



**ORPHANED AND VULNERABLE LEARNERS'
PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES: FOUNDATION
PHASE EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES**

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DECLARATION

I, **Fazila Hoosen (203516718)**, do hereby declare that this dissertation entitled “**ORPHANED AND VULNERABLE LEARNERS’ PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES: FOUNDATION PHASES EDUCATORS’ EXPERIENCES**” which was submitted to the university for the degree of Master of Education is my original work and has not been previously submitted for any degree or any other academic award at any other university. All sources I used or quoted were indicated and acknowledged through a complete reference.

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ABSTRACT

The loss of a parent is one of the most traumatic events a child can face, making it imperative to understand the specific challenges encountered by orphaned learners for effective support and intervention. Orphaned learners often grapple with the difficulty of living without their parents, leading to numerous psychological challenges such as depression, stress, anxiety, and poor self-concept. This study aimed to explore foundation phase educators' experiences of teaching and offering support to orphaned learners who display psychoeducational challenges. The research study was conducted in a Quintile 5 public primary school in the KwaKhangelana District. The study was framed within Bronfenbrenner's ecological system. This qualitative case study used the interpretivist paradigm to understand three purposively and conveniently sampled Foundation Phase educators' experiences of offering psychoeducational support to orphaned and vulnerable learners. Data generation encompassed semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Thematic analysis was conducted to distill patterns, themes, and underlying meanings from the generated data. The study revealed that a myriad of challenges was faced by orphaned learners, including emotional trauma, significant academic difficulties, socio-emotional struggles, and barriers to effective engagement within the classroom environment. Drawing largely on data from interviews and document analysis, the study found that the schools are obligated to make substantial progress in supporting orphaned learners, facilitated by a proactive school management team, a dedicated school-based support team and empathetic educators. The findings recommended that interventions such as differentiated instruction, additional support including the provision of food and stationery, one-on-one teaching sessions, and counselling from a school-employed social worker were implemented at the school. In addition to the support provided within the schools, efforts are to be made to seek support structures outside the school environment.

Keywords: *Foundation Phase educators, Experiences, Orphaned and Vulnerable children (OVC), Psychoeducational challenges, Psychoeducational support.*

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
B. ED	Bachelor of Education
COVID-19	Coronavirus-19
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
FP	Foundation Phase
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
JP HED	Junior Primary Higher Education Diploma
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
NGOs	Non - governmental organisations.
OVC	Orphan and Vulnerable Children
PPCT	Process–Person–Context–Time
SAPS	South African Police Services
SA-SAMS	South African School Administration Management System
SADC	Southern African Development Communities
SGB	School Governing Body
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
SMT	School Management Team
SNA	Support Needs Assessment
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

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A poem dedicated to all orphaned and vulnerable learners out there in schools.

THE ORPHAN

My parents!

These are the ones I love!

The ones I always dream of!

And the ones I will never forget!

Years, days, and months pass,

But memories never fade,

Living without you my parents is hard.

Poor me! What am I going to do in the future?

With this hardship crawling like a spider?

I wonder why I was born

Being left without parents makes all things hard.

I always dream of you, my parents.

My ideas are separate with nowhere to start,

Because you left me in the desert.

Oh, please help poor me!

Give me your sympathy and sympathise with me!

Lord, help me in whatever I do.

Parents, you left me in the world to suffocate.

All my clothes are worn out, no one takes care of me.

I cried and wiped off my tears.

Tears may dry, but memory never fades away.

Some people laugh and scold me

About my lifestyle.

I wish God would bless them.

Tears trickle down my cheeks thinking of you.

(Dorothy Zengeni, Gomorefu Secondary School, Marange, Zimbabwe)

FOCUS Newsletter, Volume 1, June 1997)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The loss of a parent is undoubtedly a traumatic experience, resulting in major changes in the life of an orphaned child that may affect their psychological well-being. Orphaned children often grapple with the difficulty of living without their parents, leading to numerous challenges. Magampa (2014) suggests that psychological problems such as depression, stress, anxiety, and poor self-concept may arise from the loss of parents. Furthermore, the literature indicates that these challenges may manifest in a lack of concentration at school, ultimately leading to poor academic performance (Themane & Osher, 2014; Mwoma & Pillay, 2015). The authors maintain that orphaned learners are more prone to emotional and behavioural issues than their non-orphaned counterparts and are considered vulnerable. Educators are, therefore, tasked not only with delivering academic content but also with providing a supportive and understanding atmosphere for these vulnerable children. Research studies on psychoeducational challenges experienced by orphaned and vulnerable learners (OVC), and their impact in the early years, can provide invaluable insights into how these experiences shape a child's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Addressing these challenges early is vital, as the brain's adaptability during the early years makes it more responsive to interventions, which can mitigate long-term negative outcomes and promote healthier developmental trajectories. In the same vein, research studies on the educators' experiences in offering psychoeducational support to orphaned and vulnerable learners are also eminent.

The first chapter of this quest aimed at exploring Foundation Phase (FP) educators' experiences of offering psychoeducational support to orphaned and vulnerable learners experiencing psychoeducational challenges is presented. Within this chapter, I present the background to the study, a statement of the problem, purpose, and rationale of the study, the significance of the study, the location of the study, clarification of key terms used in this study, as well as the synopsis of the theoretical framework and research methodology. The chapter concludes by providing an overview of the subsequent chapters that are entailed in this research study.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

South Africa for the past four years has faced a silent crisis. In 2020, there were 2.9 million orphans in South Africa (Hall, 2023), with the orphan population increasing due to various adverse circumstances, including Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and the rampant Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) pandemic that hit the South African shores in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic-associated deaths resulted in nearly 150,000 children becoming orphans in South Africa (UNICEF, 2022). A special report in the Mail and Guardian, titled “*The Shock of 134,500 Covid Orphans in South Africa*” (2022, April 1), highlighted the alarming number of children orphaned by COVID-19 in the country. The article cited a study published in *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, which revealed that South Africa had the second-highest number of COVID-19 orphans among 21 countries analysed (2022, April 1).

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) defines an orphan as a child under 18 years of age who has lost one or both parents to any cause of death (UNICEF, 2015). Hall (2023) further defines orphans in three mutually exclusive categories, which are: a) A maternal orphan is a child whose mother has died but whose father is alive, b) A paternal orphan is a child whose father has died but whose mother is alive, and c) A double orphan is a child whose mother and father have both died. The latter category is regarded as the most gruesome one as the loss presents significant challenges for the child as both their primary caregivers are deceased (Hall, 2023).

The tragic loss of parental support and loved ones during childhood can have a long-lasting impact on mental and physical health (Mwona & Pillay, 2015). According to Themane and Osher (2014), schools have a huge responsibility to protect every child's right to live and grow up in an environment that supports their physical, psychological, social, and emotional development. It is with this conviction that I undertook this journey to explore the plight of orphaned and vulnerable children and their psychoeducational challenges from the perspective of FP educators.

KwaZulu-Natal has the largest child population and the highest orphan numbers, with 673,000 children (16% of children in the province) recorded as orphans who have lost a mother, a father, or both parents (Hall, 2023). According to Google's dictionary definition, a child is a young human being below the age of puberty. UNICEF South Africa emphasises the need to protect, care for, and nurture our most vulnerable children (UNICEF, 2022). Orphaned children face the difficulty of living without their parents, which often leads to numerous challenges. Magampa (2014) suggests that psychological problems such as depression, stress, anxiety, and

poor self- concept may result from the loss of parents, leading to a lack of concentration at school and poor academic performance. Mwoma and Pillay (2015) note that while a large amount of research exists on orphans and their education and living experiences, there is very little research on the psychological care and support provision for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in government schools to meet their psychological needs.

Furthermore, while many research studies on orphans have been conducted in rural schools across the province, there is a paucity of research conducted in urban and inner-city schools (Hall, 2023). This research study, therefore, realised the necessity to address challenges faced by orphans in urban and inner-city areas of KwaZulu-Natal to identify interventions that may help overcome difficulties that impede their psychological and educational development. Hence, in this study, the focus is on FP educators' experiences of offering psychoeducational support to orphans and vulnerable learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit, KwaZulu-Natal.

Generally, most educators are not trained to deal with difficulties resulting from having orphans in their classrooms (Mwoma & Pillay, 2015). Therefore, they are faced with a major responsibility to take care of these vulnerable learners (Themane & Osher, 2014). As educators grapple with the daunting responsibility of supporting orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) in their classrooms, understanding their experiences and challenges becomes imperative.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The death of parents often precipitates emotional distress among orphans, rendering them susceptible to long-term psychological challenges such as anger, sadness, anxiety, and tendencies to withdraw and self-isolate. These emotional burdens can significantly hinder their social, emotional, and academic development, with lasting implications for their future well-being (Ntuli, Mokgatle, & Madiba, 2020). Magampa (2014) underscores the detrimental impact of parental loss on the development of a positive self-identity among orphans, which may subsequently contribute to poor academic performance. As they are among the most vulnerable children, it is imperative that the rights of orphaned learners are prioritised by all stakeholders involved in their care and education. Themane and Osher (2014) advocate for comprehensive research efforts to raise awareness of the challenges faced by OVC and highlight the sensitivity of their plight to ensure that possible intervention strategies are sought to respond to the needs of the OVC and improve the quality of learning and teaching.

1.4 PURPOSE AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

1.4.1 *Purpose of the study*

The purpose of this study was to explore FP educators' experiences of teaching and offering support to orphaned learners who display psychoeducational challenges. The study aimed to understand how FP educators can develop pedagogical and learning environments that are accommodative to orphaned and vulnerable learners.

1.4.2 *Rationale of the study*

My impetus for this research study stems from my work experience as a Foundation Phase departmental head who advises 18 educators about their teaching and how to best adapt their instruction to suit the needs of their learners. In my role as a Departmental Head for the past 11 years, I am very mindful of how different learner backgrounds and circumstances influence learning, well-being, and motivation. I manage and teach in an inner city multicultural and multiracial school with an enrolment of approximately 1,500 learners, many of whom come from difficult homes or disadvantaged backgrounds. It is a very challenging work environment as my colleagues and I deal with many social issues daily and have found that most of the reasons for learner hardship are related to family socio-economic standing and family predicament.

A recent conversation with my FP team on activities related to Family tree, Mother's Day and Father's Day celebrations, and personalised card-making by learners piqued my interest in conducting this study. I wanted to understand how my colleagues and I accommodated those learners in the classroom who may or may not have one or both of the parents. Further introspection led to the question as to whether we as educators are fully equipped to address the plight of orphans in our classrooms adequately. The FP educators also expressed this sentiment in my department. Being a class educator and being in a leadership role I realised how important it is for educators to know each learner's circumstances, especially those who are orphaned and vulnerable, and how I need to research and find ways to help support the educators and in turn support the learners under our care.

Additional studies are necessary to develop an understanding of psychoeducational challenges faced by orphan learners since much of the current literature that I have come across focuses

on the plight of orphans and vulnerable learners in rural areas of South Africa many of whom have been orphaned due to AIDS-related illnesses. A research study conducted by Ranthamane (2020) focused on the psychoeducational challenges of HIV and AIDS orphans in Grades five and six in a rural school. A study conducted by Ndlovu (2019) explored psychosocial support systems for vulnerable children in rural schools in KwaZulu-Natal. In addition, Ntuli, Mokgatle, & Madiba (2020) researched the psychosocial well-being of orphans in a rural local municipality of Mpumalanga Province. There is clearly a lack of research conducted in Urban and inner-city schools of KwaZulu-Natal. Ngobese (2020) conducted a research study in the urban Cato Manor area of KwaZulu-Natal but focused more on orphans and vulnerable children's perceptions of child poverty. There is thus, a crucial need to research and support inner-city and urban-based orphaned and vulnerable children and their schooling.

I believe that my study is timely given the concerns globally since millions of children became orphans during the COVID-19 pandemic (Global Health, 2022). Upon reading about the issues faced by orphans, I think that a research study exploring educators' perceptions and experiences regarding psychoeducational support, as well as the challenges faced by OVCs, will yield important insights. In summary, the rationale for this study stems from my professional standing, my personal curiosity, and my quest to contribute to knowledge.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study extends to both theoretical and practical realms, contributing to a deeper understanding of FP educators' experiences when teaching the OVC, along with the psychoeducational challenges these learners face. This study serves as a valuable resource, offering insights to enhance academic engagement in FP classrooms on multiple fronts. By striving to improve the academic performance of orphaned learners, the study aims to positively impact their psychological, psychosocial, and psychoeducational wellbeing. Exploring educator experiences sheds light on the challenges faced by FP educators in supporting the OVC. The research findings and recommendations derived from this exploration have the potential to enhance the quality of teaching and learning while also fostering the psychosocial wellbeing of vulnerable learners. Moreover, the findings can inform the development of sustainable and well-coordinated support structures for the OVC by various stakeholders including caregivers, community donors, social workers, and healthcare professionals.

Anticipated outcomes of this study include informing policy formulation aimed at improving

teaching conditions for the OVC and facilitating researchers' deeper understanding of the dynamics within classrooms catering to such learners. Educators themselves stand to benefit from this study, as it prompts introspection and invites them to challenge their practices in light of the identified challenges. Furthermore, this study has the potential to stimulate debates on psychoeducational challenges experienced by the OVC, contribute to ideas on effective pedagogy, underscore the importance of educator knowledge and experience, and emphasise the relevance of contextual factors. Through these avenues, the study aims to contribute meaningfully to the broader discourse on education and the welfare of our most vulnerable children.

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.6.1 *Research Objectives*

This study pursued the following objectives:

- i. To explore foundation phase educators' experiences of offering psychoeducational support to orphaned and vulnerable learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit.
- ii. To understand how foundation phase educators offer psychoeducational support to orphaned and vulnerable learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit.
- iii. To determine why foundation phase educators, offer psychoeducational support to orphaned and vulnerable learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit the way they do.

1.6.2 *Research Questions*

This study was driven by the following research questions:

- i. What are foundation phase educators' experiences of offering psychoeducational support to orphaned and vulnerable learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit?
- ii. How do foundation phase educators offer psychoeducational support to orphaned and vulnerable learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit?
- iii. Why do foundation phase educators offer psychoeducational support to orphaned and vulnerable learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit the way they do?

1.7 LOCATION OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted in a public primary school located in KwaKhangela Circuit, Umlazi District. To safeguard the school's anonymity, a pseudonym, "Beacon of Hope Primary," was used. During the period of conducting this research study, the school had 44 state-paid educators and a social worker employed by the school governing body (SGB). The school had 1500 learners, from Grade R to Grade 7. These learners came from diverse cultural, language, social, and economic backgrounds. The school hosted learners from different countries outside of South Africa as well as from the greater Durban and inner-city areas. There were approximately 42 learners in each classroom many of whom came from diverse language backgrounds with English being the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). The research site was a Quintile 5, fee-paying school that comprised of learners from both middle-class and disadvantaged backgrounds. To support the disadvantaged learners, the school implemented a feeding scheme to ensure that all learners had access to nutritious meals during the school day. Additionally, the school provided various forms of assistance to disadvantaged learners, including school fee aid, educational resources, and support services aimed at bridging the gap between different socioeconomic groups. The school's demographics reflected a blend of socioeconomic statuses, educational needs, and cultural experiences, contributing to a complex and multifaceted learning atmosphere.

1.8 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Orphan: - An orphan is a child who is under the age of 18 who has lost one or both parents to any cause of death (Hall, 2023; UNICEF, 2015).

Vulnerable children, often referred to as OVC (Orphaned and Vulnerable Children): - are those children who are at a higher risk of experiencing adverse outcomes and difficulties in their lives due to various factors that may include: orphanhood, poverty, abuse, malnutrition, and neglect (Sibeko, 2018). It's important to note that the concept of vulnerable children encompasses a wide range of circumstances, and the specific definition may vary depending on the context. This is the terminology that was used mostly in this study when referring to orphaned learners.

Psychoeducational challenges: - Psychoeducational problems are problems encountered by youth in the education process serious enough to cause significant emotional or psychological problems (Sam, 2013). In this study, psychoeducational challenges refer to difficulties or obstacles that OVC may face in the process of learning and acquiring knowledge due to

psychological, emotional, or social factors. These challenges can impact a child's ability to succeed in educational settings and can manifest in various ways, such as emotional and behavioural disorders. Learners experiencing conditions such as anxiety, depression, or conduct disorders may struggle with emotional regulation, which can interfere with their ability to engage in learning activities.

Support: - In this research study, this term refers to the professional assistance and encouragement that is offered by FP educators to the OVC. Support is defined as help and encouragement offered by educators that is intended to address the psychological, emotional, physical, and educational needs of learners in a school environment (Sibeko, 2018).

1.9 SYNOPSIS OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

This research study was anchored on the theoretical underpinnings of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological systems. The ecological systems theory articulates that a child is surrounded by numerous interconnected systems that affect their development. This theory was formulated in 1979 by Urie Bronfenbrenner. It focuses on the quality and context of the child's environment. Bronfenbrenner (1979) envisaged the child's environment as having different interconnected layers that influence their development with different degrees of impact. According to Bronfenbrenner, there are five systems around the child. These are; a) the microsystem, b) mesosystem, c) exosystem, d) macrosystem, and e) chronosystems. All these systems influence each other in complex ways (McGuckin & Minton, 2013). For this study, all five systems are highly relevant as they collectively influence and interact with each other to shape the educational and developmental experiences of the OVC at the school.

The *microsystem* is the one that is closest to the child's everyday life. It includes people, institutions and services that she or he directly interacts with in their immediate environment such are parents, siblings, other family members, school educators, other staff, and peers, etc. (McGuckin & Minton, 2013).

The *mesosystem* is about how people in the different microsystems around the child interact and are connected with each other for example a child's parents or guardians attending a school event (McGuckin & Minton, 2013).

The *exosystem* includes the broader community the child lives in. It includes everything from extended family members, parents' workplaces, neighbours, family friends, mass media, health, education, and social welfare services as well as political systems and policies

(McGuckin & Minton, 2013).

The *macrosystem* covers things going on at a bigger societal level and how these influence the other systems around the child. It includes ideologies, values, attitudes, laws and customs of a particular culture or subculture (McGuckin & Minton, 2013).

The *chronosystem* refers to how people experience things over their lifetime. It includes big life changes such as being displaced from one place to another (McGuckin & Minton, 2013).

In Chapter Two, a thorough examination of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and its relevance to this research study will be provided, offering insights into how these systems interact to shape the experiences of orphaned learners and the support they receive from FP educators.

1.10 SYNOPSIS OF RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section provides a summary of the research method used in this study. Chapter Three presents and discusses the research design and methodology that were used in this research study in detail.

1.10.1 *Research Paradigm*

A research paradigm serves as a framework for conducting research, providing a methodological model or pattern (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). According to Abbadia (2022), a research paradigm represents a set of ideas, beliefs, or understandings within which theories and practices operate. Researchers often identify six dominant paradigms or philosophies for research, including positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism or constructivism, pragmatism, critical theory, and postmodernism (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). For this study, the interpretivist paradigm was adopted due to its alignment with the subjective nature of the research topic. The interpretivism paradigm entails perceiving the world through the experiences and perceptions of participants, thereby viewing knowledge as socially constructed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

The interpretivism paradigm provided a suitable framework for investigating how FP educators perceived and navigated the psychoeducational challenges encountered by the OVC in their classrooms. By prioritising the perspectives and insights of educators, the study aimed to uncover nuanced understandings of the complexities inherent in supporting the OVC within

the educational context. This approach allowed for a holistic exploration of the multifaceted interactions between educators, learners, and their respective environments.

1.10.2 Research Approach

A research approach is a procedure selected by the researcher to collect, analyse, and interpret data. There are three approaches to research which are; quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). The research approach selected for this study involved a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research focuses on understanding phenomena by exploring the perspectives and experiences of participants, without relying on numerical data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). It is characterised by its interpretive and naturalistic approach to the subject matter (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

As described by Skovdal and Cornish (2015), qualitative research seeks to gain insights into phenomena by capturing the viewpoints and experiences of individuals involved. In this study, qualitative methods were employed to gather textual data from participants, allowing them to articulate their experiences in providing psychoeducational support to the OVC in their classrooms. Through a qualitative research approach, the study aimed to delve deeply into the lived experiences and perspectives of educators, shedding light on the challenges and strategies associated with supporting the OVC in educational settings.

1.10.3 Research Methodological Design

Research methodology is “an outline of the procedures that are used for data collection, analysis, and interpretation that researchers propose for their studies. Surveys or questionnaires, case studies, and document analysis are some of the research methodologies employed by social science researchers” (Creswell, 2013, p.114). In this study, the case study methodological design was adopted within a school setting.

This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of real-life situations, which may not be fully captured through experimental or survey research methods. A case study provides a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and offers valuable insights (Rule & John, 2011). Specifically, the case study focused on FP

educators who teach the OVC, aiming to thoroughly examine their experiences, practices, and challenges in supporting these learners.

