alcohol abuse, unemployment and divorce (Labella, Narayan, McCormick, Desjardins & Masten, 2019). Again, whilst children from opulent families are susceptible to peculiar forms of abuse, such as being exposed to ruthless social media and internet perils or evils (Sharp, 2019).

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The background was laid in chapter one, It is then logical to examine what other researchers have found in support or contrary to the hypothetical assertions made in chapter one.

A literature review examines previous research on the phenomenon under study in order to identify other scholars' findings. It is a baseline assessment exercise to appraise the current situation and interrogate previous findings on the subject, juxtaposing the two to explore new developments. Many circumstances impact the lives and schooling of rural vulnerable children. This section explored what other writers and researchers have found on the psychosocial support systems available to assist rural children. Guided by the research question, the researcher reviewed relevant literature and empirical findings on psychosocial support systems for vulnerable children.

2.2 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The primary difference between a positivist study and an interpretivist one is the ontological stance. People are dynamic; their experiences and behaviour thus, cannot be directly deduced using natural laws. It is for this reason that this study employed a theoretical framework that guided the study along “ecosystemic perspectives, which specifically take social context into account” (Donald et al., 2010 p.10). The theoretical framework used in this study is a convergence of Communities of Practice and social constructivism. Khanlou and Wray (2014) argue that a hybrid approach that combines multiple theoretical perspectives epistemologically provides more insights into human phenomena or multidimensional constructs. The value of this approach is that it provides multidisciplinary and intersectoral methodologies to enable a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. The theories mentioned enabled the researcher to inductively explore the dynamics and issues relating to the provisioning of psychosocial support systems.

Communities of practice constitute groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they regularly interact (Wenger, 2011, p.1). The concept's origins lie in the *learning theory*, from which anthropologist Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger coined the term (Hoadley, 2012). As a theory, Community of practice (CoP) provides an excellent framework to study how people network to solve life problems and

generate knowledge and wisdom for future applications. People in communities of practice share their collective strength and expertise. They learn from one another in an informal way. They design useful processes to embark on self-help and emancipation programmes. Collective knowledge generation and sharing synergises their competences, resources and capital in problem solving. They focus on common problems, analyse, strategize and set standards. They empower and renew themselves continually through knowledge creation and sharing, and through peer professional development, mentoring and coaching (Wenger, 2011; Wenger et al., 2000). Members of communities of practice are self-organized and become members voluntarily. They are brought and held together by a common passion, interest and commitment to build and share knowledge towards a common goal. They also take collective responsibility for management and stewardship of their newly acquired knowledge. Individual participants in a CoP, as well as in social constructivism, may “have diverging social norms, expertise, and experiences” (Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016, p.793), but every participant can freely share their views without restriction emanating from a superiority/inferiority complex. For the purpose of this study, it was crucial that ‘expert power’ be minimized by allowing all contributors to feel equally important. Community of Practice provides a framework for creating a conducive school environment that promotes psycho-social support and academic development (Hoadley, 2012). The emphasis is on collaboration and participation of individuals contributing through dialogue in a collective domain of interests. Through such engagement, knowledge is socially negotiated and constructed (Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016). The researcher discusses the tenets of CoP in the closing chapter of discussion and recommendations, where conscious effort is made to advocate social justice.

The other theoretical framework in this study is social constructivism. Social constructivist viewpoint on learning is that cognitive development can take place in a social context as a result of motivational processes in socio-cultural engagements and communications with people significant to the learner. Social constructivism believes that “learning processes that involve peer interactions challenge the learner to think at a higher level and move forward to the next cognitive development stage” (Barak, 2017, p. 285).

Social constructivism represented the ontology of this study (Hay, 2016). Social constructivism posits that reality is constructed through human activity, and that knowledge does not exist before it is constructed through social interaction. It enables the researcher to frame the study and interpret the findings in a social context. The ecological context of humans

is where they understand their environment, culture and values, and hence contribute to the construction of knowledge that improves their livelihood. In the social constructivist approach, data is generated in the real context, contrasted with established theories and integrated with personal experiences (Carlson, 1999). Gergen (2011, p.4) notes that knowledge, reason, emotion, and morality reside, not in the individual mind, but in relationships within a given community or tradition. Knowledge is co-constructed and is subjective (Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016). Learning is a process, and meaningful learning is realised when people engage in social inter-subjective interaction. Lyons, Thompson & Timmons, (2016) states that social constructivism has the underlying belief that challenges are insurmountable. There will always be something positive to be used as a springboard to initiate and sustain a positive change if people work together.

The synergy of Community of Practice and social constructivism as the theoretical framework synchronises seamlessly with the research design to guide the study from data generation through to analysis and discussion. This framework and design enhanced the researcher's self-awareness first, enabling the critique of participants' experiential and educational circumstances (Kemmis et al., 2014). Social constructivism gives meaning and perspective to an individual's state of awareness of the surrounding situation, the extent of knowledge of the elements that cause the situation to be what it is, and the capacity to share such awareness with others. Participants critically engage and communicate to reach common understanding of the situation they find themselves in. They use dialogue "to find how particular perspectives, social structures or practices may be irrational, unjust, alienating or inhumane" (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p.125). People's views, values and perceptions are taken into cognisance and are respected, and the researcher is able to; firstly, recognise that meanings are subjective, complex, diverse and multiple; and secondly, qualitatively interpret the participants' complex views without watering them down by categorizing them into boxed ideas.

Social constructivists maintain that reality is the product of coordination where people interact (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The notion of socially constructed knowledge espouses both the tenets of CoP as well as those of social constructivism. Neither CoP nor social constructivism is limited by any boundaries. This means that diverse constellations of communities of practice can operate and gain access to one another's territories across organizational boundaries and even cultural divides. The result is a strategically interwoven theoretical framework for practical knowledge creation and functionality. This framework reiterates the notion that

epistemologies should demystify learning practices, experiences and learning content; to embrace and appreciate knowledge created by indigenous communities (Hlalele, 2019). Knowledge that is informally created in the broader community through social engagement can thus, be used with full recognition and regard in a formal educational system. The gate is also reciprocally open for researched knowledge to benefit broader communities. This renders communities of practice a unique vehicle for life-long learning, even beyond the boundaries of a classroom. Participants in a community of practice “develop a practice of sharing repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems” (Wenger, 2011, p.2).

The main purpose of this study was to explore the availability or lack of psychosocial support systems, and hence the ways in which resilience can be understood as a psycho-socially harvested attribute for promoting mental health among vulnerable children. (Glass, Kohli, Surkan, Remy, & Perrin, 2018). The focus was to identify the psychosocial support systems necessary to enhance resilience, and ultimately the development of learning self-efficacy among vulnerable children in rural schools. The amalgamated theoretical framework together with the supporting research design provided a paradigm for the researcher to view and frame research data, appraise the data for collaboration cues and to derive relevant meaning (Lyons et al., 2016). This synergic amalgamation of theories in this study, in sections analysis and discussion, will be referred to as the Communities of ~~social constructivism~~ practice.

2.3 The focus of this literature review

Since the outbreak of HIV/AIDS, coupled with the culture of violence in South Africa, and the proliferation of orphans and vulnerable children, there has been a noticeable interest by the researchers to do work on OVC. The literature review explores psychosocial support systems available or that could be provided for vulnerable children in rural schools. The topics discussed are: psycho-social support services for collective efficacy; psychosocial support systems in rural schools; the prevalence of OVC in South Africa; the “home” concept; the family structure; family culture; parental involvement; socio-economic issues; psychosocial support services; mitigating (against predisposing) factors and strategies: psychosocial support in schools (investigating support systems available in rural schools); inclusive education principles (addressing barriers to learning, development and participation); school culture; and school/community/government collaboration.

2.4 Psycho-social support services for a collective efficacy

The Salamanca ‘Framework for Action’ (UNESCO, 1994) states that governments should offer a range of educational and psychosocial support services to support the development of inclusive schools (Ambelu, Mulu, Seyoum, Ayalew, & Hildrew; 2019). The South African White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) envisaged the establishment of school-based support teams and district support teams incorporating educational psychologists and school counsellors. Given the country’s limited financial resources, as well as the infamous legacy of apartheid, it is arguably difficult for the government of the day to provide every school with a psychologist to attend to learners on a one-to-one basis (Engelbrecht, et al. ,2017). However, considering the high proliferation of vulnerable children in rural schools, it would be advisable to capacitate school-based support teams (Bradshaw, Williamson, Kendziora, Jones & Cole, 2019) by providing training and skills and the implementation of psychosocial support programs. Empowered teachers and caregivers/parents should collaborate to make sense of the challenges and present a united front in addressing the issues affecting the children, especially vulnerable children in rural settings (Epstein, 2018; Lyons et al., 2016). Research (Gross, 2015) shows that teacher commitment is directly proportional to student success (Emmers, et al., 2019; Bradley-Johnson et al. (2000) suggest what they call *indirect services*, as an alternative, where psychologists develop specialized programs and train other stakeholders such as educators who have more contact with learners, parents and caregivers, to offer more proximal support services. Engelbrecht et al. (2017, p.16) also emphasize the need for “collaboration between teacher education institutions, provincial departments of education, and local schools in the development of well-structured teacher education programs for inclusion and the development of effective multi-professional support on district levels that can further develop the capacity of teachers to provide support in their classrooms.” Research has shown that site-based interventions work much better in providing support to vulnerable learners faced with psychosocial challenges than external expert approach (Nel et al, 2013; Engelbrecht et al. 2016; Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016; Lyons, et al., 2016).

2.5 Psychosocial Support Systems in Rural Schools

Muribwathoho (2015) found in his study that, most psychosocial issues impacting learners’ learning negatively can be addressed by providing adequate school-based psychosocial support programs. On the background of Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001), he argues that policies are in place to set systems and programs necessary and capable, not only to protect every child’s

rights, but to address all psychological and structural impediments to learning. The well-designed psychosocial programs should bring about positive change in learner behavior like enhancing pro-social behavior, and ultimately help improve academic performance (Mwoma & Pillay, 2015). It is noticeable that the findings of the same study accentuate the role of a psychologist from development to implementation of such programs, and recognizes that teachers are very important when it comes to the implementation (Bradshaw, et al., 2019). These intervention programs should, according to Durlak, Weissberg, Dominick, Taylor and Schellinger (2011), yield positive effects on social and emotional adjustments, and these interventions in schools work most efficiently if incorporated into routine educational or classroom practices and do not require direct involvement of an external expert for implementation. This means that an expert or psychologist should be involved in developing the programs and further give training support to teachers, social workers and school counsellors. Psychologist should also be involved in assessment of learners and appraising post implementation results to evaluate to effectiveness of the programs (Durlak, et al, 2011; Epstein, 2018; Gardner & Stephens-Pisecco, 2019).

Muribwathoho (2015) also found that the state of psychosocial services programs in schools was very much undesirable. Teachers either did not care to implement the policies or did not have adequate resources and support. Inclusive Education (DoE, 2001) states that education is a basic human right and that psychosocial services are meant for all children. This study, however, mainly focused on the lives of vulnerable children in rural schools. Rural vulnerable children face unique problems in their academic career, and thus, require more dedicated psychosocial support.

Few studies have focused on the support offered to vulnerable children in schools. A study by Mwoma and Pillay (2015) conducted in a South African township, Soweto evaluated the challenges experienced by teachers in providing psychosocial support. According to the research study, teachers play a crucial part in the lives of these children as some of the vulnerable children, specifically orphans, lack sufficient parenting (Schneider, 2018). Richter et al., (2004) further postulate that in order to adequately meet the psychosocial needs of vulnerable children and to encourage good academic performance, teachers need to be well-trained in this area. Themane and Thobejane, (2019) emphasizing the importance of the concept of ‘teacher agency’: the capacity of teachers to act willingly and resolutely to make an impact

in learners educational, mental and social well-being through psychosocial support interventions (Gardner & Stephens-Pisecco, 2019).

According to Tchombe, Wirdze and Muki (2018), as the children grow, enter developmental stages and gradually become more aware of themselves and their surroundings, the need for professional psychosocial strategies becomes greater (Tchombe, 2015). Mwoma and Pillay (2015) found that counselling services for vulnerable children are necessary to enhance mastery over any challenges they face on a daily basis. Results from their study showed that vulnerable children experience behavioral problems, low self-esteem, as well as interpersonal relational problems with teachers and their peers. Well-trained educators or professional counsellors are of utmost importance for provision of mitigation strategies (Barak, 2017; Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016; Themane & Thobejane, 2019).

The National Curriculum Statement recommends that Life Orientation as a subject is imperative as it offers learners life skills that can equip them to become productive, responsible, and lead a meaningful life (DoE, 2002). Findings from a study conducted by Pillay (2012) showed that supporting and meeting the needs of vulnerable children is not only limited to educators but also extends to other stakeholders such as guardians, counsellors, social workers and psychologists. Involvement of stakeholders can curb problematic behaviors, school dropouts, and involvement in socially frowned-upon activities. Following their research study, Mwoma and Pillay (2015) could not establish any existing support structures or interventions in place in the education system to support vulnerable children. The dire need and agency to offer psychosocial support to these learners, puts educators in stressful situations as they do not only teach, but also address mental health issues in the classroom. Learning depends on learners being psychologically sound (Tchombe, et al., 2018; Ambelu, et al., 2019).

According to the UNAIDS (2004), the AIDS pandemic has left multitudes of children orphaned worldwide, mostly in the sub-Saharan African countries. Chizororo (2010) maintains that children who grow up without parents are deprived of a family system characterized by support and care. He further discusses the importance of support, making mention of Bronfenbrenner's theory of systems. He highlights that for individuals to develop well and optimally function in society, the family system should provide affection, good self-concept, socialization, and daily care (Warrasally, 2015; Masten, 2018). Thus, orphaned and vulnerable children are unable to fully benefit from these familial provisions because of their familial setting (Ungar, 2013). An

international study conducted in Zimbabwe sought to determine the effectiveness of psychosocial support to orphaned and vulnerable children to improve their scholastic performance (Chitiyo, Changarab & Chitiyo, 2008; Francis-Chizororo, 2010). According to the findings of this study, the participating learners who had shown past emotional vulnerability and poor academic performance, were found to have improved their academic performance after psychosocial support. This is consistent with other studies emphasizing the need for psychosocial support to orphaned and vulnerable children because of abject poverty characterizing rural communities as well as the scathing consequences of HIV/AIDS (Theron & Donald, 2013; Ambelu, et al., 2019; Tchombe, et al., 2018).

2.6 Prevalence of OVC in South Africa

It may not be a straightforward exercise to quantify the vulnerable children excluding the so called OVC. According to UNAIDS (2004), South Africa has the fourth-highest adult HIV prevalence rate in the world. Statistics released by the United Nations show that, in 2016, the HIV prevalence rate for adults aged 15 to 49 was 27% in Swaziland, 25% in Lesotho, 25% in Botswana and 19% in South Africa. This has led to an exponential rise in the number of orphans (Nsagha, Marcelin, Assob & Njundah, 2014).

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2011), South Africa has the world's largest number of HIV-infections and an estimated 3.7 million orphans, with around 150 000 children living in child-headed households. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reported in 2013 that 80% of its member states had taken legal measures to protect the education rights of children with disabilities and those left forlorn in rural communities. There are, however, several dynamics at play which tend to shape the developmental landscape for vulnerable children. Vulnerability of children has been described in many ways, but for this study, the description by Myende & Hlalele (2018) as; the lack of service provision and resources in rural areas, is most appropriate.

The fore-going sections have alluded to the fact that vulnerability of children is not limited to orphans. "Children may be faced with trauma and distress irrespective of their race, developmental stage or socioeconomic background" (Gardner & Stephens-Pisecco, 2019). All children need psychosocial support. Previously traumatized children would require additional support over and above the normal support and guidance (Kaljee, Zhang, Langhaung, Munjile, Tembo, Menon, Stanton, Li & Malungo, 2017). Vulnerable children experience multiple and/or

serious risks to their development due to several predisposing risk factors, especially poverty, whether or not they are orphans (Donald et al., 2010). According to Myende and Hlalele (2018), rurality presents added vulnerability for children over and above the vulnerability presented by HIV/AIDS.

2.7 The psychosocial support systems within the home

2.7.1 The home concept

Psychosocial is defined as the relationship, influence and interaction between the psychological (emotional, cognitive spiritual dimension) and social (interpersonal relationships and social environment) aspects of individuals lives (Kaljee, et al., 2017). The home is the natural incubator to provide all these psychosocial aspects of a child and to protect against any deleterious intruders in the form of prohibitive psychosocial risk factors.

Psychosocial support systems for vulnerable children find a conducive working environment on the foundation of a sound home background. The home provides a child the environment where socialization and growth take place, which forms an important foundation for child's developmental outcomes. A stimulating home environment provides warmth and emotional support and becomes a good basis for healthy growth and holistic upbringing of children. Parents and families use innate and learned strategies, based on; their cultural values, belief systems and norms to guide children's socialization. Children should be trained from home to deal with all forms of prejudice against them. They must be prepared to face the dangers of discrimination, and barriers to opportunities against their success, (Schneider, 2018; Glass, Kohli, Surkan, Remy, & Perrin, 2018).

The home provides basic living conditions and should provide a safe haven for children to be protected from all forms of maltreatment. The home is supposed to provide security and be the place where children play, grow and thrive. However, many children live in homes that do not meet these basic standards and conditions (Sohnge, 2001; Glass, et al., 2018). A conducive learning environment should start at home. Home conditions play a role in preparing a child for learning. A conducive home environment is one where the child feels safe and secure and can be happy and carefree. Anything falling short of this ideal exposes children to vulnerability to a host of risks (Endris & Sitota, 2019; Gao, Wang, Yin, Hsieh, Rost, Zimmerman & Wang, 2019). What happens when children do not feel safe at home? Sohnge (2001, p.231) notes that "Running away is considered as being a way for alienated young people to express themselves.

They feel alienated from homes characterized by violence and conflicts or feelings of insignificance or inferiority”

The concept of a home may differ across cultures. It is not simply a building but has a milieu or a soul that unifies and protects a family. Nonetheless, protection is accomplished through an appropriate building called a house. A house comes in many shapes and forms. South Africa’s most recent National Census (2011) reported that 21.5% of South Africans lived in either rural traditional or informal dwellings. Such dwellings are hardly conducive for raising children. The areas where they are located often lack basic infrastructure such as roads and sidewalks for children going to school, clean running water, electricity (leading to households relying on paraffin stoves that are health hazards), adequate toilet facilities, and health care facilities to diagnose and treat diseases arising from unfavorable conditions. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) states that physiological needs precede those of self-actualization. The South African General Household Survey of 2016 found that 13.5% of South African households were living in Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) or state-subsidized dwellings. While they come with minimal infrastructure, these houses are too small for an average South African family of three generations under one roof. Such a physical home environment is not suitable for giving dignity and security for the vulnerable children (Gao, et al., 2019).

