CHALLENGES OF SCHOOL COUNSELLORS IN THE PROVISION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES IN HIGH SCHOOLS

GANIYAT OLUSHOLA ZURAKAT

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Supervisor: Henry Muribwathoho

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DECLARATION

I, GANIYAT OLUSHOLA ZURAKAT, hereby declare that this dissertation is the product of my original work and it has not been submitted for degree purposes at any other University. All the sources used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete referencing.

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Student's signature   Date

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Supervisor's signature   Date

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ABSTRACT

Access to a variety of psychological services that cater for the emotional, psychological, personal/social and other needs of learners within the school setting no doubt enhances their academic and general achievement in life. This is why there is a need to focus on barriers that might mitigate against the availability of such services. This study explored one such barrier, in the form of challenges to school counsellors in the provision of psychological services in high schools. Positioned within the interpretivist paradigm, the study adopted a qualitative method, using semi-structured interviews with four counsellors from four schools within the Durban metropolis, to investigate the challenges of the counsellors and their coping mechanisms. The ecosystems theory and transactional model of stress and coping served as frameworks for understanding the phenomenon under study. Findings from the study indicated that top among the challenges which school counsellors experience are time and financial constraints, lack of support from the Department of Education, parental involvement, and challenges emanating from their teaching colleagues. On the other hand, enthusiasm and passion for helping, support from the school head/management, organisations and professionals, improvising and adapting to the situation as it is, are some of the major coping mechanisms counsellors reported that they adopted to manage the situation. Based on these findings, the appointment of individuals whose sole duty would be counselling, establishment of discussion forums for counsellors and strategies for involving parents are some of the recommendations made to reduce, if not completely eradicate, the challenges.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

APA	American Psychology Association
APS	Australian Psychological Association
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BSocSc	Bachelor of Social Science
CSTA	Canadian Schools Trustees' Association
DoE	Department of Education
FDoE	Florida State Department of Education
HDE	Higher Diploma in Education
HPCSA	Health Professions Council of South Africa
HOD	Head of department
IDEA	Individuals with Disability Education Act
NCESS	National Committee on Education Support services
NCSNET	National Commission and Special Needs in Education and Training
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Beginning from the late 19th century, the provision of psychological services in schools started to gain popularity around the globe (Fagan, 1992; Braden, Dimarino-Linnen & Good, 2001; Fagan & Wise, 1994; Yee & Brennan, 2009; Hui, 1991), resulting from a series of observed developmental challenges and needs of school students, ranging from antisocial behaviours, drug-related problems, suicidal tendencies, premarital sex, classroom disruptions, maladjustment to career and educational needs (Chiu, 1993; Loekmono, 1993; Achieng, 2007; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004; Chireshe, 2006).

 This pattern of events was the same in South Africa, where psychological services were first introduced in the 1960s (Euvrard, (1992), although in White schools only, because at that time the country was still plagued by apartheid. This meant the country was characterized by segregation in all spheres, including the educational sector, where some schools were well equipped and had access to good services and facilities, including the services of school counsellors, while others had none of these. However, following abolition of the apartheid system in 1994, the status quo changed and it became a rule to provide all schools with the necessary facilities and services, as seen in the aim of the South African Schools Act of 1996, stated as "to provide for a uniform system for the organisation, governance and funding of schools; to amend and repeal certain laws relating to schools; and to provide for matters connected therewith" (Republic of South Africa, 1996, p. 1). This made the provision of counselling services a right of all schools, irrespective of location or category of students enrolled.

Several years later, however, the provision of psychological services has not been accomplished in all schools across the country. In schools were they exist, they are either not fully functional or faced with many challenges that inhibit their proper functioning. Muribwathoho (2003), for instance, reports that 63% of the learners involved in a study stated that counselling services were not available in their schools, 59% responded that such services were not adequate, 57% that the services did not meet their needs, and 51% that they were not aware if such services existed in their schools.

It is against this backdrop that this research work is set, to unravel the challenges that school counsellors experience and the coping mechanisms they adopt, so that stakeholders in the education sector can be equipped with the knowledge of these and provide adequate support.

1.1   RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

I chose this topic due to my interest in adolescents and all that contributes to their psychological wellbeing. During the period of my practicum as a trainee counsellor and my experience as a teacher and counsellor in a high school, I observed that adolescents are always in need of counselling and guidance, due to the challenges of that stage of life. However, they do not get this from their homes – and neither does the school effectively provide for this. I also observed that most schools either lacked school counsellors or, where they did exist, they were faced with challenges that prevented them from carrying out their duties effectively. These observations motivated me to carry out a study to explore and seek answers to this problem.

Various studies have been carried out on the challenges that counsellors experience. Inman, Ngoubene-Atioky, Ladany and Mack (2009) conducted a qualitative study which sought the view of school counsellors on the challenges they face. Using a discovery-oriented method, they discovered that the challenges emanate mostly from the lack of knowledge of a counsellor's roles and responsibilities on the part of the school personnel (principal and teachers) and parents. In another study carried out by Hadji (2002), challenges experienced by school counsellors were said to emanate from the counsellors themselves, the setting, authorities and educational system as a whole. Pillay (2011), however, opines that there are three characteristics required of counsellors within the South African context: taking responsibility for their own and other people's personal and professional development, ability to work with internal and external stakeholders, and ability to carry out multiple roles and duties in a multicultural setting.

However, to my knowledge none of the studies available has investigated the coping mechanisms adopted by counsellors to mediate the challenges they experience. In view of this, this study will not only investigate the challenges experienced but will also explore the coping mechanisms that are adopted. Findings from this study will equip stakeholders in the educational sector with the knowledge of what is currently the case and what resources and support will be needed to assist school counsellors to better their services. The results will also assist counsellors who face similar challenges in schools to

adopt the coping mechanisms that have worked for others, in alleviating such challenges. Aside from these, the findings from this study will add to the body of knowledge available on the subject.

1.2   FOCUS AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The focus of this research work is to explore the challenges school counsellors experience in the provision of psychological services in South African high schools.

1.3   OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To investigate the challenges that school counsellors experience in the provision of psychological services in South African high schools.
- To identify the coping techniques adopted by counsellors to address the challenges.

1.4   KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to gain an understanding of the challenges school counsellors experience in the course of providing psychological services in high schools, the study is guided by these questions:

- What challenges do school counsellors experience in the provision of psychological services?
- What coping mechanisms do counsellors adopt to address these challenges?

1.5   DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following key concepts relating to the topic are operationalised in the context of the study:

Challenges

In the context of this study, the use of challenge refers to situations or factors that counsellors regard as difficult to deal with. These factors pose a problem to them in the course of carrying out their duties and outweigh the resources at their disposal.

Coping mechanism

In this study coping mechanism refers to factors that enable school counselors to manage, control or carry on with their job, despite the challenges that they face. The factors could be individual, school or community based.

School counsellors

School counsellors are individuals who are trained to cater for the vocational, educational and personal/social development needs of learners, in order to enhance their success and adjustment.

Psychological services

Psychological services include all the different kinds of services provided by the school counsellors, aimed at promoting the mental health of learners and enhancing their learning. In this study, psychological services are regarded as the same as support services.

High school

High school, also referred to as secondary school, is the phase of education that comes after the primary school phase and which may be followed by tertiary education. In the context of this study, high school spans through Grades 8 to 12 and learners therein are usually between the ages of 14 to 18 years.

1.6   RESEARCH DESIGN

1.6.1   Research method

The research is qualitative and comprises a literature study and an empirical study.

The literature study was used to gain an understanding of the international and national trends and challenges that exist in the provision of psychological services. The study used materials from journal articles, unpublished dissertations, books, government publications and relevant internet sources.

In line with the focus of the research, which is to explore and gain an understanding of the challenges school counsellors experience in the provision of psychological services, as well as their coping mechanisms, the empirical study used a qualitative method of data collection and analysis and aligns with the assumptions of the interpretative paradigm.

1.6.2   Data collection

Four schools within the Durban metropolis were purposively selected, based on the fact that they had school counsellors. Four counsellors, one each from the four schools, formed the sample for the study,

and data were collected using individual semi-structured interviews, which were audiotaped, with the permission of the participants.

1.6.3   Data analysis

Data collected from the interviews with each school counsellor were transcribed, coded, categorised and thereafter analysed thematically, based on the research questions.

1.6.4   Ethical considerations

In line with the ethical policy of the university, clearance was obtained from the research office, after which permission to visit schools and conduct research was sought and granted by the provincial Department of Education (DoE). Participants signed the consent form, which described the purpose of the research and other details to them and also let them know that their participation was voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any point. This was done to ensure their informed consent. In order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of participants, no names were mentioned during the process of analysis and presentation of findings.

1.7   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR THE STUDY

The study was undergirded by two theories: the ecosystems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) and the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Both theories paved the way for understanding the relationship between school counsellors and the environment, as well as how such relationships influence their functioning. A detailed description of both theories and how they relate to the study is presented in Chapter Two of this work.

1.8   OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

Chapter One provides an introduction to the study, including the rationale, objectives and key research questions to be answered.

Chapter Two presents a review of related literature, highlighting what has been covered and what is yet to be done. It also touches on the theoretical frameworks that undergird the study.

Chapter Three discusses the methodology which the study adopted and aspects such as its paradigm, sampling procedure, data collection and analysis.

Chapter Four presents the results and analysis of the findings, based on the data generated.

Chapter Five provides a discussion of the findings presented earlier, with links to previous literature and the theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter Six concludes the study and it comprises a summary, outline of the significance of the study and recommendations for further research and practice.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0   INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews relevant literature on the challenges school counsellors experience in the provision of psychological services in high schools, and their coping mechanisms. It begins with a general overview of what school psychological services are and a brief description of their major components. In addition, the historical development of psychological services in schools, both internationally and nationally, is briefly traced, after stating the need for such services in schools. The chapter also examines what is revealed in terms of title and qualifications of school counsellors. The major challenges which school counsellors experience, as gathered from previous studies, and their coping mechanisms are also presented. Finally, the chapter ends with an exposition of the theoretical frameworks that undergird the study.

2.1   DEFINITION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

The American Psychological Association (APA) (1982) describes school psychological services as services offered to clients in educational settings, from pre-school through higher education, for the protection and promotion of mental health and facilitation of learning. They are also described as among the support services that are provided to learners who have learning needs, with support services defined as "all human and other resources that provide support to individual learners and to all aspects of the system, while these services attempt to minimise and remove barriers to learning and development, they also focus on the prevention of these barriers and on the development of a supportive learning environment for all learners" (DoE, 1997, p.3). In addition, the 1999 (34 CFR 300.24 (b) (9)) regulations implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) amendments of 1997 define psychological services as including the following:

> "Administering psychological and educational tests, and other assessment procedures, interpreting assessment results, obtaining, integrating and interpreting information about child behaviour and conditions related to learning; consulting with other staff members in planning school programs to meet the special needs of children as indicated by psychological tests, interview, and behaviour evaluations; planning and managing a program of psychological

services, including psychological counselling for children and parents; and assisting in the development of positive behavioural intervention strategies". (Florida State Department of Education (FDoE), 2000, p.4-5).

The bottom line of these definitions and descriptions of psychological services is that they function as a support structure, put in place to assist learners benefit optimally from schooling, despite the various challenges and needs they may have.

2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

2.2.1 International context

The emergence and development of school psychology differs from country to country, as do events that surround its emergence. In the United States of America psychological services were introduced into schools in the late 19th century, as the society began to value the importance of children other than their addition to the labour force (Fagan, 1992). Besides, following the enactment of the compulsory schooling law schools experienced learners with varied needs, which created the need for special education and thereafter school psychologists (Braden, Dimarino-Linnen & Good, 2001; Fagan & Wise, 1994).

School psychological services are provided by educational psychologists in New Zealand, and since the late 1950s have offered guidance, counselling as well as facilitation services in different categories of learning institutes. Guidance and counselling services were also established in most secondary schools in Hong Kong in the 1950s (Yee & Brennan, 2009); in the 1990s they developed from career guidance into a whole school approach, which requires teachers to assist students to recognise and deal with their challenges, personal development, social adaptation and adjustment in school (Hui, 1991). In a policy document the Hong Kong Education Department (1986) states the reasons for introduction of guidance curricula in schools to include: increase in variety of children's backgrounds; developmental, personal and social needs; lack of interest in school work; classroom disturbance; a rise in adolescent antisocial behaviour; decrease in morals and ethics (Chiu, 1993); and increase in anti-social behaviours like drug abuse, pre-marital sex, violence, teenage pregnancy and suicidal tendencies (Loekmono, 1993).

In Australia the awareness of educational psychology developed gradually after the start of universal comprehensive education and the beginning of special education. By 1920 public schools started to provide services to students with learning needs, and in regular schooling there was also the establishment of special schools for students who were mentally retarded (Ashman & Elkins, 2002). In the Victoria district of Australia the development of psychological services was premised on the belief that there is need for the provision of psychological services in schools as much as in homes and neighbourhoods (Faulkner, 2000). However, use of psychometric techniques for school selection and placement purposes, as well as vocational counselling were given more attention than all the other psychological services (Oakland, Faulkner & Annan, 2005).

School psychology became well entrenched in Canada in the 1980s, when it was first provided in the metropolitan areas. Prior to this, in the early 1920s, Manitoba district employed the services of specialists in education management and testing, while the Department of Public Health was created in the district of Toronto in 1919 to pick out mentally retarded students. This latter function was later expanded to include partnership with school personnel to attend to the needs of failing students (Oakland et al., 2005).

The events surrounding the introduction of psychological services in the Western world are no different to those in most African countries. In Kenya for instance, the Ministry of Education mandated the creation of guidance and counselling department in all schools in the late 1900s and early 2000s, following the increase in cases of indiscipline and chaos experienced in schools (Achieng, 2007). The situation is the same in Nigeria, where counselling services were introduced as one of the educational services available to battle the prevailing challenge of school dropout, low academic achievement, emotional and mental distress and other maladaptive behaviours among school students (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). In Zimbabwe school psychological services were introduced in 1983 to cater for the personal, educational and career needs of learners, following the rapid expansion of secondary school education and realisation of the differences that exist in the interests and intellectual and motivational needs of learners (Chireshe, 2006).

It therefore appears that there are commonalities in the timing and circumstances that brought about the creation of psychological services both internationally and nationally. Events reported in the literature reveal that psychological services were generally introduced around the 19th century across countries,

and reasons for its introduction were generally the observed varied needs and increase in antisocial and delinquent behaviours of learners. This illustrates the fact that the needs of learners, particularly at high school level, are generally the same irrespective of their location.

2.2.2 South African context during apartheid

The history of psychological services in South Africa cannot be depicted well without first mentioning the features that characterised its educational system. Prior to the democratic change that occurred in the country in 1994, the South African education system was fraught with inequalities in the services available to different racial groups. In 1948 the Nationalist Government introduced the 'apartheid' system, and that was the beginning of the inequality, as the people were divided into four major racial groups: 'Whites', who were about 10% of the total population, 'Indians' (3%), 'Coloureds' (10%), and 'Blacks' (75%) (Daniels, 2010; Naicker, 2005). Following this division the education system was also fragmented, culminating in disparity in educational development among the four racial groups.

At the time education was controlled by the Department of National Education (General Affairs), which had under it four different ministries, each running separate affairs for Whites, Indians, Coloureds and Blacks (excluding the 'national' and 'independent homelands'). The White ministry had four independent educational provinces under it (Cape, Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal), each having their own Department of Education, while each of the six national and four independent homelands also had their own Department of Education, meaning the South African educational system was fragmented into 18 different Departments of Education.