1.10.4 Data Generation Methods

Coghlan (2019) and Goebel and Maistry (2022) differentiate between data gathering and data generation, with data gathering being discreet and the researcher being detached or inconspicuous and engaging in a remote and unobtrusive observation or document analysis which may be done from outside the research setting. However, data generation is participatory and can serve as a form of intervention as both the participants and the researcher are made aware of the issues through engagement, and are stimulated to think about actions to change the situation. In this study, data was generated through semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

Semi-structured interviews were utilised to allow participants to share their perspectives and experiences in their own words, facilitating deeper exploration and understanding of the issues (Robinson, 2014). This approach enabled interactions between the researcher and participants, fostering rich dialogue and insights. Document analysis involved examining various documents related to the school's records on the OVC Care Management Policies, Learner Profiles, Educator Observation, and Intervention Books, as well as screening and support needs assessment (SNA) forms. This method provided additional context and supplementary information to complement the insights gained from the interviews.

1.10.5 Research Participants (Sampling)

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) delineate two primary types of sampling which are; random sampling and purposive sampling, also known as non-probability sampling. In this study, a purposive convenience sampling strategy was employed to select three FP educators, one educator chosen from each grade spanning Grades 1 to 3. Purposive sampling was chosen due to the specific focus on FP educators from the targeted grades. Convenience sampling facilitated the selection of educators who were easily accessible, particularly considering the researcher's role as the FP Head of Department in the school where the study was conducted.

Given this context, there was a possibility of educators being reluctant to participate. As highlighted by Creswell (2013) and Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), the rationale for employing purposive convenience sampling is twofold: firstly, it enables the identification of participants who possess detailed and rich information pertinent to the research objectives, and secondly, it ensures that participants are readily accessible. Therefore, FP educators who expressed a willingness to participate were approached for inclusion in this research study.

1.11 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis involved the process of transforming raw data into meaningful insights (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2012). Once the data was generated, it underwent analysis to uncover the key findings of the study. In this research, field notes and audio recordings were transcribed into manageable segments and constituted the primary data for analysis. The objective was to comprehend the various components of the data and identify recurring patterns or themes.

The analysis process entailed organising the data to facilitate the identification of commonalities and informed interpretations (Maxwell, 2012). Data were structured based on similarities found in the participants' responses. Patterns emerged through a systematic approach, including colour coding to highlight similarities, aligning with the guidance of Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018). As a result, themes emerged from the extensive dataset, providing valuable insights into the research questions.

1.12 CHAPTER OVERVIEW.

This research study consists of five chapters. A summary of each is presented below:

❖ Chapter One: Setting the Scene

This chapter provides an introduction and background to the study. It discusses the general background of the study, outlines the problem statement, and discusses the rationale, purpose, and significance of the study. In addition, the chapter clarifies terms that were used in this study and provides a synopsis of the theoretical framework that underpinned the study and the research design and methodology that were implemented.

❖ **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This chapter focuses on a review of literature related to the phenomenon under the lens. Scholarly literature from national, Southern Africa Development Communities (SADC) and international contexts was used in this chapter to substantiate the arguments made on the study's phenomenon.

❖ **Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology**

This chapter discusses in detail the research paradigm, research approach, research methodological design, research participants and sampling procedures, data generation methods, data analysis, maintenance of research rigour, ethical considerations, and limitations to the study that were experienced when conducting this study.

❖ **Chapter Four: Data Presentation, Discussion and Analysis**

This chapter focuses on data presentation and its analysis to address the research questions and research objectives of the study. The findings from the data analysis and the interpretation of the data are also presented in this chapter. It details themes that emerged from the participants' verbatim quotes and document analysis. The research findings are presented and discussed regarding the literature reviewed and the theoretical framework that underpinned this study.

❖ **Chapter Five: Summary of Findings, Recommendations and Conclusion**

In this final chapter of the study, the presentation of the main findings, recommendations, and conclusion are made. The chapter consolidates and highlights key insights gained from the research. A summary of the entire study as well as a discussion of the implications of the study both practically and theoretically is also done.

1.13 CONCLUSION

This introductory chapter has set the stage for the research by providing context, identifying research questions and objectives, and outlining the problem statement. By reviewing existing literature, it has shed light on the educational challenges faced by orphaned children and their potential long-term impact on their well-being and academic achievement. The chapter has also presented the key elements of the research study, illustrating their significance in shaping the academic rigour of the project.

In the next chapter of this research study, Chapter Two, the literature review on the phenomenon under investigation will be presented, along with the theoretical framework that underpins this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Orphaned children are equally deserving of unconditional support and love. The world is much stronger when the vulnerable are also strengthened.” Wayne Chirisa

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter of this study, Chapter One discussed the basis of the study by providing an introduction to the study. It discussed the general background of the study, outlined the problem statement and research questions, and discussed the rationale, purpose, and significance of the study. In addition, the chapter clarified terms that were used in the study and provided a synopsis of the theoretical framework that underpinned the study and the research design and methodology that were implemented. This chapter discusses the study's literature review and theoretical framework.

A literature review examines previous research on the phenomenon under study to identify other scholars' findings (Creswell, 2013; Luft et al., 2022). Guided by the research question, the researcher reviewed relevant literature on orphaned learners' psychoeducational challenges. Scholarly literature from national, Southern African Development Communities (SADC) and an international context will be reviewed in this chapter to substantiate the arguments made. The theoretical framework of a research study underpins the philosophical grounds on which the research is based, forming a link between theoretical aspects and practical components of the phenomena being investigated (Creswell, 2013). Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory was chosen because it best explains the phenomenon under study.

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Vithal and Jansen (2010, p. 14) state that a “literature review assists the researcher to get a synthesis of what has not been written on that topic with the goal of clarifying it and addressing the gaps”. This section aims to present the literature review that the researcher navigated when conducting this study. The literature review is organised into five main themes, each addressing different aspects of the research topic. Since this research study values context, the first theme of the navigated literature focuses on the psychological challenges experienced by orphaned

learners emphasising the emotional and mental health issues they face. The second theme focuses on the orphaned learners' psychoeducational challenges highlighting how their educational journey is impacted by factors such as grief, trauma, and social isolation. The third theme focuses on the educators' beliefs, practices and understanding of psychoeducational support shedding light on educators' perspectives and approaches to assisting orphaned learners. The fourth theme focuses on the FP educators' role in supporting the OVC with grief and loss outlining the specific responsibilities and challenges faced by educators in this context. The fifth and last theme focuses on the review of international studies on orphaned and vulnerable children offering insights from a global perspective to complement the findings of local research.

2.2.1 Psychological Challenges Experienced by Orphaned Learners

Several studies have documented a significant rise in the population of the OVC in Sub-Saharan Africa and have highlighted the profound effects of this phenomenon on their psychological, emotional, and behavioural development. Gilo's (2017) research study on the experiences of orphaned children in Ethiopia highlighted those orphaned learners, in contrast to their non-orphaned counterparts, experienced significant psychological issues and distress. Orphans experience multiple challenges and require divergent kinds of support. These challenges are interrelated and have a collective impact on the well-being, nutritional status, educational experience, and feelings of love and security among orphaned learners (Mawere & Fraderick, 2015).

According to Oyedele et al., (2016), the experiences of orphaned learners vary in nature and intensity from one individual to another. The author highlighted that the challenges experienced by orphans at school were most likely a direct result of the difficulties they encountered in their lives. Oyedele et al., (2016) further stated that psychological challenges can have a far-reaching impact on the overall growth and development of orphans, affecting various aspects of their lives, including their academic performance.

In a study conducted in Kenya, researchers identified several psychological challenges that orphans encountered following the loss of their parents (Gicharu, 2013). In this study, the authors emphasised that when a child loses a parent, they are deprived of a crucial aspect of life, which is the guidance and support of a parent. This loss often necessitates someone else to take on the role of parenting, leading to a host of social problems (Gicharu, 2013). Orphans

often experience a sense of loss, feeling deprived of their own family and friends. Relocation, which can be a result of changes in living arrangements after the loss of parents, may further contribute to their feelings of disconnection (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 2016). Orphans might miss attending the schools they are familiar with, where they have established relationships with specific educators, fellow learners, and the community. As a result, they may experience a sense of isolation, and these feelings can significantly impact their academic performance (Tanga, 2013). According to Breckenridge et al., (2017), the death of parents amplifies the responsibilities of those who remain behind to care for their children, intensifying the pre-existing financial challenges.

Consequently, caregivers or relatives may find it challenging to provide these children with essential needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and education. In addition to the challenges mentioned by the authors, orphans may also face discrimination from caregivers when it comes to the allocation of resources for their needs. New caregivers may prioritise their own biological children when distributing resources, potentially leaving the orphaned children with fewer essential resources and support. This unequal treatment can further exacerbate the challenges that orphans face in their daily lives (Tanga, 2013).

A case study conducted by Asikhia and Mohangi (2015) in a secondary school located in Atteridgeville, Pretoria examined the psychological, emotional, and behavioural consequences experienced by orphans, as well as the school support they received. The findings of the study revealed that orphaned participants in the study had a notably high prevalence of psychological, behavioural, and emotional problems.

In addition, the support provided by the school was deemed insufficient. The research study also revealed that orphans were vulnerable to both mental and physical health issues, faced challenges related to poor nutrition, experienced poverty, and were at risk of sexual abuse (Asikhia & Mohangi, 2015). Furthermore, the absence of adult guidance and counselling had a detrimental impact on their education. Similarly, Kyaruzi (2022) undertook a research study on the psychosocial well-being of orphaned children in selected primary schools in Tanzania. The results of the study revealed that orphaned children were confronted with various psychosocial challenges, such as unhappiness, worries, loneliness, and other stressful experiences, which have a significant impact on their overall well-being.

The findings from Kyaruzi's (2022) study suggested that the behavioural issues observed in orphaned children, encompassing emotional difficulties and their interactions with peers and

educators, negatively influenced their ability to engage in learning activities within the classroom. Furthermore, there is a need for intervention to enhance psychosocial awareness for orphaned children in primary schools. Kyaruzi's (2022) study emphasised the need to provide in-service training to educators in government schools on guidance and counselling service provision to better support and address the psychosocial needs of orphaned children in the educational system.

A study conducted by Mwoma and Pillay (2015) in a South African township (Soweto) revealed that orphans faced a severe shortage of basic necessities like food, clothing, and shelter. The study focused on the psychological, emotional, and behavioural consequences experienced by orphans and the school support they received. Mwoma and Pillay (2015) found that orphans who were sampled in the research study as participants faced a high prevalence of psychological, emotional, and behavioural problems. Research found that many orphans live with elderly individuals who may struggle to manage all the tasks necessary to sustain a household.

Consequently, these children took on significant responsibilities and often had little time for play or schoolwork. Some of the orphans included in the study expressed strong feelings of anger and sadness due to their disadvantaged living conditions. These challenges had a detrimental impact on the orphans' academic performance, as they may be frequently late or absent from school due to a lack of both material and emotional support. Absenteeism and tardiness in attending school were identified as additional challenges that could have a detrimental impact on the academic performance of the OVC (Mwoma & Pillay 2015).

These factors may result in the OVC missing out on important educational opportunities and falling behind in their studies. Orphans in the study also reported low self-esteem, behavioural problems, and difficulties in their interpersonal relationships with peers and educators. The study found that anxiety, depression, and stress are prevalent mental health challenges among the OVC and that these emotional difficulties have a significant impact on their overall well-being, including their academic performance and social interactions (Mwoma and Pillay, 2015).

Cultural practices related to handling grief can also significantly affect an orphan and contribute to psychoeducational challenges (Babedi, 2018). According to Cancer.net. (2019), in some cultures, the topic of death and the loss of loved ones may not be openly discussed. This silence surrounding death can lead to ongoing grief and emotional distress among the

orphans, as they may never have the opportunity to find closure or process their feelings and experiences. Aboobaker (2016) concurs that the cultural context in which orphans are situated can play a pivotal role in shaping their understanding of and responses to grief and loss.

2.2.2 Orphaned Learners' Psychosocial Challenges

Psychosocial challenges refer to behaviour and emotional difficulties displayed by learners that impact schooling and academic achievement as learning depends on learners essentially being psychologically sound (Ambelu et al., 2019). The psychoeducation praxis is understood as knowledge of the learning processes in its cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects (Sibeko, 2018). Psychosocial challenges can stem from different factors such as contextual disadvantages, social problems, individual disabilities, and learning difficulties (Sibeko, 2018).

The repercussions of these issues such as heightened anxiety, depression, limited concentration span, severe trauma, increased discrimination and stigma, and elevated poverty levels unfold within the classroom, as educators grapple with the already demanding task of facilitating teaching and learning (Wood & Goba, 2011). Sibeko (2018) further noted that one of the most challenging tasks for educators is addressing the psychosocial challenges of orphans, as the loss of one or both parents can cause severe emotional pain and psychological trauma, profoundly affecting the child's psychological state which impacts on their academic performance.

Ranthamane (2020) conducted a study at a primary school in Lesotho that focused on investigating the psychoeducational challenges of HIV and AIDS orphans. The results indicated that the psychoeducational needs of orphans are compromised primarily due to a deficiency in support, particularly from caregivers. The study highlighted that HIV and AIDS orphans faced multifaceted challenges, including economic, social, psychological, and educational difficulties. These challenges, such as hunger, lack of resources, poor shelter, and exposure to child labour, impacted their well-being. Economic and social hardships contributed to emotional distress which adversely affected their education with issues like lack of concentration, poor attendance, and school dropout.

Babedi (2018) undertook a study on psychoeducational and social factors that contribute to anxiety in orphaned adolescent learners. The results indicated that orphaned learners

experienced intense anxiety which led to educational challenges and the school that the study was conducted in lacked a functional School Based Support Team (SBST) which was needed to address this psychoeducational challenge. As a result, the orphaned adolescent had very little or no emotional and learning support except from a few compassionate educators. The participants acknowledged that some educators displayed a negative attitude and said hurtful and belittling things to them which made them dislike learning and hindered their academic performance.

2.2.3 Educators' Beliefs, Practices and Understanding of Psychoeducational Support

The South African Department of Education's (DoE) Norms and Standards (DoE, 2000) identify seven roles for the educator and the competencies within each role. The community, citizenship, and pastoral role requires educators to "demonstrate the ability to develop a supportive and empowering environment for the learner and respond to the educational and other needs of learners and fellow educators." (DoE, 2000). This duty of care is established based on the principle that educators act "*in loco parentis*" (in the place of parents) with both original and delegated authority, which is inherent in their professional role (DoE, 2000; Mampane, 2018). Educators have a legal obligation to care for learners who are under their supervision for both educational and extracurricular activities.

This legal and ethical responsibility ensures the well-being and safety of learners under their care. Educators are often considered the "first in line" (Hay, 2015, p.60) to provide support and assistance to a grieving child. Ogina, (2010) mentioned that pastoral care is not an isolated undertaking but an integral aspect of teaching methodology. The author acknowledged that achieving intellectual and social development necessitates considering both a learner's internal elements (such as personality, character, and emotions) and external elements (home, society and environment).

This recognition highlighted the crucial role that educators played in helping learners cope with the emotional challenges that may arise from personal loss or grief. However, educators sometimes underestimate the impact of loss and grief in a FP classroom, assuming that young children can continue without requiring support (Dyregrov et al., 2013). According to Lethale and Pillay (2013), this misconception can lead to a lack of appropriate assistance for children dealing with these emotional challenges. Examining educators' beliefs, practices, and understanding of psychoeducational support is essential, as positive practices and attitudes

among educators are more likely to enhance the cognitive, behavioural, and emotional wellbeing of the OVC (Lethale & Pillay, 2013).

The study conducted by Aboobaker (2016) in a Pretoria-based Grade 3 classroom highlighted that educators often grapple with numerous responsibilities, sometimes overlooking children facing challenging circumstances. This research underscored that educators' roles extend beyond teaching as they also serve as confidants and trusted caretakers due to the significant amount of time learners spend at school (Aboobaker, 2016). These findings illuminate the diverse responsibilities educators bear in supporting learners academically and emotionally.

Contrastingly, a study by Coultas et al., (2015) in rural Zimbabwe revealed that educators predominantly perceived their roles as centred on teaching, facilitating learning, and managing school discipline. Providing care was not typically viewed as part of their responsibilities. This study highlighted a potential gap in recognising and understanding the broader roles and responsibilities that educators may need to undertake, especially in contexts where learners face unique challenges such as caregiving needs (Coultas et al., 2015).

Educators who participated in Magampa's (2014) study on the academic performance of orphaned primary school learners aged eight to ten years in the Limpopo Province, expressed concern that orphaned learners were more likely to achieve lower grades, struggle to maintain concentration and complete their schoolwork. Additionally, these participants viewed orphans as being disadvantaged and observed that orphaned children were more likely to exhibit behavioural and emotional difficulties compared to their non-orphaned peers (Magampa, 2014).

The educators expressed concerns about the capacity of guardians to adequately support orphaned learners, indicating that many of these caregivers were struggling to cope and, as a result, were unable to meet the needs of these children effectively. Some educators in the study expressed significant frustration when it came to dealing with orphaned children. Magama (2014) found that educators did not consider themselves adequately equipped to address the issues faced by orphaned and vulnerable children.

Mwoma and Pillay (2016) point out that educators faced obstacles in assisting OVC due to various reasons which included lack of sufficient time and curriculum pressures. Educators often found it challenging to balance the demands of the curriculum with the additional support required for the OVC. The study also highlighted that some educators lacked sensitivity and

did not fully consider the unique challenges faced by the OVC and, unfortunately, made comparisons between them and children who had better resources.

Their qualitative study revealed that the limited psychological support available to orphans in government schools can be attributed to a lack of professional skills such as counselling and guidance training, to effectively address the psychological needs of the OVC. As a result of these limitations, educators faced significant challenges in meeting the psychological and psychoeducational needs of orphans within the school setting (Mwoma and Pillay, 2016).

2.2.4 Foundation Phase Educator's Role in Supporting OVC with Grief and Loss

Educators should be able to know the signs of grief and how to support the child (Ranthamane, 2020). However, there remains a lack of understanding regarding the factors influencing educators' decision-making in addressing the needs of grieving children. Exploring the specific considerations guiding educators in supporting these learners is important (Aboobaker, 2016). Mwoma and Pillay (2016) highlight that many educators feel ill-prepared or untrained to manage the range of emotions that children might express and the psychological support given to orphans is minimal, as caregivers and educators lack counselling skills. Costelloe et al., (2020) purport that the grieving process in children is influenced by their age and their level of conceptual understanding, which typically becomes more developed around the age of seven. According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2011), learners between the ages of five and nine years are in the FP. At this age, children may fail to grasp the permanence and universality of death, resulting in anxiety, confusion, and potentially pathological symptoms (Chen & Panebianco, 2017; Costelloe et al., 2020).

Children who are experiencing trauma or loss rely on the school environment to function as a supportive community (Costelloe et al., 2020). However, a significant number of educators lack the knowledge and skills required to effectively handle issues of grief within the classroom setting (Stylianou & Zembylas, 2016). Unfortunately, because of the demands of the curriculum and insufficient preparation in handling bereavement and the experience of loss, educators frequently respond reactively rather than proactively to children's grief (Costelloe et al., 2020). Aboobaker (2016) asserts that in order for educators to develop a sense of ease and confidence when assisting learners who are mourning, they require specific and purposeful training focused on grief and the grieving process as it is important to recognise that grief should not be viewed as a problem to be solved but rather a process that requires support.

Children experience real grief when bereaved, yet some educators may still fail to understand this concept. Equipping educators with knowledge and skills in bereavement training would enable them to empower and offer the necessary support for learners who are experiencing grief as emphasised by Dyregrov et al., (2013). The authors noted that educators often encounter a lack of support from the school's administrative structures when assisting children dealing with grief. They feel that they are on their own in providing support to grieving learners and are left to decide on the most appropriate approach themselves.

Aboobaker (2016) states that educators are often unsure as to whether they are capable of helping a bereaved child by themselves or whether it would be better suited to refer them to a specialist. Hence, Aboobaker (2016) highlighted the importance of ensuring that educators have the necessary resources and support to address the emotional needs of learners effectively.

It is essential to recognise that many OVC have reported highly positive experiences with certain educators, particularly those involved in guidance and life orientation (Pillay, 2016). Educators have shown exceptional kindness and consideration towards OVC, taking proactive measures such as organising food hampers and providing school uniforms. They have also arranged additional learning support classes for OVC who faced difficulties in their schoolwork.

Such positive attitudes and actions by educators play a pivotal role in fostering the cognitive, behavioural, and emotional well-being and empowerment of OVC (Lethale & Pillay, 2013). According to Lethale and Pillay (2013), these supportive educators contribute to the holistic development and success of vulnerable children in the educational environment. Nxumalo et al. (2015) aver that educators in Sub-Saharan countries like Swaziland were reported to have used their resources and money to help meet the social needs of orphans. Essentially, educators in schools where there was high poverty among orphans indicated that their roles go beyond academic support to being caretakers ensuring that there's provision of food and clothing for learners in an under-resourced area (Nxumalo et al., 2015).

2.2.5 Review of International Studies from the Asian Pacific Region

India has more than 25 million orphans and abandoned children (UNICEF, 2012). Kaur et al., (2018) conducted a descriptive study focused on behavioural and emotional issues in orphans and other vulnerable children in Pradesh, India. Their research outcomes indicated that children

who lacked parental care and a stable family environment were often at risk of developing a range of psychological problems and psychiatric disorders.