One of the most useful attributes gained through resilience is the ability to learn to improvise - the capability to make the most with the least. Vulnerable children learn to improvise because of the hardship they endure. They are often forced to share a home with distant relatives if fostered by extended family, or with children that are unrelated to them in the case of school dormitories in orphanages. Through attachment, they adapt and learn to make a home away from home (Khanlou & Wray, 2014; Leve, Harold, Chamberlain, Landsverk, Fisher, & Vostanis, 2012).

2.7.2 Family structure as a psychosocial support system.

The family is a system and a basic social unit where children belong and receive fundamental psychosocial support (Gerrard, Soriano & Geiger, 2019). The family is an essential support system for its members, especially children because of them being the weakest (most vulnerable) (Wilson, 2019). The family exists in an environment with elements or aspects which may support or impede the functioning of the vulnerable children as well as that of the

contingent support system. “Various aspects of family life affect child’s cognitive development and school achievement” (Snowman & McCown, 2012, p.151). Learning problems start at the very beginning of a learning career. The foundation of a child’s cognitive development is a family responsibility. The family plans a child’s early childhood development from pregnancy to the choice of a pre-school or an early childhood development institution the child should attend. Rural children are deprived of early childhood development opportunities (Kaljee, et al., 2017; Britto, Lye, Proulx, Yousafzai, Matthews, Vaivada & MacMillan, 2017).

Parents should play an active role to stimulate the child’s cognitive responsiveness to learning by reading to the child as early as possible. The family, as the support system, is also responsible for proper socialization of a child (Masten, 2018; Gao, et al., 2019). The family is also the primary institution to provide a conducive environment for the child’s mental health, free from all forms of abuse. These include child labor under the disguise of prevailing poverty and the infamous cultural practice where parents give their teenage girls in marriage to older men (Warria, 2019). Barton and Coley (2007, p.39) note that “long before schools begin their jobs, however, teaching and learning take place in the family. Home and family experiences and conditions continue to influence learning, too, once children start school.” Family aspects, such as family structure, can predict schooling success or the lack thereof, even before children start school (Abuya, et al., 2019). Sustenance of the child is the primary responsibility of the family (Gerrard, et al., 2019). Children who grow up without a father in the home have increased risk of low academic achievement, school drop-out, and behavioral and emotional problems (Zellweger, Chrisman, Chua, & Steier, 2019). Interestingly, the study also found that non-resident fathers can have a positive impact and more positive influence on a child’s cognitive and emotional development than resident fathers, if such fathers show commitment in various other ways. A father can be away but if they send supportive messages and financial support, the child becomes emotionally adaptive (Glass, et al., 2018). This suggests that, fathers may be present, but if they are detached and show little interest and commitment, they lose the opportunity to mentally stimulate and emotionally develop their children (Tyrell, Yates, Reynolds, Fabricius & Braver, 2018).

According to van IJzendoorn et al. (2011), children who grow up in institutions or orphanages (Zhou & Yi, (2014).) found that children’s academic development was not negatively affected by an absent father if he was working in another city or country but fully supporting the family financially, and if the mother did not anticipate relationship problems with the father (Wilson,

2019). This suggests that, if the mother is not emotionally disturbed, the children benefit from her positive emotional energy. Thus, while the presence of a supportive and involved father can be a catalyst for children's psychological well-being, especially in terms of identity and self-esteem, the importance of a quality mother-child relationship should not be downplayed (Abuya, et al., 2019). Milkie, et al. (2015) maintain that mothers are unique and irreplaceable. Thus, fatherlessness or other unfavorable dynamics of a family structure alone cannot be a definite predictor of the child's behavior or future. The family is not only affected by stressors such as low socioeconomic status, but by the attitude attached to such stressors (Abuya, et al., 2019; Antle, Gibson, & Krohn, 2019; Wilson, 2019). For example, an orphaned child could benefit from a healthy attachment to a caregiver or grandmother, if they have a positive attitude.

Various determinants of child development need to be considered because people and families are dynamic and fluid (Wilson, 2019). The same kind and number of stressors can cause different vulnerabilities to different children. This means that it would be difficult to predict the outcome of a child's upbringing in a straight scientific equation. It is for this reason that Schiffrin, Liss, Miles-McLean, Geary, Erchull, & Tashner (2014, p.549) posit that, "Ultimately, it is likely that the type, rather than the amount, of parental involvement is crucial in determining child outcomes." With adequate psychosocial support systems, even orphans can have a meaningful future (Zellweger, et al., 2019; Abuya, et al., 2019). The reasons for the father's absence will also determine the mother's emotional state (Shannon, 2002; Wilson, 2019). For example, divorce is said to be more emotionally taxing than death. Research by Amato (2014) showed that children's adjustment depends on how well their parents have adjusted to the disruption of the family unit. An emotionally vexed mother cannot socially or academically support her children. In sum, it appears that the elements that are most important in the family structure are the mother's attitude and the family's financial status. The converse is that if the parents are present but abusive towards the child, the child is better off without them (Britto, et al. 2017; Tyrell, et al., 2018; Gerrard, et al., 2019).

Single parenthood, especially among teenagers, is another issue of great concern in South Africa today. Teenage parents often also double up as learners and have to juggle between daunting responsibilities of parenting and schooling (Singh & Naicker, 2019). The parent and the offspring are both children and vulnerable. There is additional vulnerability for the teenage mother, because of a host of negative psychological risks including stigma attached to teenage

pregnancy (Mazzuca, Nagarchi, Ramanaik, Raghavendra, Javalkar, Rotti, & Beattie, 2019; UNICEF (2011). Young mothers are ostracised by their peers, teachers and community members. School achievement of teenage mothers was found to be associated with lower risk of infant deaths resulting from supportive rural healthcare (Weldearegawi, Melaku, Abera, Ashebir, Haile, Mulugeta, Spigt, 2015; Taylor, 2019). This implies that support systems such as healthcare play a supportive role for teenage mothers. Unfortunately, some of the healthcare workers at public health facilities, caregivers at care centres, and social workers assume a disapproving and judgemental stance and they condescendingly reprimand or scold teenage mothers instead of giving them appropriate support as deserving clients (Amaran, 2012; Mantovani & Thomas, 2015; Jwili, 2016).

Divorce is also a contributor to children's vulnerabilities, financial support deprivation, emotional support bankruptcy, as well as possible abuse by stepfamily members. The HIV/AIDS pandemic results in parents being unable to care for their children. Children in turn carry the burden of caring for their parents and are deprived of the opportunity of being children (Theron & Donald, 2013; UNICEF (2011).

Vulnerable children need all the psychosocial support systems they can get. All the support systems can contribute to the development of a child, and the family system is the foundation of all psychosocial support systems strata for vulnerable children (Upadhaya, Tize, Adhikari, Gurung, Pokhrel, Maharjan, & Reis, 2019).

Deprivation of love and family care, directly and indirectly, deprives children of the opportunity to develop important psychological traits such as self-identity and self-esteem (Tyrell, et al., 2018; Burke, 2013). Child psychologists (Mash & Wolfe, 2010; Donald et al., 2010) tell us that identity crises during childhood bring about interpersonal problems which can further affect goal setting abilities. These children become adults who are not caring and who struggle to sustain relationships (Upadhaya, et al., 2019; Burke, 2013). Lack of psychosocial support systems for a child predispose a child to many vulnerabilities including emotional instability (Schiffrin et al. 2014), disorientated values, and antisocial motives (Burke, 2013). Orphaned children are often forced by circumstances to care for their younger siblings, before they are emotionally developed themselves. They assume parental responsibilities, yet they were not properly parented themselves. This emotional burden, and

the resulting psychological repercussions, will manifest in the children they were parenting whilst they were children themselves (UNICEF 2011; Hammersley, 2017).

2.7.3 Family culture

Apart from their genetic make-up and psychological influences, the development of a child is heavily influenced by socialization ((Hammersley, 2017; Epstein, 2018; Upadhaya, et al., 2019. They grow up in a context that influences and shapes them in many dimensions. Family cultural values, practices and beliefs play a large part in determining whether a child builds resilience or gives in to risk factors (Donald et al., 2010). A child growing up in a family with a negative outlook on life or who is constantly bombarded with pessimistic attitudes will often exhibit skewed behavior. Families experience a host of stressors that undermine their health (Bonell, et al., 2019). Some family situations go beyond poor social values and influences and involve negative practices such as family violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and physical or sexual abuse of children. Vulnerable children are more susceptible to maltreatment because they are exposed to a host of other risk factors (Mash & Wolfe, 2010; Donald et al., 2010).

2.7.4 Parental involvement as a learner psychosocial support systems element

Research (Schneider, 2018) has shown that there is a rise in the number of mothers who are working and who spend much of their time outside their homes for a significant part of their children's school years. Children compete for parental time with family income demands (Barnes, Bryson & Smith, 2006). This phenomenon means that the care and supervision of the children is left to childcare institutions. The challenge is that the values promoted in such institutions may be not exactly those of the parents. This surrogacy of parenting affects almost all contemporary children, and it is not only orphans who are subject to socialization through institutions (Upadhaya, et al., 2019).

Socialization of children has become even more complex, with the overwhelming social media onslaught. According to Schneider (2018, p3), parents and even schools, "have few mechanisms to insulate their children from the messages communicated through the media." The avalanche of fake news, illicit and graphic, and violence shown on public screens daily exacerbate the vulnerability of children to trauma. Cyberbullying is also reported to be a serious risk factor that frequently push youth over the edge of suicide (Yot-Domínguez, Guzmán Franco & Hueros, 2019). On the 8th of August 2019, SABC news carried a report that People's Commission of Inquiry had found that 279 children were murdered in Western Cape, and 2000

children were murdered country wide in the 2017/2018 financial year (SABCNewsOnline, 2019). This kind of report carries more psychological harm than obvious physical threat. Television and social media not only draw the attention of children, but also affects the parents themselves. It is not uncommon to find parents glued to the television or their cellphones thereby ignoring their parental duties such as reading to their children (Schneider 2018; Sharp, 2019).

The time parents devote to their children is crucial to their academic and social development. Such is also the opportunity to create children's emotional stability. Parental time, according to research (Epstein, 2018), helps preschoolers and elementary learners to improve their cognitive skills and social development (Ucus, Garcia, Esterach, & Raikes, 2019). This helps parents to prepare their children for successful schooling and equips them with social norms and skills (Wilson, 2019). Goldfarb et al. (2014) observes that family connectedness and communication between parents and children help to keep them from bad behavior as well as boost their academic performance, better than any properly classified internet information or 'illusion of knowledge' as (Danovitch, 2019) calls it. Goldfarb et al. (2014) also found that children of families that take meals together are less likely to get involved in bad behavior. Such intimacy enables parents to detect problems at an early stage (Hammersley, 2017).

Positive family connections can help adolescents to avoid delinquent behavior and develop a "positive self-concept with the aim of making realistic, responsible choices for themselves" (Sohnge, 2001, p.254). The negative effects of single parenting can be greatly reduced if the remaining family structure practices open communication (Martínez-Pampliega, Cormenzana, Corral, Iraurgi, & Sanz, 2019). (Gerrard, et al., 2019). Unfortunately, there is no opportunity for such family cohesion in an orphanage, residential institution or extended family or foster home (Glass, et al., 2018).

In the case of orphanages and residential school hostels, caregivers are not related to the children under their care and they work a stipulated number of hours for low wages. Caregivers are overstretched in terms of time as well as emotional viscosity. Many also have low levels of education, and thus, cannot be expected to assist with homework (Sharp, 2019; Sohnge, 2001).

Predisposing factors start from home, and yet the home and the family is the basic institution charged with the responsibility to lay a good foundation for effective socialization and proper

upbringing of a child (Abuya, et al., 2019; Ucus, et al., 2019). When this ideal is not realized or only partially attained, social pathologies negatively impact the child's life (Berns, 2012). Social ills associated with, or resulting from, poor or lack of proper parenting, dysfunctional homes and socio-economic deprivation, give rise to secondary issues such as cognitive development and socialization problems, which in turn are responsible for the schooling problems currently experienced in rural South African schools (Masten, 2018; Upadhaya, et al., 2019; Glass, et al., 2019). Acting individually or in combination, these factors diminish a child's opportunities to become responsible citizens, thereby threatening social justice, peace and democracy in South Africa (Mohangi & Archer, 2015).

2.8 Socio-economic issues impacting on vulnerable children.

The causal effect of low socio-economic status is a psychosocial factor that brings about harsh consequential circumstances to those affected. There is a strong link between poverty and mood disorders (Burke, 2013; Mash & Wolfe, 2010). Mood disorders and poverty contribute to further other psychological conditions like depression. Depressed parents cannot care for their children (Glass, et al., 2018). Rural communities in South Africa continue to bear the brunt of disenfranchisement inherited from the legacy of apartheid. Rural schools, by extension, are under-resourced (Myende & Hlalele, 2018; Reardon, 2011). There is lack of educational amenities in rural educational settings (Ambelu, et al., 2019; UNICEF, 2011). The Department of International Development (2000) highlights significant correlations between levels of education and a country's economic growth. Research conducted by UNESCO (2007) found that two-thirds of children not attending school were from poor households whose mothers had no education.

UNICEF (2011) highlights that education promotes individual and national growth which are essential for a country's economic growth. According to Statistics South Africa's General Household Survey (2016), the percentage of South African households with inadequate or severely inadequate access to food decreased from 23.9% in 2010 to 22.3% in 2016. The percentage of households that experienced hunger decreased from 23.8% to 11.8% while that of individuals who experienced hunger decreased from 29.3% to 13.4% over the same period. The percentage of individuals who benefited from government social grants increased from 12.7% in 2003 to 29.7% in 2016. Therefore, whilst there was a slight decrease in the percentage of people without food, there was also an increase in the people living below the poverty line.

Many children do not have adequate clothing for school. They wear one set of clothing for the whole week. Many children have no warm clothing during winter. Teenage girls lack access to sanitary pads and lose a number of schooling days every month. Girls also lack privacy. Apart from health issues, inhumane living conditions have negative psychological effects, including lack of self-esteem that inhibits learning (Mills, & Howe, 2019; Mazzuca, et al., 2019; Khan, Ahmad, Singh & Dwivedi, 2019).

Children from poor households as well as orphans are vulnerable to opportunistic and unscrupulous adults. In many cases, caregivers and foster parents abuse their government grants. Insensitive school principals unlawfully suspend children from school due to unpaid school fees. Destitute families have to grapple with inadequate facilities and resources like food. Food is usually in short supply and nutritionally inadequate, causing learners to lack concentration in the classroom. Wolde and Belachew (2019) found that sociocultural household factors in rural Kenya led to stunting resulting from food scarcity challenges and chronic under-nutrition gave rise to learning problems.

Disability is another predisposing factor to poverty. People living in poverty are disproportionately marginalized by the mainstream business sector in terms of employment opportunities (UNICEF, 2011). Disability in children is a predisposing factor for multiple vulnerabilities. According to Miles and Signal (2010), disabled children are amongst the poorest and the most disenfranchised in most communities, and are disproportionately excluded from quality education. Howell and Lazarus (2001, p.32) assert that “learners with disability in South Africa, particularly black disabled learners, have experienced the most severe barriers to learning in the past.” This predicament is aggravated by poverty affecting rural communities. According to Mash and Wolfe (2010), chronic poverty is an acute risk factor which, not only gives rise to other risk factors, but increases children’s vulnerability to psychopathology. Psychopathology refers to psychological dysfunction within an individual that is associated with distress or impaired functioning which deviates from the person’s culture (Mash & Wolfe, 2010; Burke, 2013).

South Africa is currently facing many social pathologies, the majority of which result from poverty, moral bankruptcy and the viral scourge of corruption. It is not uncommon in rural communities to find drug and alcohol outlets out-numbering all schools, libraries, youth resource centers and clinics combined (Koketso, Calvin & Prudence, (2019). School drop-out

and youth unemployment result from these issues (Dupéré, Goulet, Archambault, Dion, Leventhal & Crosnoe, (2019). These problems are largely blamed for exponential rise in crime statistics. It is a vicious circle. The school being a microcosm of the society unfortunately becomes the extension of these violent patterns. The social pathologies evidently show the lack of social capital among learners and youth (Rose, Peter & Samwel, 2019; Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016). Stressors are more severe in poor countries and cause myriad of mal-functionings and chronic diseases among children, including mental retardation which “occurs more often among children from lower socioeconomic groups” (Mash & Wolfe, 2010, p.279). The fundamental values of inclusive education (RSA, 2001) include equality, participation, respect for diversity, non-violence and concern for community. Most of these are rare in poor and rural communities and schools. This results in learning barriers and educational exclusion which lead to children being stigmatized and categorized. Over time, many will respond by resorting to antisocial behavior (Bryant, Guy, Holmes & CALM Team. (2019). Lack of social competence in dealing or coping with these issues affects academic performance and then children are relegated to so-called special schools and juvenile prisons or become school dropouts (Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016; Nkosi, et al., 2019). School drop-out is a major contributor to youth unemployment and crime in South Africa. Crime is rocketing (Pelser, 2008) and is the primary threat to social justice and democracy. Poor children who experience trauma on a daily basis, personally or through media exposure, have no support system to help them develop social capital and build resilience (Rose, et al., 2019; Ambelu, et al., 2019).

2.9 Psychosocial mitigation strategies for vulnerable children

There are many mitigation strategies that can be adopted to rescue, protect and nurture vulnerable children. Families, schools, communities and authorities can all play a significant role at different levels of intervention. This study explored literature on mitigation strategies that are provided by psychosocial support systems.

2.9.1 Inclusive education principles

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994) on inclusive education advocates, among other things, support within the general education system for all children, especially the disabled and vulnerable. Inclusive education is a framework for addressing barriers to learning and participation due to psychosocial impediments. Miles and Singal (2010, p.11) state that it “aims to promote democratic principles and a set of values and beliefs relating to equality and social justice so that all children can participate in teaching and learning.” This

statement points to the importance of psychosocial support systems that should be deployed to support the development of children and protection of their constitutional rights. The very nature of democratic principles suggests to us that there must be broad consultation amongst all stakeholders. That speaks to the need for the deployment of diverse support systems working together for the common goal. This means that the adults should also consider children's interest and preferences in endeavors of trying to improve children's lives. There is a tendency of totally excluding children in decision making about their lives, especially children with special needs (Walton, 2011; Swantz, 2008). White Paper 6's (DoE, 2001) asserts that all children can learn. we incorporate all children's opinions in every decision making. After all, the goal is to help them to grow into independent thinkers. Social justice would mean that support systems should work towards eliminating all developmental risk factors facing the vulnerable children (Ambelu, et al., 2019). According to UN Convention on the Rights of children, children become vulnerable in many ways. Not only do they lose adult support and care, but they also become the victims of crime and evil acts of unscrupulous adults. They are exposed to human trafficking, sexual abuse and labor exploitation. Psychosocial support systems are very crucial for providing strategic responses to the critical needs of the vulnerable children in rural communities, from food security to health care, to educational rights. Unprotected children are many a time forced to trade off their rights due to poverty and hunger (UNICEF, 2011). World organizations like UNICEF and others, employ global strategic frameworks to respond to the plight of vulnerable children, but the short-range responses such as should be found in the home, the school and the community can be more effective. The communities are the custodians and proponents of the values of Ubuntu.