The disparity that existed in educational resources and development was also reflected in the provision of school psychological services (referred to as education support services). For instance, Euvrard (1992) notes that guidance and counselling services were introduced in South Africa in the 1960s in White and Coloured schools, following enactment of the South African National Education Policy Act 39 of 1967, and later – in 1981 – in black schools (National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI), 1992). Behr (1980) adds that following this Act psychological services were provided in all four white educational departments and child guidance clinics were created; a clinic served a group of schools and rendered intellectual, emotional and scholastic assessments of pupils, and also provided psychotherapy and remedial teaching, among other services. In the Bantu Education Department (serving African schools) a section with psychological services was created, but it only assessed pupils in Forms I and III

just so as to assist teachers and lecturers to assess their teaching, and it was teachers who had taken Psychology modules during their degree training that were trained to become responsible for guidance; in the Indian Education Department assessment and placing of pupils with special needs were the main focus.

To buttress the ongoing claim of disparity, Dovey and Mason (1984) opine that psychological services were introduced in African schools as a means of social control and towards creating a spirit of submissiveness in black learners. Mathabe and Temane (1993, p.23) concur with this, and also argue that the services "were originally seen as an instrument for the government imposition of religious, cultural and vocational ideologies and value systems". Moreso, Normand (1993) adds that the early 1990s was characterised by one school psychologist for 5 to 10 schools in white provinces, while only two psychologists had to cater for more than 100 black schools.

To further depict the situation, most studies (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001; Naicker, 2005; Ganie, 1996; Naicker, 1994) refer to the report of the survey of education support services across the country carried out by the NEPI committee (1992). This survey revealed, among other things, that there existed a huge gap in the provision of psychological services across the racially divided departments, adding that White schools received more comprehensive services compared to African schools, with schools in rural areas receiving close to no support services at all.

The above descriptions of developments within the educational sector reflect the extent of disparity and inequality that existed in the provision and nature of school psychological services at the time.

2.2.3   South African context post-apartheid

In the wake of the democratic elections of 1994 the tables turned in South Africa and a new dispensation began. With the emergence of a democratically elected government the country moved from being fragmented on the basis of race to being democratic, with great concern for human rights and justice. Bearing history in mind, reform of the educational sector became of great priority to the democratically elected government; as such, a single education system was created in 1995 to cater for uniform development of all races. The framework for this is contained in the White Paper on Education and Training (Daniels, 2010; Fiske & Ladd, 2004). Following this, the eighteen racially divided education departments were replaced with nine provincial departments and a National DoE which provides

uniform education policies and services (Harley & Wedekind, 2004). Thus psychologists from the different racial groups were brought together to form non-racial provincial teams (Engelbrecht, 2009).

However, years after the dawn of the new dispensation the negative effects of apartheid have not been completely wiped out; its traces are still observable in the distribution of psychological services across the country. This is portrayed by the findings of a study carried out in an urban area of Gauteng, where 80% of those considered as having special education needs had access to support services, while only 30% of those in less advantaged area with the same needs had access them (DoE, 1997). Aside from the discrepancy that exists in their provision, psychological services have also not undergone much development. As it is, either they are not available in some schools or, where they are available, such services might be limited, not comprehensive enough, or carried out by counsellors who do not have adequate training. This is evidenced by research carried out in the greater Durban North region, where it was reported that 63% of learners study stated that counselling services (a form of psychological service) were not available in their schools, 59% responded that such services were not adequate, 57% that the services did not meet their needs, and 51% that they were not aware if such services existed in their schools (Muribwathoho, 2003). These reports show that there is more to be done in provision of psychological services in the country.

2.3   POLICIES RELATING TO PROVISION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES IN SOUTH AFRICA

As the awareness of psychological services continued to increase, several committees were set up and policies were made in line with the reports of committees around the issue of provision of psychological services in South Africa. Some of these policies are briefly discussed below.

2.3.1   NEPI report of 1992

The NEPI (1992) report contains the findings of a survey carried out shortly before the end of apartheid, to assess trends in the provision of support services across the country. At the time, support services were still provided on a racial basis. The survey found, among other things, that gross inequalities existed among the racially segregated departments, and hence policy proposals on various aspects of school psychology were made.

2.3.2 White Paper on Education and Training (1995)

This was the first policy statement published after the end of the apartheid system. The paper contains policies and principles for the new education system, based on the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The paper recognised that the provision of support services in South African schools had not been comprehensive enough, particularly in African schools. It stated the need for the Ministry of Education at provincial level to undertake research and consultation on the current status of support service provision, thereafter to formulate policies to improve standards. The provisions of the paper cover such aspects as an integrated education and training system, equal access to education and training for all, equity, as well as a restructuring and transformation of past inequalities (DoE, 1995).

2.3.3 The National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS).

These committees were appointed to look into and make recommendations on the entirety of special needs and support services provision in education and training in South Africa, with the aim of developing an education system that will be more responsive to the diverse needs of learners. At the end of their deliberations the committees presented a report titled *Quality Education for All: Overcoming Barriers to Learning and Development*. This report made some recommendations, part of which is that all learners should have access to learning centres, which should be able to cater for their diverse needs. The report also recommended that provinces should have district offices where professionals, including educational psychologists, social workers and health workers, can train and provide support for the educators in the learning centre, thereby ensuring the provision of support services to learners (DoE, 1997).

2.3.4 Education White Paper 6

The main objective of the White Paper 6, titled *Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System,* is "to extend the policy foundations, frameworks and programmes of existing policy for all bands of education and training so that education and training system would recognise and accommodate the diverse range of needs" (DoE, 2001, p.24).

The above mentioned policies reveal what was obtainable in terms of provision of psychological services in high schools during apartheid, as well as the transformations that have taken place since.

These policies impact on the provision of psychological services by aiming to ensure that they are well catered for in the school setting.

2.4 COMPONENTS OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Psychological services in schools are rendered in different forms, based on what they set out to achieve, but their major components appear to be the same across various contexts. For instance, the APA (1982) states that services that make up the school psychological service are psychological and psycho-educational assessments of learners, intervention programmes, consultation with school and parents, counselling and research programmes. Oakland, Faulkner and Annan (2005) buttress this as they state that school psychological services are provided under six broad areas: (i) individual psycho-educational evaluation of the student's cognitive, emotional, effective, social and linguistic functioning, using different psychological and educational assessment techniques; (ii) direct interventions to promote development in the cognitive, social and emotional domains, through services like teaching, training and counseling; (iii) indirect services to students, through collaboration with parents, teachers, principals and other personnel that relate directly with them; (iv) research and evaluation activities to develop the psychology and educational professions, and also create a knowledge base for their practices; (v) supervision and administrative services to enable psychologists to plan, co-ordinate and develop the psychological and social services they render; and (vi) prevention services to prevent problems or reduce their effects when they occur.

The Australian Psychological Society (APS, 2013) concurs with the above, proposing four areas of focus in the delivery of school psychological services: (i) direct services, which includes counselling and assessment of the cognitive, academic, social-emotional and behavioural functioning, through psychometric tests; (ii) indirect services by collaborating with parents, teachers and significant others to cater for the needs of students; (iii) whole school service such as prevention, intervention and post-intervention services for the entire school population; and (iv) systems service, which entails collaboration with teachers, parents, agencies and government departments or educational sectors to provide psychological services to students. The American School Counselor Association (2004) also subscribes to this, as it describes the areas of delivery of psychological services in schools as direct services (structured services to assist learners to develop certain competencies and individual and group

counselling) and indirect services (referral services, consultation and collaboration with parents, teachers and other stakeholders).

From the foregoing it can be said that the major services that make up the school psychological services provision are counselling, assessment, consultation and collaboration, referral, and intervention programmes. Brief descriptions of these services are given below.

2.4.1 Counselling services

Definitions of what counselling really is abound. Velleman and Aris (2010, pp.19-20) give a concise understanding of the term: "counseling is primarily about enabling individuals, as far as possible, to overcome obstacles, to take control of their own lives, and to learn how to take maximum responsibility and decision-making power for themselves and their futures." Gibson and Mitchell (2003) draw the line between counselling and other services like advising, directing, listening sympathetically, and appearing to be interested in the challenges an individual is faced with, by describing it as a skill and process that involves a one-to-one relationship between a trained counsellor and a client, aimed at helping the client to combat adjustment, developmental and decision-making challenges. These definitions imply that counselling is a helping profession, where the role of the counsellor in the counsellor-client relationship is to assist the individual to develop an understanding of his strengths and weakness and explore his unique opportunities and possibilities, so as to make a change and/or decision, which he can take responsibility for.

Counselling services rendered in secondary schools may differ slightly in the manners in which they are executed, but are usually geared towards the same goals. According to Sciarra (2004) counselling should come in these forms: individual counselling; small-group counselling (involving a small number of students who have the same challenges and/or goals, in a group setting); large group guidance (aimed at developing students' career, academic and personal/social goals, usually a planned programme that involves all students and is coordinated by counsellors and teachers); and consultation services (with learners, teachers or parents, the goal of which is to assist the individual to function effectively in their areas of challenge). In the same vein, Gibson and Mitchell (2003, pp.61-62) opine that counselling revolves around the following and more: guidance and information to students on issues like college placement and scholarships, individual counselling, career guidance and assistance, administration and

interpretation of standardised tests, group guidance and counselling, student development activities, and consultation with teachers, parents and students.

2.4.2   Psychological assessment

According to Lubbe (2004), psychological assessment is the process of gathering information and understanding, which will aid the child's development and functional abilities in the family and community. More specifically, Ollendick and Hersen (1993, p.6) define psychological assessment as "an exploratory, hypothesis-testing process, in which a range of developmentally sensitive and empirically validated procedures is used, to understand a given child, group, or social ecology and to formulate and evaluate specific intervention procedures". Often assessment is carried out to evaluate the cognitive functioning, language functioning, visual and auditory perception, motor skills, and social, cognitive or emotional skills of a learner, and at other times to determine how they contribute to his learning needs (APS, 2013).

Psychological assessment is not a once-off procedure; rather, it is an on-going process that uses different techniques in order to achieve a rich understanding of the individual and his contexts. To buttress this, Cates (1999) claims that psychological assessment encompasses the several psychological tests, instruments or techniques alongside behavioural observations, administered to obtain numerous data. In addition, Groth-Marnat (2003) opines that a psychologist might include techniques like interviewing, administering and interpreting traditional psychological tests, naturalistic observations, neuropsychological assessment, and behavioural assessment in his job of assessment.

Besides encompassing different techniques, psychological assessment also serves various functions. Huysamen (1996) explained that psychological assessments can be used for selection (to determine if an individual has the minimum skills required to be regarded as being successful), placement (to determine if a student should take a particular subject, and at what stage) and classification (to determine the place of a student in a category) purposes, as well as for the evaluation of academic achievement. According to him, assessments can also be used to determine a child's readiness for school, for the provision of vocational guidance and remedial exercises, and as a tool for diagnosing mental retardation by clinical psychologists. When psychological and educational research includes variables that have to be measured, assessment is also necessary, he adds. In the same vein, Lubbe (2004, p.320) views the

purpose of assessment to be "focused on obtaining an holistic view of the child in terms of competencies, assets, strengths and areas of difficulty", adding that it "determines the progress of significant developmental achievements, aids in placement and promotion decisions and diagnoses learning, teaching and emotional or behaviour difficulties experienced by the child". In describing the function of assessment, Domino and Domino (2006) report that many authors have summarised it into being used for classification, self-understanding, programme evaluation and scientific inquiry purposes.

2.4.3 Consultation and collaboration services

Consultation and collaboration services are provided by the school counsellor, with teachers, parents and relevant school personnel, in order to ensure efficient service delivery. According to the APS (2013) there is a need to consult with the teachers because they spend more time with the students and would be able to provide information on their mental health and general psychological wellbeing; when planning an intervention or prevention programme there is a need to consult and collaborate with them to determine the best approach and strategy. Consultation with the parent might be necessary when there is a need to make them aware of their child's needs (subject to the consent of the student, depending on age and maturity) and also involve them in implementation of the psychological intervention deemed necessary. Collaboration with them can take the form of information programmes to educate them on adolescent characteristics and equip them with the best parenting skills. Consultation with other school staff and relevant school personnel entails advice on better classroom practices, planning of skills training programmes for students and advice on curriculum, all geared towards improving the overall impact of schooling on students. School counsellors can also consult with colleagues and senior members of the profession (without defeating the ethics of confidentiality) to develop their skills and knowledge, and when dealing with complex issues, for competent service delivery. These views are shared by the FDoE (2000).

The concepts of collaboration and consultation suggest that to achieve effective school psychological services provision the counsellor must be ready to build a team with other school personnel and the school community as a whole.

2.4.4 Referral services

School counsellors perform referral services when they re-direct clients needing psychological services which are beyond their scope of practice to appropriate qualified professionals. According to the Health

Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) (2008), backed by the APS (2013), this forms part of the professional practice required of a professional school counsellor. Where the need arises, counsellors can refer students to social workers, child care officers, psychologists, public health nurses and doctors (Canadian School Trustees' Association (CSTA), 2012), mental health agencies, employment and training programmes, vocational rehabilitation, juvenile services, social services, and special school programmes (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

2.4.5 Psychological intervention programme

According to Reber (1995, p.386) psychological intervention refers to "any procedure or technique that is designed to interrupt, interfere with and or modify an ongoing process, or maladaptive behaviour patterns"; it includes the strategies and action plan mapped out by school counsellors to help students, parents and teachers to deal with any academic, behavioural, psychological, emotional and social problems that have been identified, following analysis of the psychological assessment process (APS, 2013). Intervention programmes are designed to assist students to perform according to their desired expectations (Upah, 2008); when performance is assessed as being impeded by the absence of skills and attitudes necessary for proper functioning, social-emotional and behavioural interventions are usually mapped out to ensure optimum performance (Forman, & Burke, 2008). Furthermore, intervention strategies could take the form of counselling, therapy, social skills training, behaviour management, self-monitoring programmes, and classroom management training, among others (FDOE, 2000). This means that it is not always designed to involve learners only, but teachers and parents could be included when their involvement is needed to assist learners in reaching their optimum performance.

2.5   NEED FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES IN SCHOOLS

As the world is advancing with new technologies and growing opportunities, so are the young people and their needs, which calls for guidance and assistance to enable them to sail through. The adolescent stage (spanning through ages 12 to 18), which is the period when most learners pass through high school, requires a lot of nurturing and guidance, as it is a period of transformation into adulthood where the child outgrows childhood and is characterised by changes in physical, mental, social and psychological development (Omoegun, 2007). These changes might be the reason that Erickson (1963) qualifies adolescence as a sensitive period that puts a lot of pressure on the individual's positive adjustment, as it brings with it different forms of social demands and challenges that the adolescent must

deal with in order to avoid any potential crises. Portraying the nature of adolescence in simple terms, Gibson and Mitchell (2003) posit that adolescents are "as varied, unpredictable, and uncontrollable as their peer group permits" (p.77).

These descriptions of adolescents and their tendencies are confirmed by reports on violent acts carried out by learners in high schools. A recent study on national school violence in South Africa (Burton & Leoschut, 2012), for instance, reveals that secondary schools are characterised by much violence, particularly from learners on learners and learners on educators. The study revealed that the common crimes in secondary schools are bullying, victimisation, sexual assault, threat of violence and robbery, and also that while the rate of verbal assaults and physical violence have decreased, compared to the results of a similar study in 2008, sex violence has increased from 2.2% in 2008 to 3.3% in 2012. This finding is corroborated by statistics available from the South African Department of Correctional Services (2012) on the number of children below 18 and between 14-25 years who have been sentenced to imprisonment or are in detention: as at the last day of 2011/2012, a total of 846 children under 18 years were in detention, with 23 039 youths aged between 14-25 years yet to be sentenced, and 31 678 already sentenced. There is no doubt that among these two groups (children below 18 and youths between 14-25 years) there are adolescents who hitherto have been learners in secondary schools.