In this particular study, it was observed that a majority of orphans and other vulnerable children exhibited conduct problems as the most prominent issue, followed by peer-related problems, emotional difficulties, hyperactivity, and a deficiency in pro-social behaviour. The study highlighted the importance of implementing measures for routine screening of psychological issues in these children. To counteract the detrimental impact of these psychological challenges on child development the authors emphasised the need to design and execute specific and timely intervention programmes.

Similarly, Shafiq et al. (2020) investigated the connection between anxiety, depression, stress, and decision-making in both orphaned and non-orphaned learners attending specific schools in Lahore, Pakistan. The findings indicated that orphaned children, in contrast to non-orphans, were more susceptible to experiencing severe depression. The study's implications underscore the necessity for heightened awareness and attention from both government agencies such as schools and non-governmental organisations to develop therapeutic programmes and interventions specifically tailored to address the needs of orphaned children.

Zhang et al. (2022) conducted a research study to explore the effects of group counselling. Their study focused on social intervention and psychological therapy, on the enhancement of social support and the reduction of perceived stress among orphans and vulnerable children attending a special educational needs school in Nanning, China. The authors highlighted that in 2020, China's orphan population was expected to be at 193,300. Their study showed that orphans and vulnerable children belong to a group of children who faced a higher likelihood of encountering more stressful situations and receiving less social support compared to their peers (Zhang et al., 2022). Its implementation in the community-based school served to raise awareness about OVC among educators and the school principal while also offering these staff members the support and the opportunity to collaborate with other professionals who have a vested interest and training in helping OVC.

Consequently, their social support group and psychological counselling programmes functioned as avenues for providing training to all educators at the community-based school. This training aimed to equip them with the necessary skills to effectively manage the significant numbers of orphaned and vulnerable children often present in schools. The findings of the

study highlighted the importance of educator training in schools to acquire fundamental skills for supporting OVC.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Sreekumar (2023) describes a theoretical framework in research as a compilation of concepts, theories, ideas, and assumptions that aid in comprehending a particular phenomenon or issue. It functions as a roadmap for the research study, guiding the research process and aiding researchers to form a clear interpretation of their findings. Hence, it offers a structured approach for organising data and forming conclusions and thus plays a crucial role in the research endeavour (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Sreekumar, 2023). The theoretical framework encapsulates the researcher's comprehension and conceptualisation of how the variables in the study are interconnected and communicate with each other. The framework is instrumental in fully describing and investigating the phenomenon under study (Uher, 2018).

This research study focused on investigating the psychoeducational challenges of orphans from the perspective of FP educators. The theoretical framework chosen for this research was Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory which provided an insightful framework for understanding the experiences of children's educators and early childhood education (Tudge et al., 2017). The primary focus of this theory centres on the interconnectedness and relationships between individuals and their surrounding physical environments. The theory suggests that social interaction occurs not only between a child and their immediate environment but also among the various systems that constitute the child's surroundings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the ecological environment, which is specific to each individual's circumstances, can be visualised as a set of nested and interconnected structures. The theory emphasises that five systems influence individuals for balanced behavioural growth (McGuckin & Minton, 2013). These systems include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystems as depicted in Figure 2.1 below.

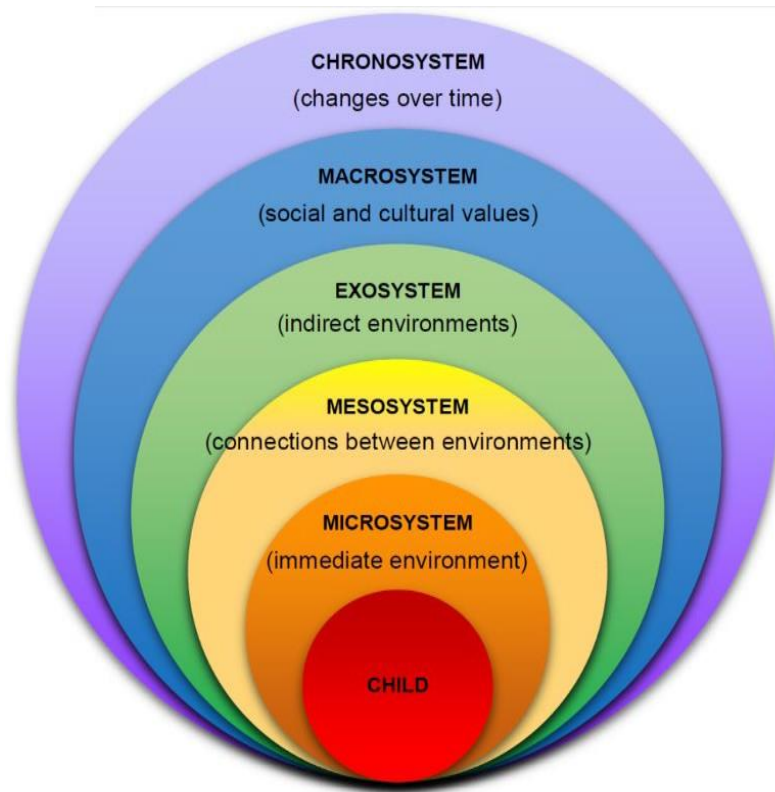


Figure 2.1: Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory

Source: Buckley & Budzyna (2023)

Figure 2.1 above illustrates that a child's development is influenced by five ecological systems.

The ecological systems are:

Microsystem: The first ecological system as depicted in Figure 2.1 above is the microsystem. In the context of a child in the Foundation Phase, Bronfenbrenner's microsystem remains highly relevant. This system refers to the child's most immediate contacts and environment, encompassing key elements and relationships that significantly influence their development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). For children in this age group, the microsystem represents their immediate and direct environment, playing a crucial role in shaping their growth and experiences. The family remains a primary and crucial component of the microsystem for children in this age group. Parents, siblings, and other close family members are the primary caregivers and sources of support for the child (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Donald et al., 2014). Their interactions, parenting styles, and relationships within the family greatly influence the child's development. The child's school, educators, and peers at school become increasingly

influential. The classroom environment, teaching methods, and the social dynamics within the school all play a significant role in shaping the child's cognitive and social development. In addition, children in this age group often form close friendships and social connections with peers.

These relationships are a vital part of their microsystem, as they impact the child's social skills, emotional development, and personal interests. The child's local community, including neighbours and community organisations, can also be part of their microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Donald et al., 2014; Tudge et al., 2017). Bronfenbrenner's emphasis on the bidirectional influences within the microsystem is particularly relevant for children of this age. They not only receive input and support from these immediate contacts but also contribute to the dynamics through their actions and behaviours (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). This interplay between the child and their microsystem is crucial in understanding their development and interaction in the Foundation Phase.

Mesosystem: The second ecological system as depicted in Figure 2.1 above is the mesosystem. This system refers to the interconnections and interactions between different microsystems in an orphaned child's life (Bista et al., 2016; Bronfenbrenner, 2005). In this context, it means that the experiences of an orphaned child within their family are linked to their experiences at school. The mesosystem emphasises how events and dynamics in one microsystem can have a ripple effect and influence the child's experiences and development in another microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Donald et al., 2014; Tudge et al., 2017). This means that what occurs in one microsystem will inadvertently affect the functioning of the OVC in another microsystem. For instance, if an orphaned child is neglected by their caregivers, this may negatively affect their perception of and attitude towards their educators. This, in turn, might lead to feelings of discomfort in the presence of peers and cause them to withdraw from social interactions with their classmates.

Exosystem: The third ecological system as depicted in Figure 2.1 above is the exosystem. This system represents external environments that indirectly influence an individual, even though the individual does not directly interact with them (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). When considering a young orphaned child, the exosystem plays a significant role in their life an example being government policies and services. The policies and services provided by the government and social welfare organisations are part of the exosystem for orphaned children. These policies may determine their access to support, education, and healthcare. Changes in government

policies can have a profound impact on the resources available to orphaned children (Bista et al., 2016; Donald et al., 2014).

Macrosystem: The fourth ecological system as depicted in Figure 2.1 above is the macrosystem. The Macrosystem comprises societal, religious, and cultural values and influences (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Donald et al., 2014). These values, although not fixed, can change over time and may have an indirect impact on the orphan. In some cultures, talking about death is not acceptable which inadvertently impacts the orphaned learner's ability to deal with grief (Aboobaker, 2016).

Chronosystem: The final ecological system according to Bronfenbrenner (2005) is the chronosystem. The chronosystem refers to the dimension of time and how various life events and transitions impact an orphaned and vulnerable child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). When considering an OVC, the chronosystem plays a crucial role in understanding their life and development. This means that the chronosystem considers the significant life events and shifts in a person's life, as well as the historical and societal contexts that can affect the experiences and development of the individual, particularly in the case of an orphaned child (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

For example, the feelings of loss and grief of an orphaned child over time are examined. The initial event of losing one or both parents is a significant life transition for an orphaned child. The chronosystem considers how the experience of loss and grief evolves over time, with the child's understanding and emotional response changing as they grow older. This system evaluates how responses to significant life changes evolve, reflecting on both the personal and broader societal impacts on an orphaned child's experience of grief and growth (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Bronfenbrenner further operationalised his theory into what he called the process-person-context-time (PPCT) model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). In this model, proximal processes are considered to be the day-to-day activities and interactions in which individuals engage as they learn and develop. These activities and interactions are significantly influenced by the contexts in which they occur and are also influenced, to some extent, by the personal characteristics of all individuals involved, including the child, educators, caregivers, and peers (Tudge et al., 2017). To study development effectively, one must collect data over time during these proximal processes, examining the interactions and their impact on the child (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

2.3.1. Significance of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory in The Context of this Research Study

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory holds significant implications for the field of education and understanding the impact of a child's environment on their development (Tudge et al., 2017). The significance of Bronfenbrenner's theory in the context of this research study is highlighted below. The following contexts of the child's environment will be explored:

Firstly, understanding environmental influences: Bronfenbrenner's theory emphasises the importance of understanding how different ecological systems, such as the family, school, and community, impact on a child's development. For orphaned children, the absence of a nurturing family environment can lead to feelings of neglect and not belonging, potentially affects their ability to form healthy relationships.

Secondly, understanding the impact on school relationships: Given the significant time children spend in school, the relationships they form with educators, peers and other school staff becomes critical for their positive development. Orphaned and vulnerable children may face unique challenges both at home and in school that can negatively affect their education.

Thirdly, supporting OVC: Understanding the various ecological systems that affect OVC is essential for providing effective support while they are in school. By considering factors like educator-learner relationships, teaching methods, and the overall school culture, educators and support systems available can better address the specific needs and challenges faced by orphaned children.

Fourthly, the importance of comprehensive research: To fully comprehend the experiences of the OVC in the school environment, it is crucial to investigate all aspects influenced by Bronfenbrenner's five ecological systems. This research approach allows for a holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by OVC, enabling the development of targeted interventions and support mechanisms.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted influences on a child's development, particularly for an OVC (Donald et al., 2014; Tudge et al., 2017). By examining the various ecological systems surrounding an OVC, including the family, school, community, and broader societal influences, educators and support systems can gain deeper insights into the challenges these children face and develop more targeted interventions. The theory emphasises the importance

of fostering positive relationships and creating supportive environments within each system to promote healthy development and academic success among all OVC (Galassi, 2016).

2.4. CONCLUSION

The current chapter provided an overview of the psychoeducational difficulties faced by orphaned individuals. It introduced various facets of the challenges experienced by orphans, including educational, psychological, and emotional difficulties, and delved into their detailed examination and discussion. The second aspect covered in the review covered psychoeducational challenges and their impact on the OVC. The third part of the review involved an examination of educators' beliefs, practices, and comprehension regarding psychoeducational challenges and the support they provide to address these issues.

The fourth section of the review centred on studies exploring the role of FP educators in providing support to the OVC dealing with grief and loss. In the concluding part of the review, scholarly literature from an international perspective was employed to validate the points presented in this chapter. Finally, the discussion delved into theoretical perspectives on orphanhood. A discussion on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and its relevance to the research study was presented. The next chapter discusses in detail the research paradigm, research approach, research methodological design, research participants and sampling procedures, data generation methods, data analysis, maintenance of research rigour, ethical considerations and limitations to the study that were experienced when conducting this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

“The planning of educational research is not an arbitrary matter; the research itself is an inescapably ethical enterprise”

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2013, p. 73)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter provided a review of scholarly literature that was deemed relevant to comprehending the study’s phenomenon. The review encompassed an exploration of literature on psychoeducational challenges encountered by orphaned learners, alongside an examination of educators' beliefs, practices, and understanding of psychoeducational support. Additionally, it delved into the FP educators’ vital role in supporting the OVC in dealing with grief and loss. By integrating these dimensions, the review not only highlighted existing gaps in research but also directed and fortified the current study by acknowledging both local and international contexts.

In this chapter, the research paradigm, research design, and methodological design as research study elements are discussed in detail. The explanation includes insights into the research approach, the sampling of participants, and data generation methods. Additionally, the procedures for data analysis, along with considerations for ethics, trustworthiness, and steps taken to address the limitations of the study, are presented. This chapter maps out the route taken in this research study and also explains the context in which the study was conducted (Mertler, 2015; Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY ELEMENTS.

This section aims to present different research design and methodology elements entailed in this study. Figure 3.1 below presents a thumbnail representation of the route I undertook when conducting this study.

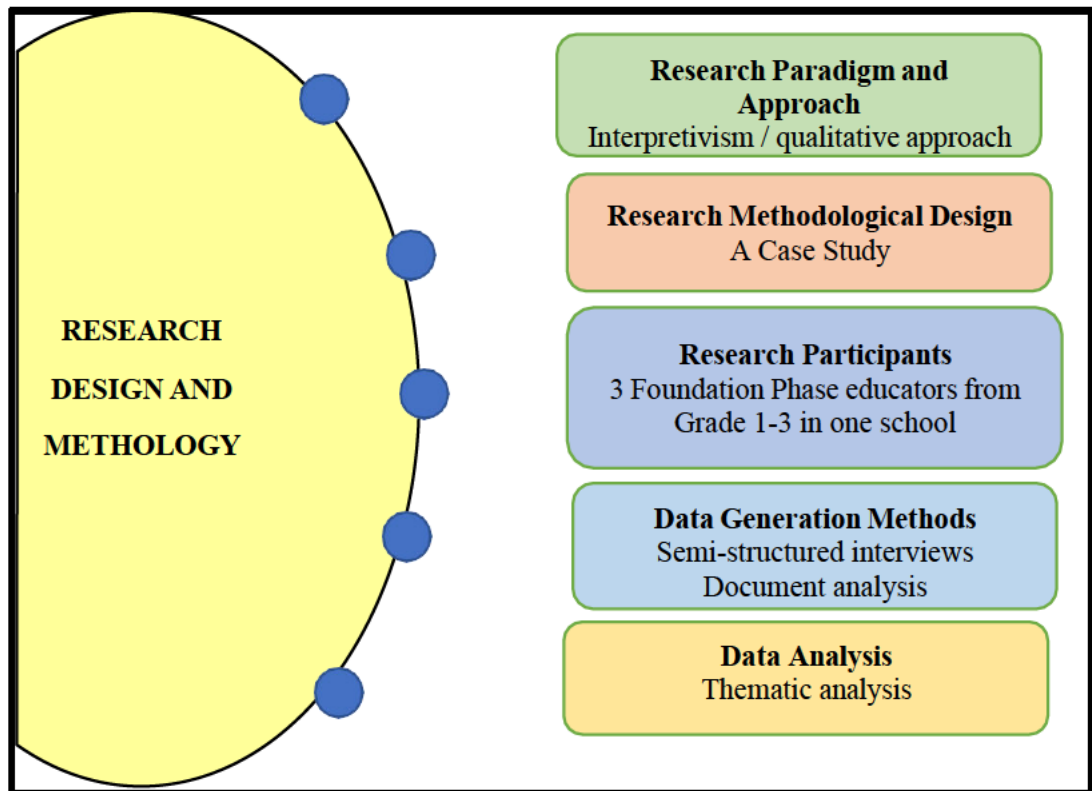


Figure 3.1: A thumbnail graphical representation of research design and methodology.

Source: Author

3.2.1 Research Paradigm

The term "paradigm" has its origins in Greek, where it denotes a pattern (Kivunja & Kiyuni, 2017). In the context of educational research, the term is employed to characterise a researcher's 'worldview'. This worldview represents the perspective, thinking, school of thought or a set of shared beliefs that shapes the meaning or interpretation of research data (Kivunja & Kiyuni, 2017). Some researchers characterise six dominant paradigms or philosophies to research which are: positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism or constructivism, pragmatism, critical theory, and postmodernism (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Paradigms function as filters or organising principles through which reality is perceived (Kivunja & Kiyuni, 2017).

Abbadia (2022) posits that a research paradigm is a method, model, or pattern for conducting research. It encompasses a set of ideas, beliefs, or understanding within which theories and practices operate. Most paradigms are based on one of two research methodologies either

positivism or interpretivism. The choice of a research paradigm has significant implications for the entire research process, from the formulation of research questions to data collection and analysis. The researcher adopting the interpretivist paradigm perceives the world through the lens of participants' perceptions and experiences. In this paradigm no data is considered objective; instead, reality is subjective and constructed. (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Interpretivism, aligned with a worldview suitable for social science research, does not adhere to a strict cause-effect orientation. Instead, it adopts the perspective that all cause-effect relationships entail a probability of occurrence, which may or may not manifest (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This paradigm advocates for the social construction of knowledge, allowing participants to derive meaning from their perspectives which aligns with the current study. Joubert (2013) affirmed that within the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher assumes the primary role in generating and analysing qualitative data. The researcher holds certain assumptions and extracts data from participants' experiences, interpreting it to derive meaningful results.

The interpretive paradigm was chosen for this study to delve into the views, feelings, and participants' interpretations of their lived circumstances. This type of research allowed for the acknowledgment of participants' realities that stem from their experiences. The interpretive paradigm accentuates experiences by delving into educator narratives, revealing their interpretations of their encounters with OVC in education. The rationale for applying this paradigm was that it readily allowed me in this study to examine FP educators' beliefs and practices when offering psychoeducational support to the OVC in school. The interpretivism paradigm facilitated the exploration of these educators' genuine thoughts, feelings, and experiences with vulnerable children, forming the foundation of the research. This paradigm was considered relevant to the study as it enabled participants to share information regarding their understanding of OVC and the psychoeducational challenges experienced.

3.2.2 Research Approach

A research approach is a methodology selected by a researcher for collecting, analysing, and interpreting data. There are three primary research approaches: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014). Unlike quantitative research, which aims to confirm or refute hypotheses through deductive reasoning, qualitative research synthesises data to produce empirical findings through a process known as inductive reasoning. The qualitative

approach focuses primarily on exploring, describing, and interpreting the personal and social experiences of participants, with a key emphasis on understanding how meanings are constructed and shaped discursively (Smith, 2015). Qualitative research examines phenomena primarily from the participants' viewpoints, allowing researchers to gain deeper insights into the subject matter, as emphasised by Skovdal and Cornish (2015). This contrasts with quantitative research, which relies on predetermined objectives and specialises in mathematical or statistical expressions (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014). Qualitative inquiry is conducted in a natural setting where data is generated and knowledge is created (Mertler, 2015; Lune & Berg, 2017; Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Skovdal and Cornish (2015) noted that qualitative research enhances the understanding of phenomena by capturing them through the perspectives and experiences of participants. In the context of this study, it involved gathering insights from FP educators about the psychoeducational challenges faced by the OVC, understanding the impact on their lives, and identifying the support needed. Such nuanced understandings cannot be achieved through quantitative research. Due to its interactive and descriptive nature, which focuses on exploring and understanding the central phenomenon related to the study, the qualitative approach is deemed suitable for this research. Fundamentally, this approach involves direct interaction with participants to gather the data under study (Maree, 2012).

The research unfolded in an open-ended manner, free from attempts to steer it toward any predetermined expectations or biases (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative approach was chosen because it was necessary to develop a complex, detailed understanding of how FP educators address the needs of OVC (Creswell, 2013). This approach also allowed me to enter appropriate research setting to gain knowledge of participants' personal experiences, obtain detailed data on how educators manage and support OVC, and understand the contexts in which participants confront the psychoeducational challenges experienced.

3.2.3 Research Methodological Design

According to Creswell (2013), research methodological design outlines the procedures used for data collection, analysis, and interpretation that researchers propose for their studies. It serves as the pattern or plan employed to collect evidence for answering research questions. Methodology encompasses the theoretical, political, and philosophical foundations of social research, outlining their implications for both research practice and the selection of specific

research methods. The most commonly used methodologies include case study, grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology and narrative (Petty, Thomson & Stew, 2012).

This study employed an exploratory case study methodological design. Woodside (2010) defines a case study as a method that provides a profound understanding of thought processes, intentions, and contextual influences identified within case study research. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) view case studies as investigations into specific instances or phenomena in their real-life contexts. Rooted in real-life situations, a case study offers insights and illuminates meanings, providing a holistic account of the phenomenon and insights therein (Rule & John, 2011).