It is encouraging to observe that there are many local Non-Profit Organizations (NPO) or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) founded for the sole reason of advocacy for the rights of children, especially vulnerable children. Communities are important, and for that reason, there is a paradigm shift from the traditional institutional care to a more community-based care for orphans (Ariyo Mortelmans & Wouters, 2019). Governments are also very crucial in supporting these NGOs' efforts, first by creating a conducive environment for global organizations such as UNAIDS and others to gain access to communities, and second, by organizing the organs of state to work collaboratively as well as ensure governments departments synergize their operations.

The department of Education cannot achieve anything without the active support from other departments, especially those of Health and Social Development. The Department of Health provides health support and care, which includes functions like immunizations and health education. The Department of Social Development assists by providing social grants, especially foster grants, which promote the ideal of having children cared for by communities rather than institutions. Third, the government helps by improving service delivery to communities. Service delivery assists by alleviating poverty, provision of proper housing and clean water to the marginalized people (Panico, Bartley, Kelly, McMunn & Sacker, 2019). Governments should also assist by improving policy and legislation. All these government functions go a long way in protecting the vulnerable children (Nsagha, et al., 2014). Policy and legislation are good and welcome as a start, but not enough if there is no political will to implement such laws. Authorities can help by demonstrating a degree of moral standards and political commitment to implementation of policies. Policy and legislation can also help to protect the rights of children who cannot make informed decisions or independent choices and those who cannot care for themselves. CoP people are encouraged to look for opportunities rather than concentrating on the problems. Human dignity despite the severity of their disability or infirmity.

2.9.2 The school culture as a psychosocial support system

The school culture is the climate of the learning ecology (Myende & Hlalele, 2018). Gregory, et al. (2011) define ‘Geography of education’ as the study of spatial variations in the provision, uptake and output of educational facilities and resources. Such provision of resources and psychosocial support systems in the school can encourage learners to actively participate in learning activities. School culture is the ecological climate of the school which is created by interconnected co-functions such as learner support for safety, mental health and wellness. The school culture has been found to influence cognitive development, emotional viscosity and social function for the learners (Osher, Cantor, & Caverly, 2019). Learner safety will include programs to prevent stigmatization and bullying (Divecha & Brackett, 2019).

The school culture can be an inviting or uninviting to the community (Bonell, Blakemore, Fletcher & Patton, 2019). The school is a well-placed community-based institution to spearhead social cohesion. The school community needs to be geared as a centrifugal point for the cultivation of success for the broader community. The school should lead the way. In the first place, this calls for a strong bond and reciprocal support between teachers, a high level of

empathy and rapport between teachers and school management, and cordial relationships based on mutual esteem and appreciation between teachers and learners (Epstein, 2018). This kind of school culture is requisite for developing progressive cultural practices in the school (Bonell, et al., 2019). This would create an environment conducive to increasing both learners' and educators' knowledge production and resourcefulness. All players in the school will benefit and will be capacitated "to develop holistic, creative and cohesive responses to issues that they could not be solved in the usual ways" (Graham & Harwood, 2011, p.3).

Inclusive education initiatives require genuine collaboration among all stakeholders (Engelbrecht et al., 2017). They call for a school culture where every player feels welcome to contribute at various appropriate levels. Strong partnerships can only be achieved if there is communication and openness across all levels and groupings in the school community.

The social justice ideal envisaged in inclusive education is that all children receive quality education and are fully supported and encouraged to participate. Teachers are expected to promote social justice (Ambelu, et al. ,2019) and "to engage people in becoming aware of and analyzing oppressive socio-political processes and reflecting on their own positions and responsibilities in relation to various forms of oppression" (Adams & Bell, 2016, p.4). This is not limited to socio-political inclusion but extends to involvement in practical teaching/learning strategies. Learners become motivated to take center stage in their learning whenever learning self-efficacy is encouraged. Teaching and learning processes should be designed to provoke critical thinking that actively involves participants in the discovery and creation of knowledge. This kind of educational engagement promotes reflection on one's own experiences as well as awareness, leading to conscious choices to change the world (Schunk and Usher's (2017).

The South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) mandates compulsory schooling for children between the ages of 7 and 15. This is a good start for securing vulnerable children's future, especially those faced with exclusion and discrimination based on various reasons like social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties (SEBD) (Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016). The school culture should welcome all children without prejudice. It should not only welcome to babysit them, but also plan progressive psychosocial programs to support them. It is for this reason that the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) exempts poor children from paying school fees and declares some schools as no-fee-schools. The majority of these schools are in the rural

communities. The Act also notes that parents are important contributors to the education of their children and should thus, participate in the system (South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996, p.23). Teachers should become facilitators rather than experts who intimidate parents with their educational status. They should be well-placed to encourage parents to help with their children's schooling. Teachers need to be sensitive to the fact that many parents in rural communities are not able to assist with homework (Marzano & Pickering, 2007; Costley, 2013; Sharp, 2019). Teachers can advise parents on affordable nutritious diet suitable for cognitive development and support. Teachers can also conscientize parents about allowing children space to do their schoolwork and creating conditions conducive to study at home. Parents could also teach young educators family skills, including child rearing practices. Such partnerships can benefit vulnerable children in rural schools (van Wyk, 2001). Such collaborations are based on mutual understanding and promotion of "negotiation and interchangeability of roles" (Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016, p.786).

2.9.3 Psychosocial support systems towards building resilience for vulnerable children

This study is not directly about investigating resilience, but it is impossible to talk about the adversity faced by vulnerable children and not mention resilience. Any support system that may contribute to uplifting a vulnerable child will directly (by rendering psychosocial motivation and guidance) or indirectly (by way of providing protective factors) be assisting in developing resilience (Gardner & Stephens-Pisecco, 2019); Ambelu, et al. ,2019). "Resilience is seen as an important element to maintaining and promoting child and youth mental health and as a life-long buffer to potential threats to wellbeing over time and transition" (Khanlou & Wray, 2014, p.65). This-shows that resilience is both a process as well as an end product of psychosocial support systems. Any help that does not uplift the child's inner strength will only be cosmetic and superficial.

Myende and Hlalele (2018, p.22) suggest strength-based approaches which recognise rural schools and children as having potential in the form of inner-resources or "capitals that contribute in ensuring that initiatives aimed at rural schools' improvements are effective and sustained." That resilience must be well connected to community support systems and be respectful of community values and culture. African communities are known of their cultural and interwoven support systems, and they promote social ecological support systems within their cultural context. African cultures emphasize human interdependence known as ubuntu,

(Ungar, 2013; Masten,2014; Myende & Hlalele, 2018). This culture of ubuntu teaches communal child protection and care saying: *ingane yakho ingane yami* (your child is also my child), (Mhlongo, 2012).

The academic achievement of any child can be attributed to a combination of personal capacity and environmental support (Ambelu, et al. ,2019). Resilience is less of an individual trait and more about the quality of the development and support a child receives from the social and physical environment. Developing resilience is a process. It is only realized over a period of time and the ultimate outcome will depend on the complexities or challenges faced over time and the support systems available (Khanlou & Wray, 2014). The process deals with the complexity of focusing on more than one element at the same time, i.e., personal capacity on the one hand, and ecological factors on the other (Gardner & Stephens-Pisecco, 2019). Another complexity is that of monitoring the process and the outcomes simultaneously, until resilience has fully run its course of empowering the child to stand alone with minimal assistance and show positive progress learning efficacy. The envisaged collaboration of psychosocial support systems can foster resilience initiatives and suitable interventions that can lead to children's positive development in the face of any adversity (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2011).

There is no panacea to the host of challenges confronting rural vulnerable children. It is for that reason that psychosocial support is sought through all available or latent systems. It takes a village to raise a child (African proverb). Building resilience involves a number of intervention strategies. It is a complex and dynamic process that no individual can achieve without the help of others. Psychosocial support systems address the stressors and developmental risks facing a child, but since building resilience depends, not only on socio-cultural support but also on the child's genetic and emotional make-up and emotional viscosity, he/she needs to be actively involved (Donald et al., 2010). Therefore, any mitigation endeavor needs to start with motivating and boosting the child's self-esteem. Supporting children to achieve resilience, confidence and independence is not an easy task.

Among other factors, the parenting style can play a pivotal role in bringing about positive psychological well-being and effective coping skills. Extreme parenting styles and involvement can cause more harm than good. While lack of involvement is detrimental to a child's development and psychological well-being, research (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011) has also shown that parental over-involvement can undermine a child's psychological well-being

and impede the development of coping skills. Resilience building should be led by an actively involved parent figure who displays assertiveness that is neither permissive nor authoritarian. Decisions are made through parental reason and power rather than negotiation, and the authoritative parent is actively engaged in shaping the child's behaviour. 'These children, whether they are raised in single or two-parent homes, are more independent, mature, self-regulating, responsible, and cooperative than children reared in either permissive or authoritarian households; and they have the highest scores on cognitive tests' (LeMoyne & Buchanan 2011, p.401). It is clear that 'authoritative' and 'authoritarian' are not in the same position on the parenting continuum. Authoritarian parenting involves being unreasonably strict whilst authoritative parenting exercises power reasonably and is open to negotiation. Undemocratic parenting style will not help the child to believe in themselves, and learn to find possible solutions to life challenges, and positively work towards learning self-efficacy.

2.9.4 Supporting Learning self-efficacy

Snowman and McCown (2011, p.274) define self-efficacy as "beliefs about one's ability to successfully carry out particular tasks." While self-esteem refers to *global* evaluative judgments about oneself, self-efficacy is the belief about the ability to carry out a *specific* task. For the purposes of this study, it is evaluated in relation to learning. Self-efficacy can be a good indicator that a learner has achieved a great deal of resilience. Learning efficacy is a motivational construct that is about a student's own belief and judgment of their ability to self-organize, self-regulate, self-motivate and exert themselves in learning a task until the desired result is obtained (Sun & Rueda, 2012). Self-regulating learners set performance goals, continually reflect on their performance and build confidence as they improve (Snowman & McCown, 2012). Schunk and Usher's (2017) research indicates that self-efficacy has a positive impact on self-regulation and learning. It also has a good influence on behavior and the outside environment, and in turn benefits from good behavior resulting in conducive learning environment. The prospects of becoming educated will further motivate them to learn (Caine et al., 2009).

Poor self-motivation is a cause of poor academic achievement among learners, especially vulnerable children. Motivation deficits in children lead to self-regulation deficits. Self-regulation is a psychological concept that is defined as the ability to engage in thought processes and language to direct behavior. Deficient self-regulation leads to impulsivity and poor maintenance of effort (Mash & Wolfe, 2010). Everybody needs motivation, whether

intrinsic or from outside sources, to start and maintain a challenging task. This is particularly true of vulnerable children or those living with disability. Mash and Wolfe, (2010) note that many vulnerable children who are relegated to the so-called special schools, with mild range of mental retardation, are well able to learn and attend regular schools and classrooms. Nevertheless, they are more disposed to helplessness and hopelessness and frustration, which place additional burdens on their social and cognitive development. Therefore, as a consequence, they begin to expect failure, even for tasks they can master given enough motivation. When it comes to psychosocial support systems for development and learning, all parties are expected to help. There is usually a blame shifting between parents and teachers when it comes to discipline of children. (Costley, 2013).

2.9.5 Psychological support systems for adults that work with vulnerable children

All human beings are vulnerable to psychological and emotional stress. Educational and health personnel and caregivers working with vulnerable children are no exception and many are emotionally overtaxed as they also have their own families to take care of. Such demands may affect their ability and commitment to maintain quality relationships with the children in their care. Sohng, (2001, p158) notes that, “under such stress the primary caregiver may become physically and emotionally exhausted, feel that she is not coping, and become more and more demoralized and depressed. As a result, she may neglect, and stop responding to, the physical and psychological needs of the children in her care.”

The relationship between the child and the caregiver is usually defined within the framework of attachment theory (Sutton, 2019). Simply defined, attachment is a social bond that can apply to all aspects of child-parent relationships. It is an on-going process of establishing and maintaining an emotional bond with parents or other significant individuals, helping the child to explore and learn about their world (Mash & Wolfe, 2012). A child is said to seek the attachment figure when stressed but to seek a playmate when in a good mood. A child can be attached to caregiver for both purposes (Belsky & Nezworski, 2015). Insensitive responses from the caregiver can lead to insecure attachments. A positive attachment disposition helps the child to experience positive effects and responses from the caregiver and strengthens secure relationships which are believed to foster children’s sense of security and positive coping skills and ultimately enhance their sense of self-worth. Such attachment is clearly conducive to building resilience which is a buffer against negative past experiences (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). Apart from emotional challenges, caregivers experience a range of other issues such as

low levels of education and support. Other stakeholders can assist by, at least showing regard for caregivers. Teachers especially, need to appreciate the contribution made by caregivers and acknowledge that they require their support.

Teacher's psychological well-being is also very important. The demands placed on teachers increase their stress levels and many find themselves in a tug-of-war between parents and learners. When it comes to involving parents, teachers cite obstacles such as the parent's inferiority complex and low levels of education that lead to them being intimidated by teachers. Power relations among teachers, parents and other stakeholders including the Department of Education, can seriously impede children's educational advancement. Sohng (2010, p.127) adds that teachers are not trained on aspects of parent involvement and feel inadequately prepared to establish partnerships with families and the community.

Finally, the psychodynamics experienced by learners create stress among teachers. Schools are extensions of society. In a country with high levels of violence like South Africa, children become the symptom bearers of societal pathologies. The media reports regularly on the unruliness of children in schools and even attacks on teachers. When the South African Schools Act abolished the use of corporal punishment in schools, teachers complained that they were not trained on other forms of administering discipline.

Dube and Hlalele, (2018, p. 68) found that corporal punishment, despite being forbidden, continues to be used in most South African schools, and that learners respond to corporal punishment through various ways, including attacking teachers and engaging in truancy. Teachers get prosecuted and dismissed for continuing to use corporal punishment. Discipline is thus, a major problem in schools and teachers struggle to deal with learners' psychopathological challenges (Cicognani, 2006). It is incumbent upon the teacher to act appropriately and with magnanimity as the adult. A judgmental attitude will not help a teacher faced with a psycho-socially wanting learner. This suggests that educators need to acquire psycho-educational skills in order to assist learners to acquire the social capital necessary to successfully navigate a schooling career (Themane & Thobejane, 2019).

Teachers who are trained in the precepts of Psychology of Education assume a different posture in counselling and development. Learners are not inert objects that can be programmed but are innately capable of self-creating and correcting (Chitiyo, et al, 2008). Moreover, a learner who

uses psychological services should not be stigmatized or isolated but be seen as “the symptom bearer” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2012, p.17) for a sick family in a sick society. The fact that an estimated 77 million vulnerable children in the age bracket six to eleven years are out of school globally points to sick societies. The major reason for school dropouts is socio-political deprivation, largely associated with rurality (Songe,2001; Mwoma & Pillay,2015; UNESCO, 1994). Many of these children were excluded because they are living with disabilities, while some were excluded for disciplinary reasons (Miles & Signal, 2010). The latter could be avoided if teachers were trained to provide the relevant support and counselling so as to enhance learners’ social capital (Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016; Zellweger, et al., 2019).

2.10 Conclusion

The foregoing literature review has exposed a barrage of societal issues embedded in the families, schools and communities. The symptoms bearers of these social pathologies are children, especially in rural communities and schools. The literature investigation has formed a basis of what has been found by other researchers about the support systems available for the rural vulnerable children to salvage them from harsh environmental and circumstantial conditions, and create a better world for their living and learning. The following chapter lays down the details of the methodology employed by this study to investigate or explore the psychosocial support systems available to rural vulnerable children.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The qualitative research approach is “generally engaged with exploring, describing and interpreting the personal and social experiences of participants and primary emphasis lies on how meanings are constructed and shaped discursively” (Smith, 2015, p.2). Qualitative research does not formulate a hypothesis, and thus does not conduct research with the aim of proving or disproving a point, which is called deductive reasoning. Instead, the data is synthesized to produce empirical findings which are then generalized. This is known as inductive reasoning (Lune & Berg, 2016; Mertler, 2015). A qualitative inquiry is conducted in a natural context where data is generated, and knowledge subsequently created. The setting in which people live, inevitably shapes what they think and converse about (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

There are different types of qualitative studies. This study employed interpretive phenomenological analysis (Eatough & Smith, 2017) which differs from other qualitative approaches (i.e., discourse analysis and conversation analysis) in that it is used to describe the experiences of individuals in relation to others, as they unfold. In other words, the research seeks to understand phenomena within their context (Creswell & Poth, 2017). It unfolds in an open-ended fashion, without the researcher trying to steer it to yield to preconceived expectations and biases (Creswell, 2015). Exploratory case studies address the questions for the current study as well as provide hypotheses for subsequent studies (Yin, 2017). This is particularly important for the current study as the researcher sought to find empirical answers and also to lay a foundation for further knowledge creation.

Case studies are particularly suitable for studying people’s lives (Eatough & Smith, 2017). This is because people are so dynamic such that it is not easy to predict the outcome of any individual’s ending despite given similar circumstances. Research is crafted together using different research elements that guide the process. Theoretical framework focuses and shapes the research process, informing the design of the study, and ultimately influencing the selection of data-generation tools (Mihas, 2019; Owen, 2014). Methodology refers to the process followed in a research study from the design through all the stages until the ultimate results. This chapter describes the sequential processes and steps employed to guide the study. It

discusses the paradigm, research design, sampling, data generation methods and tools, data analysis methods, measures of trustworthiness, ethical considerations and the limitations of the study. (Merriam & Grenier, 2019); Mertler, 2015).

3.2 The Paradigm of the study

Interpretive paradigm was adopted for this study because I want to explore views, feelings and participants own interpretations of their lived circumstances. *Interpretivism* is a worldview that is suitable for social science research. It does not subscribe to a strict cause-effect orientation but takes the view that “all cause-effect is a probability that may or may not occur” (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p.23). A paradigm has three dimensions that defines the nature and process of the study as well as influences the thinking and practice of the researcher. These dimensions are: ontology, epistemology and methodology (Hammersley, 2017; Terre Blanche, et al. 2006).

3.2.1 Ontology

The ontological stance aligned to the paradigm here, which is interpretivism, is that reality is subjective and dependent on social actors, and that individuals make the social reality (Wahyuni, 2012).

3.2.2 Epistemology

The second dimension of a paradigm is epistemology. Epistemology is the belief of the way to investigate reality or how knowledge is found. It pertains to nature of knowledge (or what is known), its forms, how knowledge can be acquired, created and communicated. Epistemology also deals with the relationship between the researcher and the participants, as well as what is to be known (Hammersley, 2017). Interpretivists believe in the subjectivity of relationship between the researcher and the interviewees as well as the knowledge. Generation, understanding and interpretation of the knowledge is done within the social context, with the individuals actively contributing to the phenomena and solutions (Wahyuni, 2012; Creswell, 2014).