Aside from violence among high school learners, mental health problems have also been identified as a common occurrence. Sawyer et.al (2000), in a national research study carried out in Australia, found that an estimated 14% of school-aged children had mental problems; these were found to impact negatively on their emotional wellbeing, social functioning and academic achievement (APS, 2013). In addition, teachers in America's classrooms have had to contend with learners battling with poverty, single parents, absent parents, and lack of social skills (Dawson, Lehr, Reschly, Reynolds & Telzrow, 1997).

Given these descriptions and tendencies of adolescence, as well as their peculiar challenges, there is no doubt a need for them to have access to psychological services in schools, which should cater for their educational, personal/social and vocational needs. Also, since they spend a large number of hours in school (Crispi, 2009), relating with their peers and significant others, it becomes imperative that the

school cater to their growing needs and assist them to lead a beneficial life through provision of various psychological services.

Confirming the role that psychological services play in attending to the needs of learners, Ondima, Mokogi, Ombaba and Osoro (2013) report that head teachers and students alike agreed that they played a pivotal role in the personal, career and academic achievements of students; respondents claimed that it gives them a practical linkage of their school work to the realities of life, improves their level of self-esteem, assists them in making informed decisions and adapting to situations, as well as coping with the challenges of life. Borders and Drury (1992), after 30 years of empirical research, posit that school psychological services contribute to students' academic and personal achievements, boost their self-esteem and self-concept, and increase positive classroom behavior, among others.

2.6   WHO PROVIDES PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES?

Differences have been observed between countries when it comes to providing psychological services in schools. These range from the title used to describe the job, to the qualification of the practitioner. When it comes to job title, "Educational psychologist", "school psychologist", "guidance officer" (APS, 2013; Yee & Brennan, 2009), "school counselor" (Anagbogu, Nwokolo, Anyamene, Anyachebelu and Umezulike, 2013); Chireshe, 2006; Pillay, 2011) "guidance and counselling teachers" (Nyamwange, Nyakan & Ondima, 2012) and "teacher counsellors" (Mushaandja, Haihambo, Vergnani, & Frank, 2013) are some of the titles used; however, 'school counsellor' will be adopted throughout this study.

Furthermore, in some countries the minimum requirement to become a school psychologist is a four-year degree in Psychology, followed by two years' supervised probationary practice or a master's or doctoral degree, which entails coursework, research and placements (APS, 2013). Elsewhere the counsellor possesses a postgraduate specialisation in vocational psychology, in addition to the psychology degree, while some countries make do with subject teachers who only take short courses in guidance (McCarthy, 2004; Mushaandja et al., 2013).

In South Africa a guidance teacher is appointed and is usually expected to have a three-year university degree with a major in Psychology. Among other things, the guidance teacher is saddled with the responsibility of providing career and personal guidance to learners, individual counselling, and handling administrative work related to the office (Mashile, 2000). Cases that are beyond the

professional jurisdiction of the guidance teachers are referred to psychologists, who are required by the HPCSA (the body responsible for regulation of the registration, training and education, among other things, of psychologists and other health professionals) to have obtained a master's degree in educational, counselling or clinical psychology, completed a 12-month full-time internship, and be registered with the Council before they can practice as registered psychologists.

2.7 CHALLENGES SCHOOL COUNSELLORS EXPERIENCE

Despite the importance placed on the provision of psychological services in schools, school counsellors experience some challenges in the execution of their duties, which has been the basis of a number of research projects around the globe. Most recurring among the list of challenges identified in previous literature are lack of time, inadequate training, inadequate funds, increase in ratio of students to counsellor, inadequate resources, poor parental involvement, lack of support from school personnel and stakeholders, negative attitude of students, and increasing reliance on technology. These will be discussed in the following subsections.

2.7.1 Lack of time

Perhaps the greatest challenge that counsellors have had to contend with is the lack of time to carry out their core duties. There is a need for them to have ample time to provide the different psychological services, as well as carry out other administrative tasks attached to the office, just as Gysbers and Henderson (2001) recommend, while proposing a comprehensive guidance and counselling programme where the counsellor's time should be spent on providing the four major components of the programme (guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive services and system reports). Although the duo recognise the fact that some of the counsellor's time needs to be spent on "running of the school" (p.9), duties that would be shared in equal proportion among all the school staff, they equally assert that nothing new should be added to their tasks, for "the assumption is that school counselors spend 100 percent of their time on task, implementing the guidance and counseling program" (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001, p.10).

On the contrary, however, counsellors often have to carry a teaching load and administrative duties, meaning that they have little or no time for their roles as school counsellors. In some countries the norm is that qualified school counsellors are not employed, so teachers who took psychology modules in their undergraduate programme are assigned the role of counselling (Pillay, 2011), or those who have a lesser

workload or possess certain skills that are considered necessary for the role (Mushaandja et al., 2103) are usually assigned the responsibility of providing psychological services to students in addition to their teaching load. In some cases psychological services are rendered by a guidance and counselling committee composed of teachers who have an interest in taking up the role (Hadji, 2002). These situations result in counsellors not having specific time set aside for the necessary services, since many still have teaching workloads and only attend to the counselling role as they do to other 'extracurricular activities' (Nyamwange et al., 2012; Mushaandja et al., 2013). Some also have to include administrative assignments and sports co-ordination, among others, to their roles as counsellors (Pillay, 2011). In trying to explain the extent of the challenge they face, one of the school counsellors interviewed by Mushaandja et al. (2013, p.81) lamented thus:

> "I have 35 periods per week like other teachers. And children cannot stay after school. They will get into trouble with parents for coming home late. They will also miss the group they walk with [it is not safe to walk alone], and some children really come from very far. Sometimes when children have difficulties and find themselves in difficult situations, I do counseling during classes, which means we miss classes".

2.7.2 Inadequate training

For school counsellors to improve their skills and knowledge of the profession and ultimately function effectively, they need not only to be well trained, but also to undergo continuous development in the field (Sears, 2002). Aside from and in addition to their undergraduate training, they need to update their skills and knowledge of the profession by belonging to professional bodies and attending conferences, undergoing postgraduate study, as well as undertaking research in their field (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). Where this is lacking it creates a challenge, as counsellors might not have the professional know-how to resolve students' issues. Unfortunately the reality is that most school counsellors were trained as teachers, and as such lack the requisite knowledge for providing guidance and counselling services (Chireshe, 2006; Mushaandja et al., 2013). Consequently these counsellors become challenged at executing psychological services and complain of inadequate training, knowledge, and skills in areas of counselling, therapy and assessment, which means they have to rely on others for assistance (Van Schalkwk & Sit, 2013; Alavi, Boujarian & Ninggatol, 2012).They also lament inadequate training on how to resolve sensitive issues like rape and child abuse. Mushaandja et al. (2013, p.82), for instance,

captured the words of a counsellor thus: "I reported a rape case to the police. The accused sued me. And there I was, on my own! We are not protected in such cases?"

Meanwhile, concurring with the challenge of inadequate training, the CSTA (2012) opines that the source of this challenge might not be unconnected from the fact that there are no specific standards or certification expected of individuals before they are assigned the role of counselors – besides, there are limited avenues for initial counsellor training and continuing development, because few universities offer such programmes. Mushaandja et al. (2013) concur with this, claiming that teachers appointed as school counsellors did not receive necessary training on counselling but were only "introduced or "sensitized" (p.79) to counselling-related modules. Although there are in-service trainings for the teachers, once appointed counsellors, they argue that these were more of theoretical than practical, and failed to build the necessary skills in them.

2.7.3 Inadequate funding

Another challenge that counsellors have had to battle with is lack of funds, contrary to the opinion of Gysbers and Henderson (2001) that there is a need for adequate finances for the success of any guidance and counselling programme. They add that the programme should have a budget to cater for necessary materials and resources, more so, and this budget should be drawn up solely for the counselling department so that its needs could be specified (Gysbers, Hughey, Starr, & Lapan, 1992). In addition, the APA (2013) in their framework for effective delivery of psychological services in schools propose that school counsellors be allocated a budgetary allowance per annum to cater for needs such as in-service professional development, professional books, journal subscriptions and psychological tests, among others. However, these propositions have been observed to be lacking in schools, as school counsellors lament the lack of funds for the running of programmes, which in turn negatively impacts on provision of psychological services (Nyamwange et al., 2013; Anagbogu et al., 2013).

2.7.4 Increase in the ratio of students to counsellors

The continuing increase in the number of students who require psychological services in schools compared to the meagre number of counsellors available is another issue that is a challenge to school counsellors (Sevinc, Tasci, & Demir, 2012; Hadji, 2002; Anagbogu et al., 2013).

It is argued that this discrepancy might exist because the awareness of the need for undergraduate counsellor trainee programmes came late, making the output unable to cater for the need (Sevin, et al., 2012). For instance, Ozyurek (2010, p.164) report that as at 2005/6, the total number of fourth-year undergraduate counsellor trainees was 985 from all 19 universities across Turkey, which is nowhere near enough compared to the number of students that require their services. This gap is consolidated by the American Counselling Association (1999), which reports a counselor: student ratio of 1:313 in some cases and 1:1182 in others. With this challenge in existence it becomes very difficult for counsellors to carry out their duties effectively.

2.7.5   Inadequate resources

Access to adequate and necessary facilities are core to the effective implementation of any school psychology programme (Borders & Drury, 1992; Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Gysbers et al., 1992). There is, for instance, a need for a separate office where counselling services (individual and small groups) can be rendered (Borders & Drury, 1992; Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Gysbers et al., 1992). The office can also serve as a consultation room for teachers and parents to discuss the needs of learners. A reception area where students' documents and other materials can be kept is also necessary, and can be attached to the office (Borders & Drury, 1992). Aside from these, resource materials are also important: facilities, print, audio and video materials need to be made available to assist the counsellor in passing information on to students, teachers and parents; the materials could include such items as a virtual tour of a college for career counseling, and psychological tests, among others (Borders & Drury, 1992; Gysbers et al., 1992).

However, as important as these facilities are, many school counsellors do not have access to them, and this has posed a great challenge to their effective functioning. Facilities such as office space and equipment, psychological test manuals and reference books, among others, were discovered to be lacking among school counsellors (Nyamwange et al., 2012). Similarly, Alavi et al. (2012) report that while counsellors in their study were not challenged in terms of space and location of the counselling room, they faced unavailability of other facilities and instruments necessary for smooth provision of services.

2.7.6 Lack of support from school personnel and stakeholders

While school counsellors are the major players in any school psychological services programme, they require the support, cooperation and involvement of other members of school personnel, including teachers, administrative staff, the DoE and School Board, among others, to function effectively (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; CSTA, 2012). This could be in the form of identifying the specific roles of the counsellor, partnering with the counsellor to draw up the goals of the programme, evaluating the outcomes of the programme, and providing necessary facilities for its success (CSTA, 2012). The involvement of teachers in particular is of the utmost importance, since they make the bulk of referrals to the counsellor. Thus the absence of these could pose a challenge to the counsellor (Low, 2009).

Research has, however, revealed that among the challenges school counsellors face is inadequate support from the school head, particularly in terms of arrears in funds provision, funding their participation at professional programmes, reduction of teaching workload to give room for counseling and lack of monitoring of counselling activities (Nyamwange et al., 2012; Hadji, 2002). Pillay (2002) corroborates this as she reports that school counsellors are challenged by lack of adequate support from the school management, school and district-based support teams, adding that there is little collaboration with private agencies because learners from low socio-economic backgrounds couldn't afford their bills.

In view of the ongoing, Hadji (2002) opines that school counsellors might be battling with inadequate support from these quarters because there are no guiding policies or regulations from the Ministry of Education compelling or stating the nature of support they should receive. In addition, this situation might be a result of the negative perceptions head teachers have, as most of them feel that school psychological services have no relationship with students' academic performance or discipline (Nyamwange et al., 2012).

2.7.7 Poor parental involvement

Another challenge school counsellors face is poor involvement of parents. A study by Alavi et al. (2012) found that part of the challenges school counsellors had to battle with was lack of communication with parents, because they seem to be unconcerned with their children's schooling and rarely visited the school except when problems arose. Pillay (2012) also mentions the poor involvement of parents, stating that counsellors comment that the situation appeared as if parents wanted the school to take up the duty of educating and bringing up their children. She reports a counsellor saying "The minority of parents

support us. Often parents of children with learning barriers are invited to the school and then they just don't show up" (p. 258). Gysbers and Henderson (2001) argue that aside from collaborating with other stakeholders within the school, the school counsellor also needs the involvement of parents for the success of school psychological services, as there might be a need to discuss their children with them before any intervention plan can be mapped out. In the same vein, the CSTA (2012) mentions that parental involvement is core to the success of the counselling programme, and suggests that to achieve it parents could be used as guest speakers at events such as career day or serve as models when describing certain jobs to the learners.

2.7.8 Negative student attitude

The attitude of students toward counselling was discovered to be another challenge that counsellors have to contend with. Alavi et al. (2012) submit that students are not willing to discuss their challenges with the school counsellors due to the negative attitude they have towards the profession. Hadji (2002) adds that students did not patronise the counselling services because they were afraid to do so, while Mushaandja et al. (2013) state that students did not have a good attitude towards counselling services because they had no trust in the counsellors and thus found it difficult to disclose their problems to them.

In the view of Mushaandja et al. (2013) this negative attitude of students might not be unrelated to their culture and the perception which their parents have towards counselling, as many of them warn their children not to discuss their private life with strangers. According to the counsellors interviewed, parents label discussing private matters with the counsellor as "hanging dirty linen" or "embarrassing the family" (Mushaandja et al., 2013, p.80).

2.7.9 Technological advancements

Just as the world is becoming a global village and there appears to be an increase in the use of technology in almost all spheres of life, so have school psychological services had to utilise more technology in the provision of services. In a survey conducted with members of the Association for Assessment in Psychology to determine the use of technology in counselling assessments (Lundberg & Cobitz, 1999), it was discovered that most participants use the internet to search for assessment data, followed by other uses of technology such as using the computer to score assessment results and build a database of results, use of video and audiotapes during assessment, and of email and fax mail to transfer

data, among others. Surprisingly, despite the ability of the computer and internet to perform several counseling-related functions, many school counsellors are still reported to have little technological know-how, most only using the computer a little for counseling-related tasks and mostly for clerical purposes such as record keeping and word processing (Owen & Weikel, 1999). Other studies have revealed that counsellors are challenged by the growing reliance on technology (Paisley & McMahon, 2001), and lack of computer and internet facilities (Anagbogu et al., 2013), with Pillay (2002) claims that contrary to this, many school counsellors are not well enough trained to use computer and internet facilities for this purpose. However, it is also argued that perhaps the cost of procuring the technological facilities might be the reason that many schools do not invest in them (Pillay, 2002), considering the fact that they become obsolete in no time and might need to be regularly updated (Paisley & McMahon, 2001).

Besides the financial implications involved, ethical considerations regarding the use of technology for counselling services is another hindrance that has been observed. For instance, Paisley and McMahon (2001) are of the opinion that too much reliance on technology can reduce the much-needed human interaction between counsellors and their clients. Sampson and Bloom (2001) also posit that the electronic transfer of confidential information calls into question the degree of confidentiality of such information; the assumption that there will be little supervision of students' career exploration and other self-assessments done electronically is another ethical issue raised (Sampson, Kolodinsky & Greeno, 1997).

With these challenges highlighted and discussed, it is important to state at this point that most of the studies that discovered these challenges were carried out outside of the shores of South Africa, with none within the Durban municipality in KwaZulu-Natal province, from where the researcher intends to draw participants for the current study. The study is therefore significant because it might be the case that the challenges that counsellors in this area experience are different from the ones highlighted above.