Case studies are particularly effective for exploring contemporary phenomena within their real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly defined. Furthermore, given that the contexts are unique and dynamic, case studies are designed to investigate and report on the complex, dynamic, and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships, and other factors in a unique way. They focus on individual participants or groups of participants and seek to understand their perceptions of events (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) and Nieuwenhuis (2016) also note that case studies involve multiple sources and techniques in the data-gathering process, making them capable of handling a wide variety of evidence, such as questionnaires, documents, interviews, and observations that validate the findings.

The use of a case study as a research methodological design was considered appropriate for this research study as it facilitated an in-depth study of a case involving FP educators' experiences of offering psychoeducational support to OVC. In my study, I explored the role of FP educators to grasp their beliefs, practices, and understandings of psychoeducational challenges experienced, as well as the support provided to the OVC within a purposively selected school in the Umlazi district.

This exploratory case study methodological design was chosen to effectively address the research focus and provide an opportunity to comprehensively understand educators' experiences in an authentic context (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). According to Creswell (2013), the evidence gathered in a case study is considered robust and reliable due to the use of diverse data generation methods. The varied sources used yielded data that was compared

and contrasted to provide comprehensive knowledge on the research topic. The use of a case study methodological design in this study captured a range of perspectives, rather than a singular point of view, helping to eliminate bias for more accurate findings (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

3.2.4 Research Sampling Procedures

3.2.4.1 *The Research Site*

According to Creswell (2015), the research site is defined as the location where data is collected. In this study, a single public primary school was selected as the research site, situated in the KwaKhangela Region, Umlazi District of KwaZulu-Natal. Located in the inner city of Durban, this quintile five, fee-paying school was chosen primarily for its convenience and my close connection to it as the Departmental Head in the Foundation Phase.

During the research period, the school served 1504 learners, with 697 in the Foundation Phase (Grades R to 3), and 806 in the Intermediate and Senior Phases. The focus of this study was solely on the Foundation Phase, which included 18 educators and two departmental heads. Grade R was staffed by two educators, while Grades 1 to 3 each had five classes, totalling 15 educators. The school also hosted one special needs class within the FP. The LoLT was English, and the learner population comprised of children from predominantly disadvantaged to middle-class families, including learners of various races and foreign nationals.

During the time of this research study, data from the school's database, known as the South African School's Admissions and Management Systems (SA-SAMS), indicated a significant number of orphaned children, highlighting the relevance of this site for studying the challenges faced by the OVC. As a member of the School Based Support Team (SBST), I had access to insights regarding the various challenges documented at this site, particularly those affecting OVC. The school had even employed a social worker, funded by the School Governing Body (SGB), to address these challenges.

My direct involvement and longstanding association with the school provided invaluable background knowledge that facilitated the purposive sampling process. The choice of this site was further justified by the fact that half of the FP staff had been teaching for between

20 and 25 years, bringing a wealth of experience and a well-established knowledge base crucial for addressing issues related to OVC.

3.2.4.2 The Sampled Participants

Creswell et al., (2011, p. 79) define sampling as "the process used to select a portion of the population for study." They assert that sampling allows the researcher to access the "richest possible source of information to answer the research questions" (Creswell et al., 2011, p. 79). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018), there are two main types of sampling: random sampling and purposive sampling, the latter also known as non-probability sampling.

Within non-probability sampling, convenience sampling, also referred to as accidental sampling, is a method where participants are chosen based on specific practical criteria such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at certain times, or willingness to participate (Etikan et al., 2016). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) and Creswell (2015) support this approach, noting that purposive convenient sampling is advantageous because it allows researchers to select participants who not only have detailed and rich information but are also conveniently accessible.

For this study, a purposive convenience sampling strategy was employed. Three FP educators, one from each of Grades 1, 2, and 3, were selected based on their ready accessibility and in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon under study. These educators were already familiar with me and expressed their willingness to be interviewed, as documented in Appendix D. The initial meeting involved all FP educators from Grade R to Grade 3, totalling 18, along with the SMT. The purpose of this meeting was to outline the research project, discuss its significance, and clarify the importance of their participation.

During this session, I also addressed technical matters, including objectivity and ethical considerations. Three FP educators were ultimately sampled as participants. I purposively sampled these educators because it was convenient to get hold of them, as they were readily available and located within the same school environment in which the research was conducted. Additionally, they had learners in their classrooms who were orphaned and vulnerable children, making them directly relevant to the study of the phenomenon. The selection was based on

their experience as well, ensuring that they possessed a deep understanding of the psychoeducational challenges faced by OVC. This approach ensured that the data generated was grounded in direct experience and relevant expertise, thereby enriching the findings of the research.

3.3. DATA GENERATION METHODS

Goldkuhl (2019) highlights that data generation in qualitative research emphasises the exploration and understanding of phenomena within their natural context, allowing researchers to capture the richness and complexity of human experiences, perspectives, and social processes. The methods employed for data generation in qualitative research are often flexible and may include techniques such as interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and open questionnaires. It involves the active and intentional process of generating data points that are relevant to the research question or objective (Goldkuhl, 2019). The study's authenticity was maintained by employing a variety of distinct data generation methods, as advocated by Cresswell (2015).

Coghlan (2019) and Goebel and Maistry (2022) distinguish between data gathering and data generation. Data gathering is discreet, with the researcher remaining detached or inconspicuous, engaging in remote and unobtrusive observation or document analysis from outside the research setting. Conversely, data generation is participatory in nature and can serve as a form of intervention. For this study, document analysis and semi-structured interviews were utilised to gather and generate data. These methods were chosen to ensure a comprehensive exploration of the research topic within its natural context.

3.3.1 Interviews as a data generation method

According to Creswell et al., (2011, p.87), an interview is defined as "a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participants questions to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions, and behaviours of the participant." Interviews involve verbal interaction to collect data from human sources (Goldkuhl, 2019). In the research context, interviews serve as a platform for a two-way conversation, allowing the interviewer to gather insights into the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions, and practices of the interviewee (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). The authors maintain that the most suitable method for investigating human experiences is often by means of interviews.

MacDonald (2012, p.42) emphasises that interviews provide the researcher with “access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than the words of the researcher”. Hence, this type of research interaction provided me with access to people's insights and experiences in their own words, facilitating clear expression. Various types of interviews can be implemented in qualitative research, including structured, unstructured, semi-structured, and focus group interviews (Alsaawi, 2014). Each type serves a specific objective and focus, with the choice depending on the research question, the nature of the study, and the depth of information sought from participants (Alsaawi, 2014). In this study, I used semi-structured interviews.

Semi-Structured Interviews

In this research study, I chose to use semi-structured interviews as the method to generate data. Semi-structured interviews are open-ended and they allowed FP educators to share their experiences of offering psychoeducational support to the OVC. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) and Robinson (2014) highlight that the techniques of individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews enable interactions between the researcher and participants, allowing them to discuss issues from their perspective in their own words and elaborate further when necessary. Semi-structured interviews, as described by Maree (2012), offered me a degree of flexibility, allowing the conversation to flow naturally while I probed for additional information.

In this study, three FP educators who were purposively and conveniently sampled as research participants were interviewed. Only one session was conducted with each participant using the interview schedule I generated (see Appendix E). The interview questions were formulated with sensitivity and respect to facilitate comfortable participation and rapport building. In the context of a semi-structured interview, I meticulously crafted interview schedule that served as an invaluable method for extracting pertinent information from my research study's participants.

I carefully designed the interview schedule by taking into account the research objectives to ensure that key topics and themes central to the study were adequately addressed during the interview process. Drawing from insights provided by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the development of such an interview schedule involved thoughtful consideration of the research questions. By providing a structured framework while allowing for flexibility, the interview

schedule facilitated a systematic exploration of relevant topics, enabling me to delve into the nuances of participants' experiences and perspectives. Ultimately, the intentional design of the interview schedule enhanced the rigour and comprehensiveness of the data generated, contributing to the overall validity and reliability of the research findings.

Prior to the interviews, participants signed a letter of informed consent outlining their rights to participate in this study, assurance that data elicited was going to be used specifically for this study only and that their identity and the school's identity will remain anonymous. I also informed the participants that they were at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time should the need arise and no adverse ramifications were to be experienced (see Appendix D). To minimise disruption to school routines, interview sessions were scheduled after school hours. All participating FP educators consented that I can use the audio recorder during the interviews. Each interview session lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.

3.3.2 Document Analysis as a data generation method

Document analysis of minutes of meetings from the SBST, SA-SAMS database, school policies and educator observation and intervention books served as the second method of data generation in this study. Data generation involves a systematic process of reviewing literature and relevant documents to extract useful information (Botha & Kourkoutas, 2015; Aspers & Corte, 2019;). In my initial step, I examined the OVC care management policies to understand the processes and protocols outlined by the school when working with the OVC. Subsequently, I checked and reviewed the SA-SAMS database of the school to ascertain the number of orphaned children and their attendance records at the research site from Grade R to Grade 3. I also verified learner profiles of the OVC through scrutinisation of the SA-SAMS database to analyse academic progress reports, screening, and support needs assessment (SNA) forms, as well as any psychological reports available.

I at a later stage reviewed minutes from the SBST meetings to determine the efforts made by the school to support the OVC. Furthermore, I checked the observation and intervention books of educators working with the OVC. The document analysis method of generating data contributed to the depth and richness of the data corpus by providing additional context and perspective from written sources (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

3.3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis involves the transformation of raw data into meaningful information (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2012). The authors state that once the data has been generated it will be analysed to reveal the findings of the study. Rule and John (2011) emphasise that data analysis and interpretation play a crucial role in the research process. During this stage, I developed thorough descriptions, identify themes, generate explanations for thoughts and actions, and engage in critical reflection to theorise the case. Ngulube (2015) outlines various methods of data analysis for qualitative research, including content analysis, thematic analysis, grounded theory analysis, and narrative analysis. For this study, thematic data analysis was employed, which, according to Braun and Clarke (2013), synergises effectively with theory to elucidate and predict diverse research outcomes within a specific context.

Braun and Clarke (2013) assert that thematic analysis involves identifying themes within the collected data and analysing the data based on these themes. The authors elucidated that the essence of thematic analysis complements social constructivism, enriching the exploration of meanings and experiences within a specific context. They emphasise the continuous process of moving between the entire data set, the coded extracts under analysis, and the on-going production of data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In thematic analysis, writing is an integral and concurrent part of the analysis, distinguishing it from statistical analyses where writing typically occurs at the conclusion of the process.

I employed the deductive and thematic analysis methods to analyse the qualitative data in this study. In the deductive approach, the theoretical framework served as a guide for identifying themes to be analysed. This method's flexibility, as highlighted by Braun and Clarke (2013), renders it particularly suitable for qualitative studies. Adhering meticulously to the analytical protocol outlined by Braun and Clarke (2013), I conducted the data analysis process in accordance with Table 3.1 provided below.

Table 3.1: Phases of Thematic Analysis

Source: Braun &Clarke (2013)

	Phase	Description of the process
1	Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing data as needed, engaging in iterative reading and re-reading of the data, and documenting initial insights.
2	Generating initial codes	Systematically coding noteworthy aspects of the data across the entire dataset and organising data pertinent to each code.
3	Searching for themes	Aggregating codes into potential themes and compiling all data associated with each potential theme.
4	Reviewing themes	Evaluating the coherence of themes in connection with the coded extracts and the entire dataset, and creating a thematic 'map' to illustrate the analysis.
5	Defining and naming themes	Continuously refining the details of each theme and the overarching narrative conveyed by the analysis, and creating precise definitions and labels for each theme.
6	Producing the report	The last phase of the analysis involved selecting vivid and compelling examples from the data, conducting a final analysis of these chosen extracts, and connecting the findings back to the research questions and existing literature. This culminates in the production of an academic report summarising the analysis.

Rule and John (2011, p.78-79) underscore the importance of rigour in data analysis, “emphasising its impact on shaping research findings and modelling the generated theory”. I ensured data triangulation by using the transcribed semi-structured interviews and findings from the document analysis which were both analysed to review the same phenomenon

(Creswell, 2015). This helped me to ensure that findings were consistent across different data sources. Rule and John (2011, p.108) elaborate that “the rationale behind triangulation lies in the diversity of sources, methods, or other aspects that strengthen the accuracy and reliability of a claim or finding”. Carter et al., (2014) concur as they mention that triangulation, in qualitative research, involves employing multiple methods or sources of data to gain a thorough understanding of a research problem or to validate findings by converging information from different sources

I meticulously examined the data, organising it into categories or themes that transcended both data sources (Creswell, 2015). To initiate the data analysis process, I listened to all the audio-taped voices of the participants. I also frequently read the interview transcripts, and the document analysis reports to make sense of the data generated. According to Creswell (2013), the researcher should become intimate with the data by reading it several times to make sense of what is revealed at different stages. In this study, I honed in on themes to convey the overarching meaning, and clear definitions were formulated for each theme.

I employed extracts or quotes to encapsulate the essence of each theme (Crowe, Maree & Porter, 2015). I used a manual colour- coding strategy to identify the codes that were later gelled into themes. These colour codes assisted me in collating the data and hence understanding each participant’s responses. I consistently validated emerging themes against the generated data. Throughout the research process, the focus was on understanding FP educators' perspectives on their experiences of providing psychoeducational support to the OVC, the challenges they encountered, and how these relate to the literature review and theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Two. The following three themes emerged as a result of thematic data analysis:

- Theme 1: Cultivating Resilience: Foundation phase educators' endeavours in offering psychoeducational support
- Theme 2: Building Collaborative Networks: Foundation phase educators' structures for psychoeducational support
- Theme 3: Compassionate Commitment: The motivation behind foundation phase educators' psychoeducational support

3.4. RESEARCH QUALITY (RIGOUR) ISSUES IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Creswell and Creswell (2018) assert that in qualitative research, ensuring research quality and rigor is crucial to producing trustworthy and dependable findings. According to Kumar (2019), research rigor refers to the strict standards and meticulous methods used to ensure the quality, reliability, and credibility of scientific research findings. To evaluate the quality and rigor of qualitative research, researchers use the trustworthiness criteria, which include trustworthiness, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) concur and state that research quality in qualitative studies is determined by several key factors which are; credibility, trustworthiness, transferability, dependability, and confirmability and neutrality. These criteria ensure that the research is accurate, applicable to other contexts, consistent, and objective.

These criteria are essential in assessing the credibility, reliability, and generalisability of the research findings and are critical in establishing the validity and legitimacy of qualitative research. By upholding research rigor, researchers can increase the confidence in their findings and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in their field (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The following section, will explore each of these criteria in depth, examining how they contributed to this research study's maintenance of quality and rigour.

3.4.1 Credibility and Trustworthiness

3.4.1.1 Credibility

Research studies that are qualitative in nature emphasise the credibility of findings, in contrast to quantitative research, which focuses on validity (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Credibility pertains to “the precision with which the researcher interprets the data supplied by the participants” (Du Plooy & Cilliers, 2014, p.258). It refers to how accurate and trustworthy the data and conclusions are and reflects the researcher's confidence in the findings of the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

In this study, participants were afforded the opportunity to review, validate, and verify the researcher's interpretations, “ensuring that the information provided was not misconstrued” (Brink et al., 2012, p.127). To guarantee the credibility of the study's findings, I engaged in member checking with the participants. In addition, I ensured credibility by using document analysis, a qualitative research method that involves interpreting documents to provide context and meaning to the topic under review (Maree & Pietersen, 2016). This method allowed me to

focus on all written communication, whether printed or digital, to gain comprehensive insight into the phenomenon under investigation. By systematically analysing these documents, I was able to cross-verify information and enhance the credibility of the research findings.

3.4.1.2 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in the research context refers to the conceptual soundness by which the value of qualitative research can be evaluated (Ringani, 2018). I ensured the trustworthiness and credibility of this study through careful participant selection, the use of a natural context, and the employment of suitable data gathering methods. I further bolstered credibility and trustworthiness by adopting data triangulation as mentioned in Section 3.3.4 above, incorporating multiple methods of data generation to achieve a convergence of evidence (Bowen, 2009).

3.4.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to “the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings” (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012, p.140). To enhance transferability, Rule & John (2011) suggest providing a comprehensive description of the research context. In this study, I thoroughly described contexts to facilitate the application of results to similar settings. I employed purposive sampling to obtain in-depth information from information-rich participants, thus enhancing transferability (Anney, 2012). In addition, the inclusion of verbatim quotations from the generated data and the detailed descriptions of the setting further supported this goal. I used thick descriptions to detail the research context, the participants, and the themes and findings that emerged from the study in rich detail (Rule & John, 2011).

3.4.3 Dependability

Di Fabio and Maree (2012, p.140) assert that “dependability refers to the consistency and regularity of the research process, the approaches employed, and the degree of control in the study”. Dependability is crucial for auditing the research process, as methodological rigour and coherence are essential for producing findings and case accounts that the research community can confidently accept (Brink et al., 2012; Rule & John, 2011). According to Woodside (2010, p.131), “dependability involves the process of employing multiple checks and cross-checks to

validate the analysis conducted”. I considered this research dependable because the data was authentic, and sourced from three purposively and conveniently sampled FP educators working with OVC. To ensure dependability in this study, I meticulously monitored the quality of the interview recordings and transcriptions and also used other data generation procedures, namely document analysis.

3.4.4 Confirmability

Confirmability pertains to the objectivity of data and the absence of research errors (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2012). According to Rule and John (2011, p.107), the confirmability of a study “ensures that the findings, conclusions, and recommendations are supported by the data collected and analysed.” Results are considered confirmable when they are derived directly from participants and evaluated through data analysis to ensure objectivity, rather than being influenced by the researcher's opinion (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2012).

Rangongo (2011, p.87) defines confirmability as “the degree to which the research findings are the focus of the inquiry and not the result of researcher bias”. To minimise any potential bias from individual participants or the researcher, I employed diverse research methods and data analysis strategies, including semi-structured interviews and document analysis. This approach not only enriched the data generation process but also helped me to ensure a comprehensive analysis and interpretation.

The literature review I presented in Chapter Two also supported the credibility and confirmability of this study. I further enhanced the confirmability of this research study by validating the correctness of data interpretations with participants after analysing the data, allowing them an opportunity to react and verify the findings as recommended by Creswell (2013). This process helped me to ensure that the research was unbiased and that I minimised any misinterpretation of participants' perspectives.

3.4.5 Neutrality

Neutrality in qualitative research refers to the absence of researcher bias (Mayburg & Poggenpoel, 2007). Confirmability, as discussed earlier, is a strategy implemented to ensure this neutrality by demonstrating the absence of bias in the research process. Establishing a

chain of evidence through confirmability audits can further validate this neutrality. In this study, I generated data through two different methods (semi-structured interviews and document analysis) to capture a broad range of perspectives and reduce the risk of bias for more accurate findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Throughout the research process, particularly during interactions with participants in interviews, I maintained neutrality by avoiding the influence of own values and judgments on the research results. As the head of the FP department, I made a conscious effort to remain open-minded, focusing on learning from the process without imposing undue influence on the participants

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In accordance with Elias and Theron (2012, p.150), “the commitment to ethical standards extends beyond individual responsibility; it encompasses the expectations of individuals, groups, colleagues, departments, and the higher education environment where this research is conducted”. As emphasised by Rule and John (2011, p. 111), “ethical relationships and practices are also key aspects of the research quality; conducting research in an ethically sound manner not only enhances the quality of research but contributes to its trustworthiness.” Prior to commencing the data generation phase, I applied for the ethics clearance at the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s (UKZN) Research Office (Appendix A). Additionally, approvals were sought from all gatekeepers including the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (see Appendix B) and the school’s principal (see Appendix C).

3.5.1 Voluntary Participation and Informed Consent

Participants should willingly grant consent, fully understanding that their participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any stage (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018; Creswell, 2015). Rule and John (201, p.112) support the idea that “informed consent upholds autonomy, safeguarding participants' privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity.” According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018), informed consent is characterised as the procedure of providing comprehensive information to an individual possessing the mental capacity to comprehend all facets of potential research that could impact the individual's decision before inclusion. Invitations to participate, in the form of letters, were extended to all identified participants. A

consent letter was issued to the purposively and conveniently sampled participants requesting them to partake in this research study (Appendix D).

Direct negotiations with individual educators included my thorough explanation of all aspects pertaining to the research process, emphasising its voluntary nature, the absence of monetary benefits, the commitment to confidentiality (no names would be disclosed), and the assurance that findings would be utilised exclusively for this research study's purposes. I asked the participants to sign a consent form confirming their comprehension of the study, their voluntary decision to participate, and their freedom to withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to do so. The study strictly adhered to the principles of voluntary participation and informed consent, safeguarding participants' freedom of choice.

3.5.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality

In the research context, anonymity implies that participants' identities will not be disclosed, while confidentiality ensures that participants will never be associated with the data they provide (Crow & Wiles, 2008). To uphold confidentiality and anonymity, I used pseudonyms for both the research site and participants. Additionally, I ensured that the identities and personal details of the sampled FP educators were omitted from the research presentation to preserve their privacy.