3.2.3 Methodology

This is a qualitative ethnographic study. Qualitative research methodology is the process of generating empirical data in an iterative process of systematic and strategic stages. The strategic steps sequentially synchronise in a relay until the final distillation of the data,

delineation of findings and better understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Barak, 2017).

3.2.4 Interpretivism

Interpretive paradigm is the chosen paradigm for this study. Interpretivism postulates that truth is created, that there is more than one truth, and that reality is conditional upon human experiences and interactions (Aspers & Corte, 2019). The interpretive epistemological stance, that knowledge is intersubjectively constructed by people in a social context, with due consideration and acknowledgement of cultural influences in the creation of such knowledge, was appropriate for this study (Barak, 2017; Mihás, 2019). Studying resilience depends on the on-going interplay between risk factors, protective factors and the child (Khanlou & Wray, 2014). Children are different and discrete human beings, and depending on their genetic make-up, individual children experience even the same environmental conditions differently (Mash & Wolfe, 2010). They therefore, cannot be predicted in rigid scientific equation developed in a laboratory, hence; the interpretive qualitative research.

This study, thus, involved a qualitative exploration of the lived experiences and future hopes for rural vulnerable children. It is specifically an appraisal of the support systems available to them. Exploratory case studies were conducted to investigate the experiences of purposefully sampled learners at two residential orphanage schools; one school for children living with physical disability (henceforth referred to as School A) and another school (School B) for children with hearing impairment. Most of the children in both schools had had some form of traumatic emotional and physical experience and some had lost one or two of their parents to HIV/AIDS or political violence or both. Both schools were boarding schools and because of the nature of the children's disabilities, it was convenient for them to stay in the school. This is not to suggest that vulnerable children are only found in such institutionalized settings, but the participants in these schools (teachers, social workers, an occupational therapist, physiotherapists, caregivers, and administrators as well as learners themselves) all had daily firsthand experience of the issues being investigated. This kind of setup was ideal for CoP and social constructivism—which enabled the researcher to understand and derive meanings from their discourses and from their lived experiences. Hammersley (2017) points to the fact that children must be regarded as active agents and be featured at the center of participatory methods research. Many studies about children exclude the voice of children and make conclusions based only on perspectives and assumptions of adults. This study endeavored to

take into consideration, the viewpoints, experiences and concerns of rural children. Participatory Action Research aims to identify areas that need to be improved and, find solutions in collaboration with those affected (Swantz, 2008, p.31).

3.3 Methodology and research methods

The process and design of the study will take shape as guided by the following sub-topics.

3.3.1 Sampling

Two orphanage schools in rural KwaZulu-Natal were selected for the study. Purposive sampling was used to select three learners, three teachers, a resident social worker, a member of school management and two caregivers. A total of eleven participants was purposively selected. In School 'A', individual interviews were held with three teachers, a social worker, and three learners. In school 'B', interviews were held with the deputy principal, one teacher and one caregiver. They all have first-hand experience and information in dealing with vulnerable children.

3.3.2 Data generation methods and tools.

Coghlan (2019) differentiates between *data gathering* and *data generation*. Data gathering is discreet, and the researcher is detached or inconspicuous and engages in a remote and unobtrusive observation or document analysis which all may be done from outside the research setting. However, *data generation* is participatory in nature and becomes a form of intervention (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006), , as both the researcher and the participants are made aware of the issues through engagements, and are invigorated to think about actions to change the situation. Data was generated through three successive levels. This was done to carry out a meaningful ethnographic investigation into the lives of all members of the school community as a learning ecology (Myende & Hlalele, 2018) Ethnographic study has its origin in sociology and anthropology (Barak, (2017). The three instruments of data generation are: *Observation*, *Document analysis* and *one to one interviews*.

3.3.2.1 Observation

Observation is a data generation technique whereby participants interact within their natural setting. Observational data collection strategy is an integral part of conducting an ethnographic study where lived realities are explored (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Observation becomes a handy tool to investigate roles, relationships, ethics and values. Participants are observed

naturally working in teams, forming teams as they play games, and solving problems and making decisions (Jorgensen 2015). Observation is useful even for the purpose of confirmation and complementation or rejection of research results obtained using other methods (Powney & Watt, 2018; Jamshed, 2014). One of the orientations of ethnographic observation is that it has its origins in sociology and anthropology, and is therefore, useful in studying phenomena of cultures such as *culture of poverty* and *school culture*, which were also investigated in this study (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

3.3.2.2 *Document Analysis*

The second level of data collection was done using the technique of *document analysis* (family history, progress reports, health records, psychological reports). *Data analysis* is a systematic process of literature review and relevant documents to glean useful information (Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016; Aspers & Corte, 2019). The data corpus was augmented and much enriched by *document analysis*. The first step was to go through the archived documents for each participant learner, which included their life history documents, previous psychological reports and academic progress reports. Then, each learner was asked to write a short essay about their life experiences. The authenticity of information recorded in the documents (files) was guaranteed as various health and social practitioners recorded results of scientific findings and objective health reports aimed at improving the participants' well-being without bias in any way (Bowen, 2009; Bernard, Wutich & Ryan, 2016).

3.3.2.3 *Interviews*

All the participants were individually interviewed. This was an eye-opening process for the researcher as preconceived ideas, half-truths and myths were replaced by reality. Three sampled learners also gave accounts of their lived experiences. Case study research methods were used to conduct open-ended interviews as well as document analysis. A case study is flexible and allows a researcher to collect data using a range of methods (Thomas, (2015). 2011). It is particularly suitable for gathering data on life experiences occurring over a long period of time. The interviews were conducted using *The Interview Schedule* (Appendix 6). Though the questions were pre-set, the interview schedule served only as a guide as the interview was allowed to flow freely with the researcher probing to get more information. *The interviews* were recorded and later transcribed. This methodology was deemed appropriate as it enabled the participants to freely express their views and feelings. The researcher

familiarized himself with the data and identified themes pertaining to past experiences of adversity and possible “bounce back” themes as well as developmental risk factors, protective factors and adaptation factors (Donald et al., 2010).

3.3.3 Data analysis methods

Data analysis was conducted in three coding levels. The first was a description of experiences and events as narrated by the participants. The second level was to cluster descriptions from the first level into themes. The third level involved thematic analysis; a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting themes within data (Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016, p.788).

Thematic analysis works well with theory to explain and predict various outcomes of research within a context. Clarke and Braun (2014) say that it works hand in glove with social constructivism to deepen the investigation of meanings and experiences within a context. The data was also critically distilled for findings which would directly or indirectly lead to participants self-reflection. Six phases of thematic analysis, adapted from Clarke and Braun (2014), were used. Details of data analysis are given in chapter 4.

3.3.4 Trustworthiness

The selection of participants, the natural context and the data gathering methods adopted in this study ensured *credibility*. The researcher enhanced credibility by adopting data triangulation of data generation methods, thereby providing confluence of evidence (Bowen, 2009).

Transferability can be enhanced by fully describing the research context. The contexts in this study were fully described. This is done so that the results can be applied to similar contexts. The research is *dependable* because the data was authentic as the participants were drawn from various categories of professionals working with vulnerable children. Efforts were made to minimize any individual participant or the researcher’s bias in collecting and interpreting the data to ensure evaluative *validity* (Gay et al., 2012; Wahyuni, 2012).

3.3.5 Ethical Considerations

Participants took part in the study voluntarily and no incentives were promised. Ethical clearance was obtained from the UKZN Research Office (Appendix 5) and permission to conduct the research was obtained from all gatekeepers including the Department of Education (Appendix 4) and school management (Appendix 3). Informed consent forms were signed by

all participants (Appendix 1). Participants' rights, beliefs and cultures were respected in that all questions were sensitive to their culture, and all participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage if they felt uncomfortable. Participants' privacy was protected, and their real names were not used. Interview questions were sensitive to private issues and the researcher refrained from soliciting graphic details of violence and/or abuse. A social worker was available to address any issues that could arise when the researcher engaged with minors. No traumatic issues arose. Data remained confidential as it was not shared with anybody except the supervisor and pseudonyms are used for the schools and participants (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Data was not made available to, or discussed with, anyone except the researcher's supervisor (Tracy, 2019).

3.3.6 Limitations of the study

Given that the study was context bound, it was not possible to be widely generalizable (Silverman, 2011). However, Thomas (2011) states that an exploratory case study can be taken further to explore other case studies and produce context-dependant knowledge. Some of the participants did not speak or understand English very well, but the issue of language was not much of a barrier since both the participants and the researcher could switch to isiZulu. Notwithstanding different experiences and perspectives between the researcher and the participants, very minimal information could have been lost during conversations (Hammersley 2017). I corroborated findings across data sets by analysing data collected using a triangulation of methods to reduce the effect of possible biases that can occur if the study had a single data generation method (Bowen, 2009). Qualitative research strives to collect, integrate, and present data from a variety of sources of evidence as part of any given study. The generalization of findings was not possible because only a small sample of participants all from a similar cultural background was used.

3.4 Conclusion

Chapter three was a detailed presentation of the research methodology and design used in the study. The processes of the research design were including sampling data generation methods and tools were laid out and discussed. The following chapter will present the data as well data.

Chapter 4

Data presentation, analysis and interpretation

4.1 Data presentation

Three stages of data generation were employed. The first was observation, whereby orphanages were visited and casual and-spontaneous conversations about the school climate took place during preliminary meetings with designated officials. researcher was also taken on a tour around the school, observed and made notes. The second stage of data generation was document analysis I meticulously examined documents of learners' historical accounts and academic progress. The final strategy was to conduct face-to-face interviews with the participants in order to get their understanding, their voice, their feelings, attitudes and awareness about the psychosocial support systems operating in their ecosystem. This was purposefully done to have children give their lived personal experiences and actively participating in the study for a more inclusive information (Blaisdell, 2019; Hammersley, 2017; Walton, 2011).

4.1.1 Observation

School A's atmosphere presented an exuberant place of hope. It appeared a conducive environment that supported the children. It was an exhibition of an atmosphere characterised by sympathy and caring, mutual support. It was wonderful to watch the learners playing and making natural children's noises, singing tunes, pushing each other around in their wheelchairs, pleasantly teasing each other and laughing in obviously care-free and in good spirits. Learners one would expect to be helped by aides were either joyously fending for themselves or being jovially ferried around by their peers. There were no traces of melancholy or stigmatization. Instead, the culture was one of helping one another as well as acceptance and respect. Their interactions revealed no awareness of abnormality, such that disability was portrayed as normality. Donald et al. (2010, p.160) states that it is important that protective resources be present in proximal interactions at all levels of the social system: family, peer group, school, and local community. This learning ecology seemed to benefit from such support systems

School B is an orphanage school for children living with hearing impairment. The atmosphere was in stark contrast to that of School A. Staff members hardly greeted a stranger. The reception staff was not welcoming. The learners moved in straight lines as though they were programmed robots. The atmosphere was tense, and the school culture did not appear inviting. Indeed, it

appeared to be excessively strict. You would imagine a juvenile correctional institution. I was initially refused permission to conduct the study, but later granted permission after two weeks of deliberation and motivation. The researcher was not granted permission to interview the learners and would not in any event have been able to engage them because of unfamiliarity with sign language. A member of the school management team instructed teachers in my presence not to respond to any questions about corporal punishment or any other forms of discipline sanctioned by the school to learners.

4.1.2 Document analysis

Document analysis was used as a research instrument in the case studies of three sampled learners. The history of their vulnerabilities is recorded in their files kept at the Social Workers office. Informed consent was obtained from parents / guardians to investigate these files to understand the extent of past and present vulnerabilities, as well as possible or stated causations for such vulnerabilities. Particular attention was on possible causes of their dire situations as well as the role played by availability or non-availability of psychosocial support systems in their lives. Following is a summary of document analysis and interview with each learner.

Participant 3

Thando Shezi (not her real name)

Thando is a shy sweet little girl. She came from northern Zululand where she lived with her grandparents and her sister who is in grade 8 in another orphanage. Her mother passed away in 2007 and the whereabouts of her father are unknown. Thando is living with albinism and she is HIV positive. A doctor's medical report in 2014 said she showed no developmental delay. A painful eye infection culminated in her right eye being removed in 2008 and she has severe impairment in her left eye. According to a doctor's report, Thando also has "mild to moderate hearing impairment". She has had recurrent ear infections since being admitted to this schooling 2015. Thando is on seven chronic medications. She has a very poor memory and struggles academically. She is vulnerable in multiple ways and it is a sheer miracle that she wears a perpetual smile on her face. Document analysis of her life history also revealed the following comments by an Occupational Therapist in June 2017: *"It seems highly likely that the combination of medical and social factors and sensory impairments have impacted significantly on Thando's education. Her very poor memory and extremely shy presentation have further exacerbated her difficulties in engaging with the class work. She requires a very high level of individualised attention to support her efforts in grasping and consolidating*

concepts and information. She requires intensive remedial intervention in numeracy and literacy.”

Participant 4

Nosipho Ngcobo (not her real name)

Nosipho is an orphan whose mother fell ill and passed away in 2012. She last saw her father in 2011 and she does not know of his whereabouts. Her parents were not married. She came to this school from Northern Zululand where she lived with both her grandparents and an aunt. The grandparents have six children of their own, three of whom are still at school. The youngest is now 13 and is in grade 5. Nosipho is partially sighted. She was perfectly sighted until the age of seven when she became totally blind.

Nosipho: *I was in grade two when my eyes started to become skewed.*

The researcher: (sympathetically probed further): It must have been hard?

Nosipho: *It was hard for me because other children were laughing and teasing me because of my strange looking eyes. (She added in a subdued tone): I used to beat them up very hard when they laughed at me. I was suspended from school many times for beating the children.*

The mysterious skewedness of eyes led to total blindness. Her grandparents made her believe that she was bewitched by jealous neighbours because she was smart and always came first in her class. She had a surgical procedure on her eyes and is now partially blind. The researcher asked Nosipho about her progress at school. She said that she had failed two years ago because her anger affected her attention to academic work. She refused to use braille. She was bitterly angry at her foster grandmother who is not directly related to her. This grandmother received her foster grant but did not send her pocket money. She had to ask other kids to give her treats. Caregivers gave her money and clothing. The foster grandmother had a drinking problem and used to fight with another aunt over her foster grant. Nosipho said she is grateful to her teachers and the school social worker who resolved the foster grant tug of war. She now uses braille and believes in herself. She believes she is coping because God is helping her, and she said that she prays regularly. She enjoys Mathematics and added that, “I am dedicated to my studies”. Nosipho believes she has a bright future and hopes to qualify as a social worker so that she can help children abandoned by their parents.

Participant 5

Sabelo Zungu (not his real name)

Sabelo hails from the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. He was brought to this orphanage because his previous school had “many stairs and had no paths for the wheelchair.” Sabelo has never met his parents. He was abandoned at a young age, probably due to shame surrounding his disability. Sabelo has a spinal problem and club feet and is wheelchair bound. He has no bowel control and uses nappies. He was raised in another orphanage which later gave him to a foster parent. The foster parent passed away and her sister took over as foster parent. Sabelo said that the latter was unsupportive and did not cooperate with the school. Recently, her brother took over as foster parent and things now seem to be “normal”. This stability and attachment has helped Sabelo to focus on his schoolwork. He said, “I am now doing well.” He is now the head boy and wears his badge with pride.

The researcher asked him how it felt to be voted as Head Boy. He replied, “I was so excited, especially because I did not know until I was surprised at the school assembly.” Asked about his role as Head Boy, he said, “I like to help other students, they report their problems to me, and I report their problems to the teachers.” The problems include students looking sad or unwell and teasing each other. Asked about the support the school gives to learners, he sang the praises of the teachers, nurses, and the social worker, who was so helpful to him when he was mourning the death of his foster parent. However, he expressed concern that the occupational therapist had a tendency to take learners out for sessions during lessons and they missed out on learning. Sabelo showed a great amount of resilience and strength. His favourite subject was Mathematics and he wanted to be a policeman when he finishes school because he is disgusted by crime, lawlessness and people who do not respect others.

Research (Gross, 2015) has shown that support systems have the ability to change, not only the way vulnerable children perceive things, but also how they cope with disability and vulnerability. The school culture factors, the attachment protective factors, and adaptation factors stood out as strong elements of the support system that uplifted, sustained and kept children believing in themselves and the future (Larsson, 2019).

4.1.3 Interviews

Altogether, nine participants out of the thirteen who were initially sampled were eventually interviewed. The participants included three learners who gave accounts of their lived experiences in different individual interviews. Their life files were made available for document analysis, as summarised above. Information and findings from document analysis were also scrutinised and used as further probing questions during interviews. Although the interview schedule was prepared as an interview guide, the interviews became spontaneous and free flowing. A large volume of data was collected by means of the interviews and only selected extracts are presented here. Interview was the third and last of three data collection instruments used in this study. After the presentation of data, thematic analysis follows. The findings are discussed and interpreted in chapter 5. Only a few extracts are presented as verbatim quotations. The rest of the data is presented in summaries and in the discussion contexts.

School A is an orphanage, mainly for children living with various kinds of disabilities and vulnerabilities. It is a rural school subjected to most rural schools' disenfranchisements. The first interview was with the school Social Worker (hereafter referred to as participant 1), who organised the other participants for subsequent interviews. She was quite knowledgeable on the issues of vulnerable children and obviously prepared for the interview. Part of the interview with participant 1 went as follows:

Researcher: how do you manage to triumph over challenges of disabilities and come out as such a united family?

Participant 1: *Well, the answer is in your question (with a smile of contentment). Family is the key word. We try to be one family, and we work as a unit to pull each other out of distress of any kind, all the time. We have our in-house support systems to deal with any kind of eventualities and we try to manage what we cannot change.*

Researcher: What have you found to be the common risk factors that previously worked against learners who found themselves in distress because of disability?

Participant 1: *(pausing and showing a concerned countenance): I think the worst risk factor is the time a child spends in the distress, because the child's development is delayed and retarded. Some of the development milestones can never be recovered. In this school, we have admitted children who had been hidden, chained and locked up by their parents because they are living with a physical disability and believed to be a disgrace or a curse. Such children, even if they were initially mentally OK, they end up adversely affected and start to show retardation in many ways. Proper stimulation can help even a child not so mentally gifted. You mentioned thriving in learning; thriving*

academically is usually our way of knowing whether we have made any progress in other areas such as psychological and emotional. Some conditions, especially medical conditions, are not easy to overcome, but increased resilience seems to carry them even in the mist of many other unresolved circumstances.

Researcher: What support systems have you found to be useful in assisting the children to be able to start a new life and to thrive in their learning?

Participant 1: *When it comes to learner support systems, the problem is the inefficiency in coordinating available support systems for better communication and collaboration. Generally, the teachers at classroom and school level take too long to detect problems related to learner issues and learning barriers. Most problems are reported at the end of a term when teachers are required to give progress reports, when the problems have already surfaced. The teachers many a time, do not seem to know who to contact for referral. If they think the problem is of a social nature, they refer to me as a social worker, but sometimes they refer problems to their senior teachers who sometimes take time to decide on the plan of action, and so the referral processes take their own time, because of the protocols involved.*

Each referral case has its own merit. It is better here (this school) because there is a social worker. It is hard for the schools that only rely on the district. Each school should have a Learner Support Team. The school LST must have well serviced communication channels with the district School Support Teams. Ideally, the two teams should have a mini conference and come up with the best way forward. This mini conference will then involve the parent, through to the school principal; to recommend the best option for the child.