2.8   COPING MECHANISMS ADOPTED BY SCHOOL COUNSELLORS

Having explored the challenges school counsellors experience in the course of their job, this section attempts a review of their coping mechanisms and what keeps them going. However, it was observed that most research relating to the phenomenon under study did not cover the coping mechanisms adopted by school counsellors, rather, what exists are recommendations, based on the observed

challenges. This is with exemption of the research carried out by Pillay (2002), who reports the ability to be creative and apply initiative in the face of challenges as a coping mechanism, indicated in the words of a counsellor as follows (p.359): "The challenges do not frustrate me. I take them as opportunities for growth. I think I have the creativity and initiative to find solutions to these obstacles", while another adds that "If you do not have sufficient resources, be innovative. Use whatever you can from the local community."

The dearth of materials on the coping mechanisms adopted by school counsellors adds to the significance of the present study, as it depicts that a gap exists with regard to the knowledge currently obtainable on the phenomenon under study, which this study intends to address.

2.9   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of a research study implies the platform or basis for its research questions, as well as the methodology designed to unravel them (Ocholla & Le Roux, 2011). Simply put, Merriam (2001, p. 45) describes it as "the structure, the scaffolding, the frame of your study". Ecosystems theory and the transactional model of stress and coping form the platform upon which the current study is built. The two are discussed below, to describe how they relate to this study.

2.9.1   Ecosystems theory

Ecosystems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1994) studies the mutual relations between an individual and the structures/systems in their environment. The theory holds that an individual's development is influenced by interactions with these structures, and that his ability to adapt determines whether the outcome of such a relationship is successful or strained. He identified four system levels that the individual relates in as the microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem and exosystem (Figure 1). These are further discussed below.

2.9.1.1 Microsystem level

The microsystem, as defined by Bronfenbrenner (1992: 227), "is a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical and material features, and containing other persons with distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality, and systems of belief". It refers to the immediate environment wherein the

individual develops, it is the closest to the individual, and such systems could be the school, home and place of work, with the actors in it being parents, colleagues and peers. Relating this to the present study, the school counsellor functions within the school system alongside other actors therein such as teachers, students, administrative staff and others, each having an influence on his experience.

2.9.1.2 Mesosystem level

This level implies the interactions between the microsystems that the individual relates with, but at this level the microsystems do not act individually but influence one another and indirectly impact on the individual. According to Bronfenbrenner (1992: 227) the mesosystem "comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person". This can be illustrated as the relationships between the school and home, or the student and other teachers. At this level it can be implied that the relationship between the student and other teachers, or the parent and the school, each of which exists in the microsystems of counsellors, could also impact on their experiences. For instance, if there is strain in the relationship between the school and parents, it could impact negatively on the functioning of the school counsellor.

2.9.1.3 Exosystem level

Relations between the social settings where the individual is not an active member (such as neighbours, local health care, work associates, family friends, etc.), and his immediate environment, but which affect the individual, are referred to as the exosystem. It "encompasses the linkage and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not ordinarily contain the developing person, but in which events occur that influence the processes within the immediate settings that does contain that person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1992: 227). This can be described as when a parent experiences burn-out at work and the stress causes him to transfer aggression to the child or not relate to him with love, thus impacting on the emotions of the child. In relation to the present study, the exosystem of counsellors could be explained as the relationship between the school and the local community, such as the DoE. Although they do not function directly with the DoE, their experience could also be built around such a relationship.

2.9.1.4 Macrosystem level

According to Bronfenbrenner (1992: 228) the macrosystem "consists of an overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and exosystems characteristics of a given culture, subculture or other broader social

context, with particular reference to the developmentally-instigative belief systems, resources, operations, and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in each of these systems. The macrosystem may be thought of as a social blueprint for a particular culture, subculture or other broader social context". This is the formed by cultural values of the larger society where the individual lives, including national and international policies that impact on him. In relation to this study, the macrosystem of counsellors includes the cultural beliefs of the community served by the school and those of the larger society, educational policies drawn up by education ministries, as well as those of professional bodies related to the school psychology field, etc.
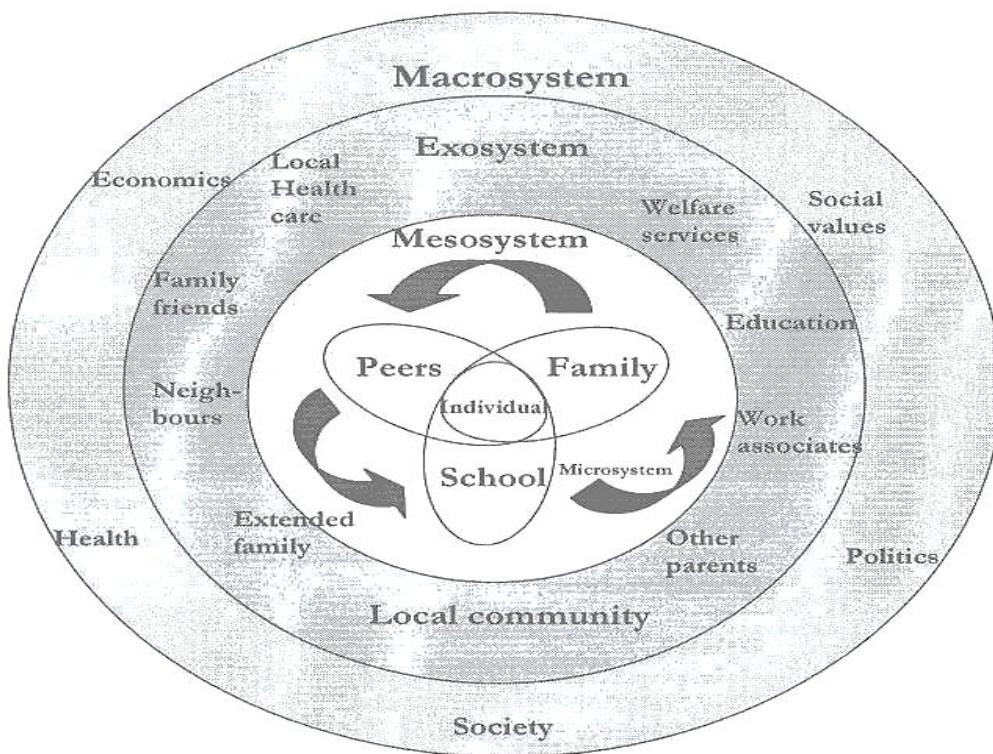
Figure 1: Depiction of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:11).

Based on the foregoing, the ecosystems theory is relevant to this study because school counsellors do not exist in isolation, but relate with people at different levels, all of which has an impact on their experience. This theory therefore paves way for understanding the challenges which school counsellors experience in the course of their job.

2.9.2   Transactional model of stress and coping

The transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) holds that stress results when a person accesses the interactions between him and the environment and perceives a gap between the demands of the situation and the resources available or ability to cope with them. Here stress is defined as "a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.19). According to them, when the interaction between the individual and the environment is appraised as taxing, the individual conducts a primary appraisal of the stressor to determine if it is irrelevant, benign-positive or stressful. The individual's encounter with the environment is appraised as irrelevant if it has no impact on his wellbeing and nothing is lost or gained; if the encounter will yield a positive impact and improve the individual's wellbeing, then it is appraised as benign-positive and feelings of joy and peace follow. However, if the encounter will result in harm/loss, threat or challenge, then it is considered as stressful.

The theory further holds that if the encounter is discovered to be a threat or challenge, a secondary appraisal is then carried out to examine what can be done to manage it or the resources available to cope with it, answering the question 'What can I do?' (Naughton, 1997). It is at this stage that coping evolves, which Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define as the cognitive and behavioural efforts an individual makes to alleviate problems that arise when the demands outweigh the resources. The model categorises the coping resources that could be available as utilitarian (e.g. money), health/morale, social networks (interpersonal relationships), general/specific beliefs (such as self-esteem) and problem-solving skills (e.g. intellectual skills, analytical ability).

Going by these assumptions, this theory is applicable to the present study as the provision of psychological services can be viewed as a transaction between school counsellors and their clients (learners); when the transaction is appraised by them as a challenge (because the resources available exceed the demands), they begin to seek ways to alleviate or manage the challenges and cope with them. Accordingly, the coping mechanism adopted is either a function of the resources available to them or a result of improved personal abilities.

In essence, the two theories that have been highlighted are relevant to this study as they both pave the way for the understanding of the relationship that exists between the counsellor and the environment he/she works in, the challenges that evolve from these interactions and the coping mechanisms adopted.

2.10   SUMMARY

The focus of this study is to investigate the challenges which school counsellors experience in the course of their job. This chapter reviewed findings from different studies from the literature in this regard. The chapter presented an historical background to the international and national development of psychological service provision in schools; it described each of the components of school psychological services, as extracted from the literature, such as counselling, assessment, consultation, intervention and referral services. The chapter also discussed the need for psychological services in schools and the challenges that different studies have reported as confronting school counsellors, some of these being lack of time, inadequate resources, poor parental involvement, and lack of support from school personnel. In the process of presenting the coping mechanisms which authors have found, it was observed that not much work has been done in its regard. Finally, the chapter expounded on the theories that underpin the present study – the ecosystems theory and the transactional model of stress and coping – and how they contribute to it.

The following chapter presents the research design and methodology of this study on the challenges of school counsellors as well as their coping mechanisms, as well as how the data were collected and analysed.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0   INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a detailed description of the design of the study as well as the process of data collection and method of analysis used to explore the challenges of school counsellors and their coping mechanisms.

3.1   PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explore the challenges and coping mechanisms of school counsellors in the provision of psychological services in high schools. To achieve this, two questions were critical to the study:

- What are the challenges which school counsellors experience in the provision of psychological services?
- What coping mechanisms do school counsellors adopt to combat these challenges?

3.2   RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design, as described by McMillan and Schumacher (2000), is a statement of the general plan of a research project, which includes the set up, who the subjects will be and how data will be collected, with the aim of gathering valid evidence that will be used to answer the set research questions. Hence details of the research paradigm and approach used will be provided.

3.2.1   Research paradigm

A research paradigm is defined as the "basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.105). In essence research paradigms are important aspects of any study because they impact on the nature of research questions and the manner in which the questions will be answered; hence the paradigm a researcher posits will ultimately reflect in the design and methodology of the study. In line with its focus of gaining an understanding of the challenges school counsellors experience, this study is positioned in the interpretivist paradigm, wherein the aim of the research work is built on "analyzing meanings people confer on their own actions" (Lichtman, 2012, p.20). In other

words, it aims primarily at gaining an understanding of the meanings and interpretations assigned by individuals to their own experiences (Babbie, 2004). The ontological assumption of this paradigm is that reality is socially constructed and a result of human thought which is expressed through language (Opie, 2004). The assumptions on epistemology are that the relationship between the investigator and the reality being investigated is a transactional one, where knowledge is created through interactions between or among the researcher and the respondents (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). These ontological and epistemological assumptions guide the decision to approach the study qualitatively, as well as the use of interviews as the data collection instrument. These are further discussed in the succeeding subsections.

3.2.2 Qualitative research approach

This study was conducted qualitatively. Since the aim was to gain an understanding of the experiences of school counsellors in their natural settings, this approach was considered suitable, considering Babbie and Mouton's opinion (2005) that qualitative research is more concerned about understanding and describing rather than explaining human behaviour. In addition, qualitative research studies a phenomenon through the meaning which individuals and groups ascribe to it, using observations and face-to-face techniques of data collection, in the natural settings in which they occur with the aim of producing an in-depth description and understanding (Creswell, 2007). The qualitative approach gave room for an understanding of the challenges which the counsellors experience, through my interactions with them, listening to the description of their challenges in their own words and in the natural setting in which they occur; the approach is viable for the development of policy and illumination of social issues, among other things (McMillan, & Schumaker, 2000), which are part of the ultimate goal of this research work.

3.2.3 Phenomenological study

Phenomenology positions itself within the qualitative realm of study and, according to Kvale (1996), holds the assumption that reality is indeed what people think it to be; as such it places importance on the experiences of individuals from their own point of view, and thus describes and understands the world as they see it. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) also opine that it enables the researcher to understand the interactions and meanings which people construct in given situations. However, in doing this the researcher has to be mindful of his/her own opinion and thoughts and attend to the accounts with an open mind, so that honesty is maintained and bias avoided in the interpretation of the participants'

accounts, which means that he/she needs to adopt reflexivity. The process of doing this in the phenomenological approach is what Starks and Brown-Trinidad (2007) refer to as 'bracketing'. I regard this approach as suitable for the present study because it allows for understanding the challenges in the provision of psychological services in high schools based on the perceptions of the school counsellors who have first-hand experience of them.

The qualitative and phenomenological approach both align with the interpretative paradigm which the study is positioned in, as they match with the ontological and epistemological assumptions outlined earlier.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology will provide information on the research site, the sample and sampling procedures as well as data collection and analysis.

3.3.1 Research sites

The study was conducted in four schools within the Durban municipality. Three of the four schools are ex-Model C schools (which were predominantly for White or Indian learners before the abolition of apartheid), while one is a private school. All four schools are English-medium schools located in urban areas, and the learners are from diverse backgrounds. The schools were selected because they had functioning school counsellors. Specific details of each school are given below.

School A

This school is an all-girls secondary school located in an urban area of Durban municipality; learners from around the area and disadvantaged areas enrol in the school. It therefore has learners of diverse backgrounds, but a higher percentage of learners and educators are Indian. The school has only one counsellor, who is also the head of Life Orientation and Social Sciences.

School B

School B is an all-boys school located in an urban area in Durban. The school also has learners from varying backgrounds, but a larger percentage of learners and educators are White. It has two counsellors, about 1200 learners, and the participating counsellor is also the head of Life Orientation.

School C

This is a private school and is also located in an urban area in Durban; it is a multi-sex school and has about 160 learners in its high school session. It has just one counselor, who also doubles as head of Life Orientation. It schools learners of all South African races.

 School D

This school is also an all-girls school, it is located in an urban area, has two counsellors, about 1300 learners in all, and the counselor who was interviewed is the head of Life Orientation.

It is evident from this description that all of the schools chosen are located in urban areas and have at least one school counsellor.

3.3.2   Sample and sampling procedures

Mitchell and Jolley (2007) contend that a sample is a selection of a group of people, considered to be representative of the larger population a research intends to cover, based on this, four school counsellors, one from each of the schools described above, comprise the sample for this study. This number of participants was settled on because the aim of the study is not to generalize the findings from it, but to have an in-depth understanding of the challenges which school counsellors' experience. This stance correlates with Lichtman's view (2010) that there are no strict rules on sample size, since the goal of qualitative research is not to generalise but to describe and interpret.

The purposive sampling technique, which according to McMillan and Schumacher (2000) implies choosing a small group or number of individuals who have in-depth knowledge and information about the phenomenon under study, was used to select participants for the study. This was most appropriate because the counsellors are in the best position to describe the challenges they face, since they experience it first hand; obtaining the information from any other source will be receiving a second-hand opinion on the subject matter, which contravenes the qualitative nature of the study. Table I below presents the background details of the sample.

Table 1: Background details of the sample

	Counsellor A	Counsellor B	Counsellor C	Counsellor D
Age bracket (yrs)	35-40	31-35	30-35	46-55
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Female
Qualification	B.Soc.Sc., HDE	B.A. (Eng./Psych.), PGCE	B.A. (Industrial Psychology), PGCE	B.A. (Psychology & Theology)
Teaching experience	18 years	10 years	7 years	16 years
Years of experience as a counsellor	4 years	10 years	+/- 2 years	16 years
Years spent in present school	15 years	10 years	1 year	16 years
Job description	Educator, HOD (Life Orientation and Social Sciences) and school counsellor	Educator, head of Life Orientation and school counsellor	Educator, school counsellor and head of Life Orientation	HOD Life Orientation and counselling, educator and school counsellor
HPCSA certified	No	No	No	No
Access to on the job training	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Psychological services provided	Counselling, consultation, and referral services, psychological assessment	Educational, vocational, personal/social counselling, psychological assessment, referral	Vocational/career and personal/social counselling, psychological assessment, referral and consultation services	Counselling, psychological assessment, referral and consultation services

3.3.3 Data collection process

Data for the study were collected using one-on-one interviews with each of the counsellors. This data collection method was chosen because I intended to capture the feelings of the school counsellors on the subject in their own words, and according to Oppenheim (1992, p.1) an interview does just that, as it allows "the respondent to say what they think and to do so with greater richness and spontaneity". In addition, the semi-structured style of interviewing, using open-ended questions, "allows the informants to answer from their own frame of reference rather than from one structured by prearranged questions" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p.3). As such, an interview guide (Appendix A) was drawn up so that similar thematic questions were answered by each counsellor, creating room for further probing based on individual responses. With this method the respondents freely expressed their thoughts and opinions on the subject matter.