3.5.3 Deception in Research

To ensure the elimination of deception in research, I implemented the following measures: I provided clear and comprehensive information about the study's purpose and procedures to participants, obtained informed consent, and maintained transparency throughout the research process. Additionally, I continuously monitored adherence to ethical guidelines to prevent any deceptive practices. These measures contributed to the credibility and trustworthiness of the outcomes of this research study

3.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of a specific study pertain to potential weaknesses that are often beyond the researcher's control (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Nonetheless, these limitations can

impact the study's design, results, and, ultimately, its conclusions. Theofanidis, and Fountouki (2018) advise that it is essential to explicitly acknowledge these limitations in the submitted research study. For instance, in the exploration of participants' interview responses, a researcher might face constraints such as being restricted to a small geographical area, thereby limiting the overall scope of responses (Theofanidis, & Fountouki, 2018).

In this study I experienced limitations that included the small sample size. I had the sense that involving only one school and only three FP educators sampled for interviews was very limiting. Additionally, my reliance on document analysis as a data generation method may have limitations, such as the potential for the documents to be biased, or the inability to gather real-time data on participants' perspectives as well as working with documents that were at my disposal. It is also important to acknowledge the potential limitation that some participants may not have reported their true responses, which could have impacted my study's outcomes (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018).

As a result of the small sample size and the use of only one school, the findings may not be universally applicable to all schools. The results that I reached from this study cannot be generalised, as the challenges experienced by the target sample may vary in different environments. While some researchers who conducted a similar study may resonate with specific experiences, I think a broader participant population encompassing multiple schools could have assisted me and yielded more diverse conclusions.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter elucidated the study's research design and methodology, comprehensively detailing the process of generating and analysing data. Rooted in an interpretivist paradigm, the study embraced a qualitative research design aimed at garnering pertinent insights essential for addressing the research questions. It provided a thorough explanation of the research methodologies employed and ethical considerations.

The next chapter will present data elicited from the purposively sampled FP educators. Additionally, it will delve into the discussion and analysis of the study's findings, providing deeper insights and implications derived from the data analysis.

CHAPTER 4:

DATA PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

“The goal is to turn data into information and information into insight.”

Carly Fiorina, former CEO of Hewlett Packard

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter discussed the research design, methodology, paradigm, sampling, and data generation methods used in the study. The chapter also discussed ethical considerations as well as the maintenance of research quality aspects considered when conducting this study. I earnestly did this to ensure that the research findings are reliable and trustworthy. The primary aim of this study was to shed light on the psychoeducational challenges experienced by orphaned learners and the psychoeducational support that FP educators offered to these learners. This chapter presents data discussions and data analysis of the study woven from the collaborative voices of the purposively and conveniently sampled FP educators and the supporting documents that were analysed.

In this chapter, I begin by providing a demographic description of the selected research site and research participants who were purposively sampled for this study. Subsequently, in this chapter, I will present the analysed data in themes that emerged from the interview transcripts that were meticulously scrutinised over a period of one year. The chapter subsequently presents data that I elicited from document analysis which was an alternative data generation method I employed to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the data.

4.2. DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF THE SELECTED RESEARCH SITE AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

4.2.1. Background of the research site

The research site's name was Beacon of Hope Primary School which is a pseudonym I used to protect the research site's identity. The school is categorised as a quintile 5 school. It is located in the inner-city in the KwaKhangela Ward, Umlazi District. During the time of study, the school served a diverse community from low to middle-income families. The learner population of approximately 1500 represented a mix of racial and ethnic backgrounds, contributing to the school's vibrant cultural tapestry. Approximately 35% of the learners are provided lunch from the school feeding scheme, reflecting the economic challenges many families face in the surrounding community. During the time of study, the school had 20 FP

educators who were permanently employed by the Department of Basic Education. In the Foundation Phase, most educators have a Bachelor of Education (B. ED.) Honours Degree as their highest qualification. Only one educator has a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education. The FP had a slightly higher educator-learner ratio, averaging 43 learners per educator. Although according to DBE (2011), the Minister of Education approved that the number has to be risen to 44 learners per class, this presented a significant logistical and instructional challenge to educators.

In the sampled research site, educators had to juggle the needs of many learners while striving to provide personalised attention and support. The school maintained a clean and functional learning environment, with classrooms equipped with basic educational materials. The school also promoted extracurricular activities, cultural events and community service initiatives. There were at least 142 learners who were identified as orphans and vulnerable children within this research site using the data obtained from the schools database of the South African Administration Management System (SA-SAMS). Since the study's focus was on FP teaching, 71 learners were identified as OVC in the FP. However, educators were aware that every child experiences some degree of vulnerability in some form or other.

4.2.2 Biographical information of the research participants

Table 4.1 below provides an overview of the three FP educators who were purposively and conveniently sampled as research participants. It lists their pseudonym, gender, professional qualifications, the number of years of teaching experience in the institution as well as the different grades taught. These demographic headings are used to provide a comprehensive understanding of the participants' backgrounds. Understanding these variables helps uncover diverse perspectives and insights on how different factors influence educators' perceptions and experiences.

Table 4.1: Research participants’ biographical information

Source: Author

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS CODING	GENDER	GRADE TAUGHT	TEACHING EXPERIENCE	TEACHING QUALIFICATION
Educator GUGU	Female	Grade 3	12 years in this school	B. ED Foundation Phase
Educator NOKWANDA	Female	Grade 2	22 years in this school	B. ED Foundation Phase
Educator DEBBIE	Female	Grade 1	34 years’ experience - of which 26 years in this school	Junior Primary Higher Education Diploma BA Degree B. ED Honours in Management Masters in Early Childhood Development

4.2.2.1 Research Participant 1: Educator Gugu

Gugu qualified with a Bachelor of Education (B.ED.) degree in the Foundation Phase in 2010 and began her teaching career in the school in 2011. She is currently a Grade 3 educator at the research site and volunteered to be interviewed as she has had experience working with orphaned learners.

4.2.2.2 Research Participant 2: Educator Nokwanda

Nokwanda qualified with a Bachelor of Education (B.ED.) degree in the Foundation Phase in 2001 and began working in the school in 2002. She is currently a Grade 1 educator at the research site and has had experience teaching all the grades in the Foundation Phase. Being a long-standing educator in the school she was in a position to have some knowledge of the challenges faced by orphaned learners and volunteered to be interviewed.

4.2.2.3 Research Participant 3: Educator Debbie

Debbie qualified with a Junior Primary Higher Education Diploma (JP HED) from Springfield College in 1988. She taught in two other schools before coming to the current school in 1998. She is currently a Grade 2 educator as well as the Departmental Head of the Phase. She has a vast knowledge of the challenges in the FP and was willing to be interviewed when approached.

4.3 DATA PRESENTATION FROM INTERVIEWS AS A DATA GENERATION METHOD

4.3.1 Emerging Themes

I applied thematic analysis to analyse the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), data analysis aims to understand the different elements of one's data and identify patterns or themes. In qualitative research, themes refer to recurring patterns, ideas, or concepts that emerge from the data during the analysis process to formulate informed interpretations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) advise that researchers have to begin with a thorough review of the transcripts to establish familiarity with the data. Subsequently, the generated data should undergo systematic coding before being organised into coherent themes.

Themes provide a structured framework for organising and interpreting data, helping researchers make sense of complex information (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Furthermore, Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2018) allude that themes serve as a basis for making comparisons and drawing conclusions, allowing researchers to generate new knowledge and contribute to the existing literature. Creswell and Creswell, (2018) concur and emphasise that comprehending the data analysis process is crucial. It involves fully grasping how to interpret collected data to address research questions effectively, thereby shaping the study's outcomes. Sub-themes emerged as a result of deeper exploration and categorisation of the data within each theme. They encapsulated the subtle nuances and intricacies within the primary themes (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018).

I meticulously characterised and scrutinised the emerged themes to ensure their alignment with the three guiding research questions provided in Chapter One as advised by Uher (2018). I drew evidence supporting the findings within these themes from direct quotations obtained during semi-structured interviews conducted with three educator participants. Table 4.2 below outlines the themes and subthemes that emerged and correspond to the research questions of the study.”

Table 4.2: Research Questions, Emerging Themes and Subthemes

Source: Author

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	THEMES	Subtheme
1. What are foundation phase educators' experiences of offering psychoeducational support to orphaned and vulnerable learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit?	Cultivating Resilience: Foundation phase educators' endeavours in offering psychoeducational support	a) Experiences of psychoeducational support and challenges encountered b) Creating supportive environments c) Empowering resilience
2. How do foundation phase educators offer psychoeducational support to orphaned and vulnerable learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit?	Building Collaborative Networks: Foundation phase educators' structures for psychoeducational support	a) Utilising support structures and fostering b) Interdisciplinary collaboration c) Engaging community resources
3. Why do foundation phase educators offer psycho-educational support to orphaned and vulnerable learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit the way they do?	Compassionate Commitment: The motivation behind foundation phase educators' psychoeducational support	a) Beliefs and personal experiences shaping action b) Recognising the need for training and additional support

4.3.1.1 Theme 1: Cultivating Resilience: Foundation Phase educators' endeavours in offering psychoeducational support

The interview questions that were interrelated to the key research question, *"What are foundation phase educators' experiences of offering psychoeducational support to orphaned learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit?"* directly led to the generation of the theme: Cultivating Resilience: Foundation phase educators' endeavours in offering psychoeducational support.

The theme emerged from the responses provided by the participants during the interview sessions detailing the various challenges faced by the OVC and the educators' efforts to address them through psychoeducational support. The psychoeducational praxis is understood as knowledge of the learning processes in its cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects. Psychoeducational challenges can stem from different factors such as contextual disadvantages, social problems, and individual disabilities and learning difficulties (Sibeko, 2018).

Ambelu et al., (2019) concur that psychoeducational challenges refer to behaviour and emotional difficulties displayed by learners that impact schooling and academic achievement as learning depends on learners essentially being psychologically sound. The narratives of Educator Debbie, Educator Nokwanda, and Educator Gugu resonate with Sibeko (2018) as they highlighted the intricate interplay of cognitive, emotional, physical, and social factors within the educational context and their endeavours to address it which will be discussed in depth in the sub-themes presented below.

Sub-Theme 1: Experiences of psychoeducational support and challenges encountered

When I asked the participants the following questions:

"Can you describe any experiences you have had in providing support to orphaned and vulnerable learners in your classroom?" and *"What challenges have you encountered when offering psychoeducational support to orphaned learners?"*, the sampled FP educators shared a spectrum of experiences in offering psychoeducational support to orphaned learners, encapsulating both positive and negative aspects of their encounters. Upon examining the educators' experiences, it was evident that each educator had encountered unique situations and challenges, yet there were some commonalities in their experiences.

Educator Debbie stated: *"Over the years, I've had several experiences providing support to orphaned learners in my classroom. One instance was when I had a learner who had recently*

lost both parents in a tragic accident. Seeing the emotional toll, it took on the child was heart breaking. She was just so sad and withdrawn.”

Educator Nokwanda echoed Debbie's sentiments, highlighting the emotional upheaval and low self-esteem experienced by orphaned learners.

Educator Nokwanda said: *"I've been teaching here for 22 years, and I've had plenty of experiences providing support to orphaned learners. One big challenge I've encountered is the emotional impact of their loss. They struggle with feelings of low self-esteem, sadness, anger, or isolation, which can affect their behaviour and academic performance and I have to support them in the classroom”.*

Educator Gugu also touched upon the emotional impact on orphaned learners. She mentioned that orphaned learners can have difficulty processing their emotions which impacts their performance in the classroom.

Educator Gugu stated: *" There's also the element of trauma and sadness that children go through when they lose a parent. This impacts their work and they need grief counselling first before they can focus on their academics."*

The above responses from the participants resonate with findings from Kyaruzi's (2022) study on the psychosocial wellbeing of orphaned children in Tanzania. Kyaruzi's (2022) research study uncovered that orphaned children grapple with numerous psychosocial challenges, including feelings of unhappiness, worries, loneliness, and other stressful experiences, all of which profoundly affect their overall well-being and academic performance.

Stemming from the emotional toll, the educators related experiences of behavioural issues among orphaned learners.

Educator Debbie mentioned that: *"Behaviour issues also occur because of their circumstances and they have difficulty processing their emotions so they act out, have temper outbursts, cry, have temper tantrums, and sometimes they are aggressive and defiant."*

Similarly, Educator Gugu stated: " *I had one learner in my class who lost his dad and lived with his mum. He often acted up in class, being out of his seat, shouting out in class, throwing tantrums and refused to follow instructions* ".

Educator Nokwanda said: " *I have experienced a lot of disrespect and anger outbursts*".

This corresponds with Magampa's (2014) research study on the academic performance of orphaned primary school learners aged eight to ten years in the Limpopo Province who found that orphaned children were more likely to exhibit behavioural and emotional difficulties compared to their non-orphaned peers.

All three participants in their interview sessions highlighted the lack of care and support experienced by some orphaned learners from their home environments. They recounted occasions when orphaned children exhibited signs of neglect, such as poor hygiene, untidy appearance, and a lack of essential resources. These observations pointed to a stark absence of parental or caregiver engagement in fulfilling the fundamental needs of these learners.

Educator Nokwanda said: "*Under neglect, most of them were not getting help with homework at home, were not submitting school projects, had old or torn school uniforms that was either dirty or not ironed. The hair was not taken care of, they would have a cold until it went away on its own, some ringworms that were untreated. It was visibly showing that they were not being properly cared for at home.*"

Educator Gugu mentioned: "*The grandmother was also struggling financially and barely had the money for food, uniforms and bus fare*".

Educator Debbie said: "*Some of the orphans I have worked with have a poor appearance, no uniforms, look unkempt, and sometimes have poor hygiene. They do not come with lunch and you can just see from the way they carry themselves that they do not have anybody that is caring for them as all children should be.*"

Ranthamane (2020) highlighted similar research findings, stating that orphans are compromised primarily due to a deficiency in care and support, particularly from caregivers.

However, Educator Debbie also pointed out that: "*Not all orphan children are neglected and unkempt and perform poorly.*"

She recounted a heart-warming experience highlighting the positive impact of supportive caregivers on orphaned children. She shared the story of a little girl being raised by her

grandmother, who despite lacking financial means, made every effort to support her granddaughter.

The challenges encountered by the OVC due to financial constraints were voiced by all three participants. Educator Nokwanda recounted instances where learners faced financial struggles, requiring her intervention to provide essentials like bus fare or lunch which resonated with Ranthamane's (2020) findings. Similarly, Educator Debbie highlighted the financial hardships faced by many orphans, impacting their ability to afford basic school supplies and attending school regularly. Educator Gugu echoed these sentiments, noting the financial strain on caregivers like grandparents.

These experiences correlate with findings from Mwoma and Pillay's (2015) study, indicating a scarcity of necessities among orphans. Additionally, the study highlighted how many orphans are cared for by elderly individuals, mirroring Educator Gugu's experience with a financially struggling grandmother supporting her orphaned grandchild. Similar challenges were highlighted by Ranthamane (2020) whose research identified issues such as insufficient finances, food, clothing, and resources among OVC.

The sampled FP educators conveyed their experiences of facing diverse challenges when providing academic support to orphaned learners. These challenges encompassed language barriers, frequent absenteeism, late coming, managing large class sizes, handling demanding curriculum requirements, coping with administrative tasks, and grappling with their own emotional toll of assisting learners who have endured loss.

Educator Nokwanda said: *“Also, high absenteeism and late coming are issues that make them fall back on their work and there are huge gaps in their learning”*.

Educator Debbie highlighted: *“It’s hard to support them with the large classes that we have and the curriculum demands and lots of admin that we have to take into account.”*

Educator Gugu articulated: *“Sometimes when the parent dies the child has to leave their old school where they learned in Xhosa medium and be moved to relatives and placed in a school that teaches in the English medium. This is a huge challenge for the child. The emotional toll of leaving one's home and friends together with the language barrier is really tough for a small child.”*

These experiences resonate with findings from Mwoma and Pillay's (2015) study on educational support for vulnerable children carried out in public primary schools in Soweto,

which revealed absenteeism, late coming and lack of sufficient time due to curriculum implementation as factors likely to adversely affect the academic performance of OVC.

Sub-Theme 2: Creating Supportive Environments

Creating a supportive environment for the OVC emerged as a pivotal focus in the educators' responses, reflecting their dedication to establishing nurturing spaces conducive to the well-being and development of these vulnerable learners. Educator Debbie emphasised the paramount importance of establishing a safe and supportive environment where orphaned learners feel comfortable expressing themselves and seeking assistance.

She articulated: *"I made sure to create a supportive environment where the learner felt safe to express her feelings and receive the necessary support from both myself and the school social worker."*

Similarly, Educator Nokwanda accentuated the significance of building trust and rapport to foster a supportive learning atmosphere. She said: *"I've found that providing opportunities for them to talk openly helped with establishing trust and makes the child feel supported. Offering individualised attention, and lending an empathetic ear really makes a huge difference."*

Educator Gugu highlighted the multifaceted nature of creating supportive environments for orphaned learners, encompassing emotional nurturing, academic assistance, and collaborative endeavours. She said: *"As an educator, I strive to be aware of the challenges and offer support wherever possible, whether it's providing resources, extra teaching, connecting them with support services, or simply lending a compassionate ear."*

In addition to emotional support, all three educators recognised the importance of addressing academic gaps and providing additional assistance. The educators employed several strategies to provide academic assistance to orphaned learners. These included early identification, individual one-on-one teaching, group teaching to encourage peer collaboration and learning, offering peer assistance within the classroom setting, providing individual attention to address specific learning needs, organising extra classes or tutoring sessions after school or during breaks to support academic growth and guiding caregivers to support at home.

Educator Debbie mentioned: *"I stayed in after school hours to help with her homework and offer her love guidance care and support."*

Educator Gugu said: *“I use group work as a way to group the children who need support and work with them more intensely. I keep them in at break and after school to offer one-to-one help as there is very little time in class.”*

Educator Nokwanda stated: *“This may involve providing additional explanation or repetition of concepts, offering extra help during break times, or facilitating peer tutoring where appropriate. Also, I guide the caregivers at home on how to offer support”*

Despite encountering obstacles, they exhibited dedication and creativity in addressing the distinctive needs of the learners, mirroring the findings of Mwoma and Pillay (2015). Moreover, the multifaceted approach to creating supportive environments, encompassing emotional nurturing, academic assistance, and collaborative endeavours, reflected the interconnectedness of systems within Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Educators addressed not only the emotional needs of the learners but also provided academic support and facilitated collaboration within the classroom, highlighting the integration of various systems to support holistic development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Sub-Theme 3: Empowering Resilience

Empowering resilience emerged as a sub-theme in the sampled FP educators' responses, reflecting their efforts of providing psychoeducational support to instil strength and perseverance in orphaned learners despite the challenges they face.

Educator Gugu poignantly stated: *“With support, they start to believe in themselves, their confidence grows, and they become more motivated to succeed.”*

The educators demonstrated a commitment to empowering resilience among orphaned learners through various approaches, as evidenced in their narratives. Educator Debbie mentioned a positive experience where a well-supported orphaned child thrived academically and socially.

She described: *“I have come across a few orphans that I have taught who were well taken care of by caregivers, thrive academically and socialise well... The child was so well-adjusted and happy.”*

Educator Gugu highlighted the positive impact of providing emotional and academic support to orphaned learners, stating, *“Seeing him grow and overcome his challenges, is what keeps me going.”*

Educator Nokwanda echoed similar sentiments: *“As time went on, I noticed Anele slowly opening up and becoming more engaged in class. He started participating in discussions, making friends, and showing signs of resilience despite his difficult circumstances. It was incredibly rewarding to see him progress and grow, knowing that I had played a part in supporting him through his grief.”*

These narratives align with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (2005), particularly in highlighting the influence of microsystems (such as school environments) and mesosystems (interactions between educators, learners, and support services) on the development of resilience. In essence, Galassi (2016) and Tudge et al., (2017) aver that by providing tailored support and fostering positive relationships, educators contributed to the creation of nurturing environments that empower orphaned learners to navigate adversity and thrive academically and emotionally, indicating the emergence of resilience.

4.3.1.2. Theme 2: Building Collaborative Networks: Foundation Phase Educators' structures for psychoeducational support

The interview questions that were related to the key research question, *“How do foundation phase educators offer psychoeducational support to orphaned learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit?”* directly led to the generation of the theme: Building Collaborative Networks: Foundation phase educators' structures for psychoeducational support. This theme encompassed the establishment of interconnected relationships and structures among educators, support staff, community organisations, and other stakeholders to provide comprehensive psychoeducational support to learners in the FP. This involved creating networks, partnerships, and collaborative frameworks aimed at addressing the diverse needs of learners, including academic, emotional, and social support, to facilitate their holistic development and well-being.