Misunderstanding between the teacher or the principal and the parent usually presents the biggest problem, when they don't agree on what is good for the child. It is very familiar to hear an argument between the parent and the principal. The parent refusing to accept that the child has a problem that can't be solved without suggested intervention measures, and the principal would not come down off their know-it-all high horse. In one instance, the principal asked the parent, "Are you a doctor?" instead of explaining nicely to the parent. Every decision should be in the best interest of a child. It is usually difficult for the district School Support Team if a school does not have a Learner Support Team. There is always discord. For example, the District would want to impose the Inclusive Education principles, sometimes without giving proper support and due consideration of such things as the appropriate curriculum, whereas

the teachers would want to label a learner and immediately push them to a 'special class', sometimes not putting the child's best interest as priority. The community can also help us a great deal in destigmatising disabilities. There is political apathy existing. Local counsellors and politicians organise events involving schools in the area and completely forget about us.

Researcher: Can you share any success story of a child who came out of distress and is now thriving?

Participant 1: *There is this girl who is a true resilient soul. She was rescued from being locked up by her parents who believed she was a curse because of a disability. She was behind (with schooling), she started grade one at age eleven. She feared people as though they were wild animals. She had never been properly socialised. She recently surprised the whole school when she started and led a song in the school assembly!*

School A had dynamic psychosocial support systems. There were communities of practice within the school, such as learner peer support system and teacher peer support system. Participant 1 said “Coordinating is my job here.” Hoadley (2012) asserts that a community of practice benefits from a knowledgeable ‘expert’ who can democratically coordinate practices within the community.

The next interview was with the deputy principal (hereafter referred to as participant 2) of school B, the gatekeeper who facilitated other interviews. Again, school B was a rural orphanage for children hard of hearing and those living with a range of other vulnerabilities, including orphans. Participant 2 was asked for his comment on the psychosocial support systems available to support rural vulnerable learners to maximise the building of resilience, so they can achieve learning self-efficacy:

Participant 2: *It is really challenging... but first, thank you for your interest in vulnerable children. It is indeed a challenging task. We try to rally all support for these learners. One good question would be what support teachers and schools get to be able to support the learners. We get least cooperation from other stakeholders, more especially the lack of cooperation from parents or guardians.*

The problems we have with some of the guardians is more than just lack of empathy, but it borders along abuse issues. Abuse takes many different forms. For an example, emotional and financial abuses are not bound by the premises of the school. Children don't have to be at home to know they are not loved. Some guardians don't collect the

kids for vacation. That is emotional abuse. We have guardians who collect government foster grant and never contribute anything towards the education or livelihood of the same child. Sometimes, we as teachers, buy school uniforms for some of the kids from our own personal money. We have had to involve the social workers and the police to solve many of the foster-care abuse cases. We understand that most rural parents are uneducated and may not exactly know how to get involved in educational issues, but taking responsibility for children should come naturally. Unfortunately, the law cannot force a guardian to love a child, so vulnerability is something permanent for many vulnerable children.

Researcher: What kind of support do you think your learners need the most?

Participant 2: *Oh, as you said, it's the psychosocial support. Too many bad things have happened to these kids that make them feel small. These children suffered abuse in many ways. Most of them feel, and in fact, are much safer here than they are at home. One of main abuses endured by many of our children is that of neglect. Families seem to forget that these kids have special needs. Some report to us that when they are on vacation they are just parked at home whilst the rest of the family goes shopping at the malls. Some tell us that the rest of the family simply carries on with their normal verbal conversations with no regard that there is a person living with deafness. This exclusion is bad for their mental stimulation, and this lack of mental stimulation is largely responsible for delayed development since infancy.*

Opportunities for communicating with hearing people is important for cognitive stimulation, developing oral language and socialization, for deaf learners living with deafness. Learners in a deaf school without hearing learners should benefit from interacting with hearing relatives at home (Mulat, Lehtomäki, & Savolainen, 2019; Tye-Murray, 2019).

Participant 2: One other challenge we are faced with in the school is the problem of discipline. Discipline is always difficult when there is no collaboration between teachers and parents. Our case is even worse as the home structures of orphans are often disarranged. We know that family insecurities for vulnerable children cause emotional frustrations for them, nonetheless we are very strict. We implement our code of conduct very decisively. We have had to suspend learners for unacceptable behavior either

committed against other learners or by contravening school rules as stipulated in the South African Schools Act and in the school's code of conduct.

It is evident that the school does not have psychosocial intervention programs (Durlak, et al, 2011) for supporting children with social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties (SEBD) with positive behavior and social competence skills (van IJzendoorn, et al. 2011; Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016). Members of a community of practice are taught socialization, friendship, respect for diversity and mutual trust as essential features of social capital (Hoadley, 2012). There are also no psychosocial support systems for either teachers or parents. This school, as a learning ecology, operates using only legalistic rules in dealing with parents and learners. The school can immensely benefit from the tenets of communities of practice. The prevalence of SEBD learners among hard-of-hearing learners may be attributed to the frustration and emotional vexation resulting from difficulties in communications (Mulat, et al, 2019).

Next was *Participant 6*, a caregiver who was the boys' dormitories housefather. He appeared to be a responsible man who was passionate about his job and believed he had a meaningful contribution to make to the boys' lives. Barak (2017) asserts that social constructivism believes that observation of a role model brings about unique learning opportunities. Participant 6 had been at this school since 2004 and prided himself on his experience. He proudly said, *"I am their father, big brother and friend."* These different roles, he believed, enabled him to address the boys' problems at all levels. Asked about his experiences with the boys, he cited the challenges of dealing with the issues confronting teenage boys. He said that discipline is the first issue to address, because it tends to become an impediment to many other positive things especially the ability to learn.

Participant 6 said, *"Generally, the boys are well behaved, but sometimes you get a few with bad behaviour. You cannot blame them because their background did not have responsible fathers to teach them how to behave. Sometimes they are angry because their parents dumped them (in dust bins) when they were small. Even those that were not dumped as small children still feel dumped here because their fathers are absent from their lives. They don't take responsibility to visit their children. Boys need a male figure to show them the way."*

Following probing on how they, as the school, dealt with the behaviour of learners (avoiding labelling it as bad), the participant said:

I do counselling as a father would to his children. Sometimes, I play a role as big brother and sometimes as a friend, so they can open up to me with their problems. Sometimes, if I can't get through to them, I use their friends. We try to be a family and support each other. I teach them responsibility, even how to wash their clothes, how to clean their rooms, and how to take care of themselves. The hostel has washing machines, but I want them to know how to do their washing using their hands.

Mental health problems associated with emotional dysregulation and conduct disorder have been found to be prevalent among children in foster care and orphanages. This results in anti-social behaviour which strains their relationship with their caregivers and teachers. (Leve, et al., 2012).

Caregivers in this orphanage school felt that they contributed a lot in supporting the children academically through the relationships they established with them. According to social constructivist perspectives on learning (Barak, (2017), learning depends on significant relationships on two levels, firstly interaction with fellow students and, secondly learning with a skilful partner and facilitator who could be a teacher or an instructor. Even without instructional knowledge, members in the community of practice contribute meaningfully.

Participant 6 proudly mentioned, *“I supervise their study and I help them with their homework. I am not trained as a teacher, but I have matric, so I can help with homework where I can. Sometimes, they understand me better than some of the new teachers who still struggle with sign language. My sign language is better than most teachers’ in this school. I even train new teachers on sign language.”*

Asked how he became proficient in sign language he said,

“The school organises in-service training for sign language, and I have attended many of those over the years.”

He added with sense of pride that,

“Our contribution as caregivers is sometimes under-estimated, yet we are like teachers to these children. For an example, we do much better in sex education even more than the school subject of Life Orientation because we teach for practical life not just for exams.”

Caregivers provided much needed support to these children. Because they were traumatized when they were still young, they did not know how to help themselves and so their growing up was bound to be difficult without proper adult care and support. The whole school had organised itself to be a supportive family. Teachers gave support. The school management organised other support initiatives like counselling, from outside. Housefathers and housemothers gave support and the children supported each other.

As per the interview schedule, all interviewees had to answer a question about support systems and cooperation from other stakeholders including any support from other sources outside the school, like parents or guardians or from the community or the Department of Education. It was noteworthy that the school included caregivers in training of teachers ((Motitswe & Mokhele, 2013).

Participant 6: Most parents and guardians don't want these children. They are only interested in their grant money. Some of the children don't even want to go home during vacations, due to lack of love and support at home. Those who go home come back retrogressed in terms of believing in themselves and having hope for the future. Some come back relapsed in terms of bad behaviour and indiscipline. Some come with (illicit) adult videos alleging they were allowed to watch at home, and cigarettes and many things showing they were badly looked after.

Poor and inadequate care exposed children, already vulnerable due to other various risk factors, to added vulnerability (Herman, 2019; Burke, 2013; Schneider 2018).

The next section focuses on data analysis where the presented data is analysed and interpreted in relation to the research questions and with reference to the literature reviewed.

4.2 Data analysis

Data analysis was done using thematic analysis. I thoroughly familiarized myself with the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts. Coding the data systematically according to initial ideas assisted in recognizing patterns and their relationships to themes. The identified categories were grouped into main themes, sub-themes and codes. The themes and sub-themes were defined and systematically analyzed in response to the research questions (Uher, 2019):

1. What psychosocial support systems are available for vulnerable rural children?
2. What role should educational psycho-social services play in addressing vulnerable children's adversities?

3. How important is collaboration among all stakeholders in addressing risk factors?

The three questions guided me to look for and unearth three main themes which will be discussed hereunder.

4.2.1 Theme 1: Psychosocial Support systems

The study's main objective was to explore psychosocial support systems for vulnerable children. One of the observations that stood out in the literature review was that building resilience was very important in supporting vulnerable children. Research (Khanlou & Wray 2014) has also shown that resilience is a transitional, before-and-after, ecological phenomenon. Using the amalgamated framework of CoP, social constructivism and Inclusive Education concepts, revealed psychosocial support systems in the data corpus. *Psychosocial Support systems* were thus, the main theme investigated and data pockets representing categories or aspects of the main theme were also unearthed. All participants without exception, directly or indirectly, emphasized the importance of having a reliable support system to protect against developmental risk factors as well as to promote protective factors, (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2011). The process of thematic data analysis was used to investigate the psychosocial support systems. Support systems appeared as transitional agents that were instrumental in pulling vulnerable children from dire situations. Conversely, the absence of psychosocial support systems for vulnerable rural children glaringly left a void in the lives of children.

Using the analogy of the RNA's effect changes in protein synthesis and where microRNAs (miRNAs) regulate gene expression by inhibiting translation and/or by inducing degradation of target messenger RNAs, downregulating mRNA levels, and so directly repressing the translation of hundreds of genes, (Selbach, Schwanhäusser, Thierfelder, Fang, Khanin & Rajewsky, 2008), these categories or aspects of the main theme represented the sub-themes. The sub-themes covered past experiences of adversity, risk factors, and protective factors and subsequent "bounce back" categories. These before-and-after sub-themes, representing the effects of the presence or absence of the psychosocial support systems, were grouped as *developmental risk factors*, *protective factors* and *adaptation factors* (Donald et al., 2010).

Analysis and coding of theme 1 yielded the following codes:

Theme 1	Sub-themes
Psychosocial Support Systems	Developmental risk factors Protective factors Adaptation factors

Table i: Psychosocial Support systems - Theme and sub-themes

4.2.1.1 Developmental risk factors

Developmental risk factors are circumstantial and structural inhibitors to development. Observation in this study depicted one of the schools as having a negative school culture and environment not conducive to encouraging peer support system. Learner engagement with each other appeared rigidly harnessed. That was a developmental risk factor. Vulnerable children naturally and adaptively develop resilience as a response to such inhibitors (Masten, 2019). Resilience refers to the tendency to rebound, bounce back, recover, adapt or cope in response to risk, challenges or adversity (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2011). Thus, resilience cannot be conceptualized without reference to the risk factors that plunged a person into a dark hole of adversity in the first place. Adversity represents a loss in the life of an individual (Masten, 2019). It is a position that, if one is not rescued from, may lead to various psychological problems or catastrophic endings like depression and suicide (Labella, et al., 2019). Adversity can grow in severity and spread its tentacles to corrupt more areas of human functioning. Risk factors give rise to more risk factors (like violence, trauma, disability, etc.) and together they conspire against an innocent or helpless life (Donald, 2010). A person under such ruthless attack is said to be vulnerable. Vulnerability, as defined and researched in the literature review, means being prone to, or being an easy target for, risk factors (Ambelu, et al., 2019). Rural schools and children are relegated to the developmental risk factors (Hlalele, 2012; Khanare & de Lange, 2017).

The literature review highlighted that, due to the high levels of violence in South Africa, children are under constant vicious attacks, physically and psychologically. This implies that all children are susceptible to harm, but have different levels of vulnerability, depending on the type and viciousness of the risk factors in their circumstances, and the availability and efficiency of psychosocial support systems at their disposal. It can take just one risk factor to

declare vulnerability. For example, a child in a stable home with caring parents can be caught in a traumatic experience because of, for an example, the high prevalence of road accidents due to drunken driving. This means that addressing risk factors is an extremely complex mission and is a significant public health issue. The public health strategy is to first try to prevent health hazards before they surface. When prevention fails, the strategy becomes to manage the situation. Participant 1 alluded to the fact that *“we try to manage what we cannot change”*.

In this study, there were children who were, and were still experiencing multiple risk factors. The developmental risk factors identified by Donald et al. (2010) include family instability, child abuse, trauma, disability and socio-economic issues. While it should be relatively easy to prevent occurrences such as child abuse and traumatic experiences in institutions like orphanages, risk factors such as disability, family instability and socio-economic circumstances are beyond prevention but can only be managed. The orphanage can thus be seen as a contingency or surrogate home or “house of safety” where risk management strategies and functions are concentrated (Herman, 2019). Participant 2 stressed this point saying: *“We know that family insecurities for vulnerable children cause emotional frustrations for them.”* School A had a diverse staff complement and teams constituting a community of practice with formidable psychosocial support systems (Li, Chi, Cluver and Stanton, 2015). The resident social worker leads dedicated constellation of teams where every member does their best to prevent, minimize or manage developmental risk factors. However, the social worker lamented the lack of collaborative support from the broader community, as well as what she termed ‘political apathy’. It was beyond her scope and power to prevent children from being abused at homes and being dumped into dust bins. Her jurisdiction, and that of other members in this community of practice started as soon as the child is rescued from abusive environment or dust bin or is dumped at the orphanage gate.

4.2.1.2 Psychosocial protective factors

“Thriving academically is usually our way of knowing whether we have made any progress in other areas such as psychological and emotional. Some conditions, especially medical conditions, are not easy to overcome, but increased resilience seems to carry them(children) even in the mist of many other unresolved circumstances,” (Participant 1). Resilience is a function of psychosocial support systems. That means that resilience is a dependent variable depending on the amount and nature of psychosocial support systems available.

According to participant 1, resilience is an important protective factor to carry the children during and through difficult times. It is appropriate then to investigate psychosocial support systems that promote resilience among rural vulnerable children (~~Yohani, Brosinsky & Kirova, 2019~~). Pienaar et al. (2011, p.130) define resilience as “the ability to successfully use external and internal resources to resolve developmental issues and life-tasks.” Such resources can be referred to as protective factors. Donald et al. (2010) identify caring, love (received and expressed), trust and hope as psychosocial protective factors. School A professed to be practicing Inclusive Education, and indeed patterns of trust, equality and respect for diversity clearly emerged from the data generated in their school environment. Inclusive Education is a useful framework and criterion for a caring and learner-centred school or learning ecosystem. Such schools are known for creating conducive learning conditions (Sohnge, 2001). While not all structural learning conditions are in place, which is a difficult ideal to achieve, *even in the midst of many other unresolved circumstances (participant 1)*, the support systems that develop a person’s internal attributes such as resilience become very sustaining. Observation revealed that School A had a school culture characterised by caring, demonstrated through supportive teams’ integrated efforts and partnerships. Peer caring and support are strong protective factors that promote a sense of belonging and facilitate resilience in a psychosocial support system (Jwili, 2016; Masten, 2019). Research in rural India found that friendship is a helpful psychosocial support system for vulnerable teenage girls (Mazzuca, et al.,2019). Lyons et al., (2016) also underscore the importance of friendship as a psychosocial developmental factor. Participant 4 said “*my friends helped me*”. Apart from promoting resilience, School “A” actively endeavoured to develop learning self-efficacy among its learners.

The teacher participants in this study all emphasized the importance of identifying and addressing learning barriers. The type and extent of learning barriers inform decision-making and appropriate course of remedial action. The teachers fully realize their active role as that which constitutes an important support system for the learners. According to Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2011), teachers are an integral component of psychosocial support systems for learners. When asked to comment on psychosocial support systems for learners, Participant 2, asked: *One good question would be what support teachers and schools get to be able to support the learners*. There is need therefore, for teachers to be skilled, not only on how to identify risks, but also on appropriate processes and channels of addressing challenges and/or making referrals. Teachers need to be supported and empowered to support learners (Ndinisa, 2016; Bradshaw, et al., 2019). The literature review referred to the frustration of teachers when they

lack the know-how. Consequently, they continue to administer outdated and forbidden forms discipline such as corporal punishment which is counterproductive in terms of learner emotional regulation and social cognition.

According to the principles of Inclusive Education, teachers are supposed to attend to the needs of each learner, giving deserved individual attention whenever needed or demanded by a specialized curriculum. *Participant 1* also stressed the need for timeous diagnosis of learner developmental risk factors by teachers. This is also crucial when it comes to addressing learning barriers. Late intervention is deleterious to the prognosis of recovery. Britto et al. (2017) emphasized that intervention for vulnerable children works better if implemented at developmentally appropriate times. The teacher participants lamented the fact that almost all their learners were age inappropriate, i.e., much older for the grades they were doing. Delays in diagnosis and, hence, design and implementation of intervention programmes cause setbacks for learners as they miss crucial developmental milestones (van IJzendoorn, et al. 2011). Piaget (1971) postulates that each developmental stage complements and assists in proper realization of the next one. Community health principles also emphasise the importance of prevention and early intervention (McNeish, Rigg & Hodges, 2019). It is always better to prevent problems before they start. Khanlou and Ray (2014, p.65) note that “investing early in the life course is seen as a powerful health promotion step with lifelong benefits including improvements in school.”