The counsellors were contacted via e-mail with a detailed explanation of the research purpose; after agreeing to participate in the study, each counsellor chose a day and time that was convenient to them for the interview. Interviews took place in a quiet area chosen by the counsellor within the school, and each lasted for a minimum of 20 minutes. Each interview session was audio-taped with the participants' permission, and thereafter transcribed for analysis.

3.3.4 Data analysis

McMillan and Schumacher (2000, p.368) state that data analysis is a "process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the patterns". According to Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit (2004, p. 6) the process should be "ongoing and iterative non-linear", meaning that it should not just involve following straight steps, but going back and forth during the process of analysis. Based on this I employed the thematic analysis method, which is a process of "identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.81). Using this method data collected were analysed in the following way, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006):

- I started with a transcription of the recorded interviews, by creating a word-processed written form. Responses were produced verbatim and a margin was created for the insertion of comments during the process of analysis.
- The next step was to familiarise myself with the data, which I did by reading the transcribed data over and over again, so as to understand the main ideas and search for patterns.

- After familiarising myself with the data a code was created for aspects of the data that were relevant to the research question. Boyatzis (1998, p.63) describes codes as "the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon".

- Following this step the different codes that were generated were categorised into different themes, such that they answered the research questions guiding the study, keeping in mind that a theme captures "something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.86).

- Thereafter the themes were reviewed, such that themes which seemed alike were merged and those that seemed to have contrasting ideas were collapsed. This is in line with Patton's dual criteria for judging categories (1990), which hold that data merged into themes should be homogenous, while there should be a level of heterogeneity among different themes.

- Following this step was final refinement of themes so that there was a clear understanding of the idea contained in each, which I thereafter named. This done, I started the process of reporting the findings, based on the themes generated.

3.4 TRUSTHWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE STUDY

Lincoln and Guba (1985) are of the opinion that the words reliability and validity can be replaced with the term trustworthiness when conducting qualitative research. Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spires (2002) also opine that steps to ensure rigor in a qualitative study should be carried out during the research process, and outlined the following strategies, among others: ensuring methodological coherence, researcher responsiveness, ensuring appropriateness of sample, and active analytical stance. McMillan and Schumacher (2000) describe validity in qualitative research as the extent to which interpretations of data collected have the same meaning for the researcher and participants. To ensure trustworthiness in this study I adhered to the constructs proposed by Guba (1981), namely credibility, dependability, transferability and comfirmability, which some authors (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Shenton, 2004; Morrow, 2005) opine correspond to internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity respectively, in quantitative research. The manner of doing this is discussed below.

3.4.1 Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research deals with the extent to which the findings from the study measure reality (Morrow, 2005). According to Gasson (2004, p. 95) it implies "how we ensure rigor in the research process and how we communicate to others that we have done so". In essence, it deals with the methods of ensuring that the researcher has analysed the data correctly. Strategies to ensure this, as proposed by Guba (1981) and buttressed by Shenton, (2004) include:

- Prior familiarisation with participants to gain adequate understanding and build a relationship of trust.
- Ensuring honesty in the reports of participants by informing them of their right to voluntary participation and withdrawal. This ensures that only those genuinely interested are involved, thus guaranteeing accuracy of their responses.
- Member checking with participants, by returning the data to them after analysis.
- Peer checking, which involves a panel of experts or experienced colleagues reviewing or re-analysing the data.
- Regular debriefing sessions between the researcher and the supervisor. Through such discussions the researcher is kept abreast of impending flaws and notified when his/her biases begin to creep into the data.
- The degree of congruence between findings from previous studies with similar focus and the present one.

Based on these, to ensure credibility, I familiarised myself with the participants by building a rapport with them at the beginning of each interview session and presenting to them an informed consent form (Appendix B) which explained in detail the essence of the study and their right to voluntary participation and withdrawal. I also emailed the transcribed data to each counsellor, to check for inappropriate interpretations, and none of them reported any misrepresentation. I included direct quotations from the text in the presentation of my findings, which according to Graneheim and Lundman (2004) also reflect the credibility of a study. Also, throughout the period of the study there were regular discussions between me and my supervisor, and during these sessions we deliberated on the best approach and methodology for the study as well as the instrument for data collection. At the end of the transcription process the data were also presented to him to ensure correctness. Lastly, the findings from the study are

quite similar to those from previous studies, as is evident in the discussion section (Chapter Five) of this study.

3.4.2 Dependability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.299), dependability "seeks means for taking into account both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design induced changes"; this means taking note of the changes in data and those made by the researcher during the process of data analysis. In other words, it means description of the research process, to allow for replication (Marrow, 2005), even though the intent is not to generate the same results (Shenton, 2004). Ensuring dependability of the study implies that the researcher would take cognizance of the extent to which necessary research ethics and practices are observed (Shenton, 2004). To achieve dependability of the study the researcher needs to provide detailed description of the research process vis-à-vis the design, data gathering and methods used (Marrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). In view of this, I stated in clear terms the instrument using for data collection, and the method and general design of the study at the beginning of this chapter. To ensure research ethics were complied with I started by obtaining clearance for the study from the research office of my institute (Appendix C), as well as permission from the provincial office of the DoE (Appendix D); these gave me a nod to proceed with the research and access to the schools.

3.4.3 Transferability

According to Morrow (2005) this implies the extent to which the findings from a particular study can be applied to wider situations. Shenton (2004), however, contends that since qualitative studies consider only a small population, it is difficult to say that that their findings can be applied to wider situations. Bassey (1981) posits that the findings can only be applied when the situations and populations are considered to be similar to those used in the study. To determine this, Firestone (1993) suggests that the researcher provides adequate information on the general design and approach of the research, so as to guide readers to make informed decisions on its transference. In line with this, Graneheim and Lundman (2004) propose that there should be a clear description of the context, sample and sampling procedure, processes of data collection and analysis, as well as explicit and intense presentation of findings of the research, which may be done by way of inserting direct quotations from the transcribed data into the research report.

In view of this, earlier in this chapter I provided details of the context, sample, sampling procedure, data collection and analysis of the study, which makes it easy for the reader to decide on its transferability. In the following chapter I include direct quotes from the transcribed text, so as to add to the richness of the findings presented. While I stated as part of the limitations of the study that its findings may not be generalised to other situations, as suggested by Morrow (2005), the steps as proposed above should guide the reader to determine the transferability or otherwise of the study.

3.4.4 Confirmability

Confirmability of qualitative research means ensuring that the findings reflect the experiences of the participants and not the prejudices or bias of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). In order words, "findings should represent, as far as is (humanly) possible, the situation being researched rather than the beliefs, pet theories, or biases of the researcher" (Gasson, 2004, p.93). This construct assumes that the strength of the research findings lies in the ability of the researcher to link together the data, process of analysis and findings in such a way that gives room for confirmation of the accuracy of findings (Morrow, 2005). Thus, in ensuring comfirmability:

- Morrow (2005) suggests the use of a variety of data collection sources, methods and perceptions (triangulation).
- The research report should provide a justification for the chosen method, assumptions and approach used, as well as a statement of the weaknesses of such techniques (Shenton, 2004). In addition the researcher should adopt reflexivity, by stating the assumptions that undergird the framing of the research questions and presentation of findings (Morrow, 2005).
- The researcher should provide an audit trail by documenting and providing step-by-step details of the entire research process (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004).

Going by these suggestions, I ensured that I put aside my opinion in the analysis of the data by reading the transcripts over and over again, such that I became familiar with the ideas therein, which is evident in my description of the data analysis process, presented earlier in this chapter. I saw to it that I provided a justification for the methodology used in the study by referencing appropriate authors, and gave a clear description of the manner in which the data were collected and analysed, such that the reader finds it easy to decide on the acceptability of my findings. I also used a form of triangulation by varying the

sources of my data collection, in that the participants where from single and multi-sex schools, private and ex-Model C schools, with varying learner compositions.

3.5   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

McMillan and Schumacher (2000) maintain that a credible research work is not only a function of the selection of an appropriate instrument and/or research strategy, but also requires adhering to research ethics. In order to ensure that this research work addressed ethical issues, the considerations outlined below were adhered to throughout the period of the study.

3.5.1   Ethical clearance

Before commencement of the study, and in line with the ethical policy of the university, clearance was sought and obtained from the research office (Appendix C), after which approval to visit schools and conduct research was sought and obtained from the KwaZulu-Natal office of the DoE (Appendix D), under which the research sites fall.

3.5.2   Informed consent

At the beginning of each interview session the participants were handed an informed consent form (Appendix B), which detailed the research purpose and their rights to voluntary participation and withdrawal. It also sought their permission to have the session audio-taped, Participants appended their signature, indicating their consent.

3.5.3   Confidentiality/anonymity

As suggested by McMillan and Schumacher (2000), I ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the settings and participants in this study by making sure that they are unidentifiable. I did this by describing the site in a way that makes it appear similar to several other sites, and used pseudonyms to represent the counselors instead of their real names. I also ensured that the transcribed data were accessible only to me and my supervisor, in keeping with the promise of confidentiality.

3.6   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study focused on gaining an in-depth understanding of the challenges which school counsellors experience, which accounts for the choice of a quantitative approach and the sample size; however, these limit the generalisability of the findings, as it cannot be said that the challenges experienced by the four participants in the study are applicable to other counsellors within the country. Furthermore, the category of schools used for the study (ex-Model C and a private school) are well equipped, with a high

recognition of the need for psychological services – this might have reduced the challenges which the participants experience, as it might be the case that counsellors in other less equipped and privileged schools experience greater challenges.

3.7   SUMMARY

This chapter covered the details of the methodology and design of the study. I presented the paradigm and approach within which the study is positioned, including justifications for them. I also provided detailed descriptions of the processes of data collection and analysis, strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, as well as limitations and ethical issues covered by the study.

The following chapter is a presentation of the findings from the data collection and analysis process.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0   INTRODUCTION

As stated in the previous chapter, four school counsellors from four different schools were interviewed, using a semi-structured interview guide. This chapter presents themes that emerged from the data collected, which depict the challenges experienced by school counsellors and their coping mechanisms. The challenges they experienced are presented first, followed by their coping mechanisms and then their suggestions on the way forward. In line with the ethical considerations guiding this study, the participating counsellors will be referred to using the following codes: CA, CB, CC and CD, meaning counsellor A, B, C and D respectively. The findings are presented under the following themes:

- Challenges counsellors experience;
- Coping mechanisms used by school counsellors; and
- Intervention strategies suggested by school counsellors (school based and community based).

4.1   CHALLENGES COUNSELLORS EXPERIENCE

Based on the findings of this study, the challenges school counsellors experience in the provision of psychological services in high schools have been categorised as those common to all the participating counsellors and those that are unique to some of them. The common challenges are parental uninvolvement; financial constraints; time constraints; inadequate support from the DoE; challenges emanating from teachers; learners not wanting to open up; and cultural issues. Challenges which were unique to just some of the counselors are: difficult learner situations; changing society; and difficulty drawing a line between work and personal life. Each of these challenges will be presented as they emanate from the study.

4.1.1   CHALLENGES COMMON TO ALL COUNSELLORS

4.1.1.1 Parental uninvolvement

All of the counsellors who were interviewed mentioned parental involvement as one of the challenges they experience on the job. According to the counsellors parents are not as involved in their children's

schooling as they should be, because most of them feel that the school should cater to all of the children without having to bring the parents. According to one of the counsellors, getting parents involved

"… is really really a nightmare, because half of the time, they are not… because the parents believe that if the children are here, they are our responsibility, they don't want to take responsibility for problems their children are facing, they don't have the time to do it." (CA)

Another counsellor gave an example of this attitude among parents:

"We have a situation at the moment, where we have a parent, we have smsed, we've written to, we've phoned … we have literally done everything we can and they still don't come in." (CD)

Aside from the fact that some parents don't seem as involved as they should be, some of the counsellors also have to battle with changing the perception of parents on the career path they have chosen for their children. According to one of the counsellors, some parents already have preconceived ideas and thus it becomes a problem when the counsellor tries to explain why their child can't follow suit, based on his/her current performance. Commenting on this challenge, CC laments thus:

"There are parents who are not entirely understanding and they've got their own particular frame of reference and they won't be moved out of that, they won't be told anything like sort of differently … So, for example, I think we've got someone in Grade 10 whose parents think is going to be an accountant, and he can't do maths … to try and have to sit down with the parents and say OK, listen, these are what the things are, I know you like … love your child, however, he is not going to pass maths core, you have to sort of deal with that … so you have to be quite tactful because if you make enemies, it's not very good."

Another aspect where parents seem to be uninvolved is in communicating with their children. One of the counsellors reported that learners find it difficult to communicate with their parents, and according to him this is due to the fact that they (the parents) spend the bulk of their time trying to make ends meet. CB highlights this in his statement:

"I will say out of the parents that we've got … 65% to 70% of them aren't really involved, they think that they are involved, … if they pay the school fees and … if they are caring parents … all of these boys ... they don't know how to talk to their parents, they don't know how to say to their parents,

listen mum and dad, I am finding this difficult, whatever the situation is, I am growing up, I don't understand, why have I got these feelings, why am I feeling like this? I think the parents are just so busy trying to make ends meet."

4.1.1.2 Financial constraints

Another challenge that school counsellors in this study have had to battle with is financial constraints. CA and CB in particularly are constrained when there is a need to carry out psychological assessment on a learner. What operates in all the schools used in this study is that since the school counsellors are not HPCSA certified, they are limited in the kind of psychological assessment they can administer. As such, they always use the service of psychologists or assessment centres when the need arises. However, because most of the tests are quite expensive, the school wouldn't want to incur such expenses, and the parents wouldn't want to part with more money after paying school fees. CB alludes to this in his statement:

> *"For once, I wanted to do a psychological test with my Grade 8, the school said no ... we ain't got money ... and if you ask the parents, the parents will say we paying R35 000 a year, we are not giving another R300 for this test."*

Another counsellor lamented the fact that due to the financial limits set by the school, she is not able to expose the learners to several other things or use the services of other professionals as much as she would have loved to. According to her, this makes her operate on a scale of preference:

> *"There are lots of people I would like to bring in to speak to the kids, there a lot of courses that I would like the kids to go on that I think will be wonderful. Unfortunately the school does have a limit in terms of me saying I would like to go on ... like, bring this or whatever, ... you know they have to draw the line somewhere. So there are things I would like to do with the kids as in there are things I would like to expose the kids to ...the school has to say well, no, we don't have money for that ... so, I have to sift through all these things, I have to choose the ones I think are sort of the best."* (CC)

CD also sees financial constraints as a challenge:

> *"There is no financial assistance, nothing at all, so there are no funds, there are no funds at*

*school, there are no funds from the parents ... their parents don't have, so where do we go ...
you know... I think funds is a big issue."*

In addition to financial constraints, one of the counselors, CA, bemoaned the fact that there were no free establishments to assist learners with issues they had:

"We had a child who had a terrible drug problem... and this was coming from the area the child lived in, there was no free establishment, SANCA [South African National Council on Alcoholism] could only help the child to a certain degree and the parents... there was no parent, the grandparents were the guardians of the child and they could not afford to send the child to private facilities. So, in that case those are real, real restrictions and challenges that we face."