After asking the participants this interview question *“Are there any support systems for offering psychoeducational support to OVC learners?”*,

Educator Nokwanda said: *“We are fortunate to have a social worker who plays a crucial role. Our school management team (SMT) is actively involved in helping with support and they write letters to the hospital for assistance”.*

Educator Gugu said: *“Our school has a social worker who's really involved in helping out. We have a referral form that we fill in if a child needs support which is taken to school based support team. They discuss the case and offer support and guidance. The social worker is on the team as well. Plus, our school management team is pretty strong; they're good at offering support when a kid needs some extra help, and they can make referrals to other places if necessary.”*

Educator Debbie said: *“We do have a dedicated social worker who plays a crucial role in providing psychosocial support to all our learners, including orphaned learners... (thinking about it before responding). We also have a very approachable school SMT whom we make referrals to.”*

When asked the question: *“Is there a policy available at your school for working with OVC? If yes briefly outline the policy?”*

In response to the inquiry, Educator Gugu expressed uncertainty, stating, *“errrrr, I do not know if there is a policy per se that I have read.”* She indicated reliance on guidance from the SMT and hinted at the possibility of such a policy existing and expressed the intention to investigate further.

Conversely, Educator Nokwanda affirmed the existence of a policy on identifying vulnerable children and admitted to not recalling all the specific guidelines, stating, *“Yes, there is, there's a policy on identifying vulnerable children that has guidelines on how to identify, investigate and implement intervention, I do not remember all the guidelines and details of the policy but I know we have one.”*

Educator Debbie provided a more detailed account of the policies in place, stating, *“We do have a policy on identifying vulnerable children and a policy on learning and learner support.”* She elaborated on the specifics of the policy on identifying an OVC, detailing the process of identification, investigation, and intervention, including referral to support services and collaboration with relevant authorities. In addition, Debbie highlighted challenges in policy implementation, citing overcrowded classrooms as a barrier to effectively addressing the needs of the OVC.

Overall, while Educator Gugu expressed uncertainty about the existence of a formal policy, Educator Nokwanda and Educator Debbie confirmed the presence of policies addressing the identification and support of OVC at the school.

The findings described in the research question and interview responses resonate with Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems (2005). The emphasis on addressing the diverse needs of learners, including academic, emotional, and social support, aligns with Bronfenbrenner's emphasis on the importance of multiple systems working together to support holistic development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). It is also worth noting that McGuckin and Minton (2013) maintain that by establishing collaborative networks and partnerships, educators are addressing the complexity of learners' needs within the broader ecological context in which they operate.

Sub-Theme 1: Utilising support structures and fostering Interdisciplinary Collaboration

In utilising support structures, the sampled FP educators' responses showed that they draw upon various internal resources within the school environment to enhance psychoeducational support. This involved capitalising on the expertise and guidance of the SMT to develop policies and interventions tailored to meet the needs of orphaned learners. All three educators mentioned a strong SBST and a proactive SMT. Additionally, these sampled FP educators confirmed that their colleagues at school also provided valuable support through collaboration, sharing resources, and offering assistance in addressing academic and emotional challenges faced by learners.

Educator Nokwanda articulated: *“The SMT makes consistent class visits checking up on the progress of OVC and monitoring them. They give support and guidance which I truly appreciate”*

Educator Gugu mentioned: *“We have a referral form that we fill in if a child needs support which is taken to the school-based support team. They discuss the case and offer support and guidance.”*

Educator Debbie said: *“I collaborate with other colleagues to share strategies and resources,”*

Fostering interdisciplinary collaboration involved partnering with other professionals, such as social workers, to provide specialised support beyond the scope of educators' expertise. The social worker employed by the SGB played a crucial role in addressing the complex psychosocial needs of orphaned learners, offering counselling, facilitating access to community resources, and coordinating interventions to promote overall wellbeing.

By collaborating with the social worker, the educators ensured a more comprehensive and holistic approach to supporting the OVC in their care. This positive support structure of a social worker available at the research site was cited as a recommendation by Sibeko's (2018) research study of experiences of primary school educators supporting learners who are HIV/Aids orphans and vulnerable at Umkhanyakude District, KwaZulu-Natal.

Educator Gugu said: *“Luckily, we have a school social worker who did grief counselling with him. After a few sessions with the social worker, I could see a difference.”*

Educator Nokwanda mentioned: *“I referred him to the SBST who then got the social worker involved. She would have one-on-one sessions where he could talk about his parents and the challenges he was facing. She also encouraged him to express himself through creative activities like drawing and writing, which helped him process his emotions.”*

Educator Debbie stated: *“We do have a dedicated social worker who plays a crucial role in providing psychosocial support to all our learners, including orphaned learners. The social worker offers counselling services, facilitates support groups, and connects learners with external resources.”*

In the provided excerpts, it was found that educators are utilising support structures within the school environment to provide psychoeducational support to orphaned learners. These structures include the SMT, SBST, collaboration with colleagues and referrals to the SGB employed social worker. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (2005) as the dynamic interactions between microsystems and mesosystems foster a comprehensive approach to promoting the well-being and development of orphaned children within the school environment.

Sub-Theme 2: Engaging Community Resources

Engaging community resources involved the school tapping into external organisations and initiatives to bolster support for the OVC. During the interviews, sampled FP educators highlighted various community support structures that assist the school. All three participants mentioned the community implemented feeding scheme, ensuring children receive regular meals to support their nutritional needs. They also mentioned non-governmental organisations (NGOs) contributed by providing essential resources such as food parcels, uniforms, and stationery, easing the financial burden on orphaned families.

I found through the interviews that the SBST made referrals for hospital interventions to offer healthcare services, while collaborations with the local Taxi Association ensured learners had access to transportation and uniforms, facilitating their attendance and participation in school activities. The participants indicated that the South African Police Services (SAPS) are also called in if needed. These collaborative efforts showcase the community's commitment to uplifting orphaned learners and promoting their holistic wellbeing as advised by Bronfenbrenner (2005) and Donald et al. (2014).

Educator Nokwanda said: *“Our school management team (SMT) is actively involved in helping with support and they write letters to the hospital for assistance. Our school benefits from community support initiatives, such as a feeding scheme, which ensures that learners have access to nutritious meals during the school day. Additionally, some food parcels, uniforms, and stationery are provided by members of the community.”*

Educator Gugu mentioned: *“And let's not forget about our community – they've been amazing, pitching in with food parcels and uniforms. It's like we're all in this together, making sure these kids have what they need to succeed.”*

Educator Debbie stated: *“We are fortunate to have many community organisations that come in to assist the school. The Taxi Association sometimes sponsors uniforms and shoes, and the police station nearby comes over if we need them to investigate abuse that is reported. Every day a community-based feeding scheme brings sandwiches for the children who need them. Many community charity organisations drop off food parcels that are sent home”.*

The engagement of community resources, as elucidated through the responses of sampled FP educators, underscores a pivotal aspect of supporting OVC within the school environment. This involvement mirrors Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (2005), particularly in the interplay between microsystems, mesosystems and the broader community context. By drawing upon community resources and partnerships, educators created a more supportive ecosystem for orphaned children, aligning with Bronfenbrenner's notion of the interconnectedness of systems in influencing human development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

4.3.1.3. Theme 3: Compassionate Commitment: The Motivation Behind Foundation Phase Educators' Psychoeducational Support

The interview questions interconnected to the key research question, “*Why do foundation phase educators offer psychoeducational support to orphaned learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit the way they do?*” directly led to the generation of the theme: Compassionate Commitment: The motivation behind foundation phase educators' psychoeducational support. This theme encapsulates the underlying motivation and dedication demonstrated by the sampled FP educators in providing psychoeducational support to the OVC within the school environment. It encompasses the profound influence of educators' beliefs and personal experiences in shaping their actions, alongside their recognition of the need for on-going training to effectively support the OVC.

Lethale and Pillay (2013) emphasise the critical importance of examining educators' beliefs, practices, and understanding of psychoeducational support. This examination is essential as positive practices and attitudes among educators are more likely to enhance the cognitive, behavioural, and emotional wellbeing of the OVC. Within this theme, educators' compassionate commitment is deeply intertwined with their beliefs and personal experiences, driving them to go above and beyond in providing tailored support to the OVC.

Their beliefs in the importance of empathy, inclusivity, and individualised care stem from their own experiences and values, guiding their interactions and interventions with the learners. Moreover, educators expressed a clear recognition of the complexities involved in supporting OVC and acknowledged the need for continuous training and professional development. They believed that on-going training is essential for enhancing their skills and knowledge in addressing the diverse needs of the OVC effectively.

Sub-Theme 1: Beliefs and Personal Experiences Shaping Action

When I asked the participants the following questions: “*What motivates you to offer psychoeducational support to orphaned learners?*” and “*Have your personal experiences or beliefs influenced how you support orphaned learners?*”

All three participants provided insightful responses, highlighting the profound impact of their individual backgrounds on their approach to psychoeducational support.

Educator Nokwanda stated: *“I guess you could say it's just part of being an educator, part of caring for these kids as if they were my own”*.

Educator Gugu said: *“This deep belief I have that every child deserves a shot at success, no matter what life throws their way. Seeing these children dealing with the loss of their parents, it just hits me hard. So, I feel this drive to step up and do whatever I can to help them through both the tough academic stuff and the emotional rollercoaster they're on. And you know what? Even the smallest acts of support can make a huge difference in their lives. It's like a little spark that keeps me going.”*

Educator Debbie said: *“I believe that as educators, we have a responsibility to provide them with the support and guidance they need to succeed despite their circumstances. Every child deserves a chance to thrive, and if I can play a small part in making a difference in their lives, then that's what keeps me motivated”*

The responses from the three participants resonate deeply with the various roles of an educator, as outlined by the Department of Education Norms and Standards (DoE, 2000). Among these roles, pastoral care stands out prominently, reflecting educators' commitment to providing emotional support and guidance to orphaned learners as they navigate through challenging circumstances.

The personal beliefs and experiences of the participants, particularly Nokwanda and Debbie's religious backgrounds, as well as Gugu's experience of losing her mother at a young age, significantly influenced their approach to psychoeducational support for orphaned learners as illustrated below.

Debbie articulated: *“As a human being service to mankind is a must as I was raised with this principle. We cannot turn a blind eye and ignore the plight of others especially young children as they are the future of our society. My religion as well is a big factor that prompts me to act and support.”*

Similarly, Nokwanda said: *“I'm a firm believer in the idea of helping others, of lending a hand when someone needs it most. I mean, it's what I've been taught at home and in church.”*

Gugu however mentioned: *“You see, I lost my own mom at a young age, and it was my grandfather who stepped in to raise me. I was so fortunate that he had the finances and the ability to take really good care of me. He was so loving and supportive. I know first hand the challenges these learners face, and I understand the importance of having someone there to*

lean on during tough times. It's like I can relate to what they're going through on a deeper level, you know”

Educator Gugu’s response resonates with the research findings of Sibeko's (2018) study on experiences of primary school educators supporting learners who are HIV/AIDS orphans and vulnerable children at Umkhanyakude District, Kwazulu-Natal which revealed that educators with personal experiences of vulnerability during their childhood possessed a unique understanding of the challenges experienced. This understanding enabled them to create supportive environments that offered valuable opportunities for OVC.

Overall, the personal beliefs and experiences of all three sampled FP educators served as powerful motivators in their commitment to providing compassionate and effective psychoeducational support to orphaned learners. These experiences shaped their perspectives, values, and approaches to caregiving, ultimately contributing to a nurturing and supportive learning environment for OVC.

Sub-Theme 2: Recognising the need for training and additional support.

When asked the interview questions: *How do you think your training or professional background has shaped your approach to supporting orphaned learners? Has it equipped you well enough to support orphan learners?* and “*What do you think is needed for educators to enhance their role in supporting OVC?*”, the responses from the interview transcripts based on the participants' responses highlighted various insights.

From Educator Nokwanda: *"My training has provided me with foundational knowledge, but it's through experience and continuous learning that I've truly honed my approach to supporting orphaned learners. I believe on-going professional development tailored to the needs of these children is essential. Workshops and resources focusing on trauma-informed care, resilience-building, and understanding the socio-emotional needs of orphaned learners would be invaluable."*

From Educator Gugu: *"My professional background has equipped me with certain skills, but supporting orphaned learners requires a deeper understanding of their unique challenges. I think educators need access to specialized training and resources focused on empathy, active listening, and creating a supportive environment. Collaboration with other professionals, such as social workers, can also provide valuable insights and support."*

From Educator Debbie: *"My training has provided a solid foundation, but there's always room for growth. To enhance educators' role in supporting OVC, I believe access to ongoing professional development is crucial. Training sessions covering trauma-informed care, cultural sensitivity, and collaboration strategies would be beneficial. Additionally, fostering a supportive school culture and providing access to resources like counselling services and community initiatives are essential."*

These responses highlight the participants' recognition of the importance of on-going professional development and tailored training to effectively support orphaned learners. They emphasize the need for specialised knowledge, skills, and resources, as well as collaboration with other professionals, to enhance the educators' role in addressing the diverse needs of OVC within the school environment aligning with the collaborative approach advocated by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

The research study by Zhang et al., (2022) in China emphasised the value of offering staff members the support and the opportunity to collaborate with other professionals who have a vested interest and training in helping OVC. As a result, their social support group and psychological counselling programmes implemented during the study served as a means of providing training to all educators at the community-based school to equip them to effectively manage the substantial numbers of OVC often present in schools. Together, these findings emphasise the importance of a holistic and collaborative approach in ensuring the well-being and academic success of orphaned learners in educational settings.

4.4 DATA PRESENTATION BASED ON DOCUMENT ANALYSIS AS A DATA GENERATION METHOD

Document analysis was a valuable method for generating qualitative data by systematically analysing written and electronic documents to gain insight into research questions in the study and obtain credible data (Maree & Pietersen, 2016). The document analysis involved a comprehensive review of all the relevant documents obtained from the research site. After interviewing the participants, I obtained relevant electronic documents from the SA-SAMS database on OVC at the school. In addition, I examined the school policies on OVC care and management. Copies of the SBST minutes, and educator observation and intervention books relating to OVC were read to obtain valuable information and relevant credible data. After

conducting a comprehensive review of all pertinent documents obtained from the research site, the narrative below provides a discussion of the document analysis.

4.4.1. Electronic data from SA-SAMS Database

It was necessary to examine electronic data from the school's database to complement the insight gathered from interviews and observation records. This form of document analysis provided me with information regarding the number of OVC enrolled in the school, their attendance patterns, and their academic profiles. By analysing this data, I gained a comprehensive understanding of the scope and scale of the OVC population within the school, as well as their educational outcomes.

Figure 4.1 below is an extract from the database on the number of learners who are orphans in the entire school from Grade R to Grade 7.

NUMBER OF LEARNERS WHOSE PARENT (S) ARE DECEASED

GRADE	MALE			FEMALE		
	Only Mother	Only Father	Both Parents	Only Mother	Only Father	Both Parents
Grade R	0	0	0	1	1	1
Grade 1	5	5	3	2	2	2
Grade 2	4	3	3	4	11	3
Grade 3	2	3	2	5	4	5

Figure 4.1: SA-SAMS data on orphans across the school

Source: Beacon of Hope Primary School SA-SAMS Database

The data from Figure 4.1 above indicates a relatively balanced distribution of orphans across grade levels, with Grade 2 having the highest number of orphans overall. This data illustrates the prevalence of orphaned children within the school community and highlights the diverse family structures and living arrangements they experience. In addition to gathering data on the number of orphans at the school, profiles of three orphaned learners in the FP were examined, one from each of the educator participants in this study.

Table 4.3 below provides an overview of the data for only three profiles that were randomly selected to avoid data overload. I opted to use learners' false names to protect their identities.

Table 4.3: Profile of three orphaned learners in the Foundation Phase

Source: Author

Pseudonym of learner	Grade	Age	Deceased Parent/s	Attendance	Academic Profile
Sipho	3	10	Both Parents	24 Days absent	Passed grade 1 and grade 2. Failed Grade 3 in 2023. Currently repeating Grade 3
Lungi	2	8	Mum	69 days absent	Passed Grade 2 with an average of 50%. Struggled throughout the year and was given a lot of support
Anele	1	7	Dad	45 days absent	Passed Grade 1 with an average of 52%.

When I reviewed the data on the randomly selected learners, it became apparent that their academic progress and attendance are closely intertwined with their personal circumstances. For instance, Siphon, a Grade 3 learner, experienced significant academic setbacks, including failing Grade 3 in 2023 and repeating the grade. This suggests potential challenges in maintaining consistent engagement with school activities, which likely impacted his academic performance.

Lungi, a Grade 2 learner who lost her mother had the highest number of absences (69 days), which could indicate that the loss impacted her school attendance and overall stability. In comparison, Siphon and Anele had fewer absences, with Siphon repeating Grade 3 and Anele passing Grade 1 with a relatively higher average. This suggests that while all three faced challenges, Lungi's academic performance might have been more affected by her significant absence compared to Siphon and Anele. Although Lungi managed to pass Grade 2 with a 50% average, her struggle throughout the year indicated the adverse effects of her personal circumstances on her academic journey. On the other hand, Anele, who lost his father, also grappled with absenteeism, with 45 days absent. Despite this, he managed to pass Grade 1 with a slightly higher average of 52%, showcasing resilience despite facing personal loss. Siphon had fewer days absent compared to Lungi but still failed Grade 3, which suggests that factors beyond attendance, such as academic support or learning difficulties, may have influenced his performance.

Overall, I realised that these cases highlight the complex interplay between personal challenges, attendance, and academic performance among learners who have experienced the loss of a parent.

4.4.2. OVC Care Management Policies

The three policy documents retrieved from the school policy file I analysed, revealed a concerted effort by the school to identify and support the OVC within its community. The policies outlined procedures for identification, investigation, intervention, and support, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to addressing the needs of at-risk learners.

In the "*Learning and Learner Support Policy*," emphasis was placed on early identification of barriers to learning, with steps outlined for assessing and addressing psycho-social issues faced by learners. The policy underscores collaboration between SBST, educators, parents, school social workers and external service providers to develop individualised support plans and monitor their implementation. Furthermore, I realised that the policy highlights the importance

of maintaining detailed records and regularly reviewing interventions to ensure effectiveness. Similarly, the "*Policy on Identifying Vulnerable Children*" outlined mechanisms for identifying vulnerable learners through various channels, including reports from educators, parents, and community members. Once identified, thorough investigations are conducted to verify reported cases, followed by targeted interventions to support the affected learners. The policy also acknowledged the crucial role of external organisations, NGOs, and private donors in supplementing the school's efforts through donations of food, clothing, financial support, and other resources acknowledged the crucial role of external organisations, NGOs, and private donors in supplementing the school's efforts through donations of food, clothing, financial support, and other resources.

The policy addressed various barriers to learning, including socio-economic factors, health conditions, and inadequate support services, emphasising the need for a holistic approach to support. Roles and responsibilities of educators, school-based support teams, the school social worker and district-based support teams are defined, highlighting the collaborative effort required to address learners' needs effectively. At school level, the policy outlined a multi-stage process, including screening, assessment, and intervention planning, to ensure that individual learner needs are identified and addressed. It emphasises the importance of regular review and evaluation of support plans.

The third policy I reviewed was the *SIAS (Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support) Policy* which provided a comprehensive framework designed to address barriers to learning and enhance educational support for learners facing challenges. It began with a preamble emphasising the importance of providing all children with access to quality education and necessary support, particularly those with barriers to learning. The purpose of the SIAS (DBE, 2014) component was outlined, emphasising the identification, assessment, and provision of programmes for learners requiring additional support. Overall, the policy provided a structured framework for identifying and addressing barriers to learning, emphasising collaboration, inclusivity, and continuous improvement in educational support provision.

Combining insights from all three policy documents, it was evident that the school was committed to providing a supportive environment for vulnerable children by employing a multi-faceted approach. This approach involved proactive identification of needs, collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, and the implementation of tailored interventions to address barriers to learning and wellbeing. By leveraging community resources and

partnerships, the school maximised its capacity to support the OVC and ensure their holistic development within the educational system.

This commitment to support OVC aligns with the narratives of educators at the school, as evidenced by their responses regarding available policies and support mechanisms. Overall, the narratives of educators at the school corroborate the school's commitment to providing comprehensive support for OVC, as outlined in the policy documents. This alignment between policy objectives and educator practices underscores the school's dedication to ensuring the well-being and academic success of all learners, including the OVC.

4.4.3. Educators' Observation and Intervention Books

After interviewing the three selected educators I asked them to show me their observation and intervention books. Examining the observation and intervention books provided a window into the specific observations, practices, and strategies employed by educators to support the OVC. It served as crucial documentation providing valuable insights into the daily experiences, challenges, and progress of OVC within the educational environment. These records provided a source of qualitative data, allowing me to gather detailed information about the behaviours, academic performance, and social interactions of the OVC.

The books detailed the types of interventions implemented, the frequency of interactions with orphaned learners, and the level of individualisation in support plans, shedding light on educator practices and approaches to OVC support. Examination of the observation and intervention book also served as a method to verify educator narratives provided in interviews. Cross-referencing the accounts provided by educators during interviews with the documented observations and interventions recorded in the book, ensured the accuracy and reliability of the information gathered.

This verification process added credibility to the data collected and enhanced the trustworthiness of the study findings. In the analysis of the educators' observation and intervention records, all three educators provided detailed and extensive information. However, due to the comprehensive and lengthy nature of these records, I selected one educator's extract to serve as a representative example. This approach was taken to streamline the presentation and discussion of the findings, ensuring clarity and focus while maintaining the integrity and depth of the analysis.