4.2.1.3 Psychosocial adaptation factors

Adaptation factors form one indispensable category in the provision of psychological support systems. Adaptation is described as the person’s functioning or the way in which people accomplish their goals, as well as the way they adjust to, and deal with, life challenges (Burke, 2013, p.465). Natural living organisms have the ability to modify their genetic make-up in order to survive harsh conditions or environments. Children adapt to their would-be-unbearable situations through attachment (Larsson, 2019). Attachment is a powerful relational construct. Simply defined, attachment is a social bond that can apply to all aspects of child-parent relationships (Ucus, et al., 2019). It is an on-going process of establishing and maintaining an emotional bond with caregivers or other significant individuals, helping the child to explore and learn about their world (Mash & Wolfe, 2010). Individuals need to attain some measure of resilience for adaptation to be possible. As noted previously, resilience involves rebounding,

bouncing back, recovering, *adapting* or *coping* in response to risk, challenges or adversity (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2011; ~~Yohani, et al., 2019~~).

Adaptation enables a person to live and thrive in an environment where they would naturally not be expected to survive. Structural modification and behavioural evolution enable them to exploit and master roles in their environment and enhance their capabilities relatively better compared with their peers (Fleagle, 2013). There are many examples of adaptation in our ecological midst. One example is that of a person who has feeble legs and gains double the strength in their arms as they adapt to using crutches. Another is the ‘fight or flight’ instinctive human response to danger. Adaptation has been found to have effect on psychosocial adjustment and emotional intelligence regulation (Piqueras, Mateu, Cejudo & Pérez-González, 2019).

Adaptation and coping are strategies to deal with adversity when all else has failed (~~Yohani, et al., 2019~~). The data generated revealed that teachers also had to adapt to the school situation. After narrating her story of initially being overwhelmed to breaking point, a teacher participant at School A said, “*It was my first time seeing so many children with multiple and severe disabilities... but now I like it here and I wouldn’t exchange this experience for anything.*” A teacher from school B said she came to the school only because she could speak sign language and then she was naturalized into a caregiver, and then eventually groomed into a teacher who is now, according to her words, *more of a mother to these vulnerable children*. Adaptation is like improvisation; doing and achieving the most with the least. Ability to adapt and make most of situations is absolutely mandated for all teachers and learners in rural ecologies beset with glaring marginalisation.

The Head Boy of School A was wheelchair bound. He could not control his bowel and used nappies. This presents a sterling example of adaptation as empowerment: empowering a person beyond their limitations. Barak (2017) draws from the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989) to emphasize that behavioral and environmental factors that promote learners’ social and cognitive development. The story was also told, by one of the teacher participants, of a learner who used her prosthetic arms to push another learner in a wheelchair. Developing a strong sense of space orientation to compensate for blindness can also be regarded as evolutionary adaptation. One very interesting aspect of adaptation is that of “psycho-biological systems that might influence adaptive and resilient behaviour” (Khanlou & Wray, 2014, p.67). Such systems

include human functions such as those carried out in areas like the brain and neurological components. Scientific exploration of these neurological components is beyond the scope of this study. Suffice to say that biomedical adaptation promotes resilience. For example, some children who live on the street develop a formidable immune system that prevents them from catching colds and flu as easily as children that live in protected environments (Donald et al., 2010).

Psychosocial Support systems help to facilitate adaptation for children living with disabilities (Paguinto, Kasparian, Bray & Farrar, 2019). Thus, the definition of adaptation can be further augmented to encompass the internal support systems' capacity to expand when environmental protective resources are in short supply. A person's internal support systems also increase in strength in such a situation. The threshold of the effect of risk factors is raised so that the same kind of adversity does not cause the expected amount of trauma. Khanlou and Wray (2014) describe resilience as a process where protective factors work to modify vulnerability to the effects of adversity. Where risk factors cannot be fully removed, adaptation becomes a natural coping strategy (Piqueras, et al., 2019). Adaptation can also be likened to what happens when a muscle is strained by a weight in a gym. It is eventually exercised by the same weight until it does not feel the strain anymore. It is not that the weight lost its potential to strain but that the muscle has adapted and increased in strength. The pain bar is raised. We can conclude that adaptation begets resilience which in turn toughens emotional viscosity.

Patterns of attachment surfaced many times in the data with, not only care-givers fulfilling this role, but also 'significant others' that individual children personally identified with. Children showed reliance and proximal attachment, not only to caregivers, but also to their peers, teachers, and social workers, and even to support staff like kitchen staff and gardeners. In School A, the social worker became a role model for many children. *Participant 1 said: Family is the key word. We try to be one family.* One learner said she would like to become a social worker, so that she can help abused children. This shows the kind of relationships established through relational adaptations. Donald et al. (2010, p.160) argue that protective resources are, at least potentially, present in proximal interactions at all levels of the social systems: family, peer groups, school, and local community. The broader community may be out of reach for these institutionalized children, So it is important for them to find role models and significant others in the local community for meaningful attachment (Li, et al., 2015). Communities of Practice should be understood as the ecologies that foster collaborations and local support for

the edification of the same community. Myende and Hlalele (2018) define an ecology as an open system, dynamic, interdependent, self-organizing and adaptive. It is clear from the document analysis that the learners greatly benefited from the psychosocial support systems. This was much evident as they benefited from psychosocial services provided through attachment and by adaptation as elements of psychosocial support systems.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Provision of psycho-social services.

Multiple factors impact on the acquisition of developmental proficiencies for vulnerable children in rural schools. These include security, supportive caregiving, health, nutrition, and safety. These domains should mutually interact with one another to collaboratively support the process of child development. These collaborative elements are necessary and should be initiated through psychosocial support services, and sustained by conducive environments (Black, Walker, Fernald, Andersen, DiGirolamo, Lu, Devercelli, (2017).

Rural children can benefit from provision of psychosocial services by various psychosocial support systems. Psychosocial implies psychological and social domains. In the literature review, psychosocial was defined as the relationship, influence and interaction between the psychological (emotional, cognitive and spiritual dimension) and social (interpersonal relationships and social environment) aspects of individuals lives, (Kaljee, et al., 2017). Relational and emotional dynamics have a significant bearing on what and how learners receive instructional information. Peers, family and teachers offer indispensable psychosocial support for children (Black, et al., 2017; Larsson, 2019).

Analysis and coding of theme 2 yielded the following codes:

Theme 2	Positive codes	Negative codes
Provision of psychological support	Inclusive edn principles De-stigmatisation Special class Teacher – learner support Peer support Caregiver care Trauma counselling Talks about drugs and crime	Neglect Apathy Discord Insensitivity

Table ii: Provision of psychological services – Themes and subthemes

The theme of provision, or lack of provision, of psychological services in public rural schools, stood out very prominently in the data corpus as an essential, or would be essential, support system. Rural school learners endure multiple vulnerabilities, even more so for orphans and children living with disabilities, (Myende & Hlalele, 2018; Kaljee, et al., 2017).

Participant 2, a deputy principal from school B, expressed strong sentiments regarding what he called “neglect” by the department of education when it comes to the provision of psycho-social services. Apart from far-in-between visits from the local police station offering a talk about crime and drugs, their school had *never had a visit by a social worker or a health worker or an educational psychologist or a psychologist*. As a matter of fact, some of the interviewed teachers in this school did not even know what the work of an educational psychologist entailed. They innocently thought that the psychological services from the department of education were limited to *trauma counselling* whenever there was an incident like shooting at a school.

It was established in the literature review that many writers support the ideal that educational psychologists should assume leading roles in the development, implementation and evaluation of school-based mental health programmes. (Engelbrecht, 2004).

Participant 1, who was a resident school social worker at another school referred here as school A, re-iterated this sentiment, calling it the department’s “apathy”. While acknowledging that

the department of education had what was called School Support Team at the district, the impact of their services was not felt on the ground. Mwoma and Pillay (2015) could not establish any existing support structures or interventions in the education system in place to support vulnerable children. Participant 1 noted ‘discord’ that existed due to the lack of proper communications and decisive leadership on the part of the department. Such dissonance, according to participant 1, hampered the provision of psycho-social services. Participant 1 remarked: *It is usually difficult for the district School Support Team if a school does not have a Learner Support Team. There is always a discord. For example, the District SST would want to impose the Inclusive Education principles, sometimes without giving proper support and due consideration of such provisions as the appropriate curriculum, whereas the teachers on the other hand would want to label a learner and immediately push them to a special class, sometimes not putting the child’s best interest as a priority.*

Myende and Hlalele (2018, p.27) conjecture that sustainable rural learning ecologies may not be achieved if the government frameworks continue their insensitivity towards the rural realities. Learning Communities of Practice facilitate the formation of ecological communities that are constantly evolving and dynamically self-organising for sustainable existence and functioning in the absence of help from outside the ecology (or broader society) (Hoadley, 2012). The internal support systems are invoked from within the learning community and are adapted to face the challenges confronting vulnerable children (Herman, 2019). Communities of Practice support the development of ecological awareness that invokes innate assets such as ubuntu. Myende and Hlalele (2018) broaden the concept of ubuntu to reach beyond the consciousness of africanness and kindness, to encompass active empowerment of individuals to tap into their inner strengths. Empowerment of teachers would translate to empowerment of learners (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2011).

The revelation by Participant 1, that there is lack of cooperation and ‘discord’ between the District and the school, portray these entities as entirely discrete; showing no patterns of collaboration and cooperation. No matter how good the intentions of the department may be, if there are no proper channels of cascading (and feedback on) the information, the service delivery suffers. Supportive monitoring has an element of motivation and support; and can promote cooperation as opposed to the superiority stance which is blamed on the department (Barak, 2017; Simorangkir, Karnati, Abdullah, 2019). Cooperation within the different spheres within the education sector is important, as provision of psychosocial services will not fully

reach the intended recipients unless they are properly co-ordinated by relaying departments (Tchombe, 2015; van Engen, Steijn & Tummers, 2019).

4.2.3 Theme 3: Collaboration

From the literature review and the data corpus, it emerged that there was very minimal collaboration between stakeholders. The department, the school and the home all took their share in the blame for renegeing when it came to collaborations.

Analysis and coding of theme 3 yielded the following codes:

Theme 3	Positive codes	Negative codes
Collaborations	Trauma referral systems Stakeholder cooperation	Poor referral systems Inefficiency in communication Lack of information Bureaucratic protocols Lack of cooperation Lack of empathy Lack of support

Table iii: Collaboration - Themes and subthemes

Participant 1 had this to say about the lack of collaboration from stakeholders:

When it comes to psychosocial learner support systems, the problem is the inefficiency in communication and lack of collaboration among stakeholders. Generally, the teachers at school and classroom level take too long to diagnose problems related to learner issues and learning barriers. Most problems are reported at the end of a term when they are required to give progress reports, and only when the problems have already surfaced. The teachers, many a time, do not seem to know who to contact for referral. Problems of a social nature should be referred to social workers and if its educational psychology, it should be referred to the district (to invoke district psychological services). These referral processes take their own time, because of the

bureaucratic protocols involved, unfortunately. Lastly, the department of education, and various other departments do not appear to talk to each other.

4.2.3.1 Collaboration among learners

Learners in a Community of Practice learn social skills and gain on emotional maturity as well as develop their social capital. They learn from their peers as well as from the significant adults (Wenger, 2011; Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016; Barak, 2017). Peer psychosocial support was mentioned by all professionals, including social workers, teachers and caregivers, as a very useful psychosocial support system. Learners testified that they supported each other and collaborated in solving all their challenges. Hoadley (2012) describes a “community of learners” as a psychosocial support system where learners learn and share life skills for mutual support, survival and thriving. Lyons, et al. (2016) found that out of all support systems available to vulnerable children, peer support, friendship and belonging to peer community of practice wrought the most effective, fulfilling and sustaining support.

4.2.3.2 School / home partnerships

Parents and guardians are also blamed for abdicating their responsibilities and showing no or very minimal commitment to the well-being and education of their children. They ‘dump’ their children at the school, especially residential schools, to be the burden of the teachers. Teachers find themselves acting as parents, social welfare workers and health workers. Community of practice and social constructivism. providing a good framework for people to engage, get involved and participate meaningfully. According to Participant 2:

It is indeed a challenging task, especially when we get least cooperation from other stakeholders, more especially the lack of cooperation from parents or guardians. The problems we have with some of the guardians is more than just lack of empathy, but it borders along abuse issues. Abuse takes many different forms, for an example, emotional and financial abuses are not bound by the premises of the school, they happen at home.

This lack of communication, cooperation and collaboration between the home and the school was evident from the literature review and it also resurfaced in data generation section, as reiterated by most participants. Participant 6, when prompted to comment about collaboration, responded as follows:

Most parents and guardians don't want these children. They are only interested in their government grant money. Some of the children don't even want to go home during vacations, due to lack of love and support at home. Those who go home come back retrogressed in terms of believing in themselves and having hope for the future. Some come back relapsed in terms of bad behaviour and indiscipline. Some come with (illicit) adult videos claiming they could watch them at home. Some of the children smoke cigarettes and engage in many age inappropriate activities, showing that they were badly looked after at home.

What this participant narrated seriously showed disintegrated psychological support systems at home, and lack of commitment and co-operation by parents. It came out in the literature review that a home is expected to be the primary institution when it comes to providing support systems for children, yet this picture depicts a serious lack of psychosocial support systems for vulnerable children at home (Herman, 2019).

Participant 6 only framed collaboration within the school/ home scope or between the school and parents. The participant did not show a global view of issues regarding collaboration as involving the community as well as various departments (Epstein, 2018). Through the framework of social constructivism, the researcher had the opportunity to bring about a global view of the issues. The contemporary concept of economic globalization can be aptly adapted in education to refer to the demand of all stakeholders and innovative skills to focus on collaborations towards sustainable support and development of vulnerable children (Tchombe, 2015).

In a Community of Practice, all stakeholders gain skills through shared participation and building of social relationships. Themane and Thobejane (2019) drew from Lave's theory (Lave, 1991) to accentuate that, A community of practice refers to teachers working together and supporting one another in the same area of knowledge generating, sharing and utilizing, so that 'the novice teachers are initiated into the practice by old timers.' Teachers get an opportunity for professional peer-development whereby they get skills and share positive ideas on how to support one another and to support learners (Van IJzendoorn 2001; Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016; Wenger, 2011). In the CoP, people are encouraged to look for opportunities rather than concentrate on problems. The researcher also has a challenge to explore the university-school relationships.

4.2.3.4 Inter-sectoral / inter-departmental collaborations

The importance of inter- sectoral / departmental collaboration was widely commented upon by the participants. There were many societal sectors declaring their concerns for the plight of vulnerable children. However, it is regrettable that these various organisations and institutions do not usually pull together at the same time, in the same direction and for the same motive. The schools did not feel that the other relay partners were running and passing the baton properly as they should.

Again, it came out from the participants that they put a fair share of the blame on the doorstep of the government departments. Whilst the participants complained about what they called apathy existing within the department of education, the literature review pointed to another schism existing between departments; their lack of collaboration. It would then be expected that the department of Social Development and the department of Health and other departments such as the department of Rural Development, collaborate with the Department of Education in providing prioritized psychosocial support and development for rural schools and learners. This collaboration can forge formidable support systems to develop holistic responses to challenges that cannot be unravelled in other ways (Graham & Harwood, 2011).

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented only a selection of the large volume of data collected for this study. Thematic analysis was employed to identify themes and sub-themes. Consolidation of the sub-themes enabled the researcher to expose the elements of the main theme which was psychosocial support systems, and explore those elements for deeper meaning. The data revealed areas where psychosocial support systems collaborated to build resilience and promote self-esteem among learners to achieve self-regulation and learning self-efficacy. Psychosocial support systems' insufficiencies were also exposed, and the resulting consequences for such deficiencies pointed out. The following chapter presents a detailed discussion of these findings.

Chapter 5

Summary of findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter summarises the findings. The investigation of psychosocial support systems was aimed at highlighting the risks faced with rural vulnerable children. The focus was to determine psychosocial resources available to rural schools and to mobilize available capital to mitigate against the exposed risks (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2011). The discussion is centred around and informed by the following major themes which were derived from the research questions.

- 5.1 Psychosocial support systems for development of resilience.
- 5.2 The role of educational psycho-social services.
- 5.3 The importance of cooperation, partnerships and collaborations.

5.1 Support systems for development of resilience

Participants working with rural vulnerable children have all attested to the fact that psychosocial support systems are essential for building resilience. On the same breath, the literature review revealed that resilience is a necessary attribute to sustain children previously exposed to adversity, to help them bounce back and resume normal development. It is for this reason that this study used the amalgamated theoretical framework of CoP and social constructivism. The synergy of this framework provided a clear magnifying glass to show whether psychosocial support systems were available in the children's growing and learning ecosystems. Psychosocial support systems are a basis and context for motivation, moral support and psycho-social healing (Durlak, et al., 2011).

The participants' narratives showed that when support systems rally together to help vulnerable children, the result is a conducive ecosystem where individuals, as well as institutions, are developed. Psycho-social services like educational psychology provide essential "potential sources of health-enhancing transactions" (Theron & Donald, 2013, p.52) and conducive learning ecologies for learners as individuals and for schools as institutions. Theron and Donald (2013) assert that resilience is an ecological phenomenon; hence, the health-enhancing transactions can only occur in an ecosystem. Ecosystem is a representation of interdependence and mutual support. It is interesting to note that the rural orphanage school under study had become a microcosm community, an almost balanced ecosystem. This institution had built itself into a formidable help-centre which provided excellent, homely warmth and support. It was a home away from home that was self-empowered and resourceful with an abundance of

contextual protective factors (Theron & Donald, 2013; Gardner & Stephens-Pisecco, 2019). However, an institution is a second choice to home environment in the provision for children’s growing and developmental needs. The home and the original family, as the first choice for rearing a child, are, however, faced with multiple challenges for black and marginalized rural South Africans.

This research study explored psychosocial support systems available for guiding the growth pathways of vulnerable children in rural schools and communities. This study found that psychosocial support systems were rare commodities for rural communities, including rural schools. It was also established in this thesis that resilience, earned through hardship, was an essential attribute that helped the vulnerable children survive. Resilience is the social conduit to psychosocial healing. It has also been argued and established through the theoretical framework (Kemmis et al., 2014; Hlalele, 2019), that since human beings are dynamic social beings, socially founded initiatives bring about more lasting solutions.

Li, et al., (2015) proposed three interactive psychosocial ecological factors that facilitate the processes of resilience and mitigate deleterious impacts on orphans and vulnerable children’s psychological development. These are: Family resources, Community resources and Internal resources.