4.1.1.3 Time constraints

The issue of time is another factor that poses as challenge to all of the counsellors interviewed. This stems from the fact that the counsellors also have to teach, in addition to counseling, and the huge gap between the numbers of school counsellors available and the numbers of students that need their attention:

"The greatest challenge here to me will be my lack of time, that I don't ... that I am actually having to teach as well, so I don't have as much time as I would like to have, that is my main concern. I have become a little bit frustrated, there are all these things that I would like to speak to the kids about, to show them and sort of talk about, but I don't have the time. Also because I do teach, I do teach Life Orientation, I only get each class for I think it's an hour a week, which as far as I am concerned, that is not enough time to explain how the world works and what not to do and like what is out there. So I have to try and cram it all in. I have got some movies, and like video clips and I have got poems and I have got things that I would like to sort of expose them to, and I just don't have the time, so I have become a little bit frustrated." (CC)

"I think time ... time generally. Let me explain: 1300 learners between two counsellors, there isn't enough time ..." (CD)

One of the counsellors also felt that inadequate time made them overlook certain important aspects of their duties:

"With regard to time you sort of overlook certain things, so you try and deal with the main thing and there is never enough time. You see, for me, rehabilitation ... not rehabilitation, ongoing and life skills are important, there is no use dealing with one issue, let's say putting the fire out, but you have not given the child skills for the rest of her life. So for me, that's important ... but that's time, and time is what we don't have." (CD)

4.1.1.4 Inadequate support from the DoE

Three of the counsellors interviewed regarded inadequate support from the DoE as a challenge to them. They stated that the DoE was not as responsive as it should be to the issue of psychological service provision in schools. According to them, this might be due to the fact that it had too much to handle. When asked if they got support from the DOE, the counsellors responded as follows:

"I don't think we get a lot of support from the government" (CB)

"The Department of Education is good in a way, but I think that they can be better. I think they've got this enormous work load and I think they've got like so many other things going on." (CC)

"Education department ... psychological services, in my 16 years I have heard or seen once or twice ... nothing, however, I do want to say that the times that we have tried, we haven't really got that much response. I don't think that they do much ..." (CD)

In addition, CB responded that the DoE ought to arrange a sort of opportunity for schools within the same vicinity to meet and discuss issues that affect them as individual schools, so that they can learn from one another:

"I think a big challenge is that maybe the schools, maybe we should be doing more work amongst the schools ... I mean Durban Girls' is across the road, but I have not actually really sat with Durban Girls this year ... and they are right up the road from us, so yes we have these counsellors' meetings, and we used to have this counsellors' group, but we don't have smaller groups, one-on-one, or two people, just talking ... so that's also an issue, I think."

4.1.1.5 Challenges emanating from fellow teachers

Interviews with the participating counsellors also revealed that some of them have had to deal with challenges emanating from their colleagues. According to the counsellors, the problem stems from the fact that teachers complain when a learner has to be taken out of class during lessons for counselling purposes, because they feel that it eats into their teaching time:

> *"The other problem is because we are quite an academic school, it becomes hard for me to take children out of lessons because other teachers then complain. So if there is some sort of problem, for me to be able to go and say to a child, come, the rest of the staff don't like it because it then eats into their teaching time as well."* (CC)

> *"When a teacher needs our help, then we are the best person to them, but generally they are quiet selfish because they want their own time, they want their teaching time."* (CD)

CD feels that this challenge exists because the teachers lack understanding and empathy:

> *"We do have a problem where teachers don't want us to take their lessons if we talk about the the thing of understanding. I don't think many teachers understand. About the empathy, there is a huge problem."*

Besides the issue of encroaching on their teaching time, CC complains about the fact that some staff members ask questions that interfere with the confidentiality of learners; having to deal with that as well, without being rude to them, poses a challenge:

"*Also, some other staff are a bit nosey, so I get asked a lot of questions and I don't want to be rude, but I have to say actually it doesn't have anything to do with you. It's not because they necessarily want to help the child, just because some people don't have enough things, they just want to know. So I find that as well ...."*

4.1.1.6 Learners not wanting to open up

Three of the counsellors that participated in the study complained of being challenged by learners not wanting to open up to them. They state that the learners find it difficult and take long to build trust in them, because they are afraid that the counsellors will divulge their secrets to other members of staff:

"Starting with the learners themselves, a lot of them don't want to open up, they don't want to talk, they are afraid ... they are afraid of confidentiality, and it takes a looong time to convince them that any information that they pass to me, you know, will be kept confidential." (CA)

"The kids take a long time to trust you and to know that you aren't going to get to the staff room and tell the rest of the staff about what is happening, and they only learn that obviously with time." (CC)

The learners also do not want to be probed, they prefer to tell the counsellors what they want to and in their own time. According to CB this also poses a challenge:

"Also the fact that sometimes, you want the boys to open up to you as well, but they are just holding back, and you know that there is something there but you can't pry. Boys don't like it, they don't want you to pry, they'll tell you when it's their time to tell you."

4.1.1.7 Cultural issues

Two of the participating counsellors stated that dealing with the different cultures of students is another challenge they have to battle with. While CA states that the greatest challenge to her is *"actually getting families to buy into the fact that the child needs help",* CD explains that when dealing with learners' issues they have to be careful so as not to go against their cultural ideologies, because some parents might take it as an offence. As a result of this, they have to acquaint themselves with the various cultures, which CD finds to be a huge task:

"I think culture in itself is very difficult, and the understanding of culture is a challenge, because we have to be very careful ... especially in our school, we have a whole lot of different cultures, and to break it down and to say, well, this is the way we are gonna deal with a situation doesn't work. We have consistently be aware and if I can say, inform ourselves, educate ourselves, in all different ways of dealing with issues, you know, and that's new ... it's new sometimes for us."

4.1.2   UNIQUE CHALLENGES

Apart from the challenges discussed above, each of which appear to be common to at least two of the participants, the challenges below were also reported by individual participants.

4.1.2.1 Difficult learner situations

CB reported that one of the challenges he faces is that some learners present with problems that are difficult to tackle. He gave an instance of a situation where a learner complained to him of feeling lonely:

> *"I had a boy, couple of weeks, just who says I am lonely… I am just lonely, I just don't … I am sometimes, I am out of the school, I am a lonely boy. And what do you do? You sit with him and you try and help him – you can't just shrug that off and go ah well, he must sort out his issues."*

CB also commented that another issue he finds difficult to tackle is the fact that there is a gap between the demands of the school and what is obtainable in society, which according to him leaves learners stuck in the middle, which he finds difficult to deal with:

> *"I think the fact that society is changing, the boys perhaps don't think, maybe the way I did when I was a boy, or the school system is pushing them in one way but they are living in another environment, which is pushing them in another one. They are stuck in the middle, you actually don't know what to do, and they say so the school is telling me to do this, but look at outside, when I leave here, what's my life gonna be like?"*

According to CB this is very difficult for him to deal with, because he doesn't know what to do to help learners in various circumstances:

> *"I find, sometimes, it's difficult, you want to make the boys' problems go away so much, and you can't … and ... you know, empathy and everything, it's a good thing to have, but you just want to make changes for them, and you can't … no matter how hard … you can't."*

4.1.2.2 Difficulty drawing a line between work and personal life

CC complains that she finds it difficult not to think about issues at school while she is at home. She feels that there is a need to draw a line between school work and her personal life, but finds it hard to do so. As such, she states that it is a challenge to her:

> *"Also, it's very hard for me not to take what happens here home. So having gone home and I sit, and I think about this child or this child or this problem or this thing I have heard, or this thing I have got to do with the staff … That I think is probably one of the hardest things as well, that I*

have got to say actually, this is for school. ..... Yes, leaving school at school and then having to go home as well and then not think about what is happening in school."

4.2 COPING MECHANISMS USED BY COUNSELLORS

After discussing the challenges they experience, school counsellors were asked if they wished to leave their job because of them. Their responses show that they intend to carry on:

"I love my job, I would continue to work as a counselor." (CA)

"I don't know if I want to leave it, but … at the moment, I am happy." (CB)

"I love it, after 17 or going up to 17 years, I wouldn't swap it for the world." (CD)

They were further asked what coping mechanisms they apply that keep them going despite the challenges. Below are the themes that emerged from their responses.

4.2.1 Enthusiasm and passion

All the counsellors interviewed reported that the zeal to carry on with their job, despite the challenges, stems from the emotional satisfaction they derive from helping learners to overcome their challenges:

"What keeps me going … the fact that we can help, if I can help one child that keeps me going." (CA)

"I know that I am only helping one or two boys, but you can see them grow, you can … overcome their issues." (CB)

CA added that although there are days that she gets really challenged and finds it hard to carry on, knowing that the learners need help and her zeal to help keep her going:

"It does become very challenging in that sense, where you feel like you can't cope anymore because you cannot believe that a child is going through such a dramatic stage in their life. Those days, you do feel burnt out, but I just carry on because I have got to help the children, they need to be helped." (CA)

CC and CD added that it is not the financial reward, but the emotional reward derived from helping and changing the learners' lives for the better that acts as their coping mechanism:

"It's rewarding ... No, it's not financial reward, to help someone makes you feel good, to go home and to think that you've made some sort of difference to sort of someone's life and they don't feel like they are completely on their own does make you feel ... yes, it is nice to know. It is nice to hear because most of the kids are really nice kids, but kids do have problems, and they do come from households where they have some issues. So it's more of an emotional reward as opposed to financial ... there is no financial reward." (CC)

"It's not about what I get out, it's about the fact of lives that I changed and the reward for them at the end of the day ... and the reward I see, you know for them coming back 15 years later, saying miss, look at this, that type of thing, to me that is more important." (CD)

4.2.2 Support from organisations and professionals

The counsellors also responded that one of the coping mechanisms they adopt is to speak to colleagues and professionals in the field whenever they feel the situation is beyond them, so as to take a leaf from their book and learn from them:

"I do phone ... we've got a psychologist that we use at school, so if I am stuck I'll phone her and say to her, Mrs.... what do you think? We'll talk about it, then she comes in." (CB)

"I have got two friends who are psychologists, so I don't particularly speak to them about kids per se, but I do talk to them on ... you know, you can sort of gauge and ask them, like sort of find out things. I have got a lot of other teaching friends and believe it or not, all teachers ever talk about [are] *our children and the sort of problems that happen like at schools, so it is quite nice to know like what is happening at this school, and how this particular teacher has dealt with it, maybe I can apply it here."* (CC)

Counsellors also use the knowledge and support they get from the different on-the-job trainings they attend as coping mechanisms:

"We are a member of ... I think its proactive education, I can email them, and like ask ... they know all about the like sort of law in terms of ... so if I have like a sort of question and I say I have sort of like come across this child who's got this and this is happening what can I do, they will help" (CC)

"The training has also given me …. like support services, so in other words, if I have a problem, who I can turn to, you know, they do examples of how you can handle certain situations." (CA)

"We are a member, I think it's of … no, not teen activity … pro-active education. I have been on a couple of their courses as well, where its myself and maybe another 10 or 15 other staff where you get to ask questions and it says if this happens, what will you then do." (CC)

CD added that she gets support from an organisation in terms of funding rehabilitation programmes for learners in need, which serves as a coping mechanism:

"Joey [at] *Careline at the Hillcrest, OK now, that is quite an expensive organisation to go to, with regard to rehabilitation. However, there is a support structure for us, yes … they will allow our learner to go there for nothing because they have the funding …we don't, so we literally bank on their support."* (CD)

4.2.3   Support from school head/management

Three counsellors stated that they feel that support from their school head/management is very important, and they use it as a mechanism to cope with their challenges:

"I think support from management, from your senior management … I think it's important." (CD)

"I have a very, very supportive senior management team who takes counselling very, very seriously and the needs of the learners." (CA)

Another counsellor added that she finds it comforting to discuss issues which she feels are beyond her with her school head, because she trusts that he will treat it with the necessary confidentiality:

"Our head here is …if I have any like sort of major problems, I do most of the time go to him, I like basically sort of trust him completely, he is a very sort of level-headed guy. Obviously I know that he is not going to pass any of the information on."(CC)

"I am very wary in terms of I have to think, OK, if this happens now, what do I do? Is this like the sort of right thing to do, is it the right thing for the child? If I am unsure, I will only go and speak to our headmaster, because I know that he is not going to pass any of it on." (CC)

"I go and inform our ... like sort of headmaster, before I phone anyone or email anyone, and I say do you think that this is the right thing to do? I would normally like to sort of sit with him and we would then sort of talk about the right thing to do, because I need him on board with me as well. I can't go and do something and then get into trouble because I haven't consulted him, and then expect him to defend me before the parents. So I have to cover all my bases, then have to go to him and say this is what I think, what do you think? Because he does need to know." (CC)

According to these counsellors, this kind of support enables them to manage their challenges and go on with their duties.

4.3.4   Personal abilities and experience

In addition to the stated coping mechanisms, three of the counsellors mentioned that another factor that serves as a coping mechanism for them is their personal traits, qualities and experience. CA stated that her ability to put herself in the shoes of the learner has helped her to cope with the challenges:

"By nature I am a very empathetic, very approachable person, and I think that definitely has helped."

According to another counsellor, being realistic with herself and knowing that she can't know it all, and as such needs to seek support and help, are two important things that have assisted her to cope with the challenges. She also adds that her faith is another important coping mechanism:

"Being able to learn, for me, the coping skills. If I don't understand, if I don't know, let me find out, so I can learn, and will help and move forward ..." (CD)

"First of all, I think being real and being honest with yourself; you know, I can't cope, I am not perfect, I need support ... to me that's the most important thing. Again, my faith is vitally important to me, because I can't go through the day with nothing, I can't ... that's just the way I am." (CD)

CD also adds that she sees counselling as something that is within her, and something that she must do and can't live without. This feeling, according to her, keeps her going despite the challenges:

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"For me, it's cool, it's a vocation, it's something that's within me. So, I am going to die if I don't ... you know, emotionally, physically. I mean not physically… you know, I think that's it, and I think it's definitely within you." (CD)

A third counsellor adds that her personal experiences in life, such as the fact that she has seen a psychologist before and comes from a home where her parents are divorced, serve as a means of coping with challenges, because she can then assist learners in the same position based on her own experiences:

"I think the older that you get, and the more that you experience in life, the easier it is to be able to help children. I mean, my parents were divorced when I was probably six, so to have now some child come in here and say, this is what is happening to me, I am then able to [say] *OK, well this is how I felt, but it's not about me though, so I would maybe say when my parents got divorced, it's all about the fact that I have sort of been through it. I can say OK well, maybe this is how you feel, or maybe this is the reason why. Also, I have seen a psychologist myself, so I think the more that you are sort of exposed to and the more that you hear and the more that you are able to deal with, that you learn as you grow. So in roughly ten years' time, I would be a lot better at my job."* (CC)

4.3.5   Improvising

Two of the counsellors reported that they cope with challenges by looking for alternatives to deal with the problem being faced. One counsellor stated that with regard to the challenge of parental involvement, she improvises so that the learner involved can be assisted. She gave one such instance:

"We realise that we've got to act in the place of the parents, so in those cases where we have identified we are not going to get the support, we then work with the kids. What I would do is I would then get permission from the child to possibly bring in their Grade controllers so the Grade controller and myself will work with the child until the child feels that he or she is able to cope." (CA)

Another counsellor mentioned how she sources for funds from other avenues to cope with the challenge of financial constraints:

"… so that's why I believe in community service, you know, all the different outreaches… so if I need funding with regard to a rehabilitation centre, I would phone rehabilitation centres, to say

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please, it's not about the funding as much as the support to get the child in, to be funded there." (CD)

CD also added that they have introduced a peer-counselling programme, where trained learners attend to the minor challenges of co-learners before referring the cases to them. This creates a means of coping with the large number of students they need to deal with:

"That's why we have the peer counsellors' group, so what we do is that they would initially do… specifically in our school it's only the seniors, they do Grade 11 to 12, so they are all trained … they are qualified, if I can say, to train … but they do the foundations though and from there they can deal with all the little things, and then we take over from there and that helps…" (CD)

4.3.6 Adapting to situations
Another coping mechanism highlighted by some of the counsellors is adaptation. CB and CD responded to the question on how they cope with the challenges by stating that they have come to realise that they can't get all they need on the job, and this realisation has seen them adapt to the situation, either by trying to change it when they can or living with it:

"I think also you [have] *got to understand that somethings are out of your reach ... you do your best."* (CB)

"Adapting is the most important thing. So how do we do it, we don't have a financial situation, we find another route to deal with it. The fact is that the child is more important than our problem ... then at least we've tried ... that's the most important thing." (CD)

4.3.7 Lower workload
CB stated that being the school counsellor makes him an important person within the school, and at the same time comes with less of a teaching workload compared to other teachers. That to him serves as a coping mechanism for the challenges attached to the position:

"Let's be honest, you working a shorter time than anyone else, you are having less marking to do, so you are more… you are an important person in the school, but you are doing what is less than if you … if you were a teacher." (CB)

4.3 INTERVENTION STRATEGIES SUGGESTED BY SCHOOL COUNSELLORS

Having discussed their challenges and coping mechanisms, the counsellors were further asked what support systems they thought were needed to assist them to cope with the challenges. The themes that emerged from their responses are subdivided into school-based and community-based support systems, and presented below.