A short extract from Educator Gugu's observation and intervention book is provided below.

Grade 3: Siphon (pseudonym)

31/01/23- Siphon arrived late to school. Was absent from the time school started. Looked very tired. No lunch. Uniform torn and untidy. No school shoes. Work is untidy and incomplete.

Had to be reprimanded for fighting with another learner. -----Placed on school feeding scheme. Requested school shoes and uniform from SMT.

*01/02/23- Late arrival with the same uniform. He looked unwashed. He borrowed pencils and crayons from other learners. Always out of his place. Work incomplete and incorrect. --
-- Contacted sister for a meeting. Handed a set of uniforms and school shoes provided by SMT. Had a one-to-one chat with Siphon at break about his behaviour.*

02/02/23—Late arrival again. Did have the new uniform on with the new shoes. Looked a little neater. Still no stationery therefore out of his place disturbing other children. Punched a boy at break. Was given a demerit for bad behaviour. --- Called him aside when Isizulu educator was in the class and had a talk with him again. Provided him with his own set of pencils, crayons and a ruler that was donated to the school. Started a star chart reward system with him. Sister did not arrive for the scheduled meeting. Contacted her again. She promised she would come in tomorrow. Filled in a referral form for school social worker and handed to the SBST.

3/03/23- Late arrival. The uniform looked creased and a bit untidy. Face unwashed. Work untidy, incorrect and incomplete. Bullied another learner at break and ate the child's hotdog. - - - Reprimanded him and sent him to the Departmental Head. Sister arrived after school. Met with the sister together with the Departmental Head. Sister explained how difficult it is at home due to financial constraints. She is responsible for him ever since her parents passed away. They live in a building that has no lights and water. They climb 6 flights of stairs to go and fetch water. She is trying her best but sometimes they have no food at home. She works in the building cleaning for different people to earn money. At night she works at a club as a waitress and comes home quite late. She has very little support from her family. The departmental Head requested a meeting with the school social worker.

The examination of the observation and intervention records corroborated the narratives provided by Educator Gugu during the interview. As Educator Gugu described, the records showed consistent patterns of behaviour exhibited by Siphon, the pseudonym for the Grade 3

learner. Siphos late arrivals, untidy appearance, lack of stationery, and incomplete or incorrect work were all documented in the records, aligning with Gugu's interview responses.

Moreover, the interventions implemented by Educator Gugu mirrored those described during the interview. For instance, Educator Gugu mentioned placing Siphos on the school feeding scheme and requesting school shoes and uniforms from the SMT, which were reflected in the records. Additionally, Gugu's efforts to provide one-on-one chats with Siphos, initiate a star chart reward system, and involve the school social worker were all documented in the records.

Similarly, upon my reviewing of the observation and intervention records of Educator Debbie and Educator Nokwanda, it became evident that their documented findings echoed the narratives provided during the interviews. Both educators' records reflected consistent observations of OVC behaviour and corresponding interventions, aligning closely with the accounts they shared during the interview sessions. The records corroborated the educators' descriptions of the challenges faced by OVC and the multifaceted support strategies employed by the school to address these challenges. This congruence between interview narratives and documented observations reinforced the reliability and validity of the study findings.

4.4.4. *Minutes of SBST*

Reviewing the SBST minutes provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by OVC within the school community and the corresponding responses from the school. By analysing multiple cases, patterns and trends regarding the needs and challenges of OVC became apparent. This allowed for insight into understanding the prevalent issues affecting OVC within the school environment. The documented interventions provided an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of support strategies employed by the school. Below is a selected extract from the SBST minutes focused on OVC support in the FP.

Learner: Siphon (pseudonym)--Grade: 3

Siphon has been exhibiting destructive behaviour in the classroom, frequently engaging in physical altercations with other learners and causing disruptions. Despite receiving one-on-one academic support, Siphon's academic performance remains below expectations. Furthermore, his circumstances present significant challenges, as he has lost both parents at a young age and is currently under the care of his sister. His attendance is irregular, often arriving late to school, and he lacks basic necessities such as stationery, proper school attire and lunch.

Intervention/Support:

Family Engagement: *Siphon's sister was invited to the school to discuss his behavioural and academic challenges, as well as the family's financial situation. Immediate support measures were implemented, including providing lunch for him at school and arranging for food parcels to be sent home. Additionally, efforts were made to source stationery, uniforms, and*

shoes from community donors to ensure basic needs are met. Guidance was also provided to his sister on applying for a school fee exemption to alleviate financial strain.

Behaviour Modification and Counselling: *The school social worker conducted behaviour modification sessions with Sipho to address his destructive behaviour and help him develop positive coping mechanisms. Counselling sessions were also provided to support him in processing his emotions and adjusting to his circumstances.*

Academic Support: *Despite challenges, the educator continued to offer one-to-one academic support to Sipho, tailoring instructional strategies to accommodate his learning needs. A motivation star chart was implemented to encourage positive behaviour and academic engagement, providing incentives for progress and achievement.*

Medical Referral: *Recognising the need for additional intervention, a referral letter was sent to a hospital paediatrician to assess Sipho's behaviour and academic struggles. Subsequent diagnosis revealed ADHD, leading to the initiation of medication to manage symptoms and improve focus.*

Progress Monitoring: *While there have been improvements in Sipho's behaviour with the implementation of behaviour modification strategies and the motivation star chart, very slow progress academically has been noted. Ongoing collaboration with medical professionals, continued one-to-one academic support, and comprehensive support from the school community will be essential in addressing Sipho's complex needs and promoting his overall well-being and academic success.*

Looking at the above excerpt and across various cases documented in the SBST minutes, several key themes emerged regarding the school's support strategies and interventions for OVC. One notable aspect was the individualised support provided to each at-risk learner. For instance, learner Sipho was offered one-on-one academic support tailored to his specific learning needs. Furthermore, the school demonstrated a collaborative approach to addressing the multifaceted needs of OVC. This collaboration involved various stakeholders, including caregivers, community donors, social workers, and healthcare professionals, to provide comprehensive support encompassing academic, emotional, and material assistance.

The school also exhibited proactive efforts in mobilising resources to meet the material needs of OVC. This included providing meals, school supplies, and uniforms, often sourced from community donors, to create a conducive learning environment for all learners, irrespective of

their socio-economic background. Moreover, the school placed a strong emphasis on addressing the emotional well-being of OVC. Grief counselling and emotional support are prioritised for learners who have experienced significant losses or trauma, promoting resilience and positive coping mechanisms among OVC. This approach resonates strongly with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasises the interconnectedness between individuals and their environments (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Continuous monitoring and review of support interventions were integral components of the school's approach. By regularly assessing the effectiveness of support strategies, the SBST ensured that interventions remained responsive and relevant to the evolving needs of the OVC. Overall, the SBST's minutes reflected a commitment to holistic support for OVC, emphasising collaboration, individualisation, and continuous monitoring to ensure the wellbeing and academic success of the OVC within the school community. The minutes concur with the educators' narratives during the semi-structured interviews sessions.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I presented comprehensive analysis of the data generated through two distinct methods. Firstly, the findings from semi-structured interviews with the educators were discussed, revealing valuable insights into the psychoeducational support that FP educators to OVC within the research context. Themes were elucidated in alignment with the research questions, supported by pertinent interview quotations.

Secondly, document analysis was employed to ascertain the number of OVC children at the research site and to gain insights into the school's approach to caring for these vulnerable learners. Through these dual approaches, a nuanced understanding of the educational landscape concerning OVC was attained, laying the groundwork for subsequent discussions and implications for practice.

As this study's research report progresses toward a conclusion, the forthcoming chapter will delve into a discussion of the findings presented in this analysis. This concluding chapter serves as a crucial component, as it presents the summary of findings, recommendations made as well as the conclusions that I reached.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." Nelson Mandela

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Nelson Mandela's profound quote above deeply resonates with the ethos of this study. In keeping with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, it underlines the importance of understanding not just the microsystems of individual interactions between educators and learners, but also the broader macrosystems, encompassing societal attitudes, values and policies, regarding the welfare of the OVC. The previous chapter explored in depth the experiences of FP educators as they navigated the complexities of providing psychoeducational support to OVC. Through a meticulous process of generating data through semi-structured interviews and an extensive document analysis process, several themes emerged. Each theme shed light on the multifaceted nature of psychoeducational support that can be offered by educators to OVC in FP. These themes were aligned with the study's guiding research questions highlighted below:

- a) What are foundation phase educators' experiences of offering psychoeducational support to orphaned and vulnerable learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit?
- b) How do foundation phase educators offer psychoeducational support to orphaned and vulnerable learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit?
- c) Why do foundation phase educators offer psychoeducational support to orphaned and vulnerable learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit the way they do?

The purpose of this study was to explore FP educators' experiences of teaching and supporting orphaned and vulnerable learners who display psychoeducational challenges. This exploration was framed by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979). This theoretical framework provided a theoretical lens through which to view the complex interplay of the orphaned and vulnerable learners, the educators, the greater school environment, the home, societal factors and governmental factors that influence educational practices and outcomes for OVC. This qualitative quest not only highlighted the psychoeducational challenges experienced by OVC,

and the immense support by the educators, the school, and the community but also brought to light the structural and resource-related challenges they navigated.

This concluding chapter presents a summary of the findings and probes deeper into a detailed discussion of the findings and the themes that emerged. The findings presented are meticulously aligned with the research questions, the study's overarching purpose, and the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) which posits that a child's development reflects the influence of various environmental systems that are interconnected.

Through this comprehensive analysis, I aimed to shed light on the current state of psychoeducational support, identifying challenges, gaps, and opportunities for enhancing the support system for one of the most vulnerable segments of our society. Furthermore, this chapter presents comprehensive recommendations for future practice, policy formulation, and research. These recommendations aim to address the gaps identified through the study, proposing actionable steps to enhance the support system for OVC. In addition, this chapter also addresses the limitations of the current study and proposes directions for future research, recognising that the journey to fully understanding and supporting OVC requires on-going inquiry and adaptation.”

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This study was organised into five chapters, each offering insights into how FP educators support OVC from a psychoeducational perspective. The study's title, *“Orphaned Learners' psychoeducational challenges: Foundation Phase Educators' Experiences,”* reflects its main research focus, and the chapters are organised around this central topic. The study was conducted in an inner city public primary school located in KwaKhangela Circuit, Umlazi District. Three educators from three FP classes (excluding Grade R) were interviewed. In addition, analysis of relevant documents pertaining to OVC was done to verify and support the educators' narratives.

The FP educators play a crucial role in shaping the early educational experiences of children, which are fundamental to their long-term development and well-being. Following the outlined research questions, this study examined the experiences of FP educators in providing psychoeducational support to OVC. OVC represent a diverse spectrum of individual learners

facing various challenges, including socioeconomic disparities, adverse family circumstances, physical or mental health issues and educational barriers (Sibeko, 2018).

This research study proved that these challenges often intersect and compound, creating significant obstacles to these children's academic success and overall wellbeing. Within this context, educators serve as frontline caregivers, tasked with not only delivering academic instruction but also providing emotional support, fostering social integration, and addressing the diverse needs of each learner. Furthermore, education in schools is supported and influenced by school management, broader socio-economic factors, community dynamics and institutional policies, all of which shape the experiences of vulnerable children within the school setting. Understanding the nuanced interplay between these various factors through the narratives of the FP educators and supporting documents available and their impact is essential in developing holistic approaches to support the OVC effectively. The summary of findings in this study is thus strategically laid out below for clarity and understanding.

5.2.1 The Power of Supportive Environments

The research findings highlighted the transformative role of supportive environments in cultivating fortitude for the OVC. According to Hay (2015, p. 60), educators are considered “first in line” to provide support and assistance to a grieving child. The findings in this study illuminated the dedicated efforts of the FP educators, as the classroom environments became more than mere physical spaces; they evolved into nurturing realms where emotional support, tailored educational strategies, and positive social interactions were implemented. This holistic approach not only addressed the immediate psychoeducational challenges faced by OVC but also laid a foundation for their long-term wellbeing and success.

According to the Department of Education Norms and Standards (DoE, 2000), one of the seven roles of an educator is to provide pastoral care. Educators are required to demonstrate the ability to develop a supportive and empowering environment for the learner and respond to the educational and other needs of learners and fellow educators (DoE, 2000). The three purposively and conveniently sampled participants that were interviewed exemplify this standard, showcasing their capability to navigate the challenges experienced by creating a supportive and empowering atmosphere for vulnerable learners. Through their dedicated efforts, these educators not only adhere to this norm but also elevate it, reflecting a deep commitment to fostering supportive environments where every learner can thrive.

5.2.1.1 Trials encountered with OVC

A study conducted by Mwoma and Pillay (2015), found that orphans who were sampled in their research study as participants faced a high prevalence of psychological, emotional, and behavioural problems. Similarly, the experiences of the sampled FP educators in providing psychoeducational support revealed a diverse range of challenges encountered that significantly impacted the learning and wellbeing of the OVC. Trauma and emotional distress were identified as pervasive issues affecting the OVC, with the educators mentioning their visible signs of psychological strain, such as withdrawal, aggression, or an inability to engage fully in classroom activities.

The findings from Kyaruzi's (2022) research study on the psychosocial wellbeing of orphaned children in primary schools in Tanzania, align closely with the challenges identified in this study which highlighted the multitude of psychosocial challenges faced by the OVC. These include feelings of unhappiness, worries, loneliness, and other stressful experiences. This alignment underscores the universality of these challenges across different contexts.

Poor academic performance emerged as another significant challenge, closely tied to the emotional and psychological wellbeing of the OVC. The FP educators in this study observed that the trauma and stress experienced by the OVC frequently manifested in difficulties concentrating, retaining information, and engaging with the curriculum, leading to a noticeable lag in academic achievement compared to their peers. Behavioural issues were also a common concern, with all three educators reporting instances of disruptive behaviour, aggression, and lack of motivation among the OVC. These behaviours were understood as expressions of underlying emotional distress, which severely impacted teaching and learning. Similarly, Mwoma and Pillay (2015), in their study found that the emotional and behavioural difficulties of orphaned learners had a significant impact on their overall well-being, including their academic performance and social interactions.

The sampled educators in this study mentioned various other obstacles. These included financial constraints, signs of neglect, language barriers, absenteeism and late coming which contributed to poor academic performance. They observed that many OVC lacked basic necessities such as school uniforms, stationery, and meals, which compromised their readiness to learn and participate in school activities. In this study, it was also revealed that there were instances where learners exhibited poor hygiene, untidy appearances, and a lack of essential resources, indicating a lack of care and support from their home environments.

This corroborates Bronfenbrenner's (2005) assertions that the home environment is the most crucial system that contributes to every child's upbringing and wellbeing. These findings further align with Sibeko's (2018), research study which found that orphans lacked care, faced a severe shortage of food, and clothing, were often absent from school or arrived late and some lived with grandparents who could not communicate in the language of teaching and learning at the school.

Fundamentally, the sampled educators' responses highlighted the multifaceted challenges faced by the OVC. Despite these challenges, the educators remained steadfast in their commitment to providing holistic support.

5.2.1.2 Creating nurturing contexts

The three educators detailed their efforts in creating nurturing contexts for OVC, focusing on various supportive strategies to address the emotional, social, and academic challenges these learners face. Firstly, they emphasised the importance of emotional support, recognising the trauma and emotional turmoil many OVC endure. By providing a compassionate and understanding environment, they aimed to make their classrooms spaces where children felt safe to express their feelings and receive the emotional validation needed to begin healing. According to Aboobaker (2016), emotional support involved empathetic listening, establishing trust, and offering comfort, love and guidance which all three educators implemented.

Academically, the educators adapted their teaching methods to be more inclusive and responsive to the unique needs of OVC. This included individual one-on-one teaching, differentiated instruction to cater to varying learning abilities, additional support for those falling behind during break and after school, and a flexible approach to participation and homework, acknowledging the complex home environments of these OVC. Guidance on how to support learners academically at home was also offered to caregivers by the educators.

Social integration emerged as a key focus, with all educators in the study working to nurture a sense of belonging and unity among learners. They organised group activities to promote teamwork, appreciate diversity, and provide mutual support, all aimed at enhancing learner integration, while also working to lessen the stigma and isolation felt by OVC.

Additionally, the educators liaised with other support structures available to provide food, clothing and stationery. They worked closely with caregivers and community organisations

to create a supportive network around each child, ensuring that their basic needs were taken care of. They also highlighted the implementation of policies and practices within the school aimed at protecting and supporting OVC.

5.2.1.3 Building Fortitude

Empowered by these nurturing contexts, most of the affected learners exhibited remarkable strength, navigating their circumstances with increased confidence and fortitude. The educators' accounts revealed a significant emphasis on building fortitude among OVC through psychoeducational support. Through their narratives, they vividly illustrated the various ways in which they supported learners in overcoming challenges which helped to build strength and perseverance in orphaned learners.

Being at school significantly enhanced the resources that contributed to the resilience of orphaned learners. The availability of physical resources such as stationery, uniforms and food not only met their basic needs but also boosted their self-esteem and courage. Additionally, the emotional support provided by educators and peers further strengthened their resilience by fostering a sense of belonging and security. Moreover, academic resources and support, including tailored assistance and encouragement, equipped them with the skills and confidence needed to overcome challenges and succeed academically. Together, these resources created a nurturing environment within the school that empowered orphaned learners to build fortitude and resilience and thrive despite their circumstances.

These findings resonate with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), emphasising the critical role of supportive school environments and positive relationships in building fortitude among orphaned learners. Overall, the educators' narratives provided compelling evidence of the power of psychoeducational support in empowering orphaned learners to overcome.

5.2.2 Forging Synergistic Partnerships: Uniting for Support

At the heart of this study lies the pivotal theme "Forging Synergistic Partnerships: Uniting for Support", which highlighted the essence of collaboration within the school and the community in addressing the multifaceted needs of the OVC. This theme explored the dynamic and

impactful ways FP educators cultivated alliances with fellow educators, the school management, school social worker, families, caregivers, and community organisations to create a cohesive network of support that extended beyond the classroom walls.

This research study highlighted the critical role of these partnerships in enhancing the educational and psychoeducational outcomes for OVC. By uniting diverse stakeholders, educators in this study facilitated a comprehensive support system that encompassed academic assistance, emotional care, and social integration, thereby ensuring that OVC received a holistic educational experience. This study delved into the strategies sampled FP educators employed to bridge gaps between various support services, thereby creating a unified front that championed the welfare and success of the OVC. This collaborative approach not only amplified the resources available to support these learners but also fostered a sense of community and belonging, pivotal for their resilience and growth aligning closely with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Drawing upon the principles of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (2005), this theme emphasised the interconnectedness of the micro, meso, and macro systems that influenced a child's development. At the micro level, educators provided direct support and guidance to OVC within the classroom environment. Subsequently, the meso level encompassed the interactions between educators, school management, social workers, and other stakeholders, creating an environment of collaboration and coordination. Finally, at the macro level, community organisations and broader societal factors played a significant role in shaping the support systems available to OVC.

5.2.2.1 Cultivating Cross-Disciplinary Cooperation

According to the school's learning and learner support policy document examined, the roles and duties of the educators, social worker, SBST, and SMT are detailed. Throughout all three interview sessions in which I engaged with the sampled participants, FP educators consistently highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration, particularly emphasising the strategic partnerships with other educators within the school, with the school social worker employed by the SGB, as well as the pivotal roles of the SMT and the SBST.

Educators highlighted the invaluable contributions of the school social worker in addressing the multifaceted needs of OVC, ranging from emotional support to accessing essential

resources. They emphasised the role of the school social worker in providing counselling and facilitating referrals to external support services like the hospital and related many success stories that help build resilience.

The significance of the SMT and SBST was unmistakable in the educators' accounts. They highlighted the pivotal role these teams played, particularly emphasising the proactive nature of the SBST. Educators described how the SMT and SBST worked collaboratively to identify and address the diverse needs of the OVC like providing food, and uniforms. They noted the SBST's proactive approach in providing timely interventions with the social worker, guiding educators on academic intervention, coordinating support services through referrals, and fostering a nurturing environment conducive to the well-being and academic success of OVC.

The educators' narratives served as a vibrant illustration of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory in action, showcasing the deep impact of various environmental systems on the development and wellbeing of OVC (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

5.2.2.2 Harnessing Community Resources

The engagement of community resources emerged as a critical factor in the support of OVC within the school setting, demonstrating the power of collective efforts in addressing the comprehensive needs of these learners. Educators across the board emphasised the significant role played by various community support structures in enhancing the wellbeing and educational experience of OVC.

A notable aspect of community involvement was the implementation of a feeding scheme by community members, ensuring that the OVC received nutritious meals during school days. This initiative not only addressed the immediate nutritional needs of the children but also supported their overall health and readiness to learn. Moreover, NGOs and community groups contributed additional resources, such as food parcels, uniforms, and stationery, alleviating the financial strain on families caring for orphaned children. These contributions were instrumental in ensuring that OVC have the necessary materials and support to participate fully in school activities.