Psychosocial support systems: Internal assets, family resources and community resources

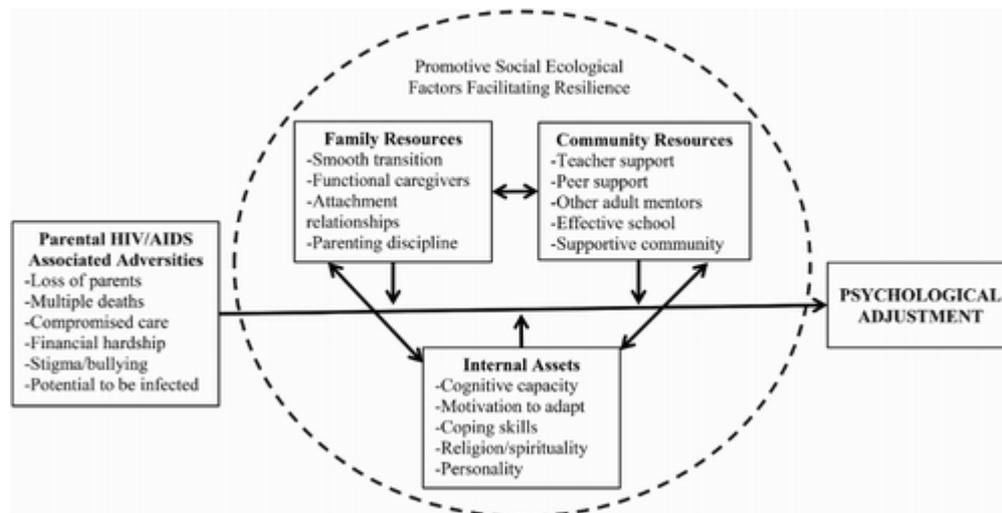


Figure i: Adopted from Li, Chi, Cluver and Stanton, 2015.

Parental HIV/AIDS has not spared rural communities. In fact, rural communities are the hardest hit by the pandemic partly due to migrant workers. This pandemic comes with added adversities for rural children, including loss of family members, resources and proper care (Li, et al., 2015). Family resources are scarce commodities in rural South Africa; hence a stable family and family support is hardly possible for OVC. This space is normally filled by extended family, foster families or caregivers who are usually referred to as housemothers or housefathers in the case of orphanages. As part of psychosocial support systems, such institutions offer valuable platforms for forming attachments and relationships needed in the life of a distressed individual. Attachment anchors an individual to other pillars of strength and is an important element of psychosocial support systems that seals the fissures left by the loss of a family or a parent.

Attachment to God has also been found to be helpful (Proeschold-Bell, Keyes, Sohail, Eagle, Parnell, & Biru, 2019). Research by Bradshaw and Ellison (2010) shows that religion can be a buffer for psychological distress. Burke (2013, p.177) also weighs in saying that, “positive religious coping may buffer a person against the effects of negative life events.” Li, Chi and Cluver (2015, p.18) included religion among the internal (personal) assets required to promote resilience. “Internal assets, such as cognitive capacity, motivation to adapt, coping skills, religion/spirituality, and personality, promote resilience processes.” Another South African study (Theron & Donald, 2013) also found that religious faith is an effective protective factor. All the participants in the current study who showed good progress in their development of resilience mentioned prayer to the Christian God of the Bible as one of their pillars of strength. This prompted the researcher to explore what the Bible says about building resilience (Cohen, 2013)

It is written in the Bible, the book of Romans chapter five (New International Version): “We are justified by *faith* to get *peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have gained *access* into this *grace* (undeserved favor) in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the *glory* (splendor) of God, and we rejoice in our sufferings (adversities), because we know that suffering produces *perseverance* (diligence), perseverance produces *character*, character produces *hope*, and hope does not disappoint, because God has poured out his *love* into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us”. It could deductively be concluded that receiving love and attachment (appreciation and support) enabled the participants to develop faith (efficacy), perseverance (endurance) and character (resilience),

which worked together for the good of those who love the Lord (attachment) and gave them access to grace (elegance) and peace. The religious factor represents a natural transition from a person's internal resources to community resources and fusion. Religion has many resources and support systems within its groupings which are community based. Places of worship and religious groupings are an epitome of communities of practice (Hoadley, 2012). Religious communities practice practical psychological support systems, providing support like bereavement counselling to children when they lose their parents. Warrasally (2015) found that being able to identify support systems and actively seeking help from such systems (including religious support system), builds resilience among OVC to pursue schooling despite previously experiencing major psychological distress and setbacks in life. Most churches in rural communities provide pastoral counselling and guidance for vulnerable children. Almost all churches have 'Sunday school' and youth programs. Children as members of communities of practice in religious formations gain a sense of belonging, self-identity and self-confidence. They develop resilience and become stronger than before, because of the psychosocial support they get through participation and practicing in such communities (Khanlow and Wray (2014).

Education should not be seen as a means to itself but as a powerful tool to emancipate people from the shackles of poverty (Amosa, James & Alumorin, 2013). Miles and Signal (2010, p.11) wrote that "education is a much broader concept than the acquisition of skills". I posit that education is a builder of resilience, whether through experience or formal acquisition of skills, and resilience catapults individuals into meaningful lives. Whilst we focus on cultivating resilience in order to build positive self-concept and learning self-efficacy, it is of interest that when ultimately acquired, education becomes a resilient force that promotes individual prosperity. Self-efficacy is evidence of acquired skills and resourcefulness. *"Thriving academically is usually our way of knowing whether we have made any progress in other areas such as psychological and emotional,* (participant 1). The qualities produced by resilience and learning self-efficacy in turn support the promotion of resilience. Those who are trained by resilience take their rightful place in society and become responsible citizens. The relationship between resilience and the psychosocial constructs that depend on it is "complex, non-linear and bi-directional" (Khanlou & Wray, 2014, p. 70). Li et al.'s (2015) triad of interactive protective social ecological factors recognizes that community resources are necessary for facilitating the processes of resilience. *Community resources* comprise resources such as peer support. Donald et al. (2010) used the example of the children living on the street as the epitome of peer support. These children have no role models or family support systems. Their only

connection with the broader community is when members of society hurl insults, accusations and judgemental statements on them (Endris & Sitota, 2019). However, they have formed formidable peer group support systems. They are survivors groomed by experience (Fleming, 2015). The current study found that the culture and environment of School A demonstrated a high level of peer support. All three learner participants confirmed that their friends were their pillars of strength, as in the sight of a learner using their prosthetic arms to push a friend in a wheelchair. One participant alluded to the fact that when her foster parents were busy wrangling over her foster grant, her friends and school mates supported her emotionally and materially: *“friends helped me and gave me some money and goodies”*. Theron and Donald (2013) mentioned ‘active agency’ regarded as a protective factor. It is when children run away from abusive parents or home. Living in the street can develop resilience whereas continued abuse can ultimately break the child’s spirit (Endris & Sitota, 2019).

One of the very important aspects of belonging to a community of practice is that membership gives a sense of belonging (Mazzuca, et al., 2019). In one orphanage, one participant (caregiver) referred to the fact that they take special care to create a homely atmosphere and sense of belonging for children by holding parties such as Father’s Day and Mother’s Day where the bond between caregivers and children is strengthened. Attachment does not only occur between caregivers and children, but also among children themselves. This does not only place the housefather as a father figure but also as a mentor, and young stars can look up to him for guidance and life alignment (Proeschold-Bell, et al. 2019).

This demonstration of interdependence is the epitome of the community of practice. The cooperation and support of all in the learning ecology is important, yet the ecosystem equation is not balanced without the educational psychosocial services as catalysts in the psychosocial support systems (Myende & Hlalele, 2018).

5.2 The role of educational psycho-social services

Educational Psycho-social services should be strategically positioned to broker psychosocial support that can create conducive environments for vulnerable children, and to nurture them through educational and life circumstances. These include; from preventing or minimizing adversities, to developing resilience, to achieving learning self-efficacy and ultimately graduate into full citizens (Mohangi & Archer, 2015; Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit, & Van Deventer, 2016).

The data portrayed School A's environment as close to ideal, at least when viewed through the framework of inclusive education. This ecology of learning presents itself as a community practicing excellent psychosocial support for vulnerable children. However, there are many other support systems that the school has not tapped into, particularly the services of educational psychologists. Dedicated psychological assessment is recommended to give all children a sound educational footing and this is critical for vulnerable children in rural schools. Child psychologists (Mash & Wolfe, 2010) advise that paediatrics health psychologists should readily be available and active to render dedicated help to vulnerable children, so they attain to their potential and quality life. A trained psychologist is required to properly diagnose and explain any disparities between intellectual potential and academic performance (Burke, 2013). However, educational psycho-social services are not available at rural schools, such as the orphanages in this study. In the literature review, a study by Chitiyo et al. (2008) found that implementing psychosocial support to orphaned and vulnerable children can improve their scholastic performance. According to the findings of this study, the learners who had previously showed emotional vulnerability and poor academic performance, showed remarkable gain in their social capital and academic improvement after psycho-social interventions (Britto, et al. 2017).

It was also noted in the literature review that it could be hardly possible for the Departments of Education of some African countries like South Africa to provide each school with an educational psychologist. Engelbrecht et al. (2017) note, however, that the districts should have active District Support Teams that visit schools and offer in-service training to school personnel (Durlak, et al, 2011). School A is technically an inclusive school and is a conducive ecosystem to nurture resilience. However, there is always room for improvement. The expertise of an educational psychologist could improve any educational situation, no matter how perfect it may seem. Individual learners who have been assisted to prevail over past adversities should be professionally guided to succeed in schooling. The school social worker and educators have done a sterling job in counselling. This is evident in the fact that learner participants and many more have emerged from a background of despair to speak with confidence and wear broad smiles. However, this progress needs to be taken a step further. Support systems in society, especially psycho-social services, can lead the way in achieving collaboration to improve rural vulnerable children's education and life prospects (Miles and Singal, 2010).

According to Burke (2013), risk factors in the psychological domain include child neglect, abuse and learning disorders. Learning disorders may be outside the scope of a social worker. The specialized expertise of an educational psychologist would fill this gap by providing leadership for diagnosis and prescription of programmes directed at academic recovery and enhancement. The school has not had a psychologist for the past four years since the resident psychologist retired, and the Department of Education replaced him with a social worker. If the department cannot provide each school with a psychologist, at least vulnerable children in orphanages and rural schools could be prioritized. Different learning needs, developmental levels, learning styles, types of intelligence, as well as hereditary and personality factors, require more directed teaching methods which should be prepared in conjunction with psychologists (Motitswe & Mokhele, 2013). One-size-fits-all delivery of teaching and learning cannot be expected to deliver for the whole spectrum of children and is not in alignment with the principles of Inclusive Education. Rural education requires more than just mainstreaming (i.e. inclusion of disabled children into mainstream class) but additional efforts to address shortage of resources. Furthermore, the spectrum of learner differences widens even further in the case of vulnerable children. Vulnerable children present a variety of developmental disorders and learning disorders, which are beyond the scope of a teacher and requires specialization of a psychologist. According to the South African Human Rights Commission and UNICEF (2011), most of the risk factors faced by rural children are in the psychological domain. Without the support of psychologists, teachers can feel helpless and overwhelmed.

All the educator participants in this study said that they had not received specific or further training to enable them to cater for diverse demands of the vulnerable children's environment. One participant said, *"When I first came here, I did not expect so many disabilities, I was shocked and overwhelmed to see so many disabled children in one place. I did not know where to start since I only had general training. I went home and cried helplessly, and my husband said I should find another job."* This participant admitted that she did not know what the scope of work of an educational psychologist was. She had never met one. She believed that all her learners would end up doing some sort of handwork, yet there were children in her class who were only physically disabled yet mentally perfectly normal. Such children were kept in the institution for safety and survival rather than for the purpose of being groomed for success.

Poorly prepared educators present serious learning barriers to vulnerable children. Engelbrecht et al.'s (2017, p.11) study found that, *"Regarding professional competencies (italics in*

original), teachers reported feelings of inadequacy and stress, caused by personally experienced limitations”. Multi-professional support and collaboration, especially psycho-educational support should be sought and be on stand-by to compensate for professional gaps that teachers may experience. Hoadley (2012) says that communities of practice were originally called “networks of professionals” which literally suggests a constellation of networking, mutual and professional support and collaboration of all stakeholders. One of the impediments to fluid collaboration is what Botha and Kourkoutas (2016) refer to as “power relations within a CoP”. Participant 1 referred to the “discord” between the District Support Teams and teachers where psychological services officials had a grand-standing and power wielding tendency manifest in remotely enforcing policies without due consideration for practicalities like in-service training versus the psychological inertia, or stubbornness to adapt to change, displayed by teachers (Emmers, Baeyens & Petry, 2019). Engelbrecht et al. (2017) also found that curriculum or subject advisors, who formed part of District Support Teams, only focused on ‘curriculum coverage’ and not on assisting with overcoming learning barriers. Participant 6 (a caregiver) accused teachers of teaching for examinations instead of teaching for holistic development. It was incumbent upon educational psychologists to address that. Department of Education, 2001, p.29) admitted that “The provision of the full range of diverse learning needs lies with our education managers and educator cadre”.

The following section discusses the issues of collaboration and communication in more detail. The aim is the emancipation and edification of vulnerable children who are left disenfranchised in rural schools. According to participant 2, *most abuses occur when children are not on the school premises during vacations*. Social workers can remove children from dysfunctional homes or abusive environments and law enforcement agencies can punish offenders, but the deeper and unfathomable hurt of abuse is psychological and is the scope of a dedicated educational psychologist.

One participant (deputy principal) interpreted the lack of psychosocial support services as follows; *“I think it’s because we have never produced a doctor or an engineer, but how would you know if you don’t support learners to realise their full potential.”* This sounded like a desperate cry for psychosocial support for vulnerable learners and teachers in rural schools; a cry from a teacher charged with the lives of many children. He needed professional support from designated educational psychologists, so he could help children unleash their potential, instead of babysitting them. Asked to recall a success story relating to a learner, another

participant who had been at the school for 13 years could only mention a workshop labourer at the same school. The Salamanca statement's definition of *Inclusion* is not limited to structural systems but includes appropriate state-of-the-art training of teachers; both as student teachers and practicing educators. This envisaged support for teachers would include increased access to professional advice and continuous consultation by educational psychologists (Forlin et al., 2015; Engelbrecht et al. 2017).

While school B met most of the inclusive education prescripts in terms of a structural system and had fairly adequate infrastructure, what was lacking was dedicated educational psychological services to support teachers to design and establish protective mechanisms necessary for intervention strategies (Ebersohn & Ferreira, 2011). Educational psychology services can help everybody in the school community to recognize possibilities and to make them believe that they can achieve more. Knowing what one wants to do and believing they can achieve it is called self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can further support other psychological elements of human functioning such as self-image and self-identity, and ultimately, self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943; Emmers, et al., 2019). The dynamics of CoP can be used to oil the channels of communication to maximize support and collaboration. The tenets of social constructivism support communities of practice to invigorate professional stakeholders into collaborative engagements.

5.3 The importance of cooperation, partnerships and collaborations

The previous sections in this chapter are the tributaries that naturally culminate in a discussion of collaborations of psychosocial support systems. Collaboration implies inclusiveness from family level to school level to district and community levels (Black, et al. 2017). If any of these levels is not delivering as expected, it becomes the missing link. Juxtaposing South African and Finnish education systems Engelbrecht et al., (2017) showed that South African teachers lacked support systems expected from various other stakeholders. Pillay (2012) found that supporting and meeting the needs of vulnerable children was, not only limited to educators, but also extended to other stakeholders such as guardians, counsellors, social workers and psychologists. In addition to these findings, much was found in the literature review on parental involvement and family culture as significant psychosocial support systems. Family instability inevitably exposes children to vulnerabilities, including emotional volatility which makes learning very difficult if not impossible. Rural schools are confronted with psychosocial challenges manifest through learner vulnerabilities on daily basis. The district was blamed for

not doing enough to support the marginalized schools. The community was also blamed for detaching and absolving itself of the responsibility of supporting schools. There was need, it seems, for teachers to cooperate and collaborate to coordinate Communities of Practice in the school and in the broader community.

It was particularly interesting to note one of the teacher participants expressing appreciation for the opportunity to engage in the interview saying that the short session made her to realize the strengths they, as a school community, had. She said “it was therapeutic” to be afforded a moment with someone willing to lend an ear to listen to their stories with interest. It was therapeutic for them to reflect upon their situation and realize the resilience they had as a collective. They benefited from the study by way of increased awareness and broadened understanding of the dynamics and factors affecting their school situation. Awareness and knowledge were created and shared even through the perturbation by interview engagement. It seemed that all participants were empowered by the knowledge gained (Setlhare, Wood & Meyer, 2016). They were geared to be involved and be empowered through the Communities of Practice.

In chapter three Wenger (2011, p.1) was quoted saying that “Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they regularly interact.” This is the heart and epitome of collaboration. It is where people get together and share ideas in a contextual setting. The adult participants from both schools in this study demonstrated a near perfect example of functioning of intra-school support systems, at least as formidable Communities of Practice operating in purposefully set up learning ecosystems. CoP’s constituencies form a constellation of support systems. Notwithstanding their individual focus and commitment, people in the Communities of Practice are collectively eager to learn and share their experiences.

The synergy of community of practice and social constructivism is designed to highlight the benefits of collaboration and collective participation in addressing social issues that posed learning barriers. The participants selected for this study seemed freshly conscientized to become integral voices, committed players, and active contributors to the envisaged full-complemented spectrum of collaboration. Participants from School A admitted that they had no connection with the community. One participant lamented the fact that the only time their school was mentioned by community members was when it was used as a landmark to give

directions. The community members still use derogatory terms when referring to disability, which made people living with disabilities appear as some sub-human species. The tenets of social constructivism encourage people to create knowledge and use it to change their situation. Teachers seemed determined to change the whole community's attitude. In the framework of CoP and social constructivism, there are no walls or boundaries. This means that diverse constellations of communities; school communities, the broader local community and society at large, could gain visa-free access to one another's territories across organizational boundaries and cultural divides. Knowledge informally created in the community through social engagement could find its way to the formal educational system. Both Schools A and B did not play sport with neighboring schools, "*Those kids from normal schools will stigmatize our children, besides disabled children cannot compete with normal children in sport,*" said one teacher participant. Participatory Action Research is a collaborative undertaking to engage in interactive cycles to address social ills (Kemmis et al., 2014). Participation in collaborating communities of practice will invigorate these teachers and empower them to say: we cannot afford to lock children in an institution and expect them to develop resilience. These children were also normal, and needed to be allowed to socialize with other "normal" children.

Resilience should be a strength that enables individuals to rise above isolation and stigmatization. It requires broader understanding and incorporation of the whole community and diverse psychosocial support systems like socio-political systems, health care systems, business communities etc. Such collaborations can come up with solutions according to their area of specialization and expertise, and then emerge to foster united psychosocial support systems' awareness campaigns to de-stigmatize and de-mystify disabilities. The business community can help by financing sporting codes like chess that cater for all children, so as to mix able-bodied and disabled children in sport, etc. The school can reach out and participate in a vibrant community garden cultivated and kept by local women's club just outside the school. This could open doors for the school, not only for nutritional support, but for more network opportunities. Such engagements could empower the school to develop resilience and emerge above marginalization and stigmatization.