4.3.1 School-based support systems

There is a need to first state that all of the counsellors that were interviewed mentioned that they get commendable support from their respective schools at the moment:

> *"We have a very supportive school structure."* (CA)

> *"This school is quite good; if I say I need this, I need this, I need to go on this course, I need to do this, the school is quite good in terms of like sort of saying that as well."* (CC)

> *"Our support structure here at school is brilliant … for example, at the beginning of the year, our structure would say… I have put down in the budget that I want 3 or 4 courses a year ... and they would support me on that. If I need to go out, they would support me … you know, we have a brilliant support structure."* (CD)

In addition, the fact that the counsellors get support from their schools is also evident from the coping mechanisms they reported that they adopt, as they stated that these included receiving support from the school head and management. However, there is still one aspect that they felt needs to be looked into, which is the issue of time.

4.3.1.1 More time

The major support counsellors mentioned, which is school-based, is the issue of time. Counsellors suggested that more time should be allocated to the counselling programme so that they can achieve more, considering the large number of learners they have to attend to and the small number of counsellors available in each school:

> *"I think, unfortunately for me, I have got the time but I have too many boys in that time. Like I should go around and call boys in randomly and say 'So how you doing?'."* (CB)

In addition to having more time to deal with learners' issues, counsellors also felt they needed more time to enable them to acquire more skills needed for the job:

> *"I would like extra time at school with the kids. I would like ... basically to have more time to go on more courses, to be exposed to more, to sort of see more, to sort of deal with different things ... so I would like to do more stuff like that. I feel I would be a lot more equipped, but I think it's just going to have to take some time."* (CC)

4.3.2 Community-based support systems

Of the five support systems mentioned by counsellors, four of them are community-based, as they have to do with the DOE, parents and other members of the community.

4.3.2.1 More support from the DoE

One of the support structures suggested by counsellors is the DoE. As stated in the report of the challenges they experience, the counsellors felt that the DoE is not doing much at the moment with regard to provision of psychological services, and needed to be more sensitive to their needs:

> *"Definitely we need more support from the Department of Education psychological services; as I said, I do understand that they have backlogs but definitely they need to be able to help, they cannot say if we refer a case to them, that it'll be on a waiting list, because children cannot be on a waiting list. You don't blame them, but I think the Department as a whole needs to take psychological services more seriously. I mean, they don't even look at counsellors, they don't pay counsellors, so I think that needs to be taken more seriously."* (CA)

CB adds that the DoE should support them by creating an avenue for counsellors from different schools within an area to meet occasionally to discuss issues that affect them as individual schools, so that they can learn from one another:

> *"I think the Department must try and link these schools more together ... because most counsellors are LO* [Life Orientation] *teachers ... and LO is a subject, and so when we meet for meetings, its more about the contents, than it's about hey, are you helping this boy, helping this boy, helping this boy - so I think that's an issue as well."* (CB)

4.3.2.2 Availability of free professional services

CA suggested that to surmount the challenge of financial constraints experienced by most counsellors, professionals related to psychological service provision should come around to offer free voluntary services to learners who, from all indications, cannot afford such services:

> *"There perhaps needs to be some kind of centre where you have professionals like social workers and psychologists, and that kind of thing, who lend their support on a voluntary basis. This is more now for those children who absolutely cannot afford it; it's very sad when a child is crying out for help and you cannot get the services for the child, because the child is unable to pay for it. So I think that will definitely help."* (CA)

4.3.2.3 More support from organisations

Another counsellor mentioned that there is a need to have more support from various organisations that can be of help with the practical aspects of managing learners' problems:

> *"I think we need more support from organisations, that can come on board, for example, let's say counselling with regard to pre- and post-abortion, and those type of things. You know, we don't have that, we are not allowed to discriminate, so, what we need is to have organisations come on, for example, abortion, or those type of things. It's a huge load to be able to do on your own, so it will be nice to have organisations come on board."* (CD)

4.3.2.4 More support from parents

Finally, counsellors mentioned that there is a need to get more support from parents, particularly when it has to do with their children. CB opines that parents should be more involved and open to the truth about their children:

> *"... More support from the parents, particularly if you phone the parent and you say listen, I think your son is having this issue, they mustn't say you don't know my son or avoid it – a lot of them avoid the topic."* (CB)

4.4 SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to explore the challenges which school counsellors experience in the provision of psychological services in high schools and their coping mechanisms. This chapter presented

the findings from the empirical study, which used interviews to achieve this set purpose. The themes that emerged from the interviews in respect of the challenges, coping mechanisms and suggested support structures were presented, with direct quotes from the counsellors.

The following chapter discusses the findings in relation to previous literature and the theoretical framework undergirding the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0   INTRODUCTION

This study explored the challenges school counsellors experience in the provision of psychological services in high schools. The previous chapter presented the findings that were generated from the analysis of data collected. This chapter will answer the research questions guiding the study, and in doing so the findings will be discussed in relation to the literature reviewed, to identify similarities and draw the lines of departure, as well as in relation to the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study.

5.1   CRITICAL QUESTION 1: What challenges do school counsellors experience in the provision of psychological services?

Several challenges experienced by school counsellors emerged from the study. Those which are common to at least two of the participating counsellors include: time constraints, financial constraints, inadequate support from the DoE, parental uninvolvement, learners not wanting to open up, cultural issues, and challenges emanating from teachers. These challenges, although experienced in different degrees and forms, corroborate with those reported in the literature, with the exception of challenges emanating from teachers. Each will be discussed in relation to findings from the literature.

5.1.1   Time constraints

Counsellors in the study bemoaned the fact that they did not have as much time to carry out their duties as they would have wanted to. Because they had to teach, alongside counselling, they found that the time they had was not enough to attend to the needs of the learners, considering the fact that in most cases there were only a maximum of two counselors in a school, compared to a huge number of learners. This challenge was also noted in the literature, where the counsellors likewise complained of inadequate time (Pillay, 2011). The similarity is that counsellors have teaching and other administrative jobs to attend to, in addition to counselling, which according to them reduces the time they spend on counselling. However, while counsellors in the literature report that counselling services in their schools are treated like any other extracurricular activity, and thus no specific time is set aside for it (Nyamwange et al., 2012; Mushaandja et al., 2013), counsellors in this study responded that they do have time scheduled in their timetable for counselling – it was just that the amount of time allocated is

not enough for them. Also, whereas counsellors in the present study are treated as counsellors, thus having a lesser workload (which one of the counsellors reported as a coping mechanism), the case is not the same for counsellors reported in the reviewed literature, who still had the same teaching workload as other teachers.

5.1.2 Financial constraints
The issue of financial constraints, noted in the literature (Nyamwange et al., 2013; Anagbogu et al., 2013) as a challenge to school counsellors, was also seen in this study. However, there seems to be some difference in the form it takes. While counsellors in the literature complain of lack of funds to run the programme efficiently, the major ways in which counsellors in this study are financially constrained are in terms of seeking outside help for assessment and rehabilitation purposes, because the parents of learners involved are not financially buoyant and the school has a set limit.

5.1.3 Inadequate support from the DoE
This study found that counsellors were also challenged by a lack of support from the DoE. They said that they did not get as much support as is needed, probably because the DoE has too many things to attend to and as such doesn't give psychological services much attention. As one of the counsellors put it: "*Definitely we need more support from the Department of Education psychological services, as I said, I do understand that they have backlogs but definitely, they need to be able to help ...*" (CA). In the words of the counsellors, it appears that there is little or no provision for psychological services in high schools. This is also evident from the fact that the DoE does not pay school counsellors for being counsellors, but pays them as teachers, which is why they have to add teaching loads to their duties.

In addition, counsellors also made the complaint that the DoE is supposed to create an avenue for counsellors from schools that fall within the same area to meet and discuss issues peculiar to them, so that they can learn from one another – but this is not happening. This challenge was also reported in the literature reviewed (Nyamwange et al., 2012; Hadji, 2002; Pillay, 2002), although the situation therein seems to be more challenging, because aside from not getting support from their education departments, the counsellors in the literature also lamented not getting enough support from the school head and management, particularly in terms of funds and resources provision, providing funds to participate in professional programmes and reducing their teaching workload. However, counsellors in this study reported that they received adequate support from the school heads and management, which they even

reported as a coping mechanism. All of the counsellors also confirmed that the school footed the bills for their on-the-job trainings and made available the necessary materials for the job. For instance, when asked if the school footed the bills for on-the-job training, CC responded thus:

> *"The school pays for me, yes, which is the really nice thing about it here. Or when I say listen, this is what I would like to do … obviously they are not going to pay for me to go and enrol at Howard College for the whole year, but if there is a seminar for three days …"*

5.1.4 Parental uninvolvement

Among the findings from this study is that counsellors are challenged by the lack of involvement among parents, which confirms reports from the literature (Alavi et al., 2012; Pillay, 2012). Judging from what is obtainable from the literature, as well as from the findings of this study, counsellors have had to contend with parents who are not involved in the schooling of their children, because the parents feel that the school should do all that needs to be done in the upbringing of the child. Part of this uninvolved attitude is parents not showing up at school when their attention is needed with regard to their child. However, aside from these similarities, findings from this study also revealed that parents do not have enough time to communicate with their children, who in turn do not find it easy to discuss issues with their parents. In addition, counsellors are challenged by the difficulty in changing the perceptions of parents with regard to choosing a career path for their child, without considering his/her abilities.

5.1.5 Learners not wanting to open up

Counsellors in this study reported that it is hard for them to get learners to trust them and discuss their private issues with them, mainly because they fear that such issues will not be kept confidential by the counselors. Also, some of the learners were reported to prefer to speak to the counsellor voluntarily, rather than being probed; this also poses a challenge to the counsellors, since it takes a long time to overcome. This finding tallies with reports from previous studies (Alavi et al., 2012; Hadji, 2002; Mushaandja et al., 2013) where the counsellors also reported finding it challenging to gain the trust of learners. A major difference is that unlike the reason found in this study, the literature (Mushaandja et al., 2013) report that the reason for lack of trust might be the cultural background of learners, which doesn't encourage discussing private issues with outsiders.

5.1.6 Cultural issues

Another factor that the counsellors considered a challenge was dealing with the needs of learners in a way that doesn't contravene their cultural ideologies. It was reported that since learners in the school were from varying backgrounds, it became a problem for the counsellors to acquaint themselves with their various cultures, since they cannot impose one single culture on them all. As CD put it:

> *"Culture in itself is very difficult, and the understanding of culture is a challenge, because we have to be very careful … in our school we have a whole lot of different cultures … we have to consistently be aware and inform ourselves, educate ourselves on all different ways of dealing with issues, you know, and it's new sometimes for us."*

It was also reported that convincing families that their child needs psychological help presented as a challenge, probably because of the beliefs held by some families. This is in line with findings from a previous study, where counsellors battled to gain the trust of learners because of their cultural beliefs (Mushaandja et al., 2013).

5.1.7 Challenges emanating from teachers

This study also found that fellow teachers also pose some level of challenge to counselors, in not wanting to release learners for counselling during their teaching time, and asking questions of the counsellor that interfere with the confidentiality of learners – not in a bid to offer assistance, but just to satisfy their curiosity. This finding appears unique to this study, as such instances have not been reported in previous studies.

5.2 CRITICAL QUESTION 2: What coping mechanisms do counsellors adopt to combat these challenges?

When asked if they will quit their jobs because of the challenges they experience, counsellors in this study indicated they desire to continue their jobs as counsellors despite the challenges. They were thus questioned on the coping mechanisms they rely on, which keep them going despite their current situations. There is need to state at this point that not much is available from previous studies in this regard; as such, most of the findings here are unique to counsellors in this study, with the exemption of two of their coping mechanisms, which will be highlighted in the course of the discussion below.

5.2.1 Enthusiasm and passion

The counsellors responded that the satisfaction that comes from knowing that they have assisted a person to make positive decisions and changes to their life is one of the factors that keeps them going. According to them, the satisfaction they get from helping is not financial but emotional, and it stems from their desire to help the learners. For the counsellors, looking back at the lives they have changed and feeling satisfied with doing so, is a major mechanism that assists them to cope with the challenges they experience.

5.2.2 Support from organisations and professionals

Another key support mechanism which counsellors rely on is the support they get from professionals and organisations. They reported that they contact professional psychologists for advice on how to treat an issue whenever they are stuck and don't know what to do; they also at times take a leaf from the book of their colleagues who might previously have experienced the same problem. In addition, counsellors stated that the on-the-job trainings they acquire through membership and attendance at courses organised by different organisations, boosts their ability to cope with the challenges. This is in line with the notion held by Sears (2002), that counsellors continuously need to update their knowledge of the profession.

The counsellors further disclosed that when confronted with certain issues, they fall back on the lessons learnt from such trainings or call for support from organisations, for instance, in terms of seeking free rehabilitation placements for learners who can't afford them. In contrast, this kind of support which counsellors in this study received has been mentioned in previous studies as being lacking, and thus listed as one of the challenges that counsellors experience. For example, counsellors were reported to complain of lack of adequate knowledge (Chireshe, 2006; Mushaandja et al., 2013), inadequate training and lack of skills such as assessment and therapy (Van Schalkwyk & Sit, 2013; Alavi, Boujarian & Ninggatol, 2012) and difficulty dealing with sensitive issues like rape and child abuse (Mushaandja et al., 2013). This suggests that counsellors in this study are better equipped in this regard.

5.2.3 Support from school head/management

Counsellors also reported that they get support from their school head and management, and that this helps them to manage their challenges well. According to them, counselling is taken seriously by the school management, which makes their work easier. They therefore find it easy to discuss learners'

problems with the school head, because they trust that they are going to be kept confidential. This kind of support is in line with the propositions by Gysbers and Henderson (2001) that school counsellors need the support of and collaboration with other school personnel in order to function effectively. However, the same cannot be said of counsellors in other studies, who report that they are challenged by lack of support from their school heads and management (Nyamwange et al., 2012; Hadji, 2002; Pillay, 2002).

5.2.4   Personal abilities and experience

Personal attributes like empathy, approachability, innate desire to help, and coming to terms with the fact that they don't have answers to all the questions – which thus drives them to seek help – are some of the qualities listed by counsellors as coping mechanisms. It was also added that lessons learnt from personal experiences have made it easier for them to assist learners who experience the same situations.