The SBST played a pivotal role in connecting the OVC with essential healthcare services through referrals to local hospitals. This collaboration extended the sphere of support beyond the educational realm into the critical area of health and well-being. Additionally, partnerships

with the local taxi association provided much-needed transportation assistance, ensuring that OVC can attend school regularly and participate in school functions, which is vital for their academic and social development.

The involvement of police services, when necessary, highlighted the community's commitment to safeguarding the welfare of OVC, particularly in cases where abuse was reported. This collaborative approach not only provided immediate assistance and protection but also contributed to creating a safe and supportive environment for the children.

The educators' narratives revealed a comprehensive network of support enveloping OVC, facilitated by the active involvement of the SMT and the broader community. This network reflected the dynamic interplay between the microsystems of the school and family, the mesosystems linking these environments, and the broader exosystem encompassing community resources and services. Such an integrated approach aligned with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, highlighting the importance of interconnected systems in fostering the development and well-being of individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

5.2.3 Empathy in Action: The driving force of Foundation Phase educators in providing psychoeducational support

The theme "Empathy in Action: The driving force of foundation phase educators in providing psychoeducational support, emerged organically from the narratives of educators as they shared their experiences and reflections on supporting OVC. Throughout the interviews, educators consistently emphasised the central role of empathy in their interactions with the learners and the broader school community. Their stories illustrated how empathy served as a driving force behind their efforts to provide comprehensive psychoeducational support to OVC, inspiring them to go above and beyond their roles as educators. As educators recounted their experiences, it became evident that empathy was not just a concept but a guiding principle that shaped their approach to teaching, caregiving, and advocacy.

Their genuine concern for the wellbeing of OVC and their willingness to listen, understand, and respond to their unique needs highlighted the transformative power of empathy in fostering resilience and promoting positive outcomes for vulnerable children. In addition to highlighting the pivotal role of empathy in their practice, educators also candidly acknowledged areas where they identified a need for growth and further support.

5.2.3.1 Influential Beliefs and Experiences Guiding Educators' Actions

The theme "Influential beliefs and experiences guiding educators' actions" emerged from probing questions posed to the participants about their motivations and personal influences in offering psychoeducational support to orphaned learners. Their responses provided profound insights into the deep-seated convictions and formative experiences that underpinned their approach to supporting vulnerable children.

Educator Nokwanda expressed a fundamental belief in the inherent duty of educators to care for all students as if they were their own, highlighting the essential role of pastoral care in their profession. Similarly, Educator Gugu, drawing on her own empathy and experiences, shared a conviction that every child deserves a chance at success, irrespective of life's challenges. Gugu's personal journey, having lost her mother and being raised by her grandfather, imbued her with a unique understanding of the struggles orphaned children face, driving her commitment to support them. Educator Debbie's perspective was shaped by both her upbringing and religious beliefs, instilling in her a sense of duty to serve humanity, particularly vulnerable children. Similarly, a study conducted by Knoblauch (2023) highlighted how religious beliefs among educators can influence their approach to caregiving in early childhood. The research suggested that educators with strong religious convictions often felt a heightened moral responsibility to care for and support vulnerable children, which enhanced their effectiveness as educators and caregivers. This finding supports this study by emphasising the role of personal faith in shaping educators' commitment to their learners' well-being. These personal beliefs and experiences not only inform educators' motivations but also shape their practices in providing psychoeducational support.

5.2.3.2 The Call for Enhanced Training and Support

The theme "The call for enhanced training and support" emerged from discussions with educators regarding their training, professional backgrounds, and perceived needs for supporting orphaned learners. Their responses shed light on the importance of ongoing professional development and tailored training to meet the unique challenges of supporting vulnerable children.

Educator Nokwanda underscored the significance of experience and continuous learning in refining her approach to supporting orphaned learners, advocating for workshops and resources focused on trauma-informed care and resilience-building. Educator Gugu emphasised the need

for specialised training in empathy and active listening, as well as collaboration with other professionals like social workers. Educator Debbie echoed the sentiment, highlighting the importance of on-going professional development in trauma-informed care and cultural sensitivity, alongside fostering a supportive school culture and providing access to counselling services.

These findings highlight educators' recognition of the need for continuous growth and support to effectively meet the diverse needs of orphaned learners. The emphasis on specialised knowledge, skills, and resources, as well as collaboration with other professionals, reflects a commitment to a holistic and collaborative approach. Drawing on the collaborative approach advocated by Bronfenbrenner's theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), these findings underscore the importance of equipping educators with the necessary tools and support to ensure the wellbeing and academic success of orphaned learners in educational settings. Additionally, the research study by Zhang et al. (2022) in China provided valuable insights into the benefits of offering staff members support, and training to effectively manage the substantial numbers of orphaned learners often present in schools, further emphasising the value of a holistic and collaborative approach.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This section explored the implications of the study in relation to the three primary research questions that guided the investigation.

5.3.1 Implications for Research Question 1

What are foundation phase educators' experiences of offering psycho-educational support to orphaned and vulnerable learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit?

FP educators in the study experienced a dynamic and challenging journey when offering psychoeducational support to orphaned learners. These educators routinely confronted a spectrum of challenges, including the intricate task of addressing the profound emotional and psychological repercussions of loss and trauma that many of these children faced. Beyond the academic sphere, educators frequently stepped into roles akin to surrogate caregivers, providing a blend of emotional support, practical assistance, and sometimes, direct intervention in their learners' personal and family lives.

These challenges were compounded by the necessity to adapt teaching methodologies to accommodate the varying and often intensified needs of orphaned learners. This adaptation went beyond conventional educational practices, requiring educators to integrate elements of social-emotional learning, trauma-informed teaching, and individualised support plans within their daily routines. Such efforts fostered a safer and more nurturing classroom environment, yet also demanded a significant emotional and professional investment from the educators themselves.

Moreover, the complexity of navigating family dynamics, or the absence thereof, placed additional strain on the educators. They often found themselves in the position of liaising with what remained of their learners' family structures, social services, and community resources to ensure the wellbeing and continued education of these children.

Despite these formidable challenges, educators experienced profound fulfilment from their work, driven by witnessing the resilience, growth, and academic progress of orphaned learners. The positive outcomes and the strong bonds formed with the learners served as a testament to the educators' dedication and the impact of their support.

5.3.2 Implications for Research Question 2

<p><i>How do foundation phase educators offer psycho-educational support to orphaned and vulnerable learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit?</i></p>
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The FP educators interviewed in the study collaborated closely with the families of the affected learners, their colleagues, the SMT, the SBST, and the school social worker to offer psychoeducational support to orphaned learners. Together, they identified and addressed the diverse needs of orphaned learners, ensuring a comprehensive approach to support. The SMT and SBST played proactive roles in providing timely interventions, coordinating support services from the wider community, and fostering a nurturing environment conducive to the well-being and academic success of orphaned learners. Additionally, the school social worker offered valuable expertise in providing emotional support, facilitating referrals to external resources, and implementing interventions to address the specific needs of orphaned learners.

The inclusion of a social worker within the school framework signified a crucial step toward addressing the complex, multifaceted needs of OVC. As a professional, the social worker brought a wealth of expertise in psychosocial support, enabling a more nuanced approach to

the challenges faced by these learners. By closely collaborating with the social worker, educators were able to extend the range of support available to OVC beyond the academic and into the realms of emotional and social wellbeing. The synergy between educators, the SMT, the social worker, the SBST and the wider community exemplified a robust collaborative approach.

This collective effort ensured that every aspect of the child's wellbeing was considered and catered to, from academic support to mental health and beyond. The study revealed how such partnerships are instrumental in creating a network of care that surrounds the learner, fostering an environment where OVC can thrive both inside and outside the classroom. Through these collaborative efforts, the educators accessed additional resources and expertise, thereby enhancing their ability to meet the unique challenges faced by orphaned learners in the classroom.

5.3.3 Implications for Research Question 3

Why do foundation phase educators offer psycho-educational support to orphaned and vulnerable learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit the way

The FP educators offered psychoeducational support to orphaned learners in KwaKhangela Circuit in a manner shaped by their beliefs, personal experiences, and recognition of the need for additional training. Their deep-seated belief in the importance of every child's success, coupled with personal experiences such as having been raised with principles of service to mankind or having overcome adversity themselves, motivated them to provide unwavering support to orphaned learners. Educators acknowledged that while their training had provided foundational knowledge, on-going professional development is essential to effectively address the multifaceted needs of orphaned learners. They advocated for specialised training in areas such as trauma-informed care, cultural sensitivity, and collaboration strategies, recognising the importance of continuous learning to enhance their role in supporting orphaned learners. Through their dedication to on-going growth and development, educators strived to create nurturing environments where orphaned learners could thrive academically and emotionally, despite the challenges they may have faced.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 Recommendations based on findings

Based on the comprehensive insights derived from the study on the FP educators' experiences in providing psychoeducational support to the OVC several key recommendations emerged. These recommendations target various stakeholders, including the educator, the school, the Department of Basic Education, and the broader support network of services, aiming to enhance the support structure for orphaned learners and the educators who serve them:

1. Enhanced Professional Development for Educators:

- Implement on-going training programmes focused on trauma-informed practices, social-emotional learning strategies, and resilience-building to better equip educators in supporting the unique needs of orphaned learners.
- Offer workshops and courses on grief counselling and psychological first- aid to empower educators to provide immediate and effective support to learners in distress.

2. Strengthened Support Systems within Schools:

- Establish a robust support system for educators, including access to professional counselling and peer support groups, to help them manage the emotional toll of their work.
- Create a multidisciplinary team within schools, comprising educators, social workers, psychologists, and community health professionals, to ensure a holistic approach to supporting orphaned learners.

3. Collaborative Networks with External Agencies:

- Foster partnerships between schools and external agencies (social services, healthcare providers, community organisations) to create a seamless support network for orphaned children that addresses their educational, emotional, and physical wellbeing.
- Enhance the referral system to ensure timely and efficient access to external support services for learners in need.

4. Access to Counselling and Psychological Services:

- Ensure that schools have access to on-site or easily accessible counselling services for learners, providing a safe space for them to express their feelings and receive professional support.

5. *Policy and Infrastructure Development:*

- Advocate for the development and implementation of policies that specifically address the needs of orphaned learners, ensuring they receive the necessary support to succeed academically and emotionally.

The abovementioned recommendations that I flagged aim to create a more inclusive, supportive, and responsive educational ecosystem for orphaned learners, recognising educators' critical role in their lives and the need for comprehensive support to fulfil this role effectively.

5.4.2 Recommendations for future studies

Given the insights from the study, the following areas are recommended for further research to deepen understanding and enhance support systems for OVC:

- To conduct further research on the effectiveness of different support strategies for orphaned learners, facilitating data-driven decisions in the development of support programmes.
- To implement a system for tracking the academic and emotional progress of orphaned learners to better understand their needs and the impact of support initiatives
- To research SMT capacity for supportive leadership: Assess the ability of SMTs to offer supportive leadership that empowers educators in their roles as providers of psychoeducational support. This includes their ability to facilitate a supportive school culture, encourage collaboration among staff, and provide emotional and professional support to educators.

These recommendations aim to deepen our understanding of the complex support needs of OVC and the various factors influencing the effectiveness of educational interventions designed to meet these needs.

5.5 LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

While the study provided valuable insights into the experiences of FP educators in providing psychoeducational support to orphaned learners, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations. Firstly, the research was conducted in a specific geographic location, limiting the generalisability of the findings to other contexts. Additionally, the study relied on self-report data from educators, which may be subject to bias or social desirability effects.

Furthermore, the sample size was relatively small, which could affect the breadth and depth of the findings. Finally, the study focused primarily on 3 FP educators' experiences, potentially overlooking the experiences of other stakeholders such as orphaned learners themselves or their caregivers. These limitations point to opportunities for future research to address these gaps and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding psychoeducational support for orphaned learners.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter marks the culmination of the study that I conducted over a period of two years. This chapter presented the summary of findings that were reached when she conducted this study during this period. It also presented the recommendations and conclusions that were reached after the data was generated and analysed.

The study embarked on an explorative journey to understand the experiences and approaches of Foundation Phase educators at Beacon of Hope Primary School (pseudonym), aptly named to reflect its role in the lives of orphaned learners in the KwaKhangela Circuit. Through in-depth semi-structured interviews and document analysis as data generation methods, the research illuminated the dedication, challenges, and adaptive strategies educators employed to offer psychoeducational support to these orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC).

The FP educators at the sampled research site served as pillars of support, navigating the complex interplay of emotional, academic, and social needs unique to orphaned learners. Their commitment extends beyond conventional teaching roles, embracing aspects of care and guidance that resonate with the nurturing ethos the school's name suggests. These educators, driven by empathy and a profound sense of responsibility, adapt their teaching methods, engage in continuous learning, and harness community resources to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

The study highlighted the educators' need for further training and resources to enhance their capacity to meet the multifaceted needs of orphaned learners effectively. It emphasised the importance of a holistic support system that includes not just the educators but the school SMT, SBST, the SGB-employed social worker, and the broader community. This collaborative approach is crucial for providing a safety net that ensured the well-being and academic success of OVC.

Despite its contributions, the study acknowledged limitations such as its localised scope, reliance on self-reported data, and a small sample size. These limitations suggest avenues for further research to deepen the understanding of psychoeducational support in diverse contexts and from multiple perspectives.

In conclusion, Beacon of Hope Primary stood as a testament to the power of education as a transformative force in the lives of orphaned learners. The dedication of foundation phase educators, coupled with the supportive framework of the school and community, offers a beacon of hope indeed. This study not only celebrates their unwavering commitment but also calls attention to the on-going needs and challenges in supporting some of society's most vulnerable members. As such, it lays the groundwork for further exploration and action to ensure that every child, irrespective of their circumstances, is given the opportunity to thrive within the sanctuary of the educational system.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



03 November 2023

Fazila Hoosen (203516718)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear F Hoosen,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00006231/2023

Project title: Orphaned learners' psychoeducational challenges: Foundation phase educators' experiences

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 29 September 2023 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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

This approval is valid until 03 November 2024.

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

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

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX B: KZN PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Tel: 033 392 1063

Email: Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Phindile Duma

Ref.:2/4/8/119

Mrs F Hoosen
15 Sandown Road
North Beach
DURBAN
4001

Dear Mrs Hoosen

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: "ORPHANED LEARNERS' PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES: FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES", 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 28 August 2023 to 31 August 2026.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

UMLAZI DISTRICT


Mr GN Ngcobo
Head of Department: Education
Date: 1 September 2023

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

APPENDIX C: APPLICATION LETTER TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

DATE: 10 August 2023

The Principal
---- Primary School
---- Street
Durban
4001

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Permission to conduct research at your school

My name is **Fazila Hoosen (STUDENT No.: 203516718)**, and I am a Masters of Education student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, in the School of Education at Edgewood Campus.

This is my official request to you to be a participant in my research. The research topic of my study is:

Orphaned and vulnerable learners' psychoeducational challenges: Foundation Phase educators' experiences.

I request a sitting with 3 teachers (1 from the following Grades – Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3). The teachers will participate in this study by responding to interview questions.

This research will not cost the school and participants financially. The participants' engagement is also voluntary and will not be remunerated. However, should there be any costs that are incurred by the participants because of this study; they will be covered by the researcher.

Participants will receive letters of consent which they will have to carefully read and sign before I begin data collection.

Your favourable response to the request of this letter will be highly appreciated as the research seeks to enhance the teaching of first additional languages, thus improving the quality of South African education and beyond.

My contact details:

Cellphone number: 073 555 5675

Email address:

fazilah06@gmail.com

For further information, you can contact my supervisor:

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Jabulile

Mzimela Office Telephone Number:

031 260 3807 Email Address:

mzimelaj@ukzn.ac.za

You may also contact the Research Office through:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001 Durban

4000 KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH

AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

CONSENT FORM

I _____(Name and Surname in full), hereby give consent for Fazila Hoosen to conduct her research at _____Primary School.

Signature:

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANTS' CONSENT LETTER

1007 Keywest
15 Sandown Road
North Beach
Durban
4000
22 September 2023

Dear Prospective Participant

RE: Request for Permission to Conduct Research

I, Fazila Hoosen (203516718), am currently a Master of Education student in the School of Education (University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus). The title of my research is: **Orphaned and vulnerable learners' psychoeducational challenges: Foundation Phase educators' experiences.**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the psychoeducational challenges experienced by orphans in the foundation phase. This study aims to heighten awareness of the plight of young orphans, acknowledge challenges faced, share good practices and seek possible intervention strategies. Three Foundation Phase (FP) educators (one from each grade, Grade 1-3) will be sampled. I would like you to partake in this study as a FP educator. Your input in this study will be highly appreciated as it will contribute immensely to my research endeavours.

Research procedures

In order to get information for this study I will be conducting semi structured interviews. An interview schedule will be utilised, however, the questions will be open-ended to allow for flexibility. The interview will be conducted once only and will last for approximately an hour or less. I will be audio-taping and writing down field notes where necessary. Additional data will be collected through semi-structured qualitative questionnaires and relevant document analysis. The information that will be produced from this engagement will be used for research purposes only.

Confidentiality

You will be treated with fairness and honesty, and I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity. All information collected will remain confidential and a pseudonym will be used in the coding, analysis and reporting of the data. Your identity will never be exposed.

Rights of the participant

Your assistance in this study will be greatly appreciated and information will be shared with you at an informal meeting upon completion of this research. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and you have the option to withdraw from this study at any time. In cases when you don't want to answer questions posed, you are free to remain silent.

For further enquiries please contact me using the Cellphone number 0735555675 or via email fazilah06@gmail.com.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours Faithfully

Mrs. F. Hoosen (Fazila)

You may contact my Supervisor for more details regarding your participation in this study.

Supervisor: Dr Jabulile Mzimela

Email Address: mzimelaj@ukzn.ac.za

You may also contact the Research Office through:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

CONSENT FORM

I(Name and surname in full), hereby give consent to be the participant on a study based on Orphaned and vulnerable learners' psychoeducational challenges: Foundation Phase educators' experiences. I fully understand that I am permitted to withdraw from this project if the need arises.

DATA GENERATION METHODS	Willing	Not Willing
1. Semi-structured interviews		
2. Voice Recording		

Participant _____

Date _____

Researcher _____

Date _____

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE EDUCATOR PARTICIPANT

Pseudonym: _____

Part A Background / Biographical information

1. Gender: _____
2. Qualifications: _____
3. Professional experience: _____
4. Experience in this institution: _____
5. Grade Teaching currently: _____

Part B Challenges Experienced when working with Orphans and Vulnerable learners (OVC).

1. Have you encountered orphan learners in your classroom?
2. Do you think that orphan learners are vulnerable and need support?
3. Can you describe any experiences you've had in providing support to orphaned learners in your classroom?
4. What specific challenges have you encountered when offering psycho-educational support to orphaned learners?
5. Can you share a specific anecdote or memorable experience related to supporting an orphaned learner?
6. How do you feel about the role of a teacher in providing psycho-educational support to orphaned learners?
7. Are there any resources or support systems available for offering psycho-educational support to orphaned learners?
8. Could you walk me through your approach or strategies when supporting an orphaned learner academically?
9. What motivates you to offer psycho-educational support to orphaned learners?
10. Have your personal experiences or beliefs influenced how you support orphaned learners?
11. In your opinion, what are the benefits of providing psycho-educational support to orphaned learners?
12. How do you think your training or professional background has shaped your approach to supporting orphaned learners? Has it equipped you well enough to support orphan learners?

Part C: Support Structures and School Policy for supporting OVC.

1. Is there a policy available at your school for working with OVC? If yes briefly outline the policy.
2. What support do you receive from the school management?
3. Do you receive any other support from other stakeholders at your school?
4. What strategies do you think teachers can adopt to better manage OVC effectively?
5. What do you think is needed for educators to enhance their role in supporting OVC?

APPENDIX F: TURNITIN CERTIFICATE

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Turnitin Originality Report

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APPENDIX G: CRITICAL READER AND LANGUAGE EDITOR

JOAN HETTEMA -ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITOR

250 Troye St., Muckleneuk, Pretoria, 0002

Date: 26 MAY 2024

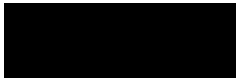
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that I have duly edited a dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a **Master of Education (MEd)** degree in Educational Psychology in the School of Education, University of KwaZulu- Natal with the title: *Orphaned learners' psycho-educational challenges: Foundation Phase educators' experiences* by Fazila Hoosen.

I have a BA majoring in Latin and English (including isiZulu, Afrikaans and Anthropology among others) from the University of Pretoria, Honours in English Language and Literature from the University of South Africa (Unisa) and *Troisième Degré* in French from *Alliance Française*. (I also did some part-time studies in Mandarin and Russian).

Throughout my 37-year fulltime career and the more than twenty years since, I have been involved with the process of writing English, editing English or lecturing in the fields of Media Studies, English for Journalism and Business English at various tertiary institutions - for 11 years - (Tshwane University of Technology, Boston College, Darnel.in College, Rosebank College and College Campus) as well as editing documents and theses for students at universities throughout the country. I also served as judge for the annual competition of the Publications Forum of South Africa for nine years.

Yours sincerely,



J A Hettema

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