Resilience is an internal force that intrinsically propels an individual. However, force remains a potential until it is put to good use. In the previous section, the words *emancipation and edification* were used together for a deliberate reason. In South African, political emancipation has not facilitated the economic upliftment of the previously disenfranchised. Emancipation

from psychosocial distress should promote resilience among vulnerable children. Scientific evidence (Ungar, 2015; Masten, 2014) has shown that children can be resilient. Resilience in children, according to Kaljee, et al.,(2017) can be bolstered by such contextual protective factors (Theron & Donald, 2013) as good physical health, quality caregiving, good nutrition, improved peer relationships and an environment showing less violence, less bullying and less exposure to traumatic experiences.

Resilience is a fuel which remains latent until properly channelled to achieve edification (educational improvement) or learning self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief and judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to attain designated types of performance (Bandura, 1986). Everybody needs motivation to believe in themselves. Yet, motivation is very fragile; it fails if, according to the person's own judgement, the task is deemed not to measure up to their capabilities. Proper self-judgement will lead to meticulous self-organizing and execution of learning tasks. None of this can be achieved without collaborated psycho-support systems.

Self-efficacy is cultivated and nurtured through psychosocial support systems. The concept of a 'system' connotes different parts or organs working together to achieve a common goal. The tenets of social constructivism and CoP are based on collaborations where solutions are found in social systems and through social engagement. Multi-level relationships should be fostered with the purpose of bringing all stakeholders on board to work together to advance children's "overall well-being *as well as* their personal and *academic development*" (italics mine) (Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016, p.796). The proficiency of academic development can be measured by the extent to which learners are able to self-organize and self-regulate and achieve some level of tenacity and consistency in their self-study. This is what this study has described as learning self-efficacy. Like resilience, learning self-efficacy cannot be achieved without proper collaborative support from psychosocial systems. A caregiver who participated in this study emphasized that they would like teachers to acknowledge their contribution to learning and holistic academic development of the vulnerable children.

It was noted in the literature review that empowered teachers and caregivers/parents can collaborate to make sense of challenges and present a united front in addressing vulnerable children's academic development (Epstein, 2018). Participant 6, who is a caregiver, alluded to the fact that caregivers also contribute to the academic support of learners as he trained junior

teachers in sign language as well as assisted learners with homework. This implies that collaborative teams are required to cultivate collective efficacy and unwavering collective commitment to support learners (Lyons et al., 2016). Thus, learning self-efficacy is a by-product of resilience manifesting in many domains. In the biological/medical domain, efficacy in learning will depend on many factors, starting with brain development, followed by early brain stimulation, and sustained by on-going academic support. Brain development is an entirely natural process that depends on genetic make-up, supported by proper nutrition and predisposed by the right type of socialization.

Psychosocial support systems can prevent risk factors and promote protective factors. One of the learner participants in this study had multiple vulnerabilities. These harsh stressors seriously affected her memory and hence, her learning. It was beyond the scope of this study to engage in psychological diagnosis of individual children, but it is relevant to note that stress affects the brain area called hippocampus which is involved in learning and memory (Mash & Wolfe, 2010). It is evident that the medical domain features importantly and should form an integral part of the envisaged support systems. Child psychologists, Mash and Wolfe (2010, p.279) assert that “mental retardation occurs more often among children from lower socio-economic groups.” The fore-going deliberations further prove and support the importance of collaborations in dealing with social issues that impede learner edification.

Myende and Hlalele (2018) drew from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), through The South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) to appreciate the legislation of empowerment of parents in furthering collaboration endeavours for supporting schools. It was also established in the literature review chapter that even various government departments needed to talk to each other and work in harmony if they were to succeed in helping vulnerable children in rural schools. Collaborations can forge service delivery by government departments, i.e. Department of Education, Department of Social Development and Department of Health. These departments, if strategically relayed and coordinated, could form a formidable hedge around vulnerable children in rural schools. This would be a noble and high calling for the governments.

This study investigated and highlighted the importance of such partnerships and collaborations. The NGO’s work and different social activism initiatives are encouraged by CoP and social constructivism principles. This framework, as elaborated upon in the third chapter, provides

multidimensional perspectives which epistemologically bring out more insights. The value of this approach is that it provides multidisciplinary and inter-sectoral methodologies to enable a better understanding of issues. CoP as a framework, encourages and supports the values of Inclusive Education, such as enhancement of social competency, and respect for diversity and helps to “enhance the social capital of various stakeholders through collaborative and constructive partnerships”, (Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016, p795). Through the CoP, rural communities are bound together and are empowered by a synergy of collectiveness of overlapping communities of interest. Through social constructivism, they find common knowledge and strength. This is a framework that promotes and support social compact. Finding what works mobilizes people to act to change their situation (Setlhare at al. 2016; Myende & Hlalele, 2017). King (1983) referred to this ideal of mutual help and support as *interrelated structure of reality*.

Rural schools should also be encouraged to look across their borders and form partnerships with community organizations where they can source support for their learners and teachers. Schools can become magnanimous and quit the antagonistic posture with the parents, and instead, use structures like School Governing Bodies to reach out to the broader community. Through the SGB, parents can source support for their school from their employers. There are various organizations which can be resourceful for rural schools, which parents can be directly or indirectly involved, such as ‘Equal Education’ and ‘National Council for Persons with Disabilities.’ These can advocate quality and equal education system in South Africa, and the promotion of democracy and participation of communities in issues pertaining to education. Apart from the envisaged collaborative care efforts alluded to above, this praxis can be achieved through activism and lobbying for children’s rights. That constitutes the envisaged Communities of Practice.

5.4 Findings and Recommendations

Based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (1989), Walton (2011) argues against the use of children as ‘research objects’ without due consideration for emancipating them. Research should not only benefit the academic endeavours of the researcher, but should give back somehow. Research on children should go beyond exploration to action (Theron & Donald, 2013). The findings should lead to “meaningful change or practical outcomes for all learners, especially those vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation.” (Walton (2011, p.89).

the views of children should also be incorporated in developing programs and initiatives to uplift them (Kohfeldt & Langhout, 2012).

It was interesting to get feedback from teacher participants saying the interviews rekindled increased awareness as well as knowledge about their situation and their involvement. The findings of this research pointed to a critical shortage of psychosocial support systems for vulnerable children in rural schools, especially highly specialized services like educational psychology services, proper health care, food security and focused poverty alleviation initiatives. Mash and Wolfe (2010, p.378) emphasize the importance of highly specialized health care for children, and report that in developed countries like the US, “paediatrics health psychologists are particularly active in helping children with chronic disorders successfully to adapt and attain optimal quality life.” Another finding was that, while social workers complained about families locking up and isolating children with disabilities, institutions also perpetuated the isolation of these children by keeping them from the broader community. Van IJzendoorn et al. (2011) refer to this as “structural neglect” and submitted that it could lead to “post-institutional syndrome” at a later stage (Ariyo, Mortelmans, Wouters, 2019). The study also found that there was glaring apathy among some stakeholders that should have been involved, (like parents) and a lack of political will to foster, partake in and contribute meaningfully to collaborations. Educational psychologists were found to be missing on the opportunities, not only to assist teachers in “developing support strategies to meet a range of learner needs” (Engelbrecht, et al., 2016), but also to foster a leading role in coordinating psychosocial support systems through multi-disciplinary collaborations (Herman, 2019). Theron and Donald (2013, p.60) argue that educational psychologists should be positioned as change agents who encourage dialogue and interpret other stakeholders’ experiences. Constructive activism and broad consultation are thus, recommended to adequately address vulnerability issues and the plight of rural children, so that their narratives can change for the better.

5.5 Recommendations for further study

Exploratory case studies address the questions for the current study as well as provide hypotheses for subsequent studies (Yin, 2017). Further studies can explore support systems available to teachers in rural schools, including their training (and in-service training) in the pedagogy of educational psychology to prepare them to provide meaningful support to vulnerable children and equip them for harsh conditions in rural schools, so they can be able to

design and implement intervention programs. According to Durlak, Weissberg, Dominick, Taylor and Schellinger (2011), intervention programs work most efficiently if incorporated into routine educational or classroom practices, and not having to rely solely on external experts. University-school relationships can be explored as I believe such partnerships can take leadership to mediate and solve the blame apportionment/ tug of war between school and parents, school and department, and school and community.

5.6 Conclusion

The most evident and important finding of this study was the inadequacy of psychosocial support systems and the lack of cooperation and collaboration to coordinate a few support systems available. Opportunities for developing and improving quality of life for vulnerable children in rural schools were therefore, lost. This thesis is only the beginning of the opportunity for raising consciousness and lobbying for vulnerable children's constitutional rights. Advocacy for child emancipation seems the right course of action to ward-off the stressors that negatively impact upon the vulnerable children's well-being. Support should be provided for vulnerable children to reach their potential and achieve a good quality life. Too many risk factors collude against the development of the child in rural schools and communities in developing countries like South Africa. While South Africa has made great strides in improving the lives of children since the advent of democracy, sadly, the risk factors associated with marginalization still maintain their grip in rural communities. Rural children's rights are even pushed to the peripherals of the mainstream economy, and by logical deduction, so is the quality education opportunities.

According to the South African Human Rights Commission, by 2011, a black child was 18 times poorer and 50% less likely to complete secondary education than a white child. Few black children were exposed to childhood developmental programmes, whereas most of their white counterparts' parents could afford the services of a private psychologist (UNICEF, 2011; Burke, 2013). These glaring racial disparities undermined the gains of democracy and threaten social cohesion. Mash and Wolfe (2010, p.457) state unequivocally that these discrepancies "stem from racism and inequality, which are arguably the major sociocultural factors contributing to abuse and neglect of children." The foregoing research only compared races, whether in rural or urban areas. The children in rural areas endure added vulnerabilities. The lack of political support leads to a host of indignities for rural vulnerable children. While relevant laws are in place to protect the children, the 'political apathy', referred to in the

literature review and confirmed by one of the participants in this study, was a stumbling block to implementation. This finding is confirmed by Khanare and de Lange (2017) and they also called for the democratization of support and care. While the communities in and around the cities frequently organize protests to demand political attention, rural communities are not politically organized and so are always last in the queue for service delivery. The state and its organs can do much better in standing for social justice (Adams & Bell, 2016) and upholding the constitutional mandate and obligation to protect the rights of children (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996)).

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Appendix 1

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Victor Ndlovu. I am Master of Education candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa.

I am conducting a research study entitled: “*Exploring support systems for orphaned and vulnerable children towards resilience and learning self-efficacy*” Your family has been chosen to participate in the study. To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions.

Please note that:

Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your input will not be attributed to you in person but reported only as a population member opinion.

The interview may last for about 1 hour and may be split depending on your preference.

Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.

Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.

You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.

The research aims at knowing the challenges of your community relating to resource scarcity, peoples’ movement, and effects on peace.

Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.

If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		

I can be contacted at:

Email: tvndlovu@gmail.com

Cell: 084 433 7433

My supervisor is Dr. Henry Muribwathoho who is located at the School of Education Studies, Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Contact details: email: Muribwathohoh@ukzn.ac.za

Phone number: (031) 260-7011

You may also contact the Research Office through:

Phumelele Ximba

HSSREC Research Office

Tel (031) 260-3587/8350/4557 E-mail: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za/snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

DECLARATION

I..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

.....

Appendix 2
Informed Consent

I

The parent / guardian of.....

learner at Ethembeni School hereby give informed assent for him / her to participate in the research done at school, under supervision of Ethembeni school Social Worker, by the researcher from UKZN.

SIGNED.....

Parent / Guardian

Human & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki building

Postal Address: Private BagX54001, Durban 4000

Tel: 031 2603587/8350/4557

Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za/snymanm@ukzn.ac.za/mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix 3

Permission to conduct Research at your Institution

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Victor Ndlovu. I am a Master of Education student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My thesis topic is “Exploring support systems for orphaned and vulnerable children towards resilience and learning self-efficacy.”

The purpose of this letter is to ask for a permission and informed consent to conduct a research at your institution. My research will focus on three learners as case studies. I will not have direct contact with learners, the study will generate data by interviewing one or two educators and a caregiver. The interviews will be augmented by a document analysis including archival records; academic reports; psychological tests and other relevant documents.

The daily programmes of your institution will not be interrupted. The interviews will be conducted at the educator’s and caregiver’s convenient times. The assurance is hereby given that the identity of all participants will be protected. The data will be used and treated confidentially and with deserving responsibility.

I trust that you will favourably respond to this request.

Further information can be obtained from my supervisor Dr Henry Muribwathoho at

email: muribwathoh@ukzn.ac.za tel. :031 2601438 / 082 671 2126

My contact: Victor Ndlovu : tvndlovu@gmail.com tel.: 084 433 7433

I

Capacity.....

Hereby give consent to Victor Ndlovu a Master of Education student at UKZN to conduct the research in our institution.

Signed:.....

Human & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee: Dr Shenuka Singh (chair)

Tel: 031 2603587/8350/4557

Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za/snymanm@ukzn.ac.za/mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix 4



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma

Tel: 033 392 1063

Ref.:24/8/1633

Mr TV Ndlovu
PO Box 2358
New Germany
3620

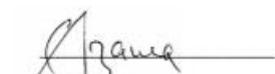
Dear Mr Ndlovu

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: "EXPLORING SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR ORPHANED AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN TOWARDS RESILIENCE AND LEARNING SELF-EFFICACY", 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 11 September 2018 to 01 March 2021.
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 below.
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


Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 13 September 2018

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Postal Address: Private Bag X9137 • Pietermaritzburg • 3200 • Republic of South Africa

Physical Address: 247 Burger Street • Anton Lembede Building • Pietermaritzburg • 3201

Tel.: +27 33 392 1063 • Fax.: +27 033 392 1203 • Email: Phindile.Duma@kzndoe.gov.za • Web: www.kzndoe.gov.za

Facebook: KZNDOE... Twitter: @DBE_KZN... Instagram: kzn_education... Youtube: kzndoe

..Championing Quality Education - Creating and Securing a Brighter Future

Appendix 5



2 October 2018

Mr Victor Ndlovu (217079314)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Ndlovu,

Protocol reference number : HSS/0800/018M

Project title: Exploring support systems for orphaned and vulnerable children towards resilience and learning self-efficacycentre for Durban

Full Approval – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol

In response to your application received 26 June 2018, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application 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.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

cc Supervisor: Dr Henry Muribwathoho
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza
cc School Administrator: Ms Tyzer Khumalo

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

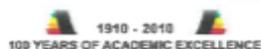
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

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Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

Appendix 6

The Interview Schedule. For teachers and caregivers

The interview schedule will take the following format:

1. Background information.
2. Communicating the purpose for the interview.
3. The interview will start with simple factual questions, such as personal details.
4. The interview will start with simple factual questions, such as personal details.
5. Follow-up with open – ended questions.
6. Further probe in a welcoming and friendly manner for greater detail if needed.
7. Invite the interviewee to talk about any points not covered.

Interview questions.

- 6 What support systems are helpful for development of resilience in vulnerable OVC?
- 7 What role should educational psycho-social services play to address vulnerabilities faced with vulnerable and previously traumatised children.
- 8 What do you think can be done by various elements of support systems to promote quality inclusive education for OVC's?
- 9 How important is the collaboration of all stakeholders in addressing risk factors, building resilience and developing learning self-efficacy?

Questions for the teacher:

Part A : **Biographical information.**

Gender :

Age :

Qualifications :

Professional experience :

Experience in this institution :

Part B : Interview questions

1. How has your experience of working with OVC learners been like?
2. Would you say that such experience has broadened your understanding of dynamics surrounding OVC learners?
3. Would you like to share one or two of your experiences with OVC learners?
4. Would you say your training as teacher prepared you adequately to teach vulnerable or previously traumatised children?
5. Do you need further training to be able to do your work better?
6. Have you received any in-service training? if so, from where?
7. What advice would you give to a novice teacher in dealing with vulnerable children?
8. What kind of support services do vulnerable children need to improve their situation?
9. In your opinion, is your school in a position to provide such services?
10. Do you think schools and NGOs are providing vulnerable children with support and services they need?
11. Does this institution enjoy the support of this community? Please explain.
12. Do learners from this institution suffer any kind of stigma from children in other schools?
13. Has this school ever had an inter-school sporting/cultural activity with any other school?

Part C : **learning barriers**

What are the learning barriers experienced by the learners?

1. What learning barriers would you categorize as common to vulnerable children?
2. Is misconduct and problematic behaviour part of the barriers they manifest? If so why do you think triggers such behaviour.
3. How do you, as a teacher, cope with such barriers?
4. Do your learners show emotional stability/ instability? Please explain.
5. To what factors would you attribute the observed learning barriers?
6. What kind of support would assist you to mitigate learning barriers experienced?

7. How do you encourage and support a learner to come out of self-pity, be self-motivated and actively pursue their studies, i.e. achieve self-efficacy in learning?
8. How crucial is the collaboration of all stakeholders in building resilience and self-efficacy for the orphaned children?
9. How would you describe the kind of support you receive for your work from;
 - 9.1 School management?
 - 9.2 Other teachers?
 - 9.3 Parents/ Guardians?
 - 9.4 Caregivers?
 - 9.5 Government services?

Part D (questions pertaining to the prognosis a particular learner).

1. How long have you known (name of a learner)?
2. How would you describe his/her first day, month and year at this institution?
3. What were the circumstances that led to him/her coming to this institution?
4. What was his/her age?
5. They came into what grade?
6. Was any baseline assessment done to ascertain their suitability for the grade?
7. How would you rate his/her level of knowledge compare to others in the grade?
8. What interventions did you or the school do to remedy knowledge gaps diagnosed?
9. Were any psycho-educational tests done on the learner? Please explain.
10. What progress has the learner made since coming to this school: emotionally, socially and educationally.
11. Do you think such progress could have been achieved if the learner had not come to this school? Please explain.

Questions for the caregiver:

Questions about possible past exposure to adversity, duration, severity and the form of adversity to diagnose resilience (Ungar, 2015).

Questions for the Caregiver (attachment)

How long have you been working with the children?

Have you had discipline / behaviour challenges? How did you deal with them?

Can you give me any anecdotal story about a particular child.

1. In your experience as a caregiver in this institution, how can you comment on the changes, if any, that have occurred in this particular child.
2. How would you describe your relationship with this particular child?
3. How would you describe their relationship with their peers?
4. How would you describe their relationship with adults?

Appendix 7



Dr. J. Sihanda (Senior Lecturer: English)
School of Education
Private Bag X 5008, Kimberley, 8300
North Campus, Chapel Street, Kimberley
E-mail: Jahulani.Sihanda@spu.ac.za
jahulani@gmail.com
Website: www.spu.ac.za
Tel: 27534910142
Cell: 0845282087
03 November 2019

CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING

To whom it may concern

I hereby confirm that I have proof read and edited the following thesis using Windows 'Tracking' System to reflect my comments and suggested corrections for the author(s) to action:

Title: Exploring psychosocial support systems for vulnerable children in rural schools.

Although the greatest care was taken in the editing of this document, the final responsibility for the product rests with the author(s).

Sincerely

03.11.2019

SIGNATURE

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DATE

Appendix 8

MED DISSERTATION

ORIGINALITY REPORT

8%

SIMILARITY INDEX

6%

INTERNET SOURCES

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PUBLICATIONS

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STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1

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Internet Source

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