5.2.5   Improvising

Another coping mechanism adopted by the counsellors is to source alternatives when they cannot obtain what is desired. They mentioned, for instance, that in combating the challenge of financial constraints they source funds from the community and organisations. In addition, peer counsellors were reported to have been established in a school to help cater for the large number of students, owing to the small number of counsellors available. This coping mechanism confirms that mentioned in the study conducted by Pillay (2002), where counsellors were reported to have initiated other creative means of managing their challenges.

5.2.6   Adapting to situations

Similar to improvising, counsellors also made it known that they cope with their challenges by coming to terms with them; in other words, they have come to understand that they can't do without experiencing challenges, and rather than walk away, they live with the challenges and get used to carrying on despite their existence.

5.2.7   Less workload

This coping mechanism is unique to one of the counsellors, who stated that having a lower teaching load implies less marking, which keeps him going. The counsellor explained that being a counsellor makes him an important figure within the school, in addition to being assigned fewer teaching jobs compared to other teachers. The issue of workload was reported by counsellors in other studies as a challenge, as

they complained of having the same teaching workload as other teachers, in addition to their counselling tasks (Nyamwange et al., 2012; Mushaandja et al., 2013).

5.3   THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Aside from confirming or running contrary to some of the results of previous studies, findings from this study buttress the propositions of the theories that undergird it.

Firstly, they are in line with the assumptions of the ecosystems theory propounded by Bronfenbrenner (1979), discussed in Chapter Two, which opines that individuals relate with other systems within the environment at different levels, and these interactions influence their development. Relating the findings to this theory, it can be rightfully said that counsellors relate with other individuals within and around the school community and such interactions influence their output, resulting in both positive and negative experiences. It can be said that the negative experiences result in challenges at the micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystem levels, while the positive experiences translate into coping mechanisms for the counsellors.

At the microsystem level counsellors experience challenges in their relationship with learners and their teacher colleagues; learners may not want to open up and teachers may not want to release learners from their lessons, as well as attempting to interfere with confidentiality issues. The uninvolved attitude of parents with regard to their children's schooling is an indication of the challenges at mesosystem level. At exosystem level counsellors are challenged by the lack of support from the DoE, while the issue of acquainting themselves with the varying cultural backgrounds of learners reflects the challenges counsellors experience at macrosystem level.

Furthermore, the coping mechanisms adopted by counsellors, as discussed earlier, can be said to be the positive experiences they encounter in relating to other systems within the environment. Mechanisms such as support from the school head falls within the ambit of the microsystem level, while support from organisations and professionals can be said to exist at exosystem level. Their personal abilities and adaptation can be explained, in the context of the theory, as their biological characteristics, which come into play at the microsystem level. This translates to mean that the counsellors do not use support from their meso- and macrosystem.

Secondly, the findings also buttress the provisions of the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which opines that challenging situations arise when the demands on an individual outweigh the resources at his/her disposal. Confirming this, counsellors recounted their challenges as resulting from the lack or inadequacy of certain assets they require to live up to their responsibilities. In addition, the theory assumes that coping mechanisms are resorted to when the individual evaluates his situation as challenging, in a bid to manage and live with the situation. The model further categorises the coping strategies into five groups, which appear to align with the findings from this study in the following way: the financial support from organisations can be aligned with the utilitarian category; enthusiasm and passion with health/morale; support from school head/management, professionals and organisations with social networking; personal abilities and experiences with general/specific beliefs; and improvising and adapting with problem-solving skills.

In essence, the manner in which the findings can be related to both theories justify the appropriateness of their use in this study.

5.4   SUMMARY

This chapter answered the research questions guiding the study and discussed them in relation to previous studies in the literature and the theoretical framework underpinning the study. It was observed that the challenges which school counsellors in the study experience are quite similar to those reported in the literature, although with some degrees of difference. Also, it can also be said, based on the findings, that counsellors in this study have access to more support structures than counsellors in previous studies, which is also evident in the coping mechanisms they adopt.

The following chapter presents a summary and conclusion to the study, as well as recommendations based on the findings and suggestions for further study.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0   INTRODUCTION

The study used a qualitative approach to gain an understanding of the challenges which school counsellors experience in the provision of psychological services in high schools. This chapter presents a summary of the research work, concluding statements, recommendations on how to combat the challenges and suggestions for the route which further research on the subject area could take. The research questions that guided this study are:

- What challenges do school counsellors experience in the provision of psychological services?
- What coping mechanisms do counsellors adopt to address these challenges?

6.1   SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study was conducted with the main purpose of understanding the challenges which school counsellors experience in the provision of psychological services in high schools. Two main objectives were set: to investigate the challenges the counsellors experience, and to identify their coping mechanisms. To achieve these objectives, the study was approached qualitatively using semi-structured interviews with four school counsellors, thus gaining an in-depth understanding of the challenges in their own words and world.

The study began with a review of relevant literature, which expounded the findings of previous work on the subject matter, as well as a description of the ecosystems theory and the transactional model of stress and coping, which formed the theoretical lens with which the study was viewed. Data were collected using open-ended, semi-structured interviews with four counsellors within the Durban metropolis. Following analysis of the data the study found that top of the list of the challenges are the issues of financial constraints, parental uninvolvement and time constraints; these are followed by lack of support from the DoE and challenges that emanate from their teacher colleagues. Occupying the lower ranks are issues like learners not wanting to open up to the counsellors because of their fear of a breach of their confidentiality, as well as the issue of variations in the cultural ideologies of the learners. Individual

counsellors also indicated that they are challenged by the fact that some learners present with problems that they find hard to deal with, and the inability to draw a line between their work and personal life.

Owing to these challenges, one would have thought that the counsellors would want to get out of their jobs at the earliest opportunity; interestingly, however, they all appear to love their job, as they expressed their desire to continue despite the odds. This desire formed the basis for asking them what coping mechanisms they adopted which made them want to carry on. In response to this, the study found that top of the list was the enthusiasm and passion which all of the counsellors had for helping others. All of the counsellors responded that they did not stay in their job because of the financial reward, which they claimed was not even alluring in the first place. Following this was the support they get from organisations that were willing to provide free services to learners, and the trainings they received from them, as well as support from professionals on the field whenever they are stuck on a problem.

In addition, the study found that the counsellors adapt to the situation as it is, improvise whenever they can, and use support from school management and heads, who saw the importance of their roles within the school and thus made provision for their needs and on-the-job trainings. Personal attributes such as empathy, a desire to learn more and previous personal experiences also come in handy for them.

6.2   CONCLUSION

This study found that psychological services in high schools are provided by individuals who had psychology degrees and most times also doubled as Life Orientation teachers. The counsellors provide vocational, educational, career and personal/social guidance services to learners and refer more difficult cases and major psychological assessment of learners to counselling or educational psychologists who are registered with the HPCSA, as they are usually not registered with the board. The study focused on exploring the challenges which counsellors experience on the job and found that these challenges stem from learners, their colleagues, parents, the school and the DoE, although, all of the counsellors revealed that their schools were responding well to their needs and rendering the necessary support. In addition, it was gathered that the counsellors used support from their school head/management and organisations, and their personal abilities and interest as coping mechanisms, which are part of the reasons none of them would leave their jobs in spite of the challenges.

The study revealed that the provision of psychological services in high schools comes with some challenges which need to be looked into so that they can be reduced or completely removed, to give room for better service provision by the counsellors, who although they try to manage the situation, still require more help to do so.

6.3   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Highlighting and describing the challenges school counsellors experience in the provision of psychological services will enhance the understanding of their predicament, what is currently available to assist them and what is yet to be done, so that recommendations can be made to stakeholders on how to improve the situation. This study has been able to describe the challenges of school counsellors and the coping mechanisms they adopt, hence schools, the community and the DoE can use the information to understand what they can do to improve the provision of psychological services in high schools. Practising school counsellors can benefit from the information provided in the study by adopting the coping mechanisms highlighted by the counsellors, to manage their own challenges.

6.4   RECOMMENDATIONS

With the challenges uncovered, coping mechanisms highlighted and gaps discovered, the following recommendations are made on how to bridge the gap to allow for effective service provision in schools.

Most importantly, there is a need to recognise and accept the fact that the provision of psychological services in the school context is a great necessity, as this would create the desire to ameliorate or completely eradicate the challenges of school counsellors, which would lead to better service provision and ultimately to a better learning environment. This is why the DoE first and foremost needs to place more importance on the issue of psychological service provision in high schools. To start with, there should be recognition and provision for the position of school counsellors, so that individuals can be appointed solely as counselors; then they would not need to add teaching loads to their job description, affording them the time needed to provide detailed and robust services. Hopefully this would put an end to the challenge of time constraints reported by counsellors.

Aside from this, the DoE can also look into creating forums, based on geographical locations, where counsellors can meet on a predetermined basis to discuss issues of concern, particularly with regard to the challenges they experience on the job, so that they can be a form of support to one another. Possibly

also a representative from the DoE can be assigned to each forum, who will then report back on the issues raised and be a link between the department and the counsellors. Perhap, this would yield faster and more fruitful responses from the DoE.

Furthermore, it is understandable that the school might not be financially buoyant enough to cater for all the major and minor psychological assessment and rehabilitation needs of learners, just as it is understandable that not all parents can be buoyant enough to afford the charges. The DoE also comes in here – they need to employ the services of psychologists and other health workers who will provide free services to learners who genuinely cannot afford the charges, because when the needs of such learners are not addressed they might become a threat not only to themselves but to society at large. This might be the reason a counsellor suggested that:

> *"There perhaps needs to be some kind of centre, where you have professionals like social workers and psychologists, and that kind of thing, who lend their support on a voluntary basis. This is more now for those children who absolutely cannot afford it; it's very sad when a child is crying out for help and you cannot get the services for the child, because the child is unable to pay for it, so I think that will definitely help."* (CA)

To combat the issue of parental uninvolvement, schools could get parents more involved by organising workshops for them on their roles as parents, which would raise awareness on the negative and positive effects of their involvement or otherwise. Parents could also be involved by inviting them as guest speakers at events or making them members of committees; in so doing they will have more cause to visit the school and then get more involved in the schooling of their children. In addition, the community which the school serves can also be involved if the school organises community services where learners are encouraged to give back to the society, through simple acts like tree planting, voluntary clean-ups and the like. Then, as the saying goes, 'to whom much is given, much is expected' – the community in turn will find it compelling to assist the school where need be.

Lastly, counsellors can work on gaining the trust of learners by creating avenues to educate them on the ethical provisions of the profession, which has at its core ensuring their confidentiality. They could embark on activities like hanging posters around the school, organising seminars and giving talks to them at intervals. These should create more awareness of what they stand for and at the same time

sensitise learners to use their services; such activities will not only educate learners, but will also educate teachers and the wider school community on the ethos and roles of the counsellor.

6.5   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the limitations of the current study, mentioned in Chapter Three, the following recommendations are made. This study was conducted in an urban area, as such the schools used are privileged schools, which might have limited the challenges experienced by the counselors. Therefore it would be interesting to conduct a research study using a different context like a rural setting and less privileged schools; perhaps their challenges might be more complex and different from those discovered in this study.

In addition, the study interviewed only school counselors, who lamented on not getting support from the DoE. Further research could investigate this claim, by conducting an interview with stakeholders at the DoE to investigate the arrangements for psychological service provision in high schools, thereby uncovering the challenges at that level.

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APPENDIX A

INSTRUMENT

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Please note that this is only a guide to ease the interview process and enable me stay within the focus of my study, other questions could arise from the responses to these.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

NAME (Optional)	
POSITION	
AGE	
SEX	
QUALIFICATIONS	
TEACHING EXPERIENCE	
YEARS IN THE SCHOOL	

SECTION B. JOB DESCRIPTION/ CHALLENGES

1. What is your understanding of school psychological services?
2. Are you a qualified school counsellor? What relevant training do you have?
3. What skills are you competent in or do you possess?
4. What is your job description?
5. What is your daily schedule like?
6. Are you assigned any other role outside your position as a school counsellor?
7. Do you think your training was sufficient for your job description?
8. Do you experience any challenge on the job?
9. If yes to the above question, could you describe these challenges?
10. What aspect of your job poses the greatest challenge?
11. Do you think these challenges impact on the quality of services you render?

C: SUPPORT/ COPING MECHANISMS

12. How do you cope with the challenges on the job?

13. Did your training prepare you for these kinds of challenges?

14. Do you get support from the school, colleagues, D.O.E, or professional body on the challenges?

15. What keeps you going, despite these challenges?

16. What support do you think will help reduce the challenges?

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

School of Education,

College of Humanities,

University of KwaZulu-Natal,

Edgewood Campus.

18 June, 2014.

Dear Participant,

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Ganiyat Olushola Zurakat, I am an MEd (Educational psychology) student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus. I am conducting a research aimed at understanding the "challenges school counsellors face in the provision of psychological services in high schools". To achieve this, I need to interview school counsellors in high schools within Durban and your school is one of such, thus, I would like to conduct an interview with you, as a school counsellor in your school.

Findings from the study will equip stakeholders in the educational sector with the knowledge of what currently operates, with regards to the provision of psychological services in high schools, and what resources and support will be needed to assist school counsellors to better their services. The results will also assist counsellors who face similar challenges in schools to adopt the coping mechanisms that have worked for others, in alleviating their challenges.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as neither your details nor that of your school will be revealed in the presentation of my findings. Pseudonyms will be used instead of your real names.

- The interview may last for about 1 hour at a stretch and may be split, depending on your preference.
- If you agree to be interviewed, the interview will be audio recorded, given your permission to do so.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for the purpose of this research only.
- Data will be stored in a secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research and will not be penalised for your decision.

Should you have any questions about this study or its procedures, now or in the future, please contact me, my supervisor or the research office at the following contact details:

RESEARCHER	SUPERVISOR	RESEARCH OFFICE
Ganiyat Olushola Zurakat	Mr. H. Muribwathoho	Ms. P Ximba
Tel: 0717412414	Tel: 0826712126	Tel: 0312603587
Email: ghanizurak@yahoo.com	Email: muribwathohoh@ukzn.ac.za	Email: ximbap@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 willingly 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.

I also give permission for the audio recording of my interview with the researcher YES ☐   NO ☐

     SIGNATURE   DATE

…………………………………………………   …………………………………………………..

APPENDIX C
ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

UNIVERSITY OF ™
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

14 August 2014

Mrs Ganiyat Olushola Zurakat 213570399
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0483/014M
Project title: Challenges of school counsellors in the provision of psychological services in high schools.

Dear Mrs Zurukat

Full Approval – Expedited

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has now 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/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an 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.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

....
Dr S Singh (Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Mr Henry Murlbwathoho
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr P Morojele
cc School Administrator: Mr Thoba Mthembu
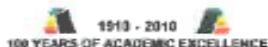
APPENDIX D
DOE PERMISSION LETTER

education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Nomangisi Ngubane   Tel: 033 392 1004   Ref.:2/4/8/224

Mrs G.O. Zurakat
3 Charles Court
15 Charles Grove
Glenwood
DURBAN
4001

Dear Mrs Zurakat

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"CHALLENGES OF SCHOOL COUNSELLORS IN THE PROVISION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES IN HIGH SCHOOLS"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 August 2014 to 30 June 2015.
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 Connie Kehologile 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 Director-Resources Planning, 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 (uMlazi district).

Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education
Date: 13 August 2014

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa   ...dedicated to service and performance
PHYSICAL: 247 Burger Street, Anton Lembede House, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Tel. 033 392 1004; Fax: 033 392 0303;
EMAIL ADDRESS: kehologile.connie@kzndoe.gov.za; CALL CENTRE: 0860 596 363;
WEBSITE: WWW.kzneducation.gov